

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · SAN ANTONIO

San Antonio Car Registration, Emissions and Toll Roads 2026

For cars brought from another state or country, cars bought in Texas, and what to know about tolls around San Antonio.

SHORT ANSWER

New residents have 30 days to register a vehicle in Texas. The order is: insurance of at least 30/60/25, then the Bexar County Tax Office. Bexar County is not one of the 17 counties that require an emissions test, so you skip that step. Since March 5, 2026, a first registration needs an unexpired passport plus an I-94, green card or immigrant visa (or a U.S. REAL ID license). The one-time new resident tax is \$90.

Step by step

- 1 Buy insurance.** Minimum liability: \$30,000 per person, \$60,000 per accident, \$25,000 property damage. Out-of-state insurance that meets these limits is accepted; bring the declarations page.
- 2 Skip the emissions test.** Texas dropped the safety inspection for non-commercial vehicles on January 1, 2025, and emissions testing applies only in 17 counties. Bexar County is not on the list, so even if you come from Houston or Dallas you do not need a test here.
- 3 Have the right ID.** A first Texas registration requires one unexpired "List A" ID (below).
- 4 Visit the Bexar County Tax Office.** Form 130-U is completed at the tax office or a title service. According to TxDMV's Bexar County page, the main office is at 233 N Pecos La Trinidad, San Antonio 78207, phone (210) 335-2251 ([txdmv.gov](https://www.txdmv.gov)). Confirm branch locations, hours and local add-on fees before you go.
- 5 Then get your license.** Take your registration receipt to DPS.

New since March 5, 2026: ID for a first registration

Under a new TxDMV rule, a first registration in Texas requires one of these:

- A REAL ID-compliant U.S. license or ID card (licenses from states that require proof of lawful presence, Texas included, also count)
- A U.S. passport
- **An unexpired foreign passport plus an I-94 (not in parole status), a current green card, or an unexpired U.S. immigrant visa**

FOR NEWCOMERS FROM TÜRKIYE

A Turkish passport alone is no longer enough; bring your I-94, green card or immigrant visa with it. An I-94 that shows only parole status does not qualify, so talk to an attorney first. From January 1, 2027, registration renewals will check ID too.

What to bring

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Previous title or registration	For out-of-state cars, that state's title or your most recent registration receipt. A temporary registration is not accepted.
☐ List A ID	One of the IDs above, unexpired.
☐ Proof of address	Lease, utility bill or proof of insurance. Ask the tax office or check the TxDMV page for the full list.
☐ Proof of insurance	At least 30/60/25.
☐ Lienholder information	If the car is financed: name, address and first lien date.

Fees (2026, state portion)

ITEM	AMOUNT
Annual registration (passenger car)	\$51.75 (+ \$1 TexasSure)
Processing and handling	\$4.75
Inspection program replacement fee	\$7.50 per year
Title application	\$33
New resident tax	\$90, once
Emissions test	None in Bexar County
Sales tax on a car bought in Texas	6.25%
Electric vehicle fee	\$200 per year

Bexar County's local add-on fees are not in this table. Ask the tax office for your total. Bought a car in Texas? Transfer the title within 30 days of the date the seller signed it. A \$25 penalty starts on day 31 and grows by \$25 every further 30 days, up to \$250.

Importing a car from abroad

- Customs entry form (CBP Form 7501) and DOT Form HS-7.
- A VIN inspection on Form VTR-68-A. Ask the tax office where to get it and what it costs.
- Certified English translations of foreign documents.

- The one-time \$90 new resident tax.

Toll roads: do you need a tag in San Antonio?

For everyday driving in San Antonio, there are essentially no toll roads. According to TxDOT, the US 281 and Loop 1604 expansion in northern Bexar County was built as non-toll general-purpose lanes, HOV/transit lanes and frontage roads. There is no local toll authority like HCTRA in Houston or NTTA in Dallas, so you do not need a tag for a normal commute.

TOPIC	DETAILS
When you need a tag	If you drive to Austin, Houston or Dallas, where the toll roads have no booths
Tags accepted	TxTag, EZ TAG, Dallas TollTag, K-TAG, PIKEPASS, ExpressToll, SunPass: they work across systems
New tags	New TxTags are no longer issued. New or replacement tags are EZ TAGs from HCTRA: hctra.org · 281-875-3279
No tag	Bills go to the address on your vehicle registration and cost more than tag rates
Rental cars	Tolls go through the rental company (usually PlatePass or HTA); ask about fees. Tags cannot be moved between cars

Watch for scams: TxDOT and TxTag do not send texts or emails about unpaid tolls. Do not click links in such messages; check your balance at 281-875-3279.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Bills and official mail go to the address on your vehicle registration, so update it 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).



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN SAN ANTONIO

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in San Antonio and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English.

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