Wisconsin Vehicle Registration
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Vehicle Registration

Vehicle registration in Wisconsin is an essential task for all car owners. Before you can operate a personal vehicle legally in Wisconsin, you must register your car with the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

Registering your vehicle helps the DMV regulate the types of vehicles operating on highways and streets across the state. With this guide, you will obtain all the necessary information regarding motor vehicle registration. Whether you are looking to renew expiring registration, replace vehicle registration or update your current vehicle registration, we will provide you with all the necessary information. To learn more about vehicle registration and your registration responsibilities, continue reading below.
Minimum Insurance
Requirements

One important part of vehicle registration is making sure you sign up for automotive insurance.

You need to show your car insurance card as proof of financial responsibility during a routine traffic stop or after an accident. Without proof of a policy, you cannot perform essential driving tasks. You must make sure to carry your proof of insurance with you at all times when operating a car. You must meet the following minimum requirements for motor vehicle coverage:

- $10,000 to cover property damage
- $25,000 for injuries or death to one person
- $50,000 for injuries or death of more than one person

Failing to meet these minimum coverage requirements may lead to severe financial penalties. If you drive without automotive insurance, you can face $500 in fines. If you do not have insurance on you after a car accident or traffic stop, you must pay a $10 fee. If you falsify your proof of insurance, you can face up to $5,000 in fines from the DMV.
Registering Your Vehicle in Wisconsin

When you buy a vehicle, either from a dealership or from a private party, you will need to register your car with the Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles.

When registering your standard automobile, the Wisconsin DMV issues two permanent license plates that you must properly affix to the front and rear of your vehicle.

When you receive your car registration documentation, you must keep the documents in your car at all times. When registering your car, you are also applying for the necessary license plates and decals for your vehicle. You can face financial and legal penalties from law enforcement if you cannot provide proof of registration during a traffic stop. When registering your standard automobile, then Wisconsin DMV issues two permanent license plates that you must properly affix to the front and rear your vehicle. The DMV also issues validation stickers for the rear license plate. Continue reading below for more information on registering new and used vehicles in Wisconsin.
Registering a New Vehicle

When purchasing a new vehicle in Wisconsin, you must obtain license plates and registration no more than two business days after your purchase. To register your vehicle, you must first apply for temporary license plate with the dealership, a DMV office, or a temporary license plate agent. If the dealership offers permanent license plate and registration services, you do not have to perform any additional tasks. You may apply for a 90-day, temporary license plate from the dealership at no additional cost.

If you apply for your temporary license plate with a DMV office or a license plate agent, you must pay the full license plate cost and additional fees to complete the transaction. The Title/License Plate Application (MV1) is the application you or the dealership must submit to the Wisconsin DMV—this document is an application for a certificate of title, license plates and vehicle registration in Wisconsin. After applying for a temporary license plate, you will receive the permanent plates and the necessary plate decals in the mail. When applying for vehicle registration, you must pay $75 for permanent plates and $3 for a temporary license plate. Temporary license plate agents may also charge an additional $5 for registration services.

Registering a Used Vehicle

If you purchased your vehicle from a private party or if your car dealer is not able to process your registration, you must complete this process on your own. Fortunately, the Wisconsin DMV offers many ways to register a motor vehicle. You may complete this transaction in person, online or by mail, depending on your eligibility. You must make sure to have temporary or permanent license plates on your car no later than two business days after your purchase. You may transfer permanent license plates to your new vehicle purchase if you have old license plates available. Otherwise, you must apply for temporary plates and receive your permanent plates in the mail.

If you are selling a used car, you must make sure to have the vehicle’s certificate of title in your name. Additionally, if you owe any money on the vehicle to a lender, you must first pay off the remaining balance before selling the car. Within 30 days of the sale, you must complete a seller notification form online. When signing over the title, you must fill out the odometer information, the sale price, brand disclosure and the lien release document, if applicable. You must make sure to provide the buyer’s name and address on the title. Additionally, you must remove the license plates from the vehicle. If desired, you may complete a bill of sale document for your personal records, available here.

