

In the quest to improve my 98 4Runner's V6 performance, I've completed several modifications to the intake system to help it breathe better;

- Replaced the factory intake tube with a performance one
- Replaced the D shaped throttle body spacer with one that is O shaped.
- Removed the elbow from the inner passenger fender well.
- Installed a foam oiled air filter, installed a deck plate on the front of the air box.

These mods didn't make it a sports car, but they made a noticeable improvement. A few weeks after the last mod, I'm cruising the highway in my 4Runner and noticed it felt labored; as if it weren't getting enough of something. The cruise control was sporadic, accelerating onto the highway was noticeably longer, and every little bridge forced a downshift. The more I drove it, the above problems continued.

Hmmm....something is definitely not right here. I went through my normal checks and everything seemed fine, but I began to focus on the deck plate because it was the last mod I did. You buy a deck plate from a marine store and install in your air box. What's a deck plate you ask? It's a round threaded collar with a lid that screws into the collar. My kayak has one for accessing the storage. You cut a hole in the front of your air box and install the deck plate. You leave it open for improved air flow and screw in the cap when slogging through mud & water. I installed mine with little fuss and all seemed well. Definitely noisier inside the 4Runner as you can hear every gulp of air and hard acceleration was really loud. Notice I said loud, not the low, power sounding, growl of a tuned intake, just loud. I've installed free flowing intakes with the open cone filters on other vehicles and so I'm familiar with the benefits of improved airflow. However, as I was running through causes of my loss of performance, I just kept thinking a hole in front of the air box is a giant leak.

We took a trip to Miami which was the perfect chance to make a comparison. I left deck plate open on the way down and closed it once there. 100 miles each way and several tall bridges would provide real world feedback. After I closed the plate, we ran some errands and up ascending a tall bay bridge, the 4Runner downshifted and quietly went right up without a fuss. It was so noticeable, I looked down at the speedo and had to slow down. When I took this bridge before, it downshifted and noisily, but slowly, huffed its way up.

The rest of the trip returned similar results. The 2 hour ride home was effortless; entering the interstate & passing was easy again and the cruise control didn't falter at all. Plus the cabin was free from the whaaaaaa noise from the hole in the air box.

I've read a lot of debate on the deck plate mod so I just had to try it. Your results may vary, but for me I found better performance with it closed, i.e. stock. The other intake mods I've done have worked flawlessly and definitely were worth the time. Now that my 4Runner is running great again, it's back to the fun stuff. Now where did I put those HID lights?