

Marathon County Vehicle Registration Fee (Wheel Tax) Frequently Asked Questions and Talking Points

This information is intended to assist local officials who are considering the adoption of a municipal or county vehicle registration fee (wheel tax).

What vehicles are subject to a wheel tax?

An automobile or a motor truck registered under 8,000 lbs gross weight and customarily kept in the municipality or county that enacted the tax. This includes:

- Automobiles, vans and Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) that qualify as a passenger vehicle
- Motor trucks and dual-purpose motor homes (trucks that can be equipped with a slide-in camper unit) registered at a gross weight of 8,000 lbs. or less.

Vehicles with the following license plate types are subject to a wheel tax, except as noted.

Standard Plate Types

AUT [Automobile and passenger vehicles](#): Issued for automobiles and for vans and SUVs that qualify as a passenger vehicle including those operated for hire. Driver Ed vehicles are exempt from wheel tax and are not included in WisDOT registration reports of vehicles subject to a wheel tax,

LTK [Light truck](#): Issued for motor trucks operated up to 8,000 lbs. gross weight including vehicles operated for hire. Dual-purpose farm trucks are exempt from wheel tax.

[Special Plate Types](#) - The special plates are subject to wheel tax.

What vehicles are exempt from this fee?

Vehicles exempt from wheel tax are:

- Buses, motorcycles, mopeds, motor homes, low-speed vehicles and trailers
- Trucks registered at more than 8,000 pounds or registered as Farm or Dual Purpose Farm
- Vehicles registered as Antique, Collector, Driver education, Historic military vehicle, Hobbyist, Human service vehicle, Low-speed vehicle, Medal of honor, Municipal, State-owned, Special X and one vehicle with Ex-prisoner of war registration issued to any qualified individual
- Any vehicle with registration issued by a Wisconsin Indian tribe or band
- Vehicles displaying Dealer, Distributor, Finance company or Manufacturer plates

What determines whether a vehicle is customarily kept in a municipality or county?

Applications for original title and registration request the county and city, village or township where a vehicle is "customarily kept" or domiciled. This information also prints on the registration renewal notice. Renewal notices instruct the customer to change their address, or where the vehicle is customarily kept, if incorrectly shown on the notice.

In the absence of an indicated municipality or county of domicile, the owner or lessee's post office address is used to determine municipality or county of domicile, per administrative rule Trans 126.01(c).

Per s. 341.60, Wis. Stats., any person who gives a false address or location where a vehicle is customarily kept in an application for registration may be fined not more than \$200 or imprisoned not more than 6 months or both.

Are estimates of the number of vehicles subject to a wheel tax within a county or municipality available?

Yes. Current vehicle data is available at the end of each fiscal and calendar year. The vehicles eligible for wheel tax report is available on the WisDOT website at [Lists of vehicle information](#).

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What are the administrative costs associated with a wheel tax?

Currently, WisDOT charges a fee per vehicle application of 17 cents. The administrative fee is the same for all municipalities regardless of the amount of fee imposed by the municipality or the number of vehicles for which the fee is collected.

How long after enactment can this fee be collected by WisDOT?

WisDOT requires notification at least 90 days prior to the first day of the month in which the amendment is effective. WisDOT also requires notification at least 90 days prior to the first day of the month in which an amended or the repeal of a wheel tax is effective.

When a wheel tax ordinance is implemented, collection for vehicles subject to the fee will begin on these dates:

- Renewal of current registrations expiring the first day of the month or later.
- Issuance of new registrations with a date of operation or dealer delivery date on the second day of the month or later.

When a wheel tax ordinance is repealed, collection will terminate on these dates:

- Renewal of current registrations expiring the first day of the month or later.
- Issuance of new registrations with a date of operation or dealer delivery date on the second day of the month or later.

Can the revenues received from wheel tax payments be used for any purpose?

Counties and municipalities must use the moneys from wheel tax payments for transportation related purposes only (s. 341.35(6r), Wis. Stats.). "Highway" is defined by state law to mean "all public ways and thoroughfares and bridges on the same." Courts have interpreted "highways" to include trails because they are "public ways and thoroughfares and bridges on the same." "Sidewalk" means that "portion of a highway between the curb lines, or the lateral lines of a roadway, and the adjacent property lines, constructed for use of pedestrians."

If a county has a wheel tax in effect, can a municipality within that county also enact a wheel tax ordinance?

