

# Vehicle Registration Compliance in Wisconsin

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Philip E. Schoech and Terry L. Schoenherr

Laurits R. Christensen Associates, Inc.

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**Christensen Associates Research Team**

Philip Schoech, Principal Investigator

Terry Schoenherr

David Armstrong

Thomas Ayen

Jeffrey Carroll

Travis Grau

Jane Hosking

William Jones

Kelly McGill

Eric Peterson

Teresa Sholts

Rita Sweeney

Brad Wagner

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## Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) commissioned Christensen Associates to conduct a three-phase project: a study of registration compliance for automobiles and light trucks, an investigation into reasons for noncompliance, and the development of a list of possible changes to the vehicle registration process that might improve compliance.

We based our study of registration compliance on a field survey of vehicles in eight Wisconsin counties that we conducted between September 9, 2013 and December 18, 2013. We collected photographic images of license plates on the backs of automobiles and light trucks, and then matched these images with records in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation database, to determine the degree of compliance with vehicle registration requirements. Of the 18,546 vehicles we observed during this period, 391 had expired registrations.

In March of 2014, we conducted a follow-up analysis of these 391 vehicles and found that 253 had renewed their registrations by that time. Another 11 vehicles had “disassociated” the photographed license plate from the vehicle, meaning that the plate was no longer assigned to that vehicle. Only 127 of the 391 vehicles continued to have expired registrations. Thus, while 2.1 percent of the vehicles surveyed initially had expired registrations, only 0.7 percent of these vehicles failed to have renewed registrations by the time of our follow-up analysis.

We also investigated whether owners of light trucks are properly registering these trucks by weight class.<sup>1</sup> We collected the curb weight and the gross vehicle weight rating for the light trucks photographed in our field study. Based on their curb weights and gross vehicle weight ratings, we characterized light trucks as: a) likely being in compliance, b) possibly being out of compliance, or c) likely being out of compliance with their registration weight limits. Because we photographed relatively few light trucks in our field work, we supplemented the data on the surveyed light trucks with data on all currently registered light trucks in the eight counties surveyed. Using the current registrations of all light trucks in the eight counties, we concluded that 33.7 percent of the A trucks are likely in compliance, with 43.7 percent possibly out of compliance, and 22.6 percent likely out of compliance. For the B trucks, we concluded that 17.2 percent are likely in compliance, 80.6 percent are possibly out of compliance, and 2.3 percent are likely out of compliance. For the C trucks, we concluded that 50.6 percent are likely in compliance and 49.4 percent are possibly out of compliance.

To investigate the reasons for vehicle registration noncompliance among automobile and light truck owners in Wisconsin, we mailed a survey to the households associated with the 391 vehicles that we had observed with expired registrations in our field study, and to households associated with an additional 109 randomly selected automobiles and light trucks. We received responses from 92 of the owners in the first group and 54 of the owners in the second group. Based on these responses, we found that the most frequently cited reason for late vehicle registration was that the owner “forgot.” Other frequently cited reasons were that the notice was either lost or never received, or that the owner did not have the money for renewing the license at the time of expiration. We also contacted social service agencies in Dane and Milwaukee Counties, to ask for their insights on the issues relating to registration compliance that might be particularly important for low-income households. These agencies pointed to

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin classifies light trucks into three weight classes, with A trucks in the lightest weight class, B trucks in the next weight class, and C trucks in the heaviest weight class.

the costs associated with vehicle registration, the frequency with which low-income households move (thus having outdated addresses in the registration database), and the significant day-to-day life issues that require most of these households' attention.

Our survey also asked respondents for suggestions as to how the registration process could be improved, and we received a variety of responses. Based on these responses, we developed a list of possible changes to improve the vehicle registration process. The first possible change concerns vehicle owners receiving renewal notices by mail, and addresses the issue of owners forgetting to renew their registrations. This change would involve mailing a follow-up notice if the registration actually expires. The second possible change addresses the issue of mailed renewal notifications getting lost, and it would involve either substituting the postal card renewal notice with a renewal notice mailed in an envelope, or changing the color of the renewal notice so that it would be more noticeable to the vehicle owner. The third possible change would involve the elimination of the convenience fee for renewing the vehicle registration online with a credit and debit card. All three of these suggested changes would create additional costs to WisDOT. Given the relatively low number of vehicles operating with expired registrations in Wisconsin, WisDOT needs to give careful consideration to the relative benefits versus the relative costs of these three suggestions prior to implementing any changes to the vehicle registration process in the state.

## Chapter 1

### Survey of Motor Vehicle Registration Compliance in Wisconsin

#### Introduction

In 2013, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) commissioned Laurits R. Christensen Associates, Inc. (Christensen Associates) to conduct this survey of vehicle registration compliance in Wisconsin. Two major objectives of this study are to collect information over a broad socio-economic mix of vehicle owners that would reflect the entire state, and to include the collection of information on light trucks that would be helpful in determining compliance with truck registration regulations.<sup>2</sup>

Vehicle registration fees are a significant source of funding for WisDOT. In 2012, vehicle registration fees accounted for \$634 million in revenue, or approximately 35 percent of the total state transportation fund revenues. Only motor vehicle fuel taxes accounted for a greater percentage of state transportation funds.<sup>3</sup> Due to the fact that the Wisconsin motor vehicle fuel excise tax rate<sup>4</sup> has been frozen for a number of years, along with the fact that motor vehicles in Wisconsin have experienced significant gains in fuel efficiency, fuel tax revenues are producing a declining share of the state's transportation fund revenues.

WisDOT last sponsored a study of vehicle registration compliance in 2009.<sup>5</sup> That study focused on the year sticker affixed to the license plate; it found that approximately two percent of the year stickers were more than 30 days out of date at the time the vehicles were surveyed.<sup>6</sup> Since 2009, Wisconsin vehicle registration fees have increased significantly, and there is some concern that these higher fees are leading some owners to operate their vehicles without proper registration. The 2009 study restricted its analysis to Southeast and South Central Wisconsin, and it was not possible to determine whether the results for the surveyed area were representative for the entire state. The 2009 study also suggested that a significant number of light trucks may not be in registration compliance with the weight limits imposed for their truck class, although the methods available to determine compliance were limited. Because of these concerns arising from the previous study, WisDOT determined that a more comprehensive study of vehicle registration compliance was in order.

#### Research Approach

In order to obtain a random sample of vehicles that was representative of the state, we first divided the state into eight regions with approximately the same number of automobiles and light trucks in each of these regions. Our objective was to randomly select approximately the same number of vehicles from

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<sup>2</sup> Light trucks are registered by gross vehicle weight. A light truck with an actual gross vehicle weight above its registered gross vehicle weight limit is out of compliance.

<sup>3</sup> *Keep Wisconsin Moving: Smart Investments and Measurable Results*, Report of the Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission, January 2013, p.42.

<sup>4</sup> The Wisconsin motor vehicle fuel excise tax rate is assessed on the number of gallons purchased, not on the purchase price for gas. Thus, this fuel excise tax does not change when the price per gallon of gas goes up or down.

<sup>5</sup> *License Plate Study for Wisconsin Department of Transportation*, Chamberlain Research Consultants, Final Report No. 0092-08-20, March 2009.

<sup>6</sup> A vehicle's registration can be current (if payment is made earlier than the expiration date) even when the year sticker affixed to the license plate is out-of-date, if the owner has not yet affixed the new year sticker sent by WisDOT after the owner renews the vehicle's registration. This can happen if the owner renews the vehicle's registration very close to the expiration date so that the new sticker is not delivered prior to the expiration date, or if the owner forgets to affix the new sticker.



each of the eight regions in order to get a representative profile for all vehicles in the state. These eight regions roughly corresponded to the eight congressional districts in Wisconsin, with the proviso that no county would be split between regions. Table 1 shows the counties assigned to each region, with the number of registered automobiles and light trucks in each county.

Because it was beyond the scope of this study to survey vehicles in each of the 72 counties in Wisconsin, we randomly selected one county in each region to represent that region. In selecting the eight counties, we used a “probability in proportion to size” approach. For each region, each of its counties had a chance of being selected, but the probability of any specific county being selected was proportional to the number of vehicles in that county. For example, Region 2 included four counties—Dane, Sauk, Columbia, and Green. Dane County had 74 percent of the automobiles and light trucks registered in Region 2, and therefore it had a 74 percent probability of being chosen for the study. Sauk and Columbia Counties each had a ten percent probability of being chosen, while Green County had a six percent probability of being chosen. Although Dane County had the greatest probability of being chosen in Region 2, the random selection process actually chose Columbia County for the study. Milwaukee County comprised its own region due to the large number of automobiles and light trucks registered there, and therefore was automatically selected for the study. The following eight counties were selected for the study: Walworth, Columbia, La Crosse, Milwaukee, Washington, Winnebago, Wood, and Outagamie. These counties appear in italics in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Number of Registered Automobiles and Light Trucks**  
**by Region and County (as of July 2013)**

