

Repair on New Gen GTO Bumper

by Chris Winslow



We have not had any tech articles recently so I thought this might be a good month for a new one.

As those of you with the new GTO's know, a weak spot on the body is the front bumper cover. Specifically there are small tabs molded into the bumper cover that clip into brackets that are fastened to the front fenders. These tabs are supposed to snap into the brackets to hold the bumper cover securely to the front fenders.

Unfortunately, the tabs, particularly the ones that clip into the bracket at the leading edge of the fender, are a bit fragile and tend to get broken if the bumper is removed for any reason. Once broken, they can be difficult to get fixed.

In my case, my tab on the passenger side has been broken for a number of years. I had tried a few years ago to fix it with a combination of some 3M epoxy and a home made bracket secured with some rivets. Unfortunately, that repair did not work. The photo above shows what it looked like after that repair.

While we were at the GTOAA convention this year, I was talking to Doug Warble, our GTOAA tech advisor for the New Gen cars (and also the lead tech advisor for GTOAA). He showed me a U-Tube video where somebody was fixing bumper tabs on a late model GTO using a new repair kit manufactured by a company call JT Spec out of Australia. This new kit comes with metal plates to repair the tabs on the bumper so that they will once again lock into the bracket on the fenders.

I decided to give it a shot, so when I got home from the convention, I ordered a kit from JT Spec. The kit was \$48 and the shipping from Australia was a very reasonable \$14. It took about 2 weeks for it to arrive. The kit includes 4 repair plates. One for the front tab on both sides and one for

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the bottom tabs on both sides.

The idea of these metal plates is to epoxy them onto existing tabs to help repair them and, as I found out as I worked with them, also to add some thickness to the tabs, so that they stay more securely locked into the brackets.

The epoxy recommended by JT Spec for this repair is JB Weld 50139 Plastic Bonder Body Panel Adhesive. JT Spec also offered that on their web site, but it was much cheaper to buy that on Amazon domestically.

In preparing for the repair, it occurred that I may need a good solvent to clean the bumper tab and repair plate before applying the epoxy. My first thought was alcohol. That turned out to be a bad thought! I checked the JB Weld website and they recommended either acetone or lacquer thinner. In addition, they specifically stated NOT to use Alcohol as it would weaken the bond. Since I did not like the idea of having lacquer thinner anywhere near the GTO, I went



with the acetone. (I picked that up at Home Depot). I also had some sandpaper handy to rough up the surfaces before bonding..

With all the supplies in hand, it was time to give it a shot. The removal of the front bumper is fairly easy. There are a total of 7 screws to remove. The balance of the bumper attachment is via the tabs and brackets.

The first screws to remove are the three screws that secure the top of the bumper cover to the front of the core support. There is not much to this. They are three Phillips screws and, in my case anyway, they came right out. Next there are two screws on each side of the bumper that secure the bumper cover to the fender liners. Again, these are some simple Phillips screws. For these I used a small ratchet that accepts bits along with a Phillips bit. That way I did not have to remove the front wheels.

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Once these 7 screws were out, the only thing left holding the bumper to the car are the tabs and brackets. In my case, I wanted to be particularly careful with the tab on the drivers side front, since that one is still OK on my GTO. The trick, if there is one, to try to protect



these front tabs is to push on the bumper towards the rear of the car while, as gently as possible, pulling the bumper cover off the brackets. I was successful in removing the bumper without breaking anything.

With the bumper off the car and setting on a moving blanket to protect the paint, it was now time to get a look at how my previous repair had held up. It was still intact, as it turns out, but it was not apparently enough to keep the bumper tab from working out of the bracket (as seen in the earlier photo).

After looking my previous repair over, I decided that the repair in the corner of the tab that had been made with the 3M material was still intact and should stay. The metal patch that I had made, while still in place, was clearly going to interfere with the new repair plate, so it had to go. Fortunately, I had secured that with rivets only, so it was just a matter of gently drilling out the rivets and pulling off the old repair plate.

With the old repair out of the way, it was time to size up the location for the JT Spec repair plate. One decision was where to



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place the plate. I think the intent of the design of the plate is to place it on the forward side of the tab on the bumper, but there are some other molded details that really interfere with that, so I decided to place it on the rear side of the tab. (This was also the conclusion that the person that did the video came to on these plates.)

The plate includes tabs for extra stability and strength of the repair, so I bent those just slightly so that they were contacting the inside of the bumper cover. What does not show well

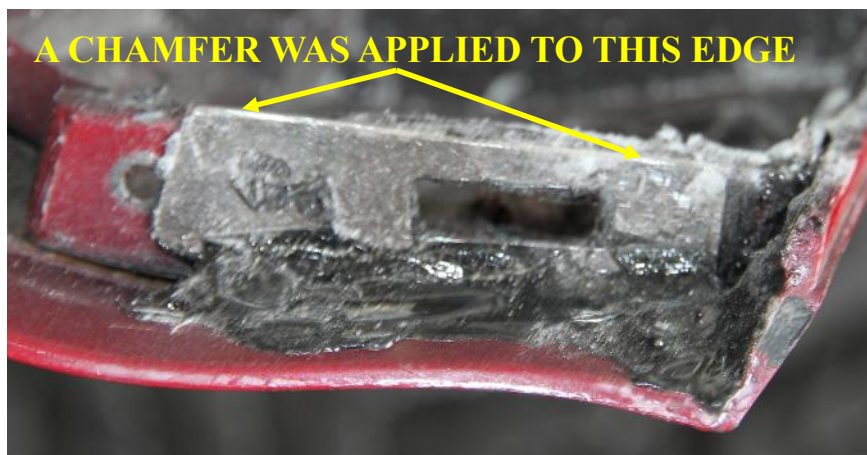


in this photo is that the tab on the bumper is actually broken on the left side of the hole. So, this repair plate will provide a means to re-secure that tab in the original location and hold it firmly in place.

