

Vehicle and Driver License Fees

Overview – Vehicle license (also known as car tab) and driver license fees are primarily set by the state Legislature and administered by the Department of Licensing (DOL).

History of Car Tab Fees – Prior to 2000, Washington state residents paid a motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) of 2.2 percent of the vehicle’s value according to a state depreciation schedule. Voters passed Initiative 695 in 1999 that repealed the MVET and replaced it with a flat, \$30 annual fee. Although the courts quickly ruled the initiative unconstitutional because it also contained a provision requiring voter approval for all tax and fee increases, the 2000 Legislature enacted \$30 tabs effective immediately. While the state fee is \$30, there are also other fees and taxes added onto license tabs depending on where a person lives.

In 2002, voters passed I-776, which reaffirmed \$30 tabs, repealed a local option \$15 tab fee, and attempted to repeal the authority of Sound Transit to collect a local MVET for Central Puget Sound transit programs. Despite challenges from local governments and Sound Transit, the state Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the initiative. However, Sound Transit argued that it could continue collecting the 0.3 percent MVET until 2028 to repay existing bonds issued in 1999 for capital projects. The Attorney General argued that Sound Transit should only collect the tax to repay bondholders and then eliminate it. In December 2006, the state Supreme Court ruled 8-1 in favor of Sound Transit.

In 2005, as part of the Transportation Partnership Package, the Legislature added a new vehicle “weight fee” for all vehicles under 8,000 pounds. Motor homes also were assessed a \$75 flat weight fee.

Current Car Tab Fees – All vehicle owners pay the following car tab fees each year:

- \$30.00 – State Fee
- \$ 3.00 – Filing fee
- \$ 0.75 – License Plate Technology Fee
- \$10.00 - \$30.00 – Weight fees on passenger vehicles and trucks up to 8,000 pounds.

Following are some examples of car tab fee bills. The illustrations are the current *minimum* state and local license tab fees for that particular vehicle. If you own vehicle over 8,000 pounds or drive a commercial vehicle, then you pay a combined license fee, which includes a fee based on the gross weight of the vehicle. Gross weight is defined as the vehicle weight, plus passengers, plus cargo/load capacity. At the end of this brief is the current combined licensing fee schedule.

Mazda 626 registered in Federal Way, King County with a value of \$10,000

State license tab fee	\$30.00
Filing fee	\$ 3.00
Technology fee	\$ 0.75
Weight fee	\$10.00
RTA (0.3% of vehicle value)	<u>\$30.00</u>
Total	<u>\$73.75</u>

Updated June 2008

Ford Expedition registered in Vancouver, Clark County that must replace their license plates

State license tab fee	\$30.00
Filing fee	\$ 3.00
Technology fee	\$ 0.75
Weight fee	\$20.00
Regular reflectorized plate fee	\$ 4.00
Replacement Plates	<u>\$20.00</u>
Total	\$77.75

Ford 3/4 Ton Crew Cab registered in Moses Lake, Grant County

State license tab fee	\$30.00
Filing fee	\$ 3.00
Technology fee	\$ 0.75
Weight fee	<u>\$30.00</u>
Total	\$63.75

Motor home registered in Bellingham, Whatcom County

State license tab fee	\$30.00
Filing fee	\$ 3.00
Technology fee	\$ 0.75
Weight fee	<u>\$75.00</u>
Total	\$108.75

Other License Tab Fees

In addition to regular license tab fees, certain vehicle owners pay additional fees for licenses each year. Some common examples of other fees:

- \$3.00 for recreational vehicles (campers, travel trailers, motor homes)
- \$3.50 for campers
- \$5.00 one-time fee for farm vehicles (this fee is in lieu of the \$30 state fee)

Where License Tab Fees Go – The \$30 state fee pays for State Patrol operations, ferry operations, and a small portion is dedicated to the Motor Vehicle Account, which pays for highway-related activities such as highway maintenance, preservation, WSDOT administration, etc.

The weight fees passed in 2005 are used non-highway (transit) projects and some freight mobility projects. Sound Transit's MVET pays for transit operations and capital projects in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

License Plate Replacement – A common question from legislators and the public is the requirement to replace license plates. The Legislature passed HB 1008 in 1997 requiring the Department of Licensing (DOL) to "periodically provide for the replacement of license plates." No specific time frame was specified, but the legislation required DOL to use empirical studies. DOL subsequently adopted a rule establishing the 7-year schedule. The main reason used by the State Patrol for replacing license plates is that the "reflectivity" of the license plates wears down over time and it makes it harder for law enforcement to identify vehicles.

License plate fees were increased in 2005. The fee to replace a set of license plates is \$24 for a set of two and there is an optional \$20 fee to keep the same license plate number.