<b>Region 1</b>		<b>Region 4</b>		<b>Region 7</b>	
<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>
Jefferson	70,604	<i>Milwaukee</i>	541,472	Ashland	13,021
Kenosha	115,748	Total	541,472	Barron	40,352
Racine	141,667			Bayfield	14,712
Rock	128,118	<b>Region 5</b>		Burnett	15,070
<i>Walworth</i>	89,805	<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>	Chippewa	52,440
Total	545,942	Ozaukee	70,177	Douglas	36,512
		Sheboygan	86,942	Iron	6,422
		<i>Washington</i>	103,967	Langlade	18,204
<b>Region 2</b>		Waukesha	318,530	Lincoln	26,699
<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>		579,616	Marathon	113,870
<i>Columbia</i>	49,868			Polk	39,827
Dane	385,468	<b>Region 6</b>		Portage	55,455
Green	31,098	<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>	Price	13,838
Sauk	54,120	Adams	19,513	Rusk	12,660
Total	520,554	Calumet	37,783	Sawyer	15,420
		Dodge	74,621	Taylor	17,214
<b>Region 3</b>		Fond Du Lac	85,182	Washburn	15,935
<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>	Green Lake	17,106	<i>Wood</i>	64,826
Buffalo	12,458	Manitowoc	70,480	Total	572,477
Clark	26,837	Marquette	14,944		
Crawford	13,512	Waupaca	46,206	<b>Region 8</b>	
Dunn	33,497	Waushara	22,802	<b>County</b>	<b>Vehicles</b>
Eau Claire	76,750	<i>Winnebago</i>	132,360	Brown	200,576
Grant	39,289	Total	520,997	Door	29,248
Iowa	20,177			Florence	4,821
Jackson	16,861			Forest	8,767
Juneau	22,900			Kewaunee	18,518
<i>La Crosse</i>	87,471			Marinette	39,953
Lafayette	13,879			Menominee	934
Monroe	35,634			Oconto	35,521
Pepin	6,619			Oneida	36,220
Pierce	32,775			<i>Outagamie</i>	156,024
Richland	14,255			Shawano	34,949
St. Croix	73,031			Vilas	23,631
Trempealeau	26,691			Total	589,162
Vernon	23,512				
Total	576,148				

After selecting the eight representative counties, we designed a plan to collect approximately 2,250 observations of automobiles and light trucks in each of these counties. We began by preparing lists of publicly accessible parking lots that we would visit in each county. In order not to bias our survey toward particular demographic groups, we selected parking lots for commercial businesses that we believed would be visited by a broad cross-section of the population.<sup>7</sup> Some of these parking lots were relatively small and had under thirty vehicles at the time we surveyed them for the study, while others had several hundred vehicles. In Milwaukee County, we selected parking lots from six different Zip Codes that represented a diverse socio-economic mix.<sup>8</sup>

Research teams of three individuals went out to selected parking lots to collect photographic images of automobiles and light trucks with Wisconsin license plates. These research teams did not collect images of vehicles with municipal plates, temporary plates, heavy-duty truck plates, and out-of-state plates. In order to collect the photographic images, two team members took pictures while riding in a vehicle driven slowly through a parking lot by the third team member. The teams took photographic images of the back of vehicles, with enough clarity to obtain information on the license plate as well as the make and model of each surveyed vehicle. The teams collected these photographic images during daylight hours. The field research was conducted between September 9, 2013 and December 18, 2013.

At approximately the same time that a research team was collecting photographic images in a particular county, WisDOT provided us with a “snapshot” from its database containing records for currently registered vehicles.<sup>9</sup> This database contains the following information for all automobiles and light trucks registered in Wisconsin:

- Plate number
- Plate type code<sup>10</sup>
- Registration expiration date
- Registration type code<sup>11</sup>
- County code
- Make description
- Model description
- Color of vehicle
- Registration weight<sup>12</sup>
- Gross weight rating<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of such enterprises include supermarkets; Target, Walmart, Kohl’s, and Shopko stores; Home Depot and Lowe’s stores; and shopping malls.

<sup>8</sup> The ZIP Codes chosen were 53207, 53212, 53216, 53219, 53222, and 53227. The 53212 and 53216 Zip Codes have relatively high percentages of low-income households and minority households.

<sup>9</sup> WisDOT maintains a database that records current information on each assigned license plate in the state. This database is continuously updated as individuals renew their registrations, vehicles are sold, etc. Our research required that we have a “snapshot” of the vehicle information at the time we conducted our field research, in order to determine whether each vehicle was properly registered at the time it was observed. Consequently, we needed to obtain a snapshot of the database each time that a research team went out into the field.

<sup>10</sup> This distinguishes specialty license plates, such as Green Bay Packer plates.

<sup>11</sup> This distinguishes automobiles, light trucks, and other vehicles (e.g., dual use).

<sup>12</sup> This field distinguishes light trucks by weight class: A trucks, B trucks, and C trucks.

<sup>13</sup> This field, which contains broad ranges of gross weights associated with the vehicle’s Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), was not used in our analysis.

In order to match the photographic image of each surveyed vehicle to a vehicle registration record, we developed a two-step computer program. In the first step, the analyst would look at the photographic image and enter the license plate number. The computer program would then use the entered license plate number to locate a registration record in the WisDOT database snapshot. In the second step, the analyst would compare the photographic image showing the vehicle’s make and model to the information contained in the registration record in order to confirm a match. At this step in the process, the analyst also entered the month and year of the stickers on the photographed license plate, and, in the case of light trucks, the letter (A, B, or C) on the light-truck sticker. At the end of this two-step process, we created a data file of the information related to each vehicle that was photographed in the field. This data file was then used in our statistical analysis.

In interpreting the results of our study, it is important to remember that the observed vehicles were drawn from entire regions and that each of the eight surveyed regions had approximately the same number of registered vehicles. While vehicles in a particular county were ultimately used in the analysis, the sampling process allowed for the possibility of selecting any county in the region. Since we collected approximately the same number of observations in each of the eight regions, it is appropriate to give equal weight to each observation when drawing inferences about statewide vehicle registration.<sup>14</sup>

### Vehicles with Expired Registrations

We were able to match 18,546 photographic images with records in the WisDOT registration database. Table 2 shows the number of images matched by county, with automobiles and light trucks distinguished.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Vehicles Matched in WisDOT Database,**  
**by Type and County**

<b>County</b>	<b>Automobiles</b>	<b>Light Trucks</b>	<b>Total</b>
Columbia	1,939	238	2,177
La Crosse	2,334	139	2,473
Milwaukee	2,209	175	2,384
Outagamie	2,165	140	2,305
Walworth	2,068	217	2,285
Washington	2,175	253	2,428
Winnebago	2,055	162	2,217
Wood	2,072	205	2,277
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,017</b>	<b>1,529</b>	<b>18,546</b>

We note that our study somewhat underrepresents the number of light trucks in the eight counties sampled. Light trucks account for eight percent of the total vehicles in our data file, while we anticipated

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<sup>14</sup> This means, for example, that vehicles observed in Milwaukee County should not be given more weight than vehicles observed in other counties when drawing inferences about registration compliance in the state.

that approximately 20 percent of our observations would be light trucks, based on the number of light trucks registered in the state.<sup>15</sup>

In conducting our analysis, the first question we investigated was the frequency with which observed vehicles had expired registrations at the time they were photographed. We answered this question by determining the number of vehicles whose registration expiration date was earlier than the timestamp on the appropriate snapshot of the WisDOT registration database. For example, if an automobile was photographed on September 9, we looked at the registration information for that vehicle in the snapshot of the WisDOT registration database closest to that date.<sup>16</sup> If the timestamp of the database snapshot was also September 9, but the registration expiration date associated with that vehicle was August 15, we concluded that the vehicle had an expired registration at the time it was photographed. Table 3 shows the number of surveyed automobiles and light trucks with expired registrations in each of the eight counties.

**Table 3**  
**Number of Automobiles and Light Trucks with Expired Registrations**

County	Number of Vehicles			Percent of Total Vehicles		
	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total
Columbia	23	4	27	1.2%	1.7%	1.2%
La Crosse	44	4	48	1.9%	2.9%	1.9%
Milwaukee	90	11	101	4.1%	6.3%	4.2%
Outagamie	43	4	47	2.0%	2.9%	2.0%
Walworth	30	3	33	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%
Washington	44	5	49	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Winnebago	47	3	50	2.3%	1.9%	2.3%
Wood	33	3	36	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%
Total	354	37	391	2.1%	2.4%	2.1%

We found that 2.1 percent of the total vehicles in our survey had expired registrations.<sup>17</sup> The percentage of light trucks with expired registrations was slightly higher than the percentage of automobiles with expired registrations, although the difference was not statistically significant.<sup>18</sup> Milwaukee County had the highest percentage of vehicles with expired registrations (4.2 percent), while Columbia County had the lowest percentage (1.2 percent).

<sup>15</sup> After our analysis was completed, we concluded that the reason light trucks were underrepresented in our study was that they were less likely to be used for transportation to some of the targeted commercial enterprises than were automobiles.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>17</sup> As a statistical estimate of the total vehicle population, the 95% confidence interval of the expiration percentage for all vehicles ranges from 1.9% to 2.3%.

<sup>18</sup> The 95% confidence interval of the expiration percentage for automobiles ranges from 1.9% to 2.3%, while the 95% confidence interval of the expiration percentage for light trucks had a wider range: 1.7% to 3.3%.

To get a better understanding of the surveyed vehicles with expired registrations, we broke them down by the length of time the registrations had been expired. We tabulated the number of vehicles whose expirations had been 30 days or less, the number of vehicles whose expirations had been 31 to 60 days, the number of vehicles whose expirations had been 61 to 90 days, and the number of vehicles whose expirations had been more than 90 days. Table 4 summarizes the results of this analysis.

**Table 4**  
**Number of Automobiles and Light Trucks with Expired Registrations**  
**by Length of Expiration**

Length of Expiration	Number of Vehicles			Percent of Total Vehicles		
	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total
0-30 Days	132	10	142	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%
31-60 Days	67	5	72	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
61-90 Days	43	3	46	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Over 90 Days	112	19	131	0.7%	1.2%	0.7%
Total	354	37	391	2.1%	2.4%	2.1%

Table 4 shows that more than one-third of the expired registrations were expired for 30 days or less. At the same time, approximately one-third of the expired registrations were expired for more than 90 days. The remaining third of the expired registrations were expired between 31 and 90 days.

