

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Car Registration and Parking Permit Guide 2026

Insurance, registration, inspection within 7 days and the city permit: the fee that goes from \$25 to \$75, the temporary permit, the street cleaning fine and E-ZPass.

SHORT ANSWER

Registration is a state matter, the parking permit is a city matter, and in Cambridge the second one causes more confusion. The resident parking permit is **\$25 now and \$75 from December 1, 2026**, and the car must be registered in Massachusetts, in your name, at your Cambridge address, with **Cambridge as the garaging code**. If you have not transferred the registration yet there is a temporary permit: \$20 for one week, \$30 for two. Every permit expires on March 31. The office is Traffic, Parking and Transportation, 344 Broadway, 617-349-4700.

First the registration (state business)

- 1 **Buy the insurance first.** You take a policy from a Massachusetts licensed agent, and the agent stamps and signs the Registration and Title Application (RMV-1). No stamp, no registration. **Have the agent enter Cambridge as the garaging code:** the city permit looks at exactly that code, and it sits in item 5 of your Coverage Selection Page.
- 2 **Gather the documents.** No SSN and no U.S. license is required to register; the RMV list includes a foreign passport and a consular ID. Arriving from another state you also need Form MVU-29, the stamped RMV-1 and the other state's title.
- 3 **Go to a Service Center.** Registration and title transactions take walk-ins, with appointments served first. Cambridge has no office, so you use Haymarket or Watertown.
- 4 **Inspection within 7 days.** Within seven days of registering you take the car for the Massachusetts Vehicle Check inspection (\$35) and repeat it every year.
- 5 **There is no grace period.** The RMV says you must register as soon as you become a resident.

A passenger plate is \$60 for two years and a title \$75; sales and use tax is 6.25 percent on the higher of the purchase price or the NADA value. Minimum insurance: \$25,000 per person and \$50,000 per accident for bodily injury to others, \$30,000 property damage and \$8,000 personal injury protection. The motor vehicle excise tax is billed not by the RMV but by the city where the car is garaged, at \$25 per \$1,000 of value; we could not read the city's own excise page, so we print no city-specific due date. Use the date on your bill.

The Cambridge resident parking permit: fees

ITEM	AMOUNT AND RULE
Resident parking permit	\$25 for the 2026 season, including one visitor permit per household. \$75 from December 1, 2026
Temporary permit (for people moving in)	\$20 for one week, \$30 for two. The two-week permit is only for people moving from outside Massachusetts
Visitor permit	One per household; it comes free with the first resident permit. A household with no car pays \$25, and a lost-permit replacement is \$50
Extended visitor permit	\$10 a week, at most 8 weeks a year per household
For someone helping you move	A temporary visitor permit, up to 3 consecutive days, \$10, not renewable
Validity	Every permit expires on March 31

Who can get one?

- **The basic rule:** the car must be registered with the Massachusetts RMV in your name at your Cambridge residential address, with Cambridge as the garaging code.
- **Exceptions:** for a company car the registration address does not have to be Cambridge (the garaging code does, plus a letter on employer letterhead, one car per resident); for a leased car the garaging code must be Cambridge; active-duty service members may use an out-of-state registration with their orders.
- **Proof of residency (dated within 30 days, name matching the registration):** a bill showing your name, the Cambridge service address and the mailing address (gas, electricity, phone, water, cable, internet), or two pieces of mail or statements showing your name and Cambridge address, plus the vehicle registration.
- **No SSN:** the city document list mentions neither a Social Security number nor any immigration document.
- **Unpaid parking tickets** block the permit.
- **How many permits:** here the city page contradicts itself. The body of the page says four vehicles per person since 2024, while the 2027 season banner says two. If you need more than two, call 617-349-4700 before you apply.
- **Fee waivers:** holders of a disability plate or placard pay nothing. The automatic waiver for people 65 and over ends on December 1, 2026 and is replaced by a hardship waiver open to any age; the same city page still prints the old rule in its 2026 fee section, so call and ask which one applies.

DECEMBER 1, 2026 AND JANUARY 1, 2027: PLAN YOUR MOVE AROUND THESE DATES

- Online renewals open **December 1, 2026**, first-time online applications **January 1, 2027**, and in-person renewals at 344 Broadway **January 4, 2027**.
- So someone moving in the autumn of 2026 still applies under the \$25 rule, while someone applying for the first time in 2027 waits for January and pays \$75. The age-65 waiver ends the same day.
- If you fall in the gap, the answer is a temporary permit: one week (\$20) if you are transferring the registration to Cambridge, one or two weeks (\$20 to \$30) if you are moving from out of state. A lease or a purchase and sale agreement is accepted as proof; if the car is not yet registered in Massachusetts, a copy of its current registration is asked for. The permit is not mailed: once the online application is approved you get a payment link by email.

