



New general-issue license plate FAQs

Why are we getting a new general-issue license plate?

We all know Texas is big, but it's getting even bigger. Our state's population increases by roughly 1,000 people every day. By the end of this year, we will be out of the alpha-numeric license plate patterns for the current six-character plate. As a result, we must begin to place seven-character combinations on the plates in 2009. It seems like the perfect time to give Texans an opportunity to choose a new plate design.

But I don't like any of these designs. Do you have anything else?

No, and yes. Texans may vote for one of the new designs or to keep the current design. For those who would like a different plate, we offer a wide array of specialty plates.

We know there is no such thing as that one, perfect plate that will make every vehicle owner happy. With more than 20 million registered vehicles in the Lone Star State, it is unlikely that we can please everyone.

Who designed the proposed plates?

As with past general-issue license plates, these designs were created by TxDOT.

We considered holding a design contest, but there are many requirements that must be met, such as color shading, to make sure license plate designs meet the legibility and reflectivity needed by Texas law enforcement.

Additionally, in a state as large as Texas, we realized running a contest would be a labor-intensive project, requiring us to use a substantial amount of state-worker time. We did not consider that a prudent use of taxpayer money.

Hey, we've never seen Texas plates with all these different colors? Is this something new?

Yes. We can now use full-plate graphics. In 2006, a group of creative TxDOT engineers developed a system that can test whether license plate designs meet law enforcement's legibility standard. They also created new standards to determine safety reflectivity for colored license-plate sheeting.

When we introduced the current general-issue plate in 2000, it was the first Texas plate to use three colors – blue, red and black. Now, we can do so much more.

What does “law enforcement legibility” and “safety reflectivity” mean?

One of TxDOT's main goals is to enhance safety, and license plate legibility and reflectivity helps us meet that goal.

Legibility is the ability to clearly read a plate's letters and numbers.

Reflectivity allows the plate to be seen from a long distance at night, and is helpful in locating cars on dark roads or that may have driven off the road into vegetation.

Motor vehicles are used in 70 percent of all serious crimes in the United States, according to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The primary method of finding these vehicles – and the people who are driving them - is the license plate number.

What's with the names of these plates?

We thought about some of the things Texans love about the state: tradition, natural beauty, thriving metropolises, and, of course, the Lone Star symbol.

We are all proud to call ourselves Texans. It is our common identity, and yet, we equally cherish our individualism, even when it comes to our favorite thing about the state.

We feel connected to the state's history, but also believe we have the best modern cities in the nation.

We brag about our big, blue sky and beautiful landscape.

We designed plates that fit into four popular genres, reflecting our diversity of thought and taste:

- Traditional Texas. The plate features blue highlights with a gold Lone Star, and bold, red "TEXAS."
- Lone Star Texas. A white Lone Star stands out in the top, left-hand corner of the plate. Wide brushes of red and blue punctuate the Texas sky on the top half of the plate along with a low-lying mountain range on the bottom.
- Natural Texas. The entire plate is covered with wildflowers.
- New Texas. This red, white and blue plate features a composite of skylines from several Texas cities.
- My Texas. This is the current general-issue license plate that was introduced in 2000. It features icons of the state, including a horse, space shuttle, and oil derrick.

Does the plate with the most votes automatically win?

By law, the Texas Transportation Commission must officially approve the state's general-issue plate. Commissioners are enthusiastic about giving Texans an opportunity to vote online to help select a new design.

How many years did it take to run out of license plate patterns?

It took us 33 years to exhaust the six-character combinations.

How long before you run out of seven-character plate combinations?

Using current population growth figures, we expect the seven-character pattern to last about 35 years.

Who makes our license plates?

The plates are made by offenders at the Wynne Correctional Unit in Huntsville. TxDOT contracts with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to manufacture license plates.

Why won't the new plate be available until 2009? Why does it take so long?

To manufacture seven-character plates, the prison factory will have to be retooled, and we will have to begin building inventory stock of the new plate while still manufacturing the old plate to ensure a smooth transition.

When the new plate comes out, will people automatically get the new plate?

Before the new plate hits the streets, we will first exhaust all of our six-character plate inventory to avoid waste. We will not replace everyone's plate at once. You will receive the new plate:

- If you buy a new vehicle and choose not to transfer your old plates.
- If your plates are seven years old, the time you are required to trade your plates in for new ones due to loss of reflectivity.

What if I like the new plate better than the one I have now. Can I buy it?

When the new plate is available in 2009, Texas drivers can replace their old plates by visiting their local county office and paying an additional fee.

How many of the current general-issue plates have you made?

The current design was introduced in 2000. Since then, we have manufactured about 31.5 million sets of those plates.

How many general-issue plates are on the street?

There are more than 20 million registered vehicles in Texas, and the majority of them have the general-issue plate.