While a vehicle may be currently registered, it may not have a current year sticker on its license plate. This can occur if the vehicle owner did not affix the sticker sent by the state after the owner updated the vehicle’s registration.<sup>19</sup> If this is the case, vehicles may appear to have expired registrations even if their registrations are current. Table 5 shows the number of surveyed vehicles by county with current registrations and expired stickers.

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<sup>19</sup> See footnote 6.

**Table 5  
Number of Currently Registered Vehicles With Expired Stickers**

County	Number of Vehicles			Percent of Total Vehicles		
	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total	Automobiles	Light Trucks	Total
Columbia	23	5	28	1.2%	2.1%	1.3%
La Crosse	26	2	28	1.1%	1.4%	1.1%
Milwaukee	48	4	52	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%
Outagamie	28	7	35	1.3%	5.0%	1.5%
Walworth	27	6	33	1.3%	2.8%	1.4%
Washington	34	5	39	1.6%	2.0%	1.6%
Winnebago	27	2	29	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%
Wood	31	3	34	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Total	244	34	278	1.4%	2.2%	1.5%

We found that 1.5 percent of the vehicles in our survey were currently registered but had expired stickers on their license plates. Percentages ranged from 1.1 percent in La Crosse County to 2.2 percent in Milwaukee County. (In addition, we found 28 vehicles with year stickers missing from their license plates, accounting for 0.2 percent of the total observations.)

We also found 61 instances where the year sticker on the plate was more recent than the expiration date of the registration (e.g., a vehicle might have a 2014 sticker affixed to its license plate while the expiration date for the vehicle in the WisDOT database is September 2013). Finally, we discovered that we had 27 license plate numbers in our sample that were not included in the WisDOT registration database.<sup>20</sup>

In our field research, we found that license plate brackets frequently obscured the month validation sticker, so that we could not identify the registration month, and also obscured the year validation sticker to the degree that we could only identify it by its color. Some of these brackets contained dealership logos while others contained logos for sports teams or other personal interests.<sup>21</sup>

An unanticipated finding from our examination of the photographic images is that vehicle owners in Milwaukee County frequently did not locate the year sticker where WisDOT indicates it should be

<sup>20</sup> Most of these license plates were “disassociated” from the vehicle for which they were issued. A plate is disassociated from a vehicle when that vehicle is subsequently registered under a different plate. WisDOT will continue to have a record of the old plate and the original vehicle owner, but that record will have no vehicle information. Individuals with disassociated plates can use those plates on other vehicles, but they are supposed to notify WisDOT if they do this. If notified, WisDOT will then add the new vehicle information to the registration record for that license plate. In addition to the disassociated plates, several of the plates not found in the WisDOT registration records were entered incorrectly at dealerships.

<sup>21</sup> However, not all of the brackets we observed were problematic, and many were designed with cutouts in the bottom left and right corners for the express purpose of affixing month and year registration stickers that are easily visible.

affixed. Furthermore, some owners in this county did not remove or cover the old year sticker when affixing a new one to the plate. In these instances, the photographic images show license plates displaying several visible year stickers affixed in a variety of locations, thus requiring additional care for our research team to identify the most recent year sticker.

### **Follow-Up Analysis of Vehicles with Expired Registrations**

In March of 2014, we reviewed the registration status of the 391 vehicles that we had observed with expired registrations during our field research. At that time, we found that 253, or 65 percent of these vehicles, had renewed their registrations since the time we surveyed their license plates. Another 11 vehicles (three percent) had “disassociated” the photographed license plate from the vehicle, meaning that the plate number was no longer assigned to the vehicle it was affixed to when it was photographed.

Of the remaining 127 vehicles, 28 had not passed an emission test required for registration, and 19 had outstanding traffic violations or other incidents that prevented the renewal of the license. The residual 80 vehicles had no apparent restriction that prevented registration renewal. These 127 vehicles represented 0.7 percent of the 18,546 vehicles we surveyed in our field research.

### **Comparing Our Results with the Number of Late Registrations in Wisconsin**

In 2013, approximately 17 percent of the vehicles registered in Wisconsin were registered after their registration expiration dates (764,015 out of 4,406,256 vehicles). This percentage is conceptually different from the percentage of vehicles out of compliance at a particular point in time, which was the focus of our study. The percentage of vehicles registered after their expiration dates includes any vehicle that had an expired registration at any time during the year, many of which were eventually registered and brought into compliance.

To clarify the relationship between these two percentages, we use a highly simplified example. Suppose that vehicle registrations occur uniformly throughout the year, so that on any given day the registration of one out of every 365 vehicles would be due to expire. Further assume that 17 percent of vehicle owners do not renew their registrations on time. Consequently, on any given day, 0.047 percent ( $0.17 \text{ percent} / 365$ ) of the vehicles will have newly expired registrations. Finally, suppose that each of the owners with an expired registration takes only three days to renew after the expiration date. (While a substantial proportion of individuals renew their registrations within a few days of the expiration date, others take considerably longer to renew, particularly if they forgot about the registration.) Under these assumptions, the total number of vehicles with expired registrations on any one day will include those whose registrations expired that day, those whose registrations expired the previous day, and those whose registrations expired two days ago. The percentage of all vehicles with expired registrations will be  $3 \times 0.047 \text{ percent}$ , or 0.14 percent. Because there are variations in both the distribution of registration expiration dates throughout the year and the length of time that owners take to renew their expired registrations, one cannot express a simple relationship between the percentage of all vehicles with expired registrations at any specific point in time and the percentage of owners who are late in registering their vehicles at any time during the year.

### **Weight Registration of Light Trucks**

A light truck is classified as “A,” “B,” or “C,” based on its “gross weight” (i.e., its weight when loaded with cargo). In order to register as an A truck, the truck and its cargo is limited to no more than 4,500 pounds at any time during the registration year. Any time that a light truck registered as an A truck is over that weight limit, it is subject to a citation. Similarly, a B truck and its cargo cannot weigh more than 6,000



pounds, and the weight of a C truck and its cargo cannot exceed 8,000 pounds. Determining the compliance of light truck registrations with these weight limits is complicated by the fact that a light truck may be in compliance at the time it is observed, but could be out of compliance at other times during the year. Also, light truck weights (without cargo) can vary significantly due to after-market modifications such as the addition of truck toppers, tonneau covers, and built-in tool boxes.

In order to estimate the degree of light truck compliance within the prescribed weight limits, we used the information on make, model, and year for each light truck we surveyed to obtain its curb weight (the weight of the light truck without passengers or cargo) and its gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR, the maximum safe operating weight of the vehicle). We obtained curb weight and GVWR information from Edmonds.com and automobilemag.com. One difficulty that we encountered was that some models have different sub-models with different curb weights and GVWRs, but the WisDOT database does not include sub-model information. To be conservative in assigning curb weight and GVWR to our observations of light trucks, we used the weights for the base model (the lightest variant among the sub-models) for the light trucks we surveyed.

Of the 1,529 light trucks observed in our study, 1,308 had information on make and model in the WisDOT database. Consequently, our analysis of truck weight is based on these 1,308 observations. We looked at the distribution of A, B, and C trucks across curb weights and GVWRs. Appendix 1 has a detailed breakdown of our light truck observations by county, curb weight, and GVWR. To provide a summary of our findings, we rated each of the 1308 light-truck observations as:

- likely in compliance with its registration weight limit if its GVWR was less than this limit,
- possibly not in compliance if its GVWR was more than the weight limit but the curb weight was at least 500 pounds less than the weight limit, and
- likely not in compliance if its curb weight was over the weight limit or less than the weight limit by 500 pounds or less.<sup>22</sup>

Table 6 shows a breakdown of light trucks by whether they were likely in compliance, possibly not in compliance, or likely not in compliance.

**Table 6**  
**Compliance with Registration Weight Limits for Light Trucks in Study**

	Total Number of Trucks			Percent of Trucks in Class		
	A Plate	B Plate	C Plate	A Plate	B Plate	C Plate
Likely In Compliance	85	142	104	19.1%	21.7%	50.2%
Possibly Not In Compliance	196	486	103	43.9%	74.2%	49.8%
Likely Not In Compliance	165	27	0	37.0%	4.1%	0.0%
Total Light Trucks	446	655	207	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>22</sup> We also attempted to assess the weight of the cargo carried by each of the light truck observed at the time that we photographed its license plate, but there were too few observations of vehicles loaded with cargo for a meaningful analysis.

Of the A trucks, 19 percent were likely in compliance with the weight limit, given the fact that their GVWRs were under 4,500 pounds. Thirty-seven percent were likely not in compliance, since the curb weight of the base model was within 500 pounds of the weight limit. The remaining 44 percent of the A trucks were possibly not in compliance, depending upon the heaviest cargo that they ever handled during the registration year. For this categorization of A trucks, their GVWRs were large enough that these trucks could handle loads that would put them above the weight limit, but their curb weights were low enough that they would be in compliance if they only carried relatively light loads throughout the year so that their loaded weight always remained under the weight limit.

Of the B trucks, just under 22 percent were likely in compliance as their GVWRs were under 6,000 pounds. Four percent were likely not in compliance as their curb weights were over 5,500 pounds and their GVWRs were over 6,000 pounds. Seventy-four percent were possibly out of compliance, depending upon the cargo that they handled at any time during the registration year, as their GVWRs were also over 6,000 pounds.

For C trucks, none of the observed vehicles had curb weights over 7,500 pounds, so none were designated as likely not in compliance. Approximately half were deemed likely in compliance as their GVWRs were under 8,000 pounds, and approximately half were deemed possibly not in compliance as their GVWRs were over 8,000 pounds.