According to s. 341.35(3m), Wis. Stats: "If a municipality and the county in which the municipality is located enact ordinances under this section, a motor vehicle customarily kept in the municipality shall be subject to a municipal registration fee and a county registration fee." Therefore, both the municipality and county would collect a wheel tax simultaneously for vehicles subject to the fee in the municipality, if each chose to enact an ordinance.

Which other counties or municipalities have enacted a wheel tax and what is/was the amount of the fee?

These counties and municipalities have a current wheel tax ordinance:

County	Fee	Implementation Month
Chippewa County	\$10	January 2015
Iowa County	\$20	February 2015
St. Croix county	\$10	January 2008

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Municipality	Fee	Implementation Month	Termination Month (if given)
Appleton city	\$20	February 2015	December 2020
Arena township	\$20	April 2015	
Beloit city	\$20*	April 1986	
Fort Atkinson city	\$20	March 2016	
Gillett city	\$20	July 2015	
Janesville city	\$20**	April 2012	
Kaukauna city	\$10	August 2015	
Milwaukee city	\$20	December 2008	
Prairie du Sac village	\$20	January 2016	
Sheboygan city	\$20	February 2016	February 2026

*City of Beloit wheel tax increased from \$10 to \$20 in February 2015

**City of Janesville wheel tax increased from \$10 to \$20 in January 2016

These counties and municipalities have repealed their wheel tax ordinance

Municipality/county	Fee	Implementation Month	Termination Month
Amery city	\$5	January 1987	December 1991
Marathon county	\$10	February 1987	January 1988
Mayville city	\$10	April 2009	April 2014
Sheboygan city	\$10*	January 1990	December 2006

*City of Sheboygan:

- January 2002, to December 2002: \$8
- January 2003, to December 2006: \$6

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Material Cost for Marathon County:

Salt Prices:

2013/14 \$66.99/ton
2014/15 \$78.49/ton
2015/16 \$79.34/ton

Asphalt Prices:

2005 \$20.40/ton
2015 \$47.76/ton - average year Marathon County paves 95,000 tons

Cost to pave a road:

In 1993, (last time federal gas tax was raised) was approximately \$75,000 per mile
In 2006 (last time Wisconsin gas tax was raised) was approximately \$85,000 per mile
In 2015 approximately \$208,000 per mile

Needs in Marathon County:

Currently 277 miles of our 611 county miles fall below our standard of a 7 out of 10 rating
Currently 19 of our 110 bridges have a sufficiently rating below our goal of 50 out of a 100 rating
4 of those bridges rate Functionally Obsolete according to federal standards

Federal funding, Fast Act Recently Passed

It's clear there is not going to be any large influx of federal funds for at least the next 6 years.

"Short-term strategies need to be found to prevent the draw down of the HTF and the economic impacts that would result..." (Source: TDA)

Highways share the battle with Transit, Aviation, Amtrak, Ports, Harbors, Waterways, etc for federal transportation funding.

State Funding Support -- Not Good

State Fiscal Bureau reports 29.29%-64.65% yearly road funding increase needed

Gas Tax Indexing is out

Weight limits increased for timber & Ag industry

Monthly cost for Wisconsinites to drive per month compared to our Neighbors, based on Registration Fees and Motor Fuel Taxes.

Illinois	\$39/month
Iowa	\$41/month
Michigan	\$28/month
Minnesota	\$42/month
Wisconsin	\$23/month

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Why don't large trucks have to pay the wheel tax?

Large trucks such as dump trucks and logging trucks pay a much higher registration and user fees, an average dump truck pays about pays approximately \$1,900 - \$2,000 in fees plus the cost of the fuel tax

A logging truck pays about \$2,400 - \$2,500 in registration and user fees plus the cost of the fuel tax.

How much money will this wheel tax generate in Marathon County?

Based on the latest statistic from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation there are 116,750 Vehicles in Marathon County that will be affected by the wheel tax, which will generate ±\$2,898,902

Can Marathon County share this revenue with other municipalities?

Wisconsin follows the principle that the unit of government that imposes a tax must also be the unit of government that spends the tax proceeds. See, Authority to Tax in Wisconsin, 44 *Marq. L. Rev.* 457, 1994

Therefore, the legislature has provided no authority for the county to exempt vehicles from particular municipalities and no authority to distribute proceeds from the taxes collected to other municipalities.

Related information:

[341.35](#), Wis. Stats., Municipal or county vehicle registration fee

[Trans 126](#) - Municipal or County Vehicle Registration Fee