Where you get it and how you use it

- **Office:** Traffic, Parking and Transportation, 344 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139; 617-349-4700; cdot@cambridgema.gov. Hours are Monday 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday to Thursday 8:30 to 5 and Friday 8:30 to noon. No appointment is needed in person.
- **Payment:** in person by cash, check, a money order payable to the City of Cambridge, or card (a service fee applies to cards). With an online application the permit arrives by mail and is not handed over at the counter.
- **Where it goes:** the resident permit sticks inside the lower left corner of the windshield; on a motorcycle you keep the permit number.
- **The visitor permit rules are strict:** one per household, only in the zone printed on the permit, the car has to move every 24 hours, it cannot be used in the same area more than three days a week (Sunday excepted), and it cannot be used for commuter parking. Misuse carries a fine of up to \$300. Dormitory residents cannot get one.
- **If you are hosting a one-day event,** you can ask at least one business day ahead, with a Parking Consideration Application, for the resident parking rule to be set aside.

Street cleaning, the 24-hour rule and snow

- **Street cleaning** runs April through December and the fine for not moving the car is **\$100**. Two city pages disagree on how often it happens: Public Works says monthly, the Park a Car page says twice a month. Read the sign on your own street and subscribe to the alert list. Public Works 617-349-4800, 147 Hampshire St.
- **The 24-hour rule:** where no meter applies and you have no Cambridge resident permit, you must move the car every 24 hours.
- **Meters:** U.S. quarters, Passport Parking or PayByPhone (the apps add a fee); no charge on Sundays and Massachusetts holidays; disability plate or placard holders park free at meters.
- **Snow emergency parking ban:** parking is prohibited on streets posted "No Parking during Snow Emergency", and cars are ticketed and towed. Residents with a parking permit park free in designated garages and must leave within two hours after the ban lifts; the garage list changes every winter, so get the current one from the [city snow page](#).

- **City-owned parking:** two garages and nine surface lots; at city charging stations electricity costs \$0.189 per kilowatt-hour plus \$0.15 an hour.

Tolls: E-ZPass MA

There is no toll inside Cambridge. You first meet one crossing into Boston through a tunnel, on the Tobin Bridge or entering the Mass Pike (I-90). There are no toll booths and no cash: either you open a free-transponder E-ZPass MA account or you get billed from your plate.

CROSSING (2-AXLE CAR)	MASSACHUSETTS E-ZPASS	ANOTHER STATE'S E-ZPASS	PAY BY PLATE
Sumner, Callahan and Ted Williams tunnels	\$1.50	\$1.75	\$2.05
Tobin Bridge	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$1.55

- **Opening an account:** the [E-ZPass MA](#) transponder is free; the opening payment is \$20 per transponder with automatic reload and \$30 with manual reload. The transponder works in the other E-ZPass states too.
- **Without an account:** the invoice is mailed to the address on your registration and every invoice carries a **\$0.60** processing fee. Pay within 30 days; after that \$1 is added per late crossing, and past 90 days a \$20 RMV fee appears and your license and registration renewals can be blocked.
- **Mass Pike (I-90):** heading west, the toll is calculated at each gantry. Look up your own route with the [EZDriveMA toll calculator](#).
- **Scam warning:** EZDriveMA has published a warning about text messages claiming unpaid tolls. Customer service is 877-627-7745.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Keep the order straight: insurance with Cambridge as the garaging code, then registration, then inspection within 7 days, then the city parking permit. The most important detail for a newcomer here is a date: the permit is \$25 now but \$75 after December 1, 2026, and first-time online applicants wait for January 1, 2027. If your car is still registered in Türkiye or another state, do not panic: the \$20 to \$30 temporary permit exists for exactly that gap. Excise and toll invoices go to the address in your RMV record, so do not skip the address update when you move. If you are subject to the address-reporting requirement, report your new address to USCIS within 10 days as well (Form AR-11); these are two separate filings and one does not cover the other.

TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN CAMBRIDGE

Have a question about your immigration status?



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