UNITED STATES ELECTRIC VEHICLE ACCESSIBILITY INDEX

Written by:
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INTRODUCTION

The US Electric Vehicle Accessibility Index is a national ranking evaluating states on how accessible their electric vehicles are to consumers. The index evaluates each state’s regulations for direct-to-consumer sales and the licensing fees for electric vehicles.

BACKGROUND

Consumer demand for electric vehicles (EVs) is on the rise, largely because EVs offer consumers a more environmentally conscious mode of transportation. Throughout the last two decades, we have seen huge growth in the electric vehicle market. Innovative electric vehicle companies like Tesla, Lucid, and Rivian have launched, adding competition to almost every major car manufacturer now offering at least one vehicle that is either fully electric or a plug-in hybrid model. The build-up towards EVs and growing consumer demand means that legacy manufacturers like Ford expect at least 40% of their global sales to be battery-electric vehicles by 2030.

In terms of laws, there have been a host of regulations proposed at both the federal and state levels to promote electric vehicle purchases. Currently, consumers can take advantage of a federal tax credit of up to $7,500 for the purchase of an electric or plug-in hybrid vehicle, although not all cars are eligible — once an auto manufacturer sells 200,000 of its electric vehicles, the incentive is no longer applicable.

There is also a federal tax credit of up to $1,000 available for consumers who install their own home charging stations, so long as they do so by December 31, 2021 and claim the credit on their federal tax return. In addition to the tax credits, President Biden’s proposed American Jobs Plan includes a $15 billion investment to build a national network of 500,000 charging stations.

States have also made notable pushes in favor of electric vehicles, such as Maine where Governor Mills recently announced her state’s plan to achieve its emissions-reduction goals by putting 41,000 light-duty electric vehicles on the road in Maine by 2025 and 219,000 by 2030. Massachusetts offers a variety of perks including purchase rebates up to $750 for home EV charging stations and even electricity discounts up to $300 for using home EV chargers during non-peak hours. California also offers purchase rebates, electricity discounts, and even free parking at popular beaches. Though these represent programs initiated by state governments here in the U.S., the global EV market is expected to be worth $563 billion by 2025.
GOVERNMENT ROADBLOCKS

Although the demand is significant for electric vehicles, there exist several government regulations at the state level that significantly burden consumers looking to transition to an automobile powered by electricity.

DEALER FRANCHISE LAWS

One example of hidden regulatory burdens that restricts expansion of the electric car market are dealer franchise laws, which prohibit manufacturers from selling new vehicles directly to consumers. This outdated regulation was put into place during the early days of the automotive industry when highways weren’t yet developed, transporting vehicles was extremely challenging, and vehicle maintenance was required much more often. Due to these factors, manufacturers needed individual franchise owners to set up convenient ways for consumers to buy vehicles throughout the country, effectively giving birth to what we now know as car dealerships.

As franchises began to develop, prominent manufacturers would force the franchisees to continue to buy cars from them — or risk losing access to all of the manufacturer’s supply of cars if they didn’t comply. These practices by manufacturers took place even during poor economic times, like The Great Depression, when the likelihood of selling those cars to consumers was extremely low. This resulted in the franchisees losing significant amounts of money while the manufacturers were still collecting funds from franchisees for the cars that manufacturers were forcing the franchisees to purchase from them.

To prevent manufacturers from engaging in those types of monopoly tactics again, dealer franchise laws were enacted to protect car dealerships at the expense of manufacturers. While the law may have made sense at one point in time, it is currently harming consumers’ ability to purchase new electric vehicles in 29 states.

LICENSING AND REGISTRATION FEES FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Licensing and registration fees for electric vehicles
vehicles are often higher than they are for gasoline vehicles, which deters lower-income consumers from purchasing EVs. Currently, 28 states have higher licensing and registration fees for electric vehicles than they do for gasoline vehicles, such as Ohio which charges a $31 fee for the registration of standard passenger vehicles, $100 for hybrid vehicles, and $200 for electric vehicles.

THE NEED FOR POLICY REFORM

In order to meet the demand for EVs as the US transportation sector becomes increasingly electrified, the government must eliminate the regulatory red tape and financial burdens they have passed onto consumers.

Dealer franchise laws are outdated and prevent consumers from purchasing new vehicles directly from manufacturers, leading to higher car prices than would otherwise exist. At one point in history, these laws may have made sense, but due to the enhancements to domestic infrastructure and innovations in the marketplace, these laws now only serve as a deterrent for consumers getting access to the vehicles they desire.