Due to the relatively small sample of light trucks surveyed, we conducted a supplemental analysis of light trucks with up-to-date registrations in the eight counties used for our field research. For this analysis, we created a list of the makes and models of the light trucks we observed in our survey, and then constructed an additional data file that contained records from the WisDOT database of all the light trucks of the same makes and models currently registered in the eight counties used for our field research. For example, if we photographed a 1999 Ford F-150 during our field research, our supplemental data file includes registration records of all of the 1999 Ford F-150s registered in the eight selected counties, which we extracted from the most recent WisDOT database snapshot. Using this approach, our supplemental analysis focused on 112,616 of the approximately 190,000 light trucks registered in these eight counties. Of these 112,616 light trucks, 31,473 are registered as A trucks, 61,333 are registered as B trucks, and 19,810 are registered as C trucks.

Table 7 shows our analysis of the 31,473 A truck supplemental observations. This table shows, by county, the percentage of A trucks likely in compliance, the percentage possibly out of compliance, and the percentage likely out of compliance.

**Table 7**  
**Compliance with Weight Limits for A Trucks, Supplemental Observations**

<b>County</b>	<b>% Likely in Compliance</b>	<b>% Possibly Out of Compliance</b>	<b>% Likely Out of Compliance</b>
Columbia	23.8%	42.8%	33.4%
La Crosse	24.6%	47.3%	28.1%
Milwaukee	20.9%	40.7%	38.3%
Outagamie	19.7%	42.2%	38.1%
Walworth	25.6%	43.5%	30.9%
Washington	23.8%	42.1%	34.1%
Winnebago	21.0%	44.1%	34.9%
Wood	21.5%	46.8%	31.8%
Average	22.6%	43.7%	33.7%
Results from Survey	19.1%	43.9%	37.0%

This analysis suggests that the percentage of A trucks that are in compliance with the weight limit is slightly higher than what we observed in our survey.<sup>23</sup> Averaging the results over the eight counties, we find that 22.6 percent of A trucks are likely in compliance, 43.7 percent are possibly out of compliance, and 33.7 percent are likely out of compliance. Milwaukee County and Outagamie County have the highest percentages of A trucks that are likely out of compliance with the weight limit, 38.3 percent and 38.1 percent, respectively. Walworth County has the highest percentage of A trucks that are likely in compliance (25.6 percent).

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<sup>23</sup> In comparing the results from the surveyed vehicles with the results from the supplemental observations, we should note that the surveyed vehicles include those whose registrations had expired while the supplemental observations were restricted to vehicles with current registrations. Because the WisDOT database contains records of vehicles that have not been registered for a number of years and may in fact have been scrapped, we chose to restrict our supplemental observations to vehicles currently registered. However, the results of the supplemental analysis might change to some extent if it were possible to distinguish light trucks with expired registrations that are still on the road.

Table 8 shows the results of a similar analysis for the 61,333 B trucks.

**Table 8**  
**Compliance with Weight Limits for B Trucks, Supplemental Observations**

<b>County</b>	<b>% Likely In Compliance</b>	<b>% Possibly Out of Compliance</b>	<b>% Likely Out of Compliance</b>
Columbia	14.7%	83.3%	2.0%
La Crosse	18.8%	79.6%	1.5%
Milwaukee	21.2%	76.3%	2.5%
Outagamie	14.5%	83.3%	2.2%
Walworth	18.4%	78.6%	3.0%
Washington	14.1%	83.3%	2.6%
Winnebago	16.2%	81.1%	2.7%
Wood	19.5%	78.9%	1.6%
Average	17.2%	80.6%	2.3%
Results from Survey	21.7%	74.2%	4.1%

This analysis shows that a smaller percentage of B trucks are likely out of compliance than in the survey. It also shows that a smaller percentage of B trucks are likely in compliance, and a larger percentage of B trucks are possibly out of compliance than in the survey. Walworth County has the highest percentage (3.0 percent) of B trucks that are likely out of compliance with the weight limit, while Milwaukee County has the highest percentage (21.2 percent) of B trucks that are likely in compliance.

Finally, Table 9 shows our analysis of the 19,810 C truck supplemental observations. As none of the models we observed in the survey had curb weights within 500 pounds of the weight limit for C trucks, none of the trucks in this analysis are deemed to be likely out of compliance. Consequently, Table 9 shows only the percentages of vehicles likely in compliance and the percentages of vehicles possibly out of compliance.

**Table 9**  
**Compliance with Weight Limits for C Trucks,**  
**Supplemental Observations**

<b>County</b>	<b>% Likely In Compliance</b>	<b>% Possibly Out of Compliance</b>
Columbia	41.3%	58.7%
La Crosse	56.1%	43.9%
Milwaukee	61.7%	38.3%
Outagamie	44.8%	55.2%
Walworth	48.1%	51.9%
Washington	46.1%	53.9%
Winnebago	49.9%	50.1%
Wood	56.5%	43.5%
 Average	 50.6%	 49.4%
Results from Survey	50.2%	49.8%

Here the analysis suggests that the survey produced results very similar to the results for all C trucks in these eight counties. Milwaukee County has the highest percentage of C trucks that are likely in compliance (61.7 percent), while Columbia County has the lowest percentage (41.3 percent).

## Chapter 2

### Alternatives for Improving the Vehicle Registration Process

#### Introduction

In order to identify options for improving vehicle registration compliance, we conducted a two-part investigation into why individuals might not register their vehicles on a timely basis. The first part was based on a survey that was sent to 500 Wisconsin households. This survey asked a series of questions relating to reasons for late registration, receiving registration notifications, payment alternatives, attitudes toward online registration, and suggestions for improving the registration process. The second part of the investigation involved contacting social service agencies in Milwaukee County and Dane County to see if they had any insights about barriers to vehicle registration among low-income households.

Next, in collaboration with the WisDOT Technical Oversight Committee, we used the results of this two-part investigation to develop a list of possible options for changing the registration process. We then analyzed each of these options, listing their respective advantages and disadvantages. In the second part of this chapter, we summarize the results of that analysis. This chapter concludes with a review of the registration process in three states that recently underwent significant changes: Indiana, Mississippi, and Missouri.

#### Household Survey of the Vehicle Registration Process

We sent a mail survey about the vehicle registration process to 500 Wisconsin households. Of these 500 households, 391 owned vehicles that we observed with expired registrations during the vehicle registration compliance survey discussed in Chapter 1. The remaining 109 households were randomly selected from the list of automobile and light truck registrations in the state. We obtained mailing addresses, but not the vehicle owner's name, for these vehicles. The survey forms were color coded to distinguish the answers of the two groups of households, but otherwise the forms were designed to give anonymity to respondents. The mailing, which included the survey and a stamped return envelope, was sent out on March 14, 2014. We asked the households to mail back the completed survey form by March 31, 2014.

We received completed surveys from 92 of the households we observed with expired registrations (a response rate of 24 percent) and 54 of the randomly selected households (a response rate of 50 percent).<sup>24</sup> In the following discussion, we distinguish the responses of these two groups. Due to the relatively small number of responses, the statistics that we present below are intended to be illustrative rather than statistically precise.

#### Reasons for Expired Registrations

The first question that we asked in our survey was whether the households had ever been late in renewing their registration. For the households that we observed with expired registrations, 22 of the 92 responding households said that they had never been late in renewing their registration. We have no explanation for this surprising result. For the 70 households that indicated they had been late in renewing their registration, we report the reasons given in the following table. (Some households gave more than one reason.)

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<sup>24</sup> The Postal Service returned six survey forms designated as undeliverable.

**Table 10**  
**Reasons for Late Registration**  
**Responses of Households with Observed Expired Registrations**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households with Late Renewals</b>
Forgot	37	53%
Didn't Receive Notice	18	26%
Lost Notice	18	26%
Didn't Have the Money	16	23%
Didn't Have an Envelope to Mail Fee	1	1%
Customer Service Center Hours were Inconvenient	5	7%
Failed Emissions Test	1	1%
Outstanding Fines or Fees	1	1%

The most frequently cited reason for being late in renewing their registration was that they forgot. A number of households also stated that they didn't receive the renewal notice or they lost their notice. Others said they didn't have the money to renew their registration at the time. Only two of the responding households cited failing an emissions test or having outstanding fees or fines at the time of registration renewal. (Renewals are not allowed under these two circumstances.)

For the randomly selected households, 19 of the 54 responding households (35%) said that they had been late in renewing their registration. Table 11 shows the various reasons given by these responders.

**Table 11**  
**Reasons for Late Registration**  
**Responses of Randomly Selected Households**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households with Late Renewals</b>
Forgot	6	32%
Didn't Receive Notice	6	32%
Lost Notice	5	26%
Didn't Have the Money	6	32%
Customer Service Center Hours were Inconvenient	3	16%
Failed Emissions Test	3	16%

No one reason seemed to predominate for this group.

### Notification of Expiring Registration

Currently Wisconsin residents are notified of their expiring vehicle registrations either by mail or by electronic notification through the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) eNotify program, but not by both. In our survey, we listed various notification options and asked households about their preferences. The group with expired registrations showed the greatest interest in being notified by mail, although a significant number expressed an interest in being notified by email or text message. The following table shows the responses for this group.

**Table 12**  
**Notification of Expiring Registration**  
**Preferences of Households with Observed Expired Registrations**

<b>Method for Notification</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households</b>
Post Card by Mail	48	52%
Letter by Mail	17	18%
Email or Text Message	33	36%

Seven of the households indicated an interest in being notified by post card and also by email or text message. It is not clear from the survey whether these responders find these different forms of communications to be acceptable alternatives, or whether they would like to be notified by more than one form of communication.<sup>25</sup>

The responders from the randomly selected households showed a strong preference for being notified by mail, as shown in the following table.