If you are buying a used car, you must make sure to submit the registration application and display a permanent or temporary license plate no more than two business days after the transaction. When applying for vehicle registration, you must pay $75 for permanent plates and $3 for a temporary license plate. Temporary license plate agents may also charge an additional $5 for registration services.
In Person Registration

When applying for vehicle registration in person at a DMV office, a title & registration provider or a temporary license plate provider, you must provide:

- An original certificate of title with the signature of the previous owner.
- A Title /License Plate Application (MV1). The DMV suggests making a photocopy of the complete application for your records.
- Personal identification.
- Payment for the necessary fees. You may transfer a license plate instead, if available.

Accepted methods of payment vary based on where you register your vehicle. DMV offices accept cash, debit cards, checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. The Wisconsin DMV also accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards. Before visiting an authorized DMV agent, you should contact the agent for the accepted methods of payment.

Before making these registration transactions, you should contact the provider of your choice to discuss any additional fees. When applying for an original title or transferring the paperwork after a sale, you must pay a $69.50 fee. When applying for vehicle registration, you must pay $75 for permanent plates and $3 for a temporary license plate. Temporary license plate agents may also charge an additional $5 for registration services. If you visit a title & registration office, you may pay up to $19.50 for a title transaction. Starting Jan. 1, 2018, the DMV will also charge an electric vehicle fee of $100 if you are registering a car that only uses electrical energy. When completing this process in-person at the DMV office, you must also pay a $5 service fee. You may need to pay local and sales taxes and wheel taxes, depending on your location. You must also pay the necessary state sales tax.
Online Registration

The DMV also offers online services to transfer or receive Wisconsin license plates. The eMV Public system offers a convenient way to title and register your new vehicle purchase. When you begin the process online, the system will alert you if you are not eligible to use eMV for this transaction. For example, you may not use eMV Public to register:

- Leased vehicles.
- Vehicles titled in another state.
- Vehicles purchased from a car dealership in Wisconsin.

For a detailed list of eMV Public restrictions, click here. To use this online service, you must make sure to have the Wisconsin title, odometer reading and lien release document, if applicable. The eMV Public system will ask you to input the last four digits of your Social Security Number, your date of birth and your driver’s license number. You may submit payment by a debit card, credit card or Automated Clearing House (ACH) service. The DMV only accepts Visa, American Express, MasterCard or Discover cards. If you submit payments by credit or debit card, you must also pay a convenience fee. To use the online service, make sure you have a printer with standard sized paper to print your temporary license plate and receipt.

After you submit payment and print the temporary tag, you must mail in the following paperwork to complete the transaction:

- The receipt issued by eMV Public.
- The original certificate of title with the seller’s signature. You must also provide the original lien, if applicable.

After mailing this information to the address listed on your receipt, the DMV will mail out your vehicle registration, permanent license plates and title. The eMV Public tool will list all fees required to complete the transaction.
**By Mail Registration**

When applying for vehicle registration by mail, you must provide:

- An original certificate of title with the signature of the previous owner.
- A **Title /License Plate Application (MV1)**. The DMV suggests making a photocopy of the complete application for your records.
- Payment for the necessary fees. You may transfer a license plate instead, if available.

You must mail the application form, payment and the original title to:

**WI Dept. of Transportation**

P.O. Box 7949

Madison WI 53707-7949

You must make checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. When applying for an original title or transferring the paperwork after a sale, you must pay a $69.50 fee. When applying for vehicle registration, you must pay $75 for permanent plates and $3 for a temporary license plate. Starting January 2018, the DMV will also charge an electric vehicle fee of $100 if you are registering a car that only uses electrical energy. You may need to pay local and sales taxes and wheel taxes, depending on your county or city. You must also pay the necessary state sales tax. Contact your local DMV office for more information.

