

State of Washington TEMPORARY PLATES

Washington State Department of Transportation
Toll Division Process



When a driver buys a new vehicle, the vehicle has a temporary plate on the front and back of the vehicle until their title application and registration are processed, and permanent plates arrive in the mail from the Department of Licensing (DOL)

The temporary plate is important, not just for DOL, but also for the Washington State Patrol (WSP), to identify the vehicle and registered owner for safety, and for the Washington State Department of Transportation's Toll Division (Toll Division), to identify the vehicle and registered owner to pay outstanding toll bills.

To improve temporary plate identification, Rep. Ramos introduced [HB 1790](#), during the 2022 legislative session, which required temporary plates to be composed of a material durable enough to remain unaltered for a minimum of four months. This bill, when passed into RCW, allowed the Toll Division, DOL, and WSP to collaborate on the design and display of temporary plates to help cameras better capture these plates.

Request for Quotation & Design Process

After HB 1790 passed, the Toll Division collaborated with DOL on the Request for Quotation (RFQ) process for a new temporary plate design, both as a scorer on the panel and as an expert in testing the design for toll camera compatibility. This included testing for:

DURABILITY

Plates were tested on vehicles and tolled roadways to test the durability of the temporary plate material options.

WEATHER-PROOFING

Plates were tested on vehicles in various conditions and run through washing machines, on multiple cycles, to simulate potential weather conditions.

UNIFORMITY

Plates were designed similarly to permanent plates, with the state (WA) and expiration date in the same location. The plate string is one character longer to help distinguish them in the DOL database.

PLACEMENT

Plates were reviewed for location, including the location of the perforations and plate placement within the frame, to ensure that all numbers could be read by toll cameras and WSP.

Toll Collection on Temporary Plates

Prior to HB 1790, the system collected approximately \$200/month from temporary plate reads. With the law change in July 2023, all state dealerships are required to put the new temporary plates on purchased vehicles, and the Toll Division is now collecting about \$193,000/month. Total revenue collected from temporary plate reads, since July 1, 2023, is \$730,000.



Interagency Collaboration

While DOL, Toll Division, and WSP collaborate on many tolling topics, this process introduced a more intentional and deeper level of collaboration between the agencies. WSP was part of the visual inspection, and DOL included the Toll Division as a key partner in the RFQ process to design temporary plates that would work with their systems.

Today, the two agencies coordinate monthly and have established subcommittees to coordinate on everything from process issues to customer service, to ensure as seamless as possible of an experience for Washington State drivers.