In the current market, we are seeing more consumers opting to purchase their vehicles online. Carvana, an online car company that sells used vehicles, reported a 37% increase in online purchases, with over 244,000 cars sold through their site in 2020. For perspective, that is the equivalent of selling 1 car about every 2 minutes. Additionally, Carvana reported that they saw a 24% increase in purchases of electric vehicles this past year.

Although companies that wish to engage in used car sales are able to do so online, manufacturers trying to sell new cars directly to consumers are prevented from doing so in many states. Electric vehicle companies like Tesla have been completely banned from selling their vehicles directly to consumers in 17 states and have sales limitations in an additional 12 states, all due to dealer franchise laws. Due to the innovative nature of electric vehicles, a traditional franchised dealership model may not be the most effective way to get these eco-friendly vehicles to consumers. Operating a stand-alone dealership increases costs, and adds a middle-man into the sale process, which can often inflate prices for consumers. This is why many electric vehicle companies have operated outside of the traditional dealership model for automobile sales.
If the goal is to reduce emissions from traditional gasoline vehicles, then it is absolutely crucial to allow auto manufacturers to sell their EVs, fuel cells, and reduced emission vehicles to consumers in the most convenient way possible. The current bans and sales limitations stifle new innovative EV companies from bringing their vehicles to the market and serve as a crony protection for the existing automotive industry who have historically relied on the dealership franchise model for success.

Requiring higher licensing and registration fees for electric vehicles is counterproductive in reaching goals for reducing emissions from vehicles. In recent years, policymakers have warned that more electric vehicles on the road will lead to a reduction in state revenue made from gas taxes, which has led to higher licensing and registration fees for electric vehicles to offset the lost revenue because EVs do not require gasoline.

Forcing consumers to pay higher fees when they opt for a more eco-friendly means of transportation only disincentivizes them from making the greener choice. It makes it less economically advantageous. Licensing and registration fees were created to help pay for infrastructure and administrative costs, but it is unfair that electric vehicle consumers are forced to carry more of that burden in 28 states. If governments are serious about reducing the amount of fossil fuels we use and consume, then they must remove the revenue-generating penalties they are passing onto EV consumers and embrace technology neutrality in licensing and registration fees.

A policy of technology neutrality would not differentiate between electric or gas vehicles when it comes to taxation.

CONCLUSION

Upon further review, it is clear that consumers want more access to electric vehicles. It is our opinion that legislation should make the purchase and ownership of EVs as convenient as possible, and we urge legislators to put forth better policies that will reduce the significant barriers currently preventing consumers from fully embracing and accessing them.

As has been demonstrated, we know that banning the direct sale of electric vehicles from manufacturers and placing high licensing and registration fees on EV owners only deters consumers from purchasing electric vehicles. Therefore, we encourage policies that promote a freer market for all vehicle sales, allowing for EVs to be sold directly to consumers as well as eliminate higher licensing and registration fees for EV owners in all 50 states.

We believe that reducing the amount of emissions from fossil fuels is a noble goal, however misguided policies like banning direct sales and imposing higher licensing and registration fees only make that goal harder to achieve. If the government is determined to reduce emissions, then they need to get out of the way when it comes to the EV industry.

The cost reductions from these policy changes also have the added benefit of reducing costs without the use of rebates and complicated subsidies. It is our view that these simple changes could significantly help each state, and the United States as a whole, meet its environmental targets in regards to electric vehicles and emissions and doing so without handing out any additional subsidies in times of tight public finances.
RESULTS

Consumer Choice Center

U.S Electric Vehicle Accessibility Index 2021

The US Electric Vehicle Accessibility Index is a national ranking evaluating states on the accessibility of their electric vehicle market. The index evaluates each state’s regulations for direct-to-consumer sales and the licensing fees for electric vehicles. The index is a project of the Consumer Choice Center and was created by David Clement, Elizabeth Hicks, Brandon Bouchard and Joshua Ippolito.

ACCESSIBLE - States with a score (15) of accessible are: Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

SOMewhat ACCESSIBLE - States with a score (10) of partially accessible are: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming.

BARLY ACCESSIBLE - States with a score (5) of limited accessibility are: Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

INACCESSIBLE - States with a score (0) of inaccessible are: Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.
METHODOLOGY

The Electric Vehicle Accessibility Index is calculated by scoring each state’s regulatory structure for direct sales to consumers, and electric vehicle licensing fees.

For direct-sales, states that prohibit the direct sale of electric vehicles are given a score of 0. States who allow for direct sales, but with significant restrictions, or for only one company, are given a score of 5. States without a ban on the direct-sales of electric vehicles are given a score of 10.