**Registering an Out-Of-State Vehicle**

If you are new Wisconsin resident, you must make sure to update the necessary vehicle registration information. You may apply in person at a **DMV office**, a **title & registration provider** or a **temporary license plate provider**, depending on your needs. You may also apply by mail, if desired. To transfer your out-of-state vehicle documents, you must gather the following information:

- An original certificate of title or vehicle registration card. If you submit your out-of-state title, you will receive a certificate of registration and a Wisconsin certificate of title. If you do not submit the out-of-state title, you will only receive a certificate of registration and you will not be able to sell your vehicle until you get a Wisconsin title.
- A **Title /License Plate Application (MV1)**. The DMV suggests making a photocopy of the complete application for your records.
- A form of personal identification. This is only necessary for in-person registrations.
- Payment for the necessary fees.

If you apply by mail, you must send the application, check and certificate of title to:

**WI Dept. of Transportation**

P.O. Box 7949

Madison WI 53707-7949
Before making these registration transactions, you should contact the provider of your choice to discuss any additional fees. When applying for an original title or transferring the paperwork after a sale, you must pay a $69.50 fee. When applying for vehicle registration, you must pay $75 for permanent plates and $3 for a temporary license plate. Temporary license plate agents may also charge an additional $5 for registration services. If you visit a title & registration office, you may pay up to $19.50 for a title transaction. Starting Jan. 1, 2018, the DMV will also charge an electric vehicle fee of $100 if you are registering a car that only uses electrical energy. When completing this process in-person at the DMV office, you must also pay a $5 service fee. You may need to pay local and sales taxes and wheel taxes, depending on your location. You must also pay the necessary state sales tax.

Accepted methods of payment vary based where you register your vehicle. DMV offices accept cash, debit cards, checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. The Wisconsin DMV also accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards. Before visiting an authorized DMV agent, you should contact the agent for the accepted methods of payment.
Renewing your vehicle registration is an important task you must perform to maintain your driving privileges. For a standard vehicle, license plates and registration will expire every year on the date of the previous registration.

The Division of Motor Vehicles will send a renewal notice at least one month before your registration expiration date. If you do not renew on time, you must pay a late fee in addition to the standard renewal fee. For your convenience, the Wisconsin DMV offers license plate and registration renewal services online, in person or by mail. Depending on the type of license plate you have, you may not be able to renew though all methods. Continue reading below for license plate and registration renewal.
In Person

You can renew your vehicle registration in person at certain DMV offices or at an authorized DMV agent. To renew in person at a DMV office or service provider, you must bring your registration renewal notice and an accepted method of payment. Methods of payment may vary based on the type of provider you visit. DMV offices accept cash, debit cards, checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust.

The Wisconsin DMV accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards. The DMV charges a convenience fee for all card payments. Before visiting an authorized DMV agent, you should contact the agent for the accepted methods of payment. Your annual vehicle registration costs $75, and you must pay a $10 late fee if you do not renew by the date of expiration. When visiting a DMV location for in-person renewal, you must pay a $3 service fee. A third-party agent may charge an additional fee up to $10 for a registration renewal transaction. When you renew in person, you will receive your new registration decal and certificate of registration immediately.

Online

Online registration renewal is a service available to eligible Wisconsin residents. If you are eligible, the mailed DMV registration notice will list a Renewal Reference Number (RRN) near the return address. If your notice does not have an RRN, you cannot renew online. If your RRN is incorrect after a license plate transfer, click here to find the correct number. Alternatively, if you subscribe to the eNotify service and receive your notice by email, you may renew online. You may not renew online if your address is not current with the Wisconsin DMV.

You may submit payment by a debit card, credit card or Automated Clearing House (ACH) service. The DMV only accepts Visa, American Express, MasterCard or Discover cards. If you submit payments by credit or debit card, you must also pay a convenience fee. Your annual vehicle registration costs $75, and you must pay a $10 late fee if you do not renew by the date of expiration. Once you submit payment, make sure print your renewal confirmation to keep in your car as proof of current registration. The DMV will send your new registration documents and