

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ATHENS

Car Registration in Athens: the 3 Percent Title Tax and Three Separate Addresses, 2026 Guide

The merger did not merge these counters: the license is outside the county, the plate is on Lexington Road and the property tax is at the courthouse. Clarke County sits outside the emissions program.

SHORT ANSWER

Registration happens at the county tax office, not at DDS: the **Clarke County Tax Commissioner, Motor Vehicle Office, 3025 Lexington Road**, lobby weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 706-613-3130.

There is no appointment system. You need the Georgia license first, and you have 30 days after the move. A title is \$18 and the plate \$20 a year; the title tax is 7 percent of value but **3 percent for someone new to the state**.

Three separate addresses, one unified government

DIVISION	WHAT IT DOES	ADDRESS AND HOURS	PHONE
DDS Oconee Customer Service Center	License, ID, knowledge and road tests	1627 McNutt Creek Road, Bogart GA 30622. Tuesday to Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Outside the county, and no bus goes there	(678) 413-8400
Motor Vehicle Office (the tag office)	Tags, titles, registration, title tax	3025 Lexington Road, Athens GA 30605. Lobby weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., phones until 5 p.m.	706-613-3130
Property Tax Division	The property tax bill, homestead applications, property tax returns	325 East Washington Street (ACC Courthouse), Suite 250, Athens GA 30601. Weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	706-613-3120

Order matters: license first, then registration

- 1 Get the license.** The state Department of Revenue requires a valid Georgia license or ID to register a vehicle. The license is the state's job and the plate is the county's; consolidation does not change that, because Georgia law makes the county Tax Commissioner the agent of the state revenue commissioner.
- 2 Register within 30 days.** You have 30 days after moving, or seven business days if you bought the car from an individual. The late penalty runs up to \$100.

- 3 Bring the documents:** form MV-1, the original out-of-state title (or the registration if you come from a state that does not title), form T-17 if the car is financed or leased, and proof of Georgia liability insurance.
- 4 Say you are a new resident** and bring something that shows your move date, such as the lease or a job letter. Say nothing and the tax is calculated at 7 percent.
- 5 The tag office publishes separate pages for newcomers:** "Nonresidents, Students and Military Personnel", "Title and Registration of Out-of-State Vehicles" and "Transfer of Out-of-State Title". In a university town it is no accident that students and temporary residents get a page of their own.

What you pay

ITEM	AMOUNT
Title	\$18
Plate and registration	\$20 a year
A lost or new title	\$8
Title tax (once, when the title is issued)	7 percent of fair market value; 3 percent for someone new to the state. On a \$25,000 car that is a \$1,000 difference
Late renewal	10 percent of the ad valorem tax plus 25 percent of the plate fee
Insurance lapse	\$25 penalty plus a \$60 reinstatement fee

Insurance minimums are \$25,000 per person and \$50,000 per accident for bodily injury and \$25,000 for property damage. Registration expires on the birthday of the first person on the record and renewal opens 30 days before it, or 90 days before online. Motor vehicle and property tax payments can also be made through the county's online system. Neither office advertises an appointment system; both work on lobby hours.

Emissions: Clarke County is outside the program

Georgia's annual emissions inspection applies in **13 metro Atlanta counties**, and **Clarke County is not on the list we read**. So unlike a resident of Fulton or Gwinnett, an Athens resident does not get an annual emissions test. We could not re-read that county list on the program's own site this round, so do not take it as settled: confirm with the program's helpline on **1-800-449-2471** or at the tag office before you register. Georgia has no annual general safety inspection either; the only check is the look a vehicle gets when you bring it to a road test.

No toll roads: you do not need a Peach Pass in town

- There is no toll booth and no toll lane in or around Athens.** The nearest tolled facility is the I-85 express lanes on the Atlanta run, over in Gwinnett County, between Old Peachtree Road and Hamilton Mill Road. We worked that out from the published segment limits rather than from an official statement about Athens drivers.

- **The usual route:** GA-316 (University Parkway) west, then I-85 south. Follow the signs the first time; the sign before the entrance shows two prices.
- **If you do want an account:** peachpass.com or 1-855-724-7277. The transponder is free and adhesive and cannot be moved between vehicles; a personal account needs at least a **\$20** prepaid balance. With no credit card, BancPass Pay n Go is a licensed cash-loadable alternative.
- **Price:** tolls on the express lanes change within minutes with traffic, with a floor of 10 cents a mile. We print no fixed amount because it moves constantly.
- **If you drive the lanes without a tag:** a camera reads the plate, the violation notice is mailed to the registered owner, and a **\$25 administrative fee per trip** is added to the toll. Unpaid notices go to collection and can end in the suspension of the vehicle registration.
- **Other states:** E-ZPass, Florida SunPass, E-Pass and NC Quick Pass all work in Georgia's express lanes, and a Peach Pass works in 19 E-ZPass states.

2026 closures and the October 12 split

The tag and property tax offices are closed on **October 12, 2026** (Indigenous Peoples Day), November 11, 2026, November 26 and 27, 2026, December 24 and 25, 2026 and January 1, 2027. October 12 has a curious split: **the buses run a full service while the tax and tag offices are shut**. So you can get around town that day but you cannot do your paperwork. Expect roadworks on the east side too: ACC Transit's Lexington Road park-and-ride shuttle (route 23) is suspended for a state transportation project along the Oconee Street corridor.

THE BUSES ARE FREE, BUT THEY DO NOT GO TO THE LICENSING OFFICE

- The unified government's own page says **ACC Transit is fare free to all riders** and states that the decision covers **the Lift paratransit service too**. That is why you will find no fare table in this guide: there is no adult fare, no day pass, no monthly pass and no transfer charge. We give no start date either, because the date repeated in news coverage appears on no official page.
- **There is a second free network:** UGA Campus Transit describes its buses on its own page as fare free and open to the public, naming "the greater Athens community" among the people it serves, so a resident who is not a student may ride.
- **But no public route leaves the county** and the new licensing office is in Oconee County. So the first link in the registration chain needs a car or a paid ride.
- The fare-free policy is a decision of the elected Commission rather than a statute, so keep that in mind for a long-term budget.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- Violation and renewal notices go to the address on the registration. When you move, update it at the tag office and on any Peach Pass account; otherwise you can go from never seeing a notice to a suspended registration.
- If you are subject to address reporting, you also have to report the new address to USCIS **within 10 days** (AR-11). A change of address at USPS does not update USCIS records.
- With a suspended registration you cannot legally drive, which breaks your work, your school run and your license plans together.
- If your address reads Winterville or Bogart you are inside Clarke County but in one of the two small cities that stayed outside the unified government. That changes your municipal business, not your USCIS filing: report the address exactly as it appears on your mail and your utility bill.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN ATHENS

Have a question about your immigration status?

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