With the part dry fitted, I did some light sanding to rough up the surfaces and then cleaned everything with the acetone. Next up was to mix up some of the JB Weld. You would think the dual syringe set up would make that fairly easy, but as it turns out the two parts did not initially come out in equal amounts. (I think there was an air bubble). It went better on the second attempt. I mixed the two parts with a stick (a small stick is provided with the JB Weld). I then used that stick to butter up the parts and then added more JB weld over the tabs and to form a fillet for increased strength. I then used a small clamp and a small pair of Vice Grips to hold it in place while the epoxy cured.

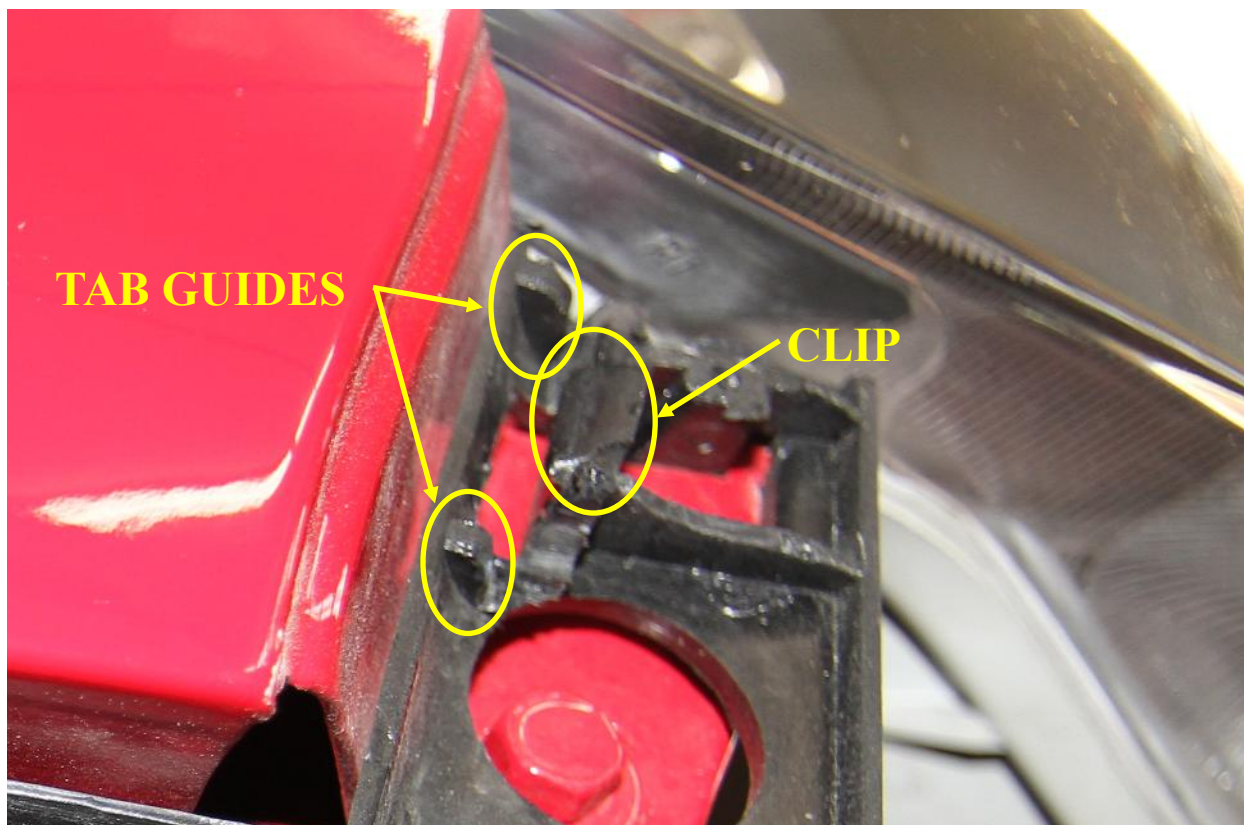
The resulting repair was actually not very pretty. I think if I ever do it again, I might try a different application method.

The material did set up rather quickly. In my case, however, I had some other projects underway and did not actually get back to installing the bumper until the next day. By then the repair plate was solidly in place on the tab.



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What I decided to do next was not shown in the U-Tube video. In my case, I had a spare bracket in my parts inventory so I pulled that and spent some time custom fitting it to the repaired tab. What I found was that with the repair plate in place, the thickness of the tab had increased. In addition, these repair plates appear to be laser cut. Because of that, they have



very crisp edges. That edge on the repair plate was catching the two guides that press the tab into the clip on the bracket, causing it to want to hang up on the way in. To address this, I used a file to put a bit of a chamfer on the repair plate and also slightly adjust the leading edge of the guides on the bracket.

With these slight tweaks to the repair and the bracket, I was done with the repair of this tab. I decided not proceed with a repair of any of the other tabs, since they are all working OK. So, it was time to put it back together.

I started with the drivers side so that I could be as careful as possible with the tab on that side. Once that side was back in and solid, I moved over to the repaired side. The bottom tabs snapped right in as usual. On the repaired tab, it took one pretty firm push to get it snapped into position. Taking the bumper off again would probably take a fair amount of persuasion on this repaired tab, so I hope I don't ever need to do that.

The results were excellent. For the first time in many years, that front bumper is properly in place on the passenger side of the car. See the photos on the next page for the before and after images..

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