1968-1972 Automatic Floor Console Installation

by James Hinshaw and Mark Meekins

Chevrolet jargon for the floor console is "seat separator". This expression sounds more like a politically correct term, but in reality it's a good description of a floor console. This device does separate the bucket seats. It also gives an air of flare and performance to a car and a meaningful purpose for the right hand.

Consoles were standard equipment on 1964 and 1965 Chevelle Super Sports. They were an extra cost option for 1966-up models, therefore, many cars weren't equipped with this feature. But that situation can be remedied. James Hinshaw, owner of Hinshaw's Chevelle Parts, 100 Bell Street, Burlington, NC 27215, 910-226-8242, recently installed an automatic floor console into a 1971 El Camino. The project was rather simple, but then James carries all the needed parts to install such equipment. From the console, shifter and cable to lens, clips, brackets and braces ... he stocks it all and then some. His business is Chevelle and El Camino parts as well as restoration services.

Provided all the equipment and parts are available, this operation can be completed in 3-4 hours. The interior will have to be gutted, the transmission floor hump drilled, bracket welded, levers changed on the transmission unit, console housing bolted in place and cable adjustments made. The following step-by-step photos show the adaptation of a console into a car. A cable adjustment article from a contemporary Chevrolet Chassis Service manual is listed elsewhere in this issue.
Punch is used to deepen dimple so drill bit will not travel. There are numerous locating dimples found on transmission hump.

1\(\frac{1}{4}\)-inch diameter hole saw makes smooth opening for console cable installation. Hinshaw’s Chevelle Parts stocks the cables.

End of cable with boot is pushed through hole. It might be slightly snug, but boot compresses.

Push cable through until grommet and retainer and approximately 8 inches of cable remain. Pin on shifter is where cable will attach.

Cable adjustments are made at transmission, but there appears to be adjustment slot behind (arrow) upper bolt beside cable pin.
Cable slides over pin and retainer clip locks itself within groove of pin.

Dimple on transmission hump is highlighted (arrow). Back half of shifter plate will be bolted to floor by two bolts.

Hammer and punch guarantee correct drilling location for attaching bolts.

Verify that shifter housing sits centerline of hump before tightening bolt. These bolts will be removed and installed on console brace.

With housing properly centered, punch two front shifter plate holes.

Bolt housing down, situate cable in holder and secure cable to shifter handle pin with snap on clip.

Cable retainer clip goes on shifter side of housing. It prevents cable from slipping.

Sheet metal attaching screws were used to secure seal retainer to floor.

Console housing for automatic and manual transmissions is same. Four areas on console secure it to transmission hump, shifter housing and floor mounting bracket.

One bracket will have to be welded to the floor for console's glove compartment.

A locating pin is run through compartment floor to determine location for floor mounting bracket.
Be sure console braces align properly with shifter housing. Note shifter switch that harness will plug in to.

Front shifter housing and console brackets line up.

Two dimples were located on hump for front console bracket. They are highlighted for photo purposes before being drilled.

With all holes lining up, double check console compartment floor bracket location and remove console.

Remove bracket and grind either side of the hump for weld.

Replace bracket and console. Realign everything. Mark floor where bracket will be welded to transmission hump.

Bottom of bracket should be flush with floor hump and may have to be slightly hammered to spread bracket legs. Weld bracket to floor.

Column shift lever on side of transmission must be removed. Only one nut secures it to transmission shifter stud. Remove pin from back drive rod and force rod from lever. This rod activates backup and neutral safety switch and column lock.

Other than cable and console mounting bracket, Hinshaw’s Chevelle Parts carries Turbo cable brackets, cable bolt/pin, Turbo transmission lever, retainer clips and clip for cable to shifter handle assembly.
Turbo 400 bracket (left) mounts to bottom side of transmission. Turbo 350 bracket (right) mounts on side.

Turbo transmission control lever is same for 350 and 400. It has feature for back drive rod and slot for transmission stud. Extension for cable bolt/pin has slot to adjust cable. In DRIVE position, bolt/pin lock nut should be tightened at distance of 5 1/2 inches from centerline of bolt/pin to retainer clip.

Cable slides over pin and is secured with cotter key.

Slot on transmission shifter lever fits over slotted stud and nut is tightened down. Back drive rod is then reinserted in lever holes and secured with cotter key.

Turbo 350 bracket (shown) is mounted to side of transmission. Turbo 400 brace is attached on bottom. Retainer goes on boot side of bracket.
Both cable bracket and lever mounted to LH side of transmission case. Transmission has provision for side and bottom mount Turbo brackets.

End of cable is placed over pin on lever after adjustment. Back drive rod is in place. See adjustment section elsewhere.

Carpet insulation is installed before carpet. Extra wires are for aftermarket rear speakers.

1968-1972 main harness is already equipped with connections for floor console harness. A jumper harness will connect under dash and console harnesses.

Jumper wiring harness is attached to main harness and routed behind and under heater panel duct.

Jumper harness should be located directly center of heater panel duct and transmission hump.

Rear compartment carpet is installed and centered. Be sure side lengths are equal for sill plate installation. Razor is used to cut around shifter housing and floor bracket. Keep numerous sharp razors to make various carpet cuts.

Align front carpet side to side and up to firewall. Once positioned, use razor to cut one seam down the center of shifter handle towards front of housing.
Excess can be trimmed on either side of initial cut to expose shifter assembly.

After locating the jumper harness, carpet was notched and connector was pulled through. The arrows show connector ends of jumper and console harnesses.

Harness will lie flat under plate. Ground wire (arrow) is secured to front brace bolt, but has yet to be attached.

Once all holes are aligned, secure console braces to transmission hump, shifter housing and compartment bracket. Bolts for shifter housing will have to be removed and reinstalled through console braces. One bolt at front of console is used for ground wire.

Hinshaw's stocks new indicator lenses and aluminum inserts for console top plates. Six screws attach plate to console.

Results look like factory job. Next month we'll cover installation of bucket seats.
**Powerglide and Turbo Hydra-Matic Floor Shift Linkage Cable Adjustment**

1. Place shift lever in DRIVE (D) position.

2. Raise vehicle. Disconnect cable from transmission lever. Manually place transmission lever in DRIVE by rotating lever counterclockwise to low detent then clockwise one detent to DRIVE. Measure distance from rearward face of attachment bracket to center of cable attachment pin. This dimension should be 5.5 inches. If not, adjust pin to obtain this dimension.

3. Turbo Hydra-Matic same as Powerglide except for obtaining DRIVE position. Obtain DRIVE position by moving transmission lever counter-clockwise to low detent, then clockwise two positions for DRIVE.

4. Install cable to transmission lever, lower vehicle, and check for proper operation.

**Back Drive Rod Adjustment**

1. Place shift lever in PARK (P) position and turn ignition switch to lock position.

2. Raise vehicle. Loosen rod retaining clamp nut at cross-shaft. Remove column lash by rotating shift lever downward and then secure rod by tightening clamp nut.

3. Lower vehicle and check for proper operation.

**NOTE:** With selector lever in PARK (P) position, the ignition key should move freely to lock position. Lock position is obtained only when selector lever is in PARK (P) position.
Approximate measurements of 70 Malibu with T-350 trans. console/shifter mounting holes