For licensing fees, states who have electric vehicle licensing fees equal to or less than standard passenger vehicles are given a score of 5. States who have electric vehicle licensing fees greater than standard passenger vehicles are given a score of 0.

STATE BY STATE REGULATIONS

ALABAMA
• Direct Sales: Alabama prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles, and prohibits automanufacturers from owning or operating service/maintenance facilities.
• Licensing Fees: Alabama has mandated an EV licensing fee of $200, while the standard motor vehicle registration fee is $65

ALASKA
• Direct Sales: Alaska allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Alaska has mandated an EV licensing fee of $100 and a plug in hybrid vehicle licensing fee of $50 beginning January 1st, 2022. The standard vehicle registration fee is $100.

ARIZONA
• Direct Sales: Arizona allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Arizona’s EV Licensing tax is about 98 percent cheaper than the licensing tax for gas vehicles.

ARKANSAS
• Direct Sales: Arkansas prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Arkansas charges $17.00 for the registration of vehicles below 3,000lb and a surcharge of $200 for electric vehicles and $100 for hybrid vehicles.

CALIFORNIA
• Direct Sales: California allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: California has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $100 for model years 2020 or later. The fee will increase every year based on the consumer price index. The standard vehicle registration fee is $53, with a Transportation Improvement fee of $27-$188 based on the value of the vehicle.

COLORADO
• Direct Sales: Colorado allows auto manufacturers to sell directly to consumers and own and operate dealerships only if they sell exclusively electric vehicles and have no franchised dealers of the same line-make.
• Licensing Fees: Colorado has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $50. The standard vehicle registration fees vary on the basis of weight and vehicle type.
CONNECTICUT
• Direct Sales: Connecticut prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles. There is currently a bill in the state legislature proposing the allowance of direct to consumer EV sales.
• Licensing Fees: Connecticut charges a $132 registration fee for passenger cars and $57 for the registration of electric vehicles.

DELAWARE
• Direct Sales: Delaware allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Delaware does not charge a different EV licensing fee. The standard vehicle registration fee is $40.

FLORIDA
• Direct Sales: Florida allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Florida does not charge a different EV licensing fee. The standard vehicle registration fees are $14.50 for vehicles weighing up to 2,499 pounds, $22.50 for vehicles weighing between 2,500 pounds - 3,499 pounds, and $32.50 for vehicles over 3,500 pounds.

GEORGIA
• Direct Sales: Georgia only allows Tesla to have direct to consumer auto sales. While Tesla is not mentioned by name, the loophole only allows Tesla to sell directly to consumers with five retail locations.
• Licensing Fees: Georgia charges $25 for the registration of vehicles less than 18,001lb, with a surcharge of $320.65 for alternative fuel vehicles starting 7/1/21.

HAWAII
• Direct Sales: Hawaii allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Hawaii has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $50. The standard vehicle registration fee is $45.

IDAHO
• Direct Sales: Idaho allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Idaho has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $140. There is currently a proposed bill to raise the EV fee from $140 to $300. The owner would be able to instead choose to pay 2.5 cents per mile driven. The plug-in hybrid vehicle fee would be an additional $75. The standard vehicle registration fee is $69 for vehicles 1-2 years old, $57 for vehicles 3-6 years old, and $45 for vehicles 7+ years old.

ILLINOIS
• Direct Sales: Illinois allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Illinois has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $100. The standard vehicle registration fee is $148.

INDIANA
• Direct Sales: Indiana allows auto manufacturers to sell directly to consumers as long as they have met several conditions.
• Licensing Fees: Indiana has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $150 and an additional plug-in hybrid vehicle licensing fee of $50. The standard vehicle registration fee is $21.35.

IOWA
• Direct Sales: Iowa prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Iowa currently charges $97.50 for electric vehicles but will charge $130 at the start of 2022. For regular passenger vehicles, Iowa charges $0.40 per 100lb of the weight of the car and 1% of the vehicle’s value.
KANSAS
• Direct Sales: Kansas prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Kansas charges a registration fee of $30 for vehicles below 4,500lb and $40 for vehicles above 4,500lb. For hybrid vehicles, the cost of registration is $50 and for electric vehicles the cost of registration is $100.

KENTUCKY
• Direct Sales: Kentucky prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Kentucky charges a $25 registration fee for both regular passenger and electric vehicles.

LOUISIANA
• Direct Sales: Louisiana prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Louisiana does not charge different registration fees for either electric vehicles or regular vehicles, with the standard plate fee starting at $20 and increasing with the vehicle’s value.

