

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · DES PLAINES

Car Registration, Emissions Testing and I-PASS in Des Plaines: 2026 Guide

State title and plates, the city vehicle sticker that no longer exists, the Cook County emissions test, insurance, tolls and Metra parking.

SHORT ANSWER

You do not need a city sticker: Des Plaines eliminated its vehicle sticker program in July 2020, so the sticker Chicago requires does not exist here. That leaves the state side: title and plates at the SOS within 30 days of moving, \$165 for the title plus \$151 for the plate, \$316 in all. All of Cook County is in the emissions testing area; the test is every two years, free and walk-in, and a car that has not been tested cannot renew its plate. The toll side matters here: I-294 runs along the west side and IL-390 along the south.

1. The state side: insurance, title and plates

- 1 Get Illinois insurance first.** Minimum coverage is \$25,000 (injury or death of one person), \$50,000 (more than one person) and \$20,000 (property damage). Keep the card in the car. Driving uninsured costs at least \$500 and your plates are suspended.
- 2 Book an appointment.** The Des Plaines facility (1533 Lee St.) requires an appointment for vehicle transactions too; sticker renewal, title, plates and transfers are all done there: apps.ilsos.gov/dlexamcheck.
- 3 Bring the documents and the form.** Form VSD-190, the original out-of-state title (if a lender holds the title, copies of the title, registration and bill of sale plus a copy of the loan agreement), the odometer reading, the VIN and signatures. Illinois titles do not need notarization.
- 4 File the tax form.** A vehicle titled and registered elsewhere for at least 3 months before you moved is exempt from Illinois tax, but you still file the form that shows the exemption (RUT-50 for a private sale, RUT-25 for an out-of-state dealer).
- 5 Use your Des Plaines address.** Toll invoices, plate renewal reminders and emissions notices all go to the address on file with the SOS.

ITEM	AMOUNT
Title (first issue)	\$165
Standard passenger plate and annual renewal	\$151
First transaction total (title plus plate)	\$316
Motorcycle plate	\$41

ITEM	AMOUNT
Duplicate title	\$50
Emissions test	free
Des Plaines city vehicle sticker	none (the program ended in July 2020)

Emissions testing: all of Cook County is covered

- The test is every two years, **free** and walk-in. Illinois Air Team stations, kiosks and mobile units run it on behalf of the state environmental agency (IEPA).
- Check whether your car is covered by plate or VIN on the [Illinois Air Team](#) station finder, or call 844-258-9071.
- We could not verify the address of the station nearest Des Plaines, so no address is printed here; use the finder.
- If your car is covered and has not been tested, the plate will not renew. Get the test done well before your renewal month.

2. The city side: no sticker, but parking permits

The Finance Department page puts it plainly: as of July 2020 the City Council voted to eliminate the vehicle sticker program. [The same page](#) says the city also dropped its pet license requirement. For someone arriving from Chicago, that is an annual errand, and a late fee, gone altogether.

DO NOT CONFUSE THIS WITH THE CHICAGO STICKER

Anyone who lives in Chicago must buy a city vehicle sticker no matter where the car is registered. **If you live in Des Plaines you do not need a Chicago sticker.** But watch the residential parking zone signs when you park in Chicago: those rules are written for residents.

- **Where a permit is still needed:** the Metra lots and the downtown garages. Daily parking is paid by app, phone or text; monthly permits are bought online. Finance: 847-391-5330.
- **Parking tickets:** the city collects them at the City Hall cashier in person or by phone (847-391-5330); there was no online payment option at the time of our research.
- **Do not let tickets pile up:** unpaid city charges also stall a home sale, because the real estate transfer stamp is not issued until every city balance is clear.

The Metra lots are run by the city, not Metra

- The Des Plaines station has 7 lots with 310 spaces (286 daily, 10 accessible); Cumberland has 2 lots with 256 spaces (all daily, 9 accessible).
- The lots are managed by the City of Des Plaines (847-391-5300), not by Metra. It is an easy detail for a newcomer from Chicago to get wrong.

- Pay through the Passport Parking app (zone 312), by phone on 847-380-4332, or by text: ParkDes1 to 727563 for Cumberland, ParkDes2 for downtown. Monthly permits are bought online or through the QR code on the pay boxes.
- We could not verify the daily and monthly parking rates on an official page, so check the amount on the [city parking page](#).

Tolls: I-PASS and the toll you missed

Des Plaines sits in the middle of the toll network: I-294 (the Tri-State Tollway) runs along the west side, IL-390 (Elgin-O'Hare) along the south and I-90 to the north. The Illinois Tollway is fully electronic with no cash lanes. On the Tollway rate schedule, paying without a transponder costs twice the I-PASS rate, and daytime (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) and overnight rates differ. A Chicago resident who stays in the city may never touch the network, but in the northwest suburbs even everyday errands often run on I-294 or IL-390.

- **I-PASS:** a prepaid account. The transponder is free from a Tollway customer service center or can be ordered online; retailers such as Jewel-Osco and Road Ranger charge a service fee. A transponder bought online or at a store has to be activated (1-800-824-7277). Auto replenish is the simplest way to keep extra charges from building up.
- **If you missed a toll:** opening a Pay By Plate account within 14 days of the trip keeps every penalty and extra charge off, and you can backdate to your first trip; it works for rental cars, borrowed cars and visitors too. Tolls are charged to the card twice a week and can take up to 30 days to appear.
- **If you miss the 14 days:** an invoice reaches your mailing address 30 days after the unpaid toll, with more at 60 and 90 days, and each one adds a per-toll charge. The first invoice adds \$3 per toll for passenger vehicles.
- **Upgrading:** you can convert a Pay By Plate account into an I-PASS account in the settings. Customer service is 1-800-824-7277.
- **Do not let a balance build up:** the SOS lists toll debt among the reasons a license is suspended and charges a \$70 reinstatement fee. Current rates are on the [Tollway rate page](#).
- **If you are here briefly:** registering your own Pay By Plate account is usually cheaper than the rental company's daily e-toll package. The Chicago Skyway and the Indiana Toll Road are separate operations; we could not verify whether they take I-PASS, so check their own sites before you drive into Indiana.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- For someone moving from Chicago, the clearest saving is the missing city sticker. But the state side is unchanged: the 30-day clock on title and plates runs, and missing it costs you.
- Update your address with the SOS within 10 days of moving. That is a separate task from the AR-11 you file with USCIS; neither one substitutes for the other.
- Budget the first year up front: \$316 for title and plates, plus insurance. With no U.S. credit history the first insurance quotes can be high, so get quotes from several companies.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN DES PLAINES

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in Des Plaines and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English.

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