

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · BUFFALO

Buffalo Car Registration, Inspection, Tolls and Winter Parking Guide 2026

Insurance, inspection, registration fees, E-ZPass, the Peace Bridge and Buffalo's winter parking ban, covered start to finish for newcomers.

SHORT ANSWER

New residents have about 30 days to register a vehicle in New York. Buy New York insurance first (25/50/10 liability, plus \$50,000 no-fault and uninsured-motorist coverage), then register at the Erie County Auto Bureau; every vehicle needs a combined safety-and-emissions inspection once a year. Erie County is outside the MCTD, so there is no \$50 surcharge. The Peace Bridge toll is collected only when entering Canada (\$4 with E-ZPass). In Buffalo, overnight parking (1:30-7:00 a.m.) is banned on bus routes from November 15 to April 1.

Step by step

- 1 **Buy New York insurance.** Minimum: \$25,000 per person / \$50,000 per accident liability (rising to \$100,000 if death results), \$10,000 property damage, plus mandatory \$50,000 no-fault (PIP) and uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage. Ask your insurer for the FS-20 insurance ID card; DMV will not register your car without it.
- 2 **Title and register at an Erie County Auto Bureau office.** If you are coming from out of state, bring your previous title or registration. See the driver's license guide for offices and hours; reservations: erie.gov/clerk/reservations.
- 3 **Get it inspected.** Every registered vehicle needs a combined safety-and-emissions inspection at least every 12 months, before the sticker expires. Check dmv.ny.gov for the current fee cap that applies in Erie County. Vehicles under 2 model years old or over 25 are exempt from the emissions portion.
- 4 **Handle your license** at the same visit or a separate appointment.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	AMOUNT
Title application	\$50
New plates	\$25
Registration (2-year, weight-based)	about \$26-\$140
Vehicle use tax (2-year)	\$30

ITEM	AMOUNT
Sales tax (4% state + local)	about 8.00%-8.875% depending on county
MCTD surcharge	does not apply in Erie County

Unlike Texas, which dropped its safety inspection in 2025, New York still requires a combined safety-and-emissions sticker every year. The Erie County Clerk promotes "Renew Local": when you renew at the county office, 12.75% of the registration fee stays in Erie County. You pay the same fee either way.

The Peace Bridge and toll roads

CROSSING	TOLL
Peace Bridge (Buffalo to Fort Erie), car, with E-ZPass	\$4 (into Canada only)
Peace Bridge, by card	\$8 (into Canada only)
Thruway (including the Grand Island bridges), no tag / Tolls by Mail	about 30% above E-ZPass plus a \$2 administrative fee

- The Peace Bridge toll is collected only when you enter Canada; there is no toll to enter the United States. It is cashless: debit/credit cards and E-ZPass are accepted.
- The Grand Island bridges are cashless (open-road tolling): E-ZPass or a bill by mail. The mail rate is noticeably higher than E-ZPass, so confirm current figures on thruway.ny.gov.
- One New York E-ZPass account works on the Thruway, the Grand Island bridges, the Niagara Falls bridges and the Peace Bridge. Open an account at e-zpassny.com; a tag costs \$25 in this part of the state.
- Example: a full Thruway trip from New York City to Buffalo costs about \$27.90 with E-ZPass and about \$41.85 by mail.

Buffalo winter parking and snow

- **Overnight parking ban on bus routes.** In the City of Buffalo, parking is prohibited on any street where passenger buses run, every day from 1:30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., from November 15 to April 1. The city can delay the start in mild years (in 2025 it was delayed to December 1). The route list is posted on buffalony.gov; check it for the 2026-27 list.
- **Tickets and tows.** Boots and impounds are handled at Room 111, City Hall (65 Niagara Square), Mon-Fri 8:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m.; impound line (716) 851-5182. To get a car released you must clear all outstanding tickets, registration, insurance and towing/storage fees. The city is moving to the ParkMobile app for parking payments.
- **Snow on the roof.** New York law bars driving with more than 3 inches of accumulated snow or ice on the roof, with a fine. Erie County can issue travel advisories or driving bans during heavy snow; if one is issued, follow it.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Toll bills go to the address on your vehicle registration, so update both your registration and your E-ZPass account after you move. If you are subject to the address-reporting requirement, you must also report your new address to USCIS within 10 days (AR-11). If you have a pending immigration case, talk to an attorney before crossing into Canada, even for a day trip to Niagara Falls, Ontario.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN BUFFALO

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in Buffalo and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

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