



TARRANT COUNTY TAX OFFICE

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BETSY PRICE
Tax Assessor-Collector

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Chairman Carona , Chairman Pickett and members of the Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security

Thank you for inviting us to share with you our thoughts and ideas on DMV and on vehicle registration.

I have been Tarrant County Tax Assessor Collector for 9 years and owned a dealer title service for 17 years before that and have served as President of the Tax Assessors Association and as their legislative chairman. I have worked with title and registration for many years. I remember when registrations were staggered and everything renewed on April 1st. We have come a long way since then and we in the Tax Assessors Association and my friends in the auto business and in fact citizens I talk to are all looking forward to the new DMV and the many exciting opportunities that a new agency can implement .

The tax assessors are partners with DMV in the registering and titling of 18 million vehicles statewide. The public often is not aware that DMV is behind the scene and generally thinks that our offices are responsible for all decisions being implemented in registration and titling. The public appreciates and indeed depends on the fact that there is a local elected official who is responsible for providing service that all the motoring public must use. We in turn appreciate our partnership with DMV and know that with continued improvement in communication and technology all citizens will benefit.

The common complaint we receive about registrations is the difficulty in knowing what the correct fees are for any vehicle. Banks, Finance companies, auto dealer, truckers, and the public as well as the tax assessor's staff all struggle with the fees associated with registering vehicles and titling them in Texas. Even when DMV quotes registration fees they do not include local fees, so the citizens often remit the wrong amounts to the tax office. HB 2553 that passed in the 81st legislator will be a big help in reducing the difficulty in getting fees correct.

I have 105 staff members working in Motor Vehicle and training them and my phone staff to quote the correct registration fees is an ongoing challenge. Recently the Star Telegram, our newspaper, reported on the issues involving registration and the inequity between light duty trucks and passenger vehicles, many of these issues are settled by the changes coming Sept. 2011, but there are still significant issues to be resolved.

Tarrant County licensed 1.5 million vehicles in '09 and titled 500,000. We try to find the fastest, smartest, and least expensive way to serve our citizens. We know that many of the issues encountered in the tax offices are a result of the limitations of RTS (Registration and Title System) and we are anxious for Vision 21 to be implemented to better serve our citizens. One good example of the limitation is the multi year sticker problem that is a work around meaning the system can't do it so it is manual and more

for Vision 21 to be implemented to better serve our citizens. One good example of the limitation is the multi year sticker problem that is a work around meaning the system can't do it so it is manual and more time consuming and complex because the system cannot be programmed to accept the local fees for 2 years. Vision 21 will bring many features that will speed the handling of registration and titling by making the system, faster, and easy to train clerks and dealer title clerks to use. Ease and speed of upcoming technology will help us move more registrations and turn the funds quicker. I heard recently that 1000 people a day are moving to Texas and the county staff and DMV staff will not necessarily grow to match. The use of smarter and faster technology and systems is vital to our service. We realize that in this economy, sales taxes have taken a nose dive and this has a major affect on the state and in turn many of the counties acting as the states agent for DMV must be diligent about titling and registering all vehicles as rapidly as possible.

Registration fees in Texas have not increased for 25 years and people moving into Texas are often shocked at how reasonable our fees are, but also how disproportionate they are (such as light truck and passenger cars), they don't like the new resident fee of \$90, but the registration fees are low in many peoples opinion. We are not advocating an increase in fees but realize that it may be coming and want to be certain that it is equitable and easy to use for everyone working with registration. We need to be certain that changes do not generate more problems and system "work arounds" (these are manual, complex and time consuming) do not slow down our ability to serve the motoring public. We also know that fee increases could cause more unregistered vehicles on the streets and that is not anything that Texas wants or needs. But Texans do want excellent streets and highways and a system of registration that is equitable as related to how other similar vehicles use our highways.

Registration renewals are printed as much as 90 days in advance and mailed about 60 days out. This causes many issues for local offices. We issue in Tarrant County about 3000 refunds totaling \$300,000 because citizens mail or bring in the renewal notice for a vehicle they don't still own and later realize what they have done and ask for a refund. (amazing but true). Also when the year models changes, we issue 100s of refunds because the renewal notice was printed so far in advance and the amount due has changed with the year change. This issue will be partially solved when the Sept 2011 changes take place. The RTS system is a batch processing system and the records are not updated for 48 hours after processing. Real time processing with Vision 21 will be a significant help for many taxpayers, issues of wrong title surrendered , clerical errors, and changes in ownership that are real time will help with toll tag tickets , red light tickets , and should help law enforcement know who they are dealing with when they make a stop. The RTS system has also limited to large counties ability to process mail electronically in batches and this would help us to free up clerks to serve the walk up public or dealers. Vision 21 must be robust and allow different options for different size counties.

The Tax Assessors are committed to continuing to work with DMV to provide the best service to all Texas citizens and to make the title and registration experience as pleasant as possible. Since tax offices are the first and often the only contact citizens have with DMV. We are glad to be a resource for the Transportation committee and for DMV. We look forward to working to improving all services to our constituents. Tax Assessors know their role in gathering and processing data and holding their staff to the highest standards enhances our relationship with DMV and is of great importance to law

that can and should be implemented soon, not 10 years from now as is the fear of many in our industry. Much of the money for technology improvement has been collected by the Tax Assessor over the last 11 years in the form of \$1 collected with each sticker sold by the counties with a population over 50 thousand, in '09 the 49 counties collecting this fee generated \$19 million, in Tarrant alone in '09 we collected \$1.5 million . The excitement generated by a new agency that is focused on the 4 divisions under it must continue and our hope is that with DMV the technology and communication needed to better serve Texas will be moved forward in a timely fashion.

Thank you for hearing us today. We are excited and ready to work to serve your constituents and our also.

Betsy Price, RTA

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