MAINE
• Direct Sales: Maine allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Maine does not charge a different EV licensing fee. The standard vehicle registration fee is $35.

MARYLAND
• Direct Sales: Maryland limits the direct sale of electric vehicles. Manufacturers of electric or non-fossil fuel vehicles that don’t have existing franchise dealerships may operate up to four direct-sale facilities in the state.
• Licensing Fees: Maryland does not charge different registration fees for either electric or regular passenger vehicles. For vehicles under 3,700lb, the registration fee is $135.

MASSACHUSETTS
• Direct Sales: Massachusetts allows manufacturers to own dealerships and directly sell to consumers with limitations.
• Licensing Fees: Massachusetts has no special licensing fee for electric vehicles, with both normal passenger vehicles and electric vehicles costing $60 each.

MICHIGAN
• Direct Sales: Michigan prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles. Consumers can receive delivery of Teslas that are registered out of state and must be re-registered in Michigan.
• Licensing Fees: Michigan has mandated an additional EV title fee of $135, consisting of a $100.00 Electric fee plus a $35.00 Electric Gas tax fee. EV renewal fees will vary between $30 - $200 depending on the vehicle.

MINNESOTA
• Direct Sales: The Minnesota Code § 80E.14 allows manufacturers to own dealerships and directly sell to consumers with limitations.
• Licensing Fees: Minnesota charges a $75 surcharge for the licensing of electric vehicles, with regular passenger vehicles being charged $10 plus (See section 1a.).

MISSISSIPPI
• Direct Sales: Mississippi allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
• Licensing Fees: Mississippi has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $150 and an additional plug-in hybrid vehicle licensing fee of $75, indexed to inflation. The standard vehicle registration fee is $15.

MISSOURI
• Direct Sales: Missouri does not prohibit manufacturers from owning dealer-
ships and/or selling directly to consumers.

- Licensing Fees: Missouri charges $75 for the licensing of regular passenger vehicles, with plug-in electric vehicles costing half ($37.5) as much.

**MONTANA**
- Direct Sales: Montana prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: Montana charges $25 for the registration of low speed electric vehicles and $217 for regular light vehicles less than four years old, with the registration fee decreasing over subsequent years.

**NEBRASKA**
- Direct Sales: Nebraska prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: Nebraska has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $75. The standard vehicle registration fee is $15.

**NEVADA**
- Direct Sales: Nevada prohibits manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers with certain exceptions (these exceptions allow Tesla to sell in Nevada).
- Licensing Fees: Nevada has no special licensing fee for electric vehicles, with both normal passenger vehicles and electric vehicles costing $33 each.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**
- Direct Sales: New Hampshire does not prohibit manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: New Hampshire charges a total amount of $34.20 for both gas and electric cars under 3000lb.

**NEW JERSEY**
- Direct Sales: New Jersey limits the direct sale of electric vehicles. Tesla is allowed a maximum of 4 direct-sale stores and 1 service center. Certain zero emission vehicle manufacturers may sell directly to consumers and are required to operate service facilities.
- Licensing Fees: New Jersey does not charge different registration fees for electric or regular passenger vehicles. The standard vehicle registration rate starts at $35.50 and changes depending on the vehicle’s weight and age.

**NEW MEXICO**
- Direct Sales: New Mexico prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles, and prohibits auto manufacturers from owning or operating service/maintenance facilities.
- Licensing Fees: New Mexico charges a registration fee which ranges from $62.00-$27.00 depending on vehicle weight and year model. The fees do not differ for electric vehicles or regular passenger vehicles.

**NEW YORK**
- Direct Sales: New York only allows Tesla to have direct to consumer motor vehicle sales. In 2014, an agreement was met between Gov. Cuomo, Tesla Motors, the New York State Automobile Dealers Association and the Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association to allow Tesla to keep 5 already existing stores in New York. Additional stores would need to be franchised dealerships. A bill backed by Tesla, Rivian, and Lucid, will soon be proposed in the state senate to allow for manufacturers of zero-emissions vehicles to sell directly to consumers in New York.
- Licensing Fees: New York charges a registration fee which ranges from $26-$140 depending on the vehicle’s weight, with electric vehicles having a minimum registration fee of $32.50.
NORTH CAROLINA
- Direct Sales: North Carolina only allows Tesla to have direct to consumer auto sales, with no more than 6 stores.
- Licensing Fees: North Carolina has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $130. The standard vehicle registration fee is $36.