**Table 13**  
**Notification of Expiring Registration**  
**Preferences of Randomly Selected Households**

<b>Method for Notification</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households</b>
Post Card by Mail	38	70%
Letter by Mail	13	24%
Email or Text Message	11	19%

Five of the eleven households that indicated they would like to receive notice by email or text message also indicated that they would like to be notified by mail.

### Methods of Payment

Currently Wisconsin residents have a variety of ways to pay for their vehicle registrations. First, they can make a payment by check through the mail. Second, they can make an electronic payment by credit or debit card through the DMV website. Also, they can make in-person payments at a DMV facility by cash, check, or credit/debit card; or they can make a payment at a third-party facility under contract with the DMV. All payments by credit/debit card have a convenience fee of \$1.25 to cover the bank charges for

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<sup>25</sup> One household indicated that it didn't need to be notified.



processing the credit/debit card transaction. In-person payments at a DMV facility are assessed a \$3.00 service fee. Third parties are allowed to assess service fees up to \$10.00.

We asked households how they prefer to pay their renewal fees. In addition to the options currently available, we included the option of an ACH transaction (i.e., an electronic transfer from a checking account), since it is currently under consideration. The following table shows the responses of the households with observed expired registrations. Many households listed more than one option, leading to the percentages summing to more than 100%.

**Table 14**  
**Method of Payment**  
**Preferences of Households with Observed Expired Registrations**

<b>Payment Option</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households</b>
Check by Mail	37	40%
Credit/Debit Card via Internet	34	37%
ACH Transaction	17	18%
At DMV Facility by Cash, Check, or Credit/Debit Card	11	12%
Third-Party Facility	9	10%

The two most commonly cited preferences were check by mail and credit/debit card via the Internet. The option of paying via ACH transaction also appeared to have strong interest.

The following table shows the responses of the randomly selected households.

**Table 15**  
**Method of Payment**  
**Preferences of Randomly Selected Households**

<b>Payment Option</b>	<b>Number of Households</b>	<b>Percent of Households</b>
Check by Mail	33	61%
Credit/Debit Card via Internet	22	41%
ACH Transaction	6	11%
At DMV Facility by Cash, Check, or Credit/Debit Card	6	11%
Third-Party Facility	2	4%

This group also expressed the greatest interest in paying by check through the mail, followed by paying by credit/debit card via the Internet. Five of the six households that expressed interest in payment at a DMV facility also expressed interest in using another form of payment, either check by mail or credit/debit card via Internet.

#### The Use of Year Stickers on the Plate

The survey also asked two general questions about the use of stickers on the license plates. We first asked whether households might be less likely to renew their plates on time if they were not required to

affix a year sticker to the plate, since there is some thought that the sticker serves as a reminder for renewing registrations. Approximately one-third of each of the two groups receiving the mailed survey indicated that they might be less likely to renew on time. Among the households with expired registrations, 31 of the 92 responding households (34%) said they might be less likely. Of the randomly selected households, 15 of the 54 responding households (28%) said they might be less likely to register on time.

We also asked each group whether they viewed affixing the year sticker to the plate as an inconvenience. (There might be various reasons that individuals find this an inconvenience, such as cold weather or a license plate bracket covering a portion of the sticker.) Among the 92 reporting households with expired registrations, 29 (32%) said that it was an inconvenience. Among the 54 reporting households that were randomly selected, 10 (19%) said they found it an inconvenience.

#### Attitudes toward Online Registration

We also asked a set of questions that were designed to see if households perceived issues with renewing their vehicle registrations online. In consultation with the Technical Oversight Committee, we posited four reasons why people would be reluctant to register their vehicles online. The first reason was the \$1.25 convenience fee that is charged for an online credit/debit card registration transaction. The second reason was uncertainty concerning the security of the user’s credit/debit card or other personal information in an online transaction. The third reason was that the waiting time to receive a sticker is longer if the transaction is made online. The fourth reason was that the household does not have an Internet connection.

Among the households with expired registrations, 57 of the 92 responders (62%) expressed some concerns about registering online. The following table shows the concerns these responders expressed. Some households expressed more than one concern, consequently the percentages add up to more than 100%.

**Table 16**  
**Concerns About Online Transactions**  
**Responses of Households with Observed Expired Registrations**

Concerns	Number of Households	Percent of Households
Don’t Want to Pay Convenience Fee	46	50%
Not Sure of Credit/Debit Card and Personal Information Security	30	33%
Sticker is not Immediately Available	16	17%
Don’t have Internet Access	14	15%

Half of these households do not want to pay the convenience fee. About one-third are not sure of their credit/debit card and personal information security. Smaller numbers cited the fact that the sticker is not immediately available or that they didn’t have Internet access.

We also asked for demographic information, to see if attitudes toward online registration were related to the responder’s age. The following table breaks down the households by the age of the respondent and shows the number that have concerns about online registration.

**Table 17**  
**Concerns About Online Transactions**  
**Responses of Households with Observed Expired Registrations, by Age**

Households by Age of Respondent	Under 45 Years	45-64 Years	Over 64 Years
Number of Households	33	44	15
Have Concerns about Online Transactions	16 (48%)	28 (64%)	13 (87%)
Don't Want to Pay Convenience Fee	13 (39%)	24 (55%)	9 (60%)
Not Sure about Credit/Debit Card and Personal Information Security	6 (18%)	17 (39%)	7 (47%)
Sticker is not Immediately Available	6 (18%)	8 (18%)	2 (13%)
Don't Have Internet Access	3 (9%)	4 (9%)	7 (47%)

Table 17 indicates that concerns about online transactions increase with the age of the respondent. Resistance to the convenience fee and concerns about Internet security both increase with age. The convenience fee is the most significant issue for all age brackets. Finally, responders over 64 years of age have considerably less access to the Internet.

Of the randomly selected households, 32 of the 54 responders (59%) expressed some concerns about registering online. The following table shows the concerns these responders expressed.

**Table 18**  
**Concerns About Online Transactions**  
**Responses of Randomly Selected Households**

Concerns	Number of Households	Percent of Households
Don't Want to Pay Convenience Fee	26	48%
Not Sure of Credit/Debit Card and Personal Information Security	18	33%
Sticker is not Immediately Available	9	17%
Don't have Internet Access	6	11%

Once again, nearly half of these households listed the convenience fee as a concern, and approximately one-third expressed a concern about the security of the Internet. When we break down these households by the age of the respondent, we obtain the following results.

**Table 19**  
**Concerns About Online Transactions**  
**Responses of Randomly Selected Households, by Age**

<b>Households by Age of Respondent</b>	<b>Under 45 Years</b>	<b>45-64 Years</b>	<b>Over 64 Years</b>
Number of Households	15	25	14
Have Concerns about Online Transactions	6 (40%)	15 (60%)	11 (79%)
Don't Want to Pay Convenience Fee	5 (33%)	13 (52%)	8 (57%)
Not Sure about Credit/Debit Card and Personal Information Security	3 (20%)	8 (32%)	7 (50%)
Sticker is not Immediately Available	1 (7%)	5 (20%)	3 (21%)
Don't have Internet Access	0 (0%)	4 (16%)	2 (14%)

These results are similar to the ones for the households that we observed with expired registrations. Fewer responders under 45 years of age have concerns about registering online than individuals 45 years or older. Fewer responders over 64 years of age have Internet access than responders in the younger groups. Responders in all age groups cited the convenience fee most frequently as a concern about the online registration process.

#### Suggestions for Improving the Registration Process

In the final section of the survey, we gave the households an opportunity to offer suggestions to improve the vehicle registration process. The individual answers that we received can be found in Appendix 2. While a common response was that the registration fees were too high, there were also a variety of other suggestions about the vehicle registration process. These responses had some general themes.

#### *Online Registration Convenience Fee*

A number of responders expressed interest in online registration, but did not feel they should have to pay a convenience fee for this option. Some individuals expressed resentment that WisDOT was “making money” from the convenience fee.

#### *Notification by Mail*

Some individuals said that the current mail piece was either getting lost in delivery or getting lost in the other mail they received. A few stated that the DMV mailings do not always go to the current address. Some also said that the notification piece should be more distinctive, so that individuals would recognize it. One individual suggested that the mail piece be a bright color so it stands out. Another individual said that a mailing in an envelope would be more recognizable. A couple of individuals suggested that a reminder notice should be mailed to those whose registration expired, as the individual may have forgotten about the need to renew the vehicle registration. Some individuals indicated that there is too much lead time between when the piece is mailed and when the registration is due.

### *Improving Customer Service at DMV and Other Facilities*

Some individuals indicated they had difficulties registering at DMV facilities because of limited service hours outside of the 9-5 workday. Some also indicated that plate/sticker renewals should be done in a designated area at DMV facilities to reduce wait time. Others cited difficulties in scheduling vehicle emissions tests. Individuals also expressed the view that additional fees should not be charged at DMV facilities.

### **Survey of Social Service Agencies**

In Dane County, we contacted the Dane County Department of Human Services Adult Community Services Division. They suggested three reasons why low-income households might fail to keep their vehicle registrations current. First, the registration fee can be problematic for low-income households, although the Division also pointed out that other costs associated with vehicle ownership, such as upkeep and fuel, can be obstacles. Second, many low-income households move frequently and renewal notifications may be less likely to reach them. Third, low-income households struggle with many day-to-day life issues and consequently may pay less attention to keeping their vehicle registrations up to date.

In Milwaukee County, we contacted Wisconsin Community Services, Inc., which has a Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability. This agency reported that low-income households can have difficulty clearing up minor violations such as parking tickets or broken headlights, and that the fines can spiral to the point where they lead to driver's license revocations and registration issues. The agency's case workers advocate with the court systems to help low-income households perform community service to clear minor violations from their records. This agency noted that the costs of owning an automobile, including vehicle registration fees, can be enormous for low-income households. Buying auto insurance is also a significant issue for these households. Finally, we heard that low-income households move frequently, often staying with friends or relatives.

