Initially homogeneous vehicular traffic flow can become inhomogeneous even in the absence of obstacles. In this phantom traffic jam phenomenon, small perturbations grow into traffic waves, called jamitons. We demonstrate that both phenomena can be captured via rather innocent-looking systems of hyperbolic balance laws, that turn out to exhibit a rich structure of nonlinear phenomena. We present what is understood about the dynamics of jamitons, as well as highlight several open question. (Received August 15, 2018)