Driver License Fees – Washington state issues a five-year standard driver’s license for \$25. A commercial driver’s license (CDL) is \$45 for a five-year license. A motorcycle endorsement is \$25 every five years in addition to the \$25 driver license fee for a total of \$50 every five years. There are also several other driver license exam fees, duplicate record fees, and others. These fees are deposited into various accounts and appropriated for general government and driver-related programs.

Sub-Agents – DOL and county auditors are authorized to appoint vehicle “sub-agents” which are private businesses that individuals can use to apply for new or renew current licenses. These businesses charge additional fees for their services on top of the state and local fees. Sub-agent fees are set by the Legislature and the most recent increase passed during the 2005 session. Although sub-agents have higher fees, they often have shorter lines, more convenient locations, and are sometimes friendlier.

Current Gross Weight Fee Schedule (RCW 46.16.070)

Schedule A applies to logging trucks and commercial trucks that do not tow trailers.
 Schedule B applies to all other trucks.

WEIGHT	SCHEDULE A	SCHEDULE B
4,000 lbs.	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00
.	
6,000 lbs.	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
.	
8,000 lbs.	\$ 60.00	\$ 60.00
.	
10,000 lbs.	\$ 62.00	\$ 62.00
.	
12,000 lbs.	\$ 79.00	\$ 79.00
.	
14,000 lbs.	\$ 90.00	\$ 90.00
.	
16,000 lbs.	\$ 102.00	\$ 102.00
.	
18,000 lbs.	\$ 154.00	\$ 154.00
.	
20,000 lbs.	\$ 171.00	\$ 171.00
.	
22,000 lbs.	\$ 185.00	\$ 185.00
.	
24,000 lbs.	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
.	

26,000 lbs.	\$ 211.00	\$ 211.00
....	
28,000 lbs.	\$ 249.00	\$ 249.00
....	
30,000 lbs.	\$ 287.00	\$ 287.00
....	
32,000 lbs.	\$ 346.00	\$ 346.00
....	
34,000 lbs.	\$ 368.00	\$ 368.00
....	
36,000 lbs.	\$ 399.00	\$ 399.00
....	
38,000 lbs.	\$ 438.00	\$ 438.00
....	
40,000 lbs.	\$ 501.00	\$ 501.00
....	
42,000 lbs.	\$ 521.00	\$ 611.00
....	
44,000 lbs.	\$ 532.00	\$ 622.00
....	
46,000 lbs.	\$ 572.00	\$ 662.00
....	
48,000 lbs.	\$ 596.00	\$ 686.00
....	
50,000 lbs.	\$ 647.00	\$ 737.00
....	
52,000 lbs.	\$ 680.00	\$ 770.00
....	
54,000 lbs.	\$ 734.00	\$ 824.00
....	
56,000 lbs.	\$ 775.00	\$ 865.00
....	
58,000 lbs.	\$ 806.00	\$ 896.00
....	
60,000 lbs.	\$ 859.00	\$ 949.00
....	
62,000 lbs.	\$ 921.00	\$ 1,011.00
....	
64,000 lbs.	\$ 941.00	\$ 1,031.00
....	
66,000 lbs.	\$ 1,048.00	\$ 1,138.00
....	
68,000 lbs.	\$ 1,093.00	\$ 1,183.00
....	
70,000 lbs.	\$ 1,177.00	\$ 1,267.00
....	
72,000 lbs.	\$ 1,259.00	\$ 1,349.00
....	
74,000 lbs.	\$ 1,368.00	\$ 1,458.00
....	
76,000 lbs.	\$ 1,478.00	\$ 1,568.00
....	
78,000 lbs.	\$ 1,614.00	\$ 1,704.00
....	
80,000 lbs.	\$ 1,742.00	\$ 1,832.00
....	
82,000 lbs.	\$ 1,863.00	\$ 1,953.00
....	
84,000 lbs.	\$ 1,983.00	\$ 2,073.00

86,000 lbs.	\$ 2,104.00	\$ 2,194.00
88,000 lbs.	\$ 2,225.00	\$ 2,315.00
90,000 lbs.	\$ 2,346.00	\$ 2,436.00
92,000 lbs.	\$ 2,466.00	\$ 2,556.00
94,000 lbs.	\$ 2,587.00	\$ 2,677.00
96,000 lbs.	\$ 2,708.00	\$ 2,798.00
98,000 lbs.	\$ 2,829.00	\$ 2,919.00
100,000 lbs.	\$ 2,949.00	\$ 3,039.00
102,000 lbs.	\$ 3,070.00	\$ 3,160.00
104,000 lbs.	\$ 3,191.00	\$ 3,281.00
105,500 lbs.	\$ 3,312.00	\$ 3,402.00