### **Options for Improving the Vehicle Registration Process**

Based on the results of the mail survey and discussions with social service agencies, we developed a list of possible changes to improve the vehicle registration process. The development of this list was done in collaboration with the Technical Oversight Committee (the Committee), and we relied on the technical expertise of that committee to identify some of the costs and benefits of the possible changes. The Committee also suggested that we review the registration process in three states that recently made significant changes to their registration processes: Indiana, Mississippi, and Missouri.

The list of possible changes are as follows: notification of expired registration by mail, changing the size and shape of the mail piece, eliminating or reducing fees for electronic and in-person transactions, and increasing the number of sites for in-person registration and emissions testing.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> One commonly suggested change that we did not address is the request to reduce the registration fees. As mentioned in Chapter 1, vehicle registration fees account for approximately 35% of total state transportation fund revenues. Reducing registration fees would have a significant impact on transportation funding and would necessitate a broader discussion of transportation funding options. Consequently, we believe that this suggestion is considerably beyond the scope of options that might be considered to improve the registration process. Further, we note that the taxes and fees associated with owning an automobile or light truck in Wisconsin are lower than the taxes and fees in the other states we studied.

### Notification of Expired Registration by Mail

Currently households that receive their registration notifications by mail do not receive a follow-up mailing if their registrations expire. If WisDOT were to decide to send follow-up notifications, it would need to decide about the timing for the follow-up notifications. Furthermore, WisDOT is not currently able to distinguish between households that are operating vehicles with expired registrations and households that have retired their plates, which means that the follow-up notifications would need to go out to more households than the targeted group in order to be effective. Finally, there would be considerable materials, handling, and postage cost associated with these mailings.

Individuals that receive registration notifications through the eNotify program have the advantage of receiving follow-up emails or text messages if they do not renew their registrations on time. Since currently only 6,323 individuals subscribe to the eNotify program, it may be advantageous for the DMV to more prominently advertise this option on its website. It also may be helpful for the eNotify messages to include a pdf file of the renewal form, or contain a link to a web page containing this form. Both of these modifications would provide individuals the option of receiving follow-up notices if they do not renew their registrations promptly while giving those individuals the option of paying by mail.

### Size and Shape of the Mail Piece

The current size and shape of the registration mail piece is dictated by the contract between WisDOT and the firm processing registration payments by mail. In terms of increasing the size of the mail piece, the only option that currently appears to be feasible is to enclose the mail piece in a larger envelope. This option would necessitate additional mail preparation, adding an envelope for each mail piece, and additional postage.

In terms of changing the color of the mail piece, it is apparent that this possible change would need to be negotiated with the firm processing payments, to ensure the piece is still machine readable.

### Fees for Electronic and In-Person Transactions

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are various fees associated with particular methods of registration renewal payments. For electronic payment by credit or debit card, a convenience fee<sup>27</sup> of \$1.25 is assessed. This fee is based on the bank charge for processing the transaction. For in-person renewals at a DMV Customer Service Center, there is a \$3 service fee for all transactions, plus the \$1.25 convenience fee for a credit or debit card transaction. For in-person renewals at third-party providers, the DMV does not assess a fee, but the third party is permitted to assess a service fee of up to \$10 for a renewal transaction. The \$3 customer service fee is set by Wisconsin statute for registration transactions at DMV facilities, and the \$10 limit on fees charged by third-party providers is set by administrative rule. Both of these fees would be relatively difficult to change. The \$1.25 convenience fee for credit and debit card transactions could be changed by WisDOT without any legislative or administrative proceeding, although such a change would have budgetary implications.

As previously noted, the electronic payment fee reflects the bank cost to WisDOT from processing credit and debit card transactions. It is our understanding that there have been some discussions in previous years about eliminating fees for electronic transactions. In 2013, a total of 1,078,131 vehicles were

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<sup>27</sup> Since some individuals in our survey were under the impression that WisDOT made money from the convenience fee, it might be worth considering giving it a different label that better indicates it represents the bank charges associated with credit/debit card transactions.

registered online. Eliminating the electronic payment fee for online transactions would currently cost WisDOT approximately \$1.3 million, and this cost would rise if more households chose his option after the elimination of this fee.

#### Making DMV Facilities and Emissions Inspection Sites More Accessible

Currently there are DMV facilities in 89 cities, with at least one facility in each of Wisconsin's 72 counties. In the most populated counties, these DMV facilities are open during weekday business hours, but not during evening hours and on weekends. In the less populated counties, DMV offices may only be open for a couple weekdays each week. For example, in Wood County the DMV facility in Wisconsin Rapids is only open during business hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while the DMV facility in Marshfield is only open during business hours on Mondays and Wednesdays. As one would expect less foot traffic in these Wood County facilities than in larger cities, it would appear to be cost effective that these facilities operate on a limited basis. In deciding whether to increase the hours of operation for these facilities, it is important to keep in mind that only a small percentage of respondents to our survey expressed a preference for renewing their registrations at a DMV facility, and that there are convenient registration alternatives.

Emissions inspections are required in seven Southeastern Wisconsin counties on a biennial basis. Some respondents to our survey indicated that they experienced difficulties in scheduling emissions tests, but we note that Wisconsin recently undertook efforts to address this issue. Beginning in July of 2012, the State of Wisconsin greatly expanded the number of inspection sites from nine to over 200. We believe that the complaints that arose concerning emissions inspections might have arisen from respondents' experiences prior to the expansion of this network.

#### **Experiences of Other States**

We reviewed the registration processes of three states where there were significant changes in recent years—Indiana, Mississippi, and Missouri—to see if they provide any examples of changes that might be useful in Wisconsin.

In 2008, the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) contracted with 3M to make operational changes to the provision and distribution of license plates. 3M handles the fulfillment of license plate orders, while PEN Products (the penal system) manufactures the license plates. Inventories of manufactured plates are sent to the 3M fulfillment center, where the transaction is completed. The 3M fulfillment center prints the registration forms and decals at the time a vehicle owner orders a license plate, then packages the license plate with the printed materials and mails the package to the vehicle owner. All registration renewals are also done by mail. This program was designed to reduce government cost and reduce workload at BMV offices, rather than to increase vehicle registration compliance. In fact, eliminating the option of in-person renewals could arguably have the unintended consequence of reducing compliance to some extent.

The vehicle registration process in Mississippi is considerably different from the registration process in Wisconsin. Registration is handled by the Mississippi Department of Revenue through county tax collectors, leading to a highly decentralized system. Also, license plates are assigned to a vehicle and owner in Mississippi, so whenever a vehicle is sold, scrapped, or donated, a new license plate must be purchased for a new vehicle. In addition, vehicles are subject to substantial county-based ad valorem taxes (on the order of several hundred dollars per year) so that the incentive for non-compliance with vehicle registration laws is substantially higher in Mississippi than in Wisconsin. The decentralized

Mississippi system has led to problems with auditing and inventory management. Historically, the Mississippi Department of Revenue centrally printed registration decals and shipped them to the tax offices in 82 counties. Thus each county held its own inventory of decals, and the state found it difficult to keep accurate accounting of these county inventories. In 2010, the state contracted with 3M to implement a print-on-demand (POD) registration renewal system with automated auditing and inventory management. This system is based on an information technology network, with statewide centralized record keeping and printers located in each county. At the time of each vehicle renewal transaction, the county prints a validation form and decal on blank stock, and the central office records the transaction. 3M and its partner ITI are responsible for hardware, software, consumables, inventory management, training, and ongoing maintenance. As was the case with Indiana, this new system primarily reduced costs and increased efficiency rather than improving compliance.

In 2010, Missouri began offering enhanced security tabs for license plates. These tabs show the unique license plate number associated with the vehicle registration in addition to the registration expiration date. The enhanced security tabs were offered in response to the concern that registration stickers were being stolen. Since the enhanced sticker now includes the vehicle's license plate number, law enforcement can quickly determine whether the sticker matches its plate. Our field research for this project suggests that stolen stickers are not a significant problem in Wisconsin. This result is not surprising, as the Wisconsin stickers disintegrate if they are removed from the plate. Also, households who lose their stickers can get replacement stickers from the WisDOT at no charge.

## Conclusions

Given the relatively low number of vehicles operating with expired registrations in Wisconsin, WisDOT needs to give careful consideration to the relative benefits versus the relative costs of any suggested changes to the vehicle registration process prior to their implementation. One possible change concerns vehicle owners receiving renewal notices by mail, and addresses the issue of owners forgetting to renew their registrations. This change would involve mailing a follow-up notice if the registration actually expires. The second possible change addresses the issue of mailed renewal notifications getting lost, and it would involve either substituting the postal card renewal notice with a renewal notice mailed in an envelope, or changing the color of the renewal notice so that it would be more noticeable to the vehicle owner. The third possible change would involve the elimination of the convenience fee for online credit and debit card transactions. All three of these possible changes would create additional costs to WisDOT



**Appendix 1**  
**Breakdown of Light Trucks by Curb Weight and Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR)**

**Light Trucks Photographed in Survey**

The following is a tabulation of light trucks photographed in our survey, broken down by curb weight and GVWR. The area shaded in green represents vehicles deemed “likely in compliance.” The area shaded in pink represents vehicles deemed “likely not in compliance.” The area shaded in yellow represents vehicles deemed “possibly not in compliance.”