NORTH DAKOTA
- Direct Sales: North Dakota prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: North Dakota has mandated an additional EV licensing fee of $120. The additional plug-in hybrid vehicle licensing fee is $50. The standard vehicle registration fee is $93 for vehicles greater than 3,200 pounds, but less than 4,500 pounds for the first six years of registration.

OHIO
- Direct Sales: Ohio only allows Tesla to have direct to consumer motor vehicle sales, with no more than 3 stores.
- Licensing Fees: Ohio charges a $31 fee for the registration of standard passenger vehicles and charges $100 for hybrid vehicles and $200 for electric vehicles.

OKLAHOMA
- Direct Sales: Oklahoma prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: Oklahoma does not charge different registration fees for electric or regular passenger vehicles, with the registration charge starting at $96.00.

OREGON
- Direct Sales: Oregon does not prohibit manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: Oregon charges a $110 title fee for electric vehicles on top of the standard $43 registration fee (the registration fee adjusts depending on the speed of the vehicle; a medium-speed electric vehicle has a registration fee of $58). Title fees for other vehicles vary depending on miles per gallon.

PENNSYLVANIA
- Direct Sales: Pennsylvania limits the direct sale of all motor vehicles. In 2014, a bill passed that allows a manufacturer to own no more than 5 dealerships selling exclusively electric vehicles, as long as a franchised dealer is not operating in the state. Although it allows for direct auto sales from manufacturers for EVs exclusively, it also makes it harder for other manufacturers (besides Tesla) to open stores.
- Licensing Fees: Pennsylvania charges $31 for the registration of standard passenger vehicles and does not charge more or less for the registration of electric vehicles.

RHODE ISLAND
- Direct Sales: Rhode Island does not prohibit manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers, with certain restrictions.
- Licensing Fees: Rhode Island has no special licensing fee for electric vehicles, with both normal passenger vehicles and electric vehicles costing $17.5 and more depending on vehicle weight.

SOUTH CAROLINA
- Direct Sales: South Carolina prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles, and prohibits auto manufacturers from owning or operating service/maintenance facilities.
- Licensing Fees: South Carolina charges between $36-$40 depending on the registrant’s age and charges a $60 surcharge for hybrid vehicles and $120 for electric vehicles.
SOUTH DAKOTA
- Direct Sales: South Dakota prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: South Dakota does not charge different registration fees for electric or regular passenger vehicles, with the fee being 4% of the vehicle’s purchase price.

TENNESSEE
- Direct Sales: Tennessee allows manufacturers to own dealerships and directly sell to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: Tennessee charges a $100 surcharge for the licensing of electric vehicles, with regular passenger vehicles being charged $26.50.

TEXAS
- Direct Sales: Texas prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: Texas charges $50.75 for both electric and regular passenger vehicles.

UTAH
- Direct Sales: Manufacturers are now allowed to hold ownership in dealerships and directly sell following the passage of H.B. 369 Auto Dealership License Amendments in Utah.
- Licensing Fees: Utah has a standard fee of $44 (for vehicles less than 12,000lb) and charges an additional $120 for electric vehicles, $20 for hybrid electric vehicles, and $52 for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

VERMONT
- Direct Sales: Vermont does not prohibit manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: Vermont charges a registration fee of $76 for gas or diesel cars and $74 for electric vehicles.

VIRGINIA
- Direct Sales: Virginia limits the direct sale of all motor vehicles. Auto Manufacturers must get approval from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles to sell directly to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: Virginia charges $30.75 for the registration of standard passenger vehicles weighing less than 6,000lb and $88.20 for the registration of electric vehicles.

WASHINGTON
- Direct Sales: Most manufacturers are not allowed to directly sell to consumers, or hold ownership in dealerships.
- Licensing Fees: Washington has a standard fee of $43.25 and charges an additional $225 for electric vehicles (only 75$ for hybrid vehicles).

WEST VIRGINIA
- Direct Sales: West Virginia prohibits the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: West Virginia charges $51.50 for standard vehicle registration and adds a surcharge of $100 for hybrid vehicles and $200 for electric vehicles.

WISCONSIN
- Direct Sales: Wisconsin prohibits manufacturers from owning dealerships and/or selling directly to consumers.
- Licensing Fees: Wisconsin has a standard fee of $85 for the registration of gas and diesel vehicles, with a $100 surcharge for electric vehicles and $75 for hybrid vehicles.

WYOMING
- Direct Sales: Wyoming allows the direct sale of all motor vehicles.
- Licensing Fees: Wyoming has mandated an annual EV fee of $200. The standard vehicle registration fee is $30.
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