Columbia County

Curb Weight	LTK “A” Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	12	13	0	0
3501-3600	0	3	0	0
3601-3700	0	1	0	0
3701-3800	0	2	0	0
3801-3900	1	1	0	0
3901-4000	0	5	1	0
4001-4100	0	1	0	0
4101-4200	0	1	2	0
4201-4300	0	1	3	0
4301-4400	0	2	1	0
4401-4500	0	1	0	0
Over 4500	0	0	7	1

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	3	21	63	0
5001-5100	0	0	4	0
5101-5200	0	0	4	1
5201-5300	0	0	1	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	0
5401-5500	0	0	3	0
5501-5600	0	0	1	1
5601-5700	0	0	1	0
5701-5800	0	0	1	0
5801-5900	0	0	1	2
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	0	10	17
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

La Crosse County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	8	7	0	0
3501-3600	1	0	0	0
3601-3700	0	1	0	0
3701-3800	0	0	0	0
3801-3900	0	1	0	0
3901-4000	0	5	0	0
4001-4100	0	1	0	0
4101-4200	0	1	1	0
4201-4300	0	0	0	0
4301-4400	0	0	0	0
4401-4500	0	1	1	0
Over 4500	0	0	7	1

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	2	12	44	1
5001-5100	0	0	4	1
5101-5200	0	0	1	0
5201-5300	0	0	3	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	0
5401-5500	0	0	1	0
5501-5600	0	0	1	0
5601-5700	0	0	0	0
5701-5800	0	0	0	0
5801-5900	0	0	1	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	0	9	6
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Milwaukee County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	18	14	0	0
3501-3600	0	0	0	0
3601-3700	0	2	0	0
3701-3800	0	3	0	0
3801-3900	0	4	0	0
3901-4000	0	5	1	0
4001-4100	0	1	2	0
4101-4200	0	0	0	0
4201-4300	0	0	2	0
4301-4400	0	3	1	0
4401-4500	0	2	2	0
Over 4500	0	1	10	6

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	2	11	27	0
5001-5100	0	0	4	1
5101-5200	0	0	3	0
5201-5300	0	0	2	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	1
5401-5500	0	0	2	3
5501-5600	0	0	0	0
5601-5700	0	0	0	0
5701-5800	0	0	0	0
5801-5900	0	0	0	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	1	12	11
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Outagamie County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	4	11	0	0
3501-3600	0	1	0	0
3601-3700	0	1	0	0
3701-3800	0	0	0	0
3801-3900	0	1	0	0
3901-4000	0	2	1	0
4001-4100	0	0	0	0
4101-4200	0	1	0	0
4201-4300	0	0	2	0
4301-4400	0	0	1	0
4401-4500	0	2	1	0
Over 4500	0	0	12	1

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	0	10	40	1
5001-5100	0	0	3	0
5101-5200	0	0	5	0
5201-5300	0	0	1	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	0
5401-5500	0	0	1	0
5501-5600	0	0	0	0
5601-5700	0	0	3	1
5701-5800	0	0	0	0
5801-5900	0	0	2	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	0	8	3
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Walworth County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	12	21	0	0
3501-3600	0	1	0	0
3601-3700	0	3	0	0
3701-3800	0	3	0	0
3801-3900	0	3	0	0
3901-4000	0	0	1	0
4001-4100	0	1	0	0
4101-4200	0	0	0	0
4201-4300	0	0	3	0
4301-4400	0	0	0	0
4401-4500	0	1	1	0
Over 4500	0	0	11	2

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	2	29	47	1
5001-5100	0	0	3	2
5101-5200	0	0	3	0
5201-5300	0	0	1	0
5301-5400	0	0	1	0
5401-5500	0	0	1	0
5501-5600	0	0	2	0
5601-5700	0	0	1	0
5701-5800	0	0	0	0
5801-5900	0	0	0	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	1	20	17
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0



Washington County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	18	13	0	0
3501-3600	0	1	0	0
3601-3700	0	3	1	0
3701-3800	0	4	0	0
3801-3900	0	3	0	0
3901-4000	0	2	1	0
4001-4100	0	3	0	0
4101-4200	0	1	1	0
4201-4300	0	2	3	0
4301-4400	0	1	1	0
4401-4500	0	2	2	0
Over 4500	0	1	7	0

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	1	17	69	0
5001-5100	0	0	9	0
5101-5200	0	0	0	1
5201-5300	0	0	5	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	1
5401-5500	0	0	5	0
5501-5600	0	0	0	1
5601-5700	0	0	0	1
5701-5800	0	0	0	1
5801-5900	0	0	1	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	1	13	29
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Winnebago County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	5	14	0	0
3501-3600	0	3	0	0
3601-3700	0	2	0	0
3701-3800	0	3	0	0
3801-3900	0	1	0	0
3901-4000	0	2	0	0
4001-4100	0	0	1	0
4101-4200	0	2	0	0
4201-4300	0	0	1	0
4301-4400	0	1	0	0
4401-4500	0	1	0	0
Over 4500	0	0	10	1

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	2	8	45	0
5001-5100	0	0	1	0
5101-5200	0	0	1	1
5201-5300	0	0	1	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	0
5401-5500	0	0	2	0
5501-5600	0	0	0	1
5601-5700	0	0	0	0
5701-5800	0	0	1	0
5801-5900	0	0	0	1
5901-6000	0	0	1	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	1	9	7
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Wood County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	6	17	0	0
3501-3600	0	1	0	0
3601-3700	0	1	0	0
3701-3800	0	3	0	0
3801-3900	0	1	0	0
3901-4000	0	2	0	0
4001-4100	0	3	0	0
4101-4200	0	0	0	0
4201-4300	0	0	2	0
4301-4400	0	3	1	0
4401-4500	0	2	1	0
Over 4500	0	1	9	0

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	2	20	57	0
5001-5100	0	0	0	0
5101-5200	0	0	1	0
5201-5300	0	0	1	0
5301-5400	0	0	0	0
5401-5500	0	0	2	0
5501-5600	0	0	0	0
5601-5700	0	0	1	0
5701-5800	0	0	0	0
5801-5900	0	0	0	0
5901-6000	0	0	0	0
Over 6000	0	0	0	0

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations			
	GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	1	18	13
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

### Light Trucks Currently Registered in County

For the makes and models of light trucks photographed in our survey, we collected data on total current registrations for the eight counties. For example, if we photographed a 1999 Ford F-150 in our survey, we collected data on all 1999 Ford F-150 light trucks in the eight counties. The following tables show a breakdown of these light trucks by curb weight and GVWR.

#### Columbia County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	408	567	0	0
3501-3600	2	9	0	0
3601-3700	0	27	0	0
3701-3800	0	20	0	0
3801-3900	0	17	0	0
3901-4000	0	75	23	0
4001-4100	0	55	29	0
4101-4200	0	33	34	0
4201-4300	0	2	66	0
4301-4400	0	33	24	0
4401-4500	0	12	45	0
Over 4500	0	5	211	27

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	50	573	2952	30
5001-5100	0	0	196	38
5101-5200	0	0	118	32
5201-5300	0	0	52	3
5301-5400	0	0	1	15
5401-5500	0	0	71	30
5501-5600	0	0	6	23
5601-5700	0	0	2	9
5701-5800	0	0	13	16
5801-5900	0	0	5	4
5901-6000	0	0	0	1
Over 6000	0	0	0	6

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	0	35	474	723
7001-7100	0	0	0	1
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

La Crosse County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	687	1014	0	0
3501-3600	2	19	0	0
3601-3700	0	39	0	0
3701-3800	0	43	0	0
3801-3900	7	45	0	0
3901-4000	0	158	18	0
4001-4100	0	63	53	0
4101-4200	0	28	46	1
4201-4300	0	4	106	0
4301-4400	0	35	45	0
4401-4500	0	18	54	0
Over 4500	0	12	303	25

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	119	1084	4286	26
5001-5100	0	0	274	36
5101-5200	0	0	194	29
5201-5300	0	0	80	6
5301-5400	0	0	8	11
5401-5500	0	0	105	31
5501-5600	0	0	9	18
5601-5700	0	0	5	6
5701-5800	0	0	21	9
5801-5900	0	0	20	3
5901-6000	0	0	0	1
Over 6000	0	0	0	7



Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	1	90	932	799
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Milwaukee County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	2550	3469	0	0
3501-3600	14	82	0	0
3601-3700	0	147	6	0
3701-3800	0	220	0	0
3801-3900	18	197	0	0
3901-4000	0	770	130	0
4001-4100	0	435	439	0
4101-4200	0	112	338	1
4201-4300	0	17	503	0
4301-4400	0	223	236	0
4401-4500	0	55	301	0
Over 4500	0	38	1800	227

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	289	2668	8570	66
5001-5100	0	0	752	86
5101-5200	0	0	344	108
5201-5300	0	0	173	49
5301-5400	0	0	22	55
5401-5500	0	0	319	78
5501-5600	0	0	24	58
5601-5700	0	0	21	47
5701-5800	0	0	78	35
5801-5900	0	0	38	12
5901-6000	0	0	2	14
Over 6000	0	0	0	14

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	14	231	2704	1826
7001-7100	0	0	0	1
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Outagamie County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	719	1123	0	0
3501-3600	7	22	0	0
3601-3700	0	36	5	0
3701-3800	0	74	0	0
3801-3900	4	67	0	0
3901-4000	0	193	45	0
4001-4100	0	106	70	0
4101-4200	0	36	111	0
4201-4300	0	5	186	0
4301-4400	0	77	85	0
4401-4500	0	32	112	0
Over 4500	0	16	523	55

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	95	1395	7209	44
5001-5100	0	0	384	77
5101-5200	0	0	280	100
5201-5300	0	0	129	22
5301-5400	0	0	9	39
5401-5500	0	0	212	85
5501-5600	0	0	24	34
5601-5700	0	0	15	32
5701-5800	0	0	40	31
5801-5900	0	0	23	9
5901-6000	0	0	0	4
Over 6000	0	0	0	17

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	2	109	1268	1695
7001-7100	0	0	0	2
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Walworth County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	734	965	0	0
3501-3600	3	19	0	0
3601-3700	0	40	1	0
3701-3800	0	40	0	0
3801-3900	4	33	0	0
3901-4000	0	146	15	0
4001-4100	0	73	54	0
4101-4200	0	18	55	0
4201-4300	0	1	125	0
4301-4400	0	40	49	0
4401-4500	0	9	59	0
Over 4500	0	16	342	53

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	102	915	3560	44
5001-5100	0	0	254	33
5101-5200	0	0	147	46
5201-5300	0	0	71	24
5301-5400	0	0	10	23
5401-5500	0	0	83	41
5501-5600	0	0	11	34
5601-5700	0	0	8	28
5701-5800	0	0	20	21
5801-5900	0	0	15	12
5901-6000	0	0	1	4
Over 6000	0	0	0	10

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	1	95	1043	1228
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Washington County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	593	817	0	0
3501-3600	8	14	0	0
3601-3700	0	29	1	0
3701-3800	0	38	0	0
3801-3900	3	30	0	0
3901-4000	0	123	18	0
4001-4100	0	80	41	0
4101-4200	0	26	65	0
4201-4300	0	1	95	0
4301-4400	0	48	40	0
4401-4500	0	17	85	0
Over 4500	0	19	303	45

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	78	848	4674	28
5001-5100	0	0	303	40
5101-5200	0	0	134	48
5201-5300	0	0	75	10
5301-5400	0	0	3	31
5401-5500	0	0	91	39
5501-5600	0	0	8	38
5601-5700	0	0	7	21
5701-5800	0	0	24	31
5801-5900	0	0	20	9
5901-6000	0	0	1	4
Over 6000	0	0	0	9

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	1	58	934	1160
7001-7100	0	0	0	1
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

Winnebago County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	743	1191	0	0
3501-3600	9	27	0	0
3601-3700	0	52	5	0
3701-3800	0	44	0	0
3801-3900	11	60	0	0
3901-4000	0	189	37	0
4001-4100	0	102	84	0
4101-4200	0	42	100	0
4201-4300	0	3	152	0
4301-4400	0	58	58	0
4401-4500	0	30	107	0
Over 4500	0	18	474	42

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	79	1304	5776	34
5001-5100	0	0	353	37
5101-5200	0	0	218	66
5201-5300	0	0	134	17
5301-5400	0	0	6	36
5401-5500	0	0	170	59
5501-5600	0	0	21	40
5601-5700	0	0	15	33
5701-5800	0	0	42	24
5801-5900	0	0	27	12
5901-6000	0	0	3	4
Over 6000	0	0	0	8

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	6	80	1044	1136
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0



Wood County

Curb Weight	LTK "A" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 3500	384	629	0	0
3501-3600	2	13	0	0
3601-3700	0	31	2	0
3701-3800	0	25	0	0
3801-3900	4	31	0	0
3901-4000	0	99	19	0
4001-4100	0	56	30	0
4101-4200	0	13	63	0
4201-4300	0	0	82	0
4301-4400	0	30	27	0
4401-4500	0	7	38	0
Over 4500	0	8	203	20

Curb Weight	LTK "B" Registrations GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 5000	120	1025	3917	32
5001-5100	0	0	191	36
5101-5200	0	0	173	40
5201-5300	0	0	113	10
5301-5400	0	0	0	10
5401-5500	0	0	76	23
5501-5600	0	0	3	17
5601-5700	0	0	7	11
5701-5800	0	0	20	15
5801-5900	0	0	5	7
5901-6000	0	0	0	2
Over 6000	0	0	0	6

Curb Weight	LTK "C" Registrations			
	GVWR Range			
	Under 4500	4501-6000	6001-8000	Over 8000
Under 7000	2	74	1119	921
7001-7100	0	0	0	0
7101-7200	0	0	0	0
7201-7300	0	0	0	0
7301-7400	0	0	0	0
7401-7500	0	0	0	0
7501-7600	0	0	0	0
7601-7700	0	0	0	0
7701-7800	0	0	0	0
7801-7900	0	0	0	0
7901-8000	0	0	0	0
Over 8000	0	0	0	0

## Appendix 2

### Suggestions for Improving the Registration Process

#### Households We Observed with Expired Registrations

- I've never been late but I've had to borrow the money to pay for it because it's expensive.
- Make all plates expire at the end of the month. Allow phone pay again – a lot of people don't have Internet, but most have phones
- Lower cost – for a family of multiple vehicles it is outrageous
- Upon renewal notice, send a letter/statement with a pre-addressed return envelope
- Anything I get in the mail needs to be paid in 15 days. You are a month and a half way too long. People misplace or forget. The convenience store is a great idea! Would also do an auto-pay from my checking account. I would also do online if there wasn't a charge for credit card.
- Make more places with later or weekend hours available to renew.
- Stronger penalties for those who do not pay on time.
- Lower the registration fee for those who pay on time each year.
- I would like to go back to doing everything the old way, everyone doesn't have a computer.
- Allow user to renew online at no additional cost. That is the sole reason for being late in the past.
- The fee is too high.
- Didn't get renewal card – lost in the mail. Late renewal card reminder would be appreciated – only new tags were expired when I got pulled over – personally do not check by stickers.
- Have a designated area at the DMV for just plate/sticker renewal. I don't think the process should involve ticket pulling and long wait periods. It should be a quick in and out process. (15 minutes at the most)
- Due to our rural location the hours are not conducive to getting to the DMV when they are open. An online option would serve my needs more.
- I avoid going to the DMV unless absolutely necessary because everything about it is so inconvenient. Paying online would be great if you weren't trying to make more money off us with the "convenience" fee. Plate renewal fees have gone up more than enough!
- Please make sure you are sending letter to current, up-to-date address
- It's hard to get sticker to stick in winter time. Should have a place at DMV that takes only license plate renewals – should not have to wait for 45 minutes or so, or a drop-off box outside and not have to pay \$3 fee + amount.
- Renewal notices would be better for me by email as well as mail in case I may not have access to email. Do away with stickers.
- I find it hard to get to an emissions testing station.
- If deer registration and hunter licenses can be bought at certain stations, why not vehicle/trailer licenses. Also post card readily lost in our "snail" mail services now in rural areas. An envelope is always more likely to be appropriately handled and does not stick on to other mail.
- I did it online for the first time and it was great. I did not like paying the \$1.50 but I understand it took me 2 minutes and I was done. I can justify the \$1.50 by the time you use a check and an envelope and a stamp you pay about the same but if they could get rid of the \$1.50 that would be nice.
- Even though advance notice is nice, because notice/bill comes so early, it gets set aside and forgotten.

- Send a self-addressed return envelope with notice. If not, clearly mark who to send it to.
- Why a convenience fee?
- Most important is receiving renewal notice.
- I feel like the cost is too high. I pay for car loan, full insurance & registration plus the fuel prices are ridiculous anymore too. My wage hasn't increased in over 8 years but everything else has. You can't afford to go without a car. A person feels trapped.
- Postcards just don't get noticed well in our mail. Postcard + email or just email is better for us.
- I can't be the only person that the notice gets lost in the mail. I was embarrassed to discover that it wasn't up to date. Perhaps a second notice if not paid on time.
- Keep the usual renewal fee – don't add any "convenience fees" on – especially considering online is an automated process and takes out the extra man hours. Put in another DMV in Appleton.
- When applying stickers over multiple stickers it hard to adhere, also hard in cold weather.
- The fees and expenses of making your car/truck legal to drive is insane. Every year more fees for this. A flat rate fee would be a nice surprise.
- Renew every two years instead of every year.
- It would be so much more convenient to have either later hours or open on Saturday for a very large group of people that work a "9-5" job. I also liked the way it was before when you walk in, grab a ticket, and go sit down based on the reason you are there. The fact that things keep changing so often (processes) is also very annoying. It's also never enjoyable because everyone who works there is not in a good mood.
- Go electronic for all communication – snail mail is not taken seriously.
- Don't mail the renewal so early.
- I did not renew in 2013 – I relocated from Appleton to Oshkosh and missed the forward of my address. I did not realize my plates were expired until I was pulled over by the police and notified.

### Randomly Selected Households

- Make the post card a bright color. So it stands out. Blue and white look like everything else.
- Have sticker be placed on a more convenient place on the license plate. Have notice come just a month before it needs renewing.
- Make it a one-time fee for as long as one owned that vehicle. Eliminate front plate. Why is it ok for some states and not WI. Implement RFI in license plate for law enforcement verification stickers. Place county of residence on each plate.
- I don't understand how the government thinks that fines and \$1.50 for use of card, how we can afford to keep giving our money away.
- Website could be more user friendly.
- I worry about fake web sites that look like the DMV's. I also feel that we should not have to pay a convenience fee if we get our stickers where we have our emissions tests done. It would also be nice to have an initial text and also a reminder a week before due if I forget.
- Have more places to emissions test my vehicle. When the emissions centers were open it was so much easier. Last year it took me several attempts over two days to find a place and then had to schedule an appointment – kind of an inconvenience!
- Reduce fee.

- I transferred two titles, because of my wife's death, to my name at a DMV office. Got both titles same day. One week later received same titles from Madison, with no registration. What to do with two titles for same auto and not new registration?
- Should not be extra fee when paying at DMV.
- This last time the stickers were not sticky. Consider 2 year registration renewal.
- Prices are too high. Maybe don't send out so far in advance 3-4 weeks is good 6-7 weeks too long.
- MVD phone system is terrible – get put in a never ending loop.
- Get rid of the front plate requirement for autos, would provide a 50% savings in plate production costs.
- Increase amount and have longer renew time. Take 1 year to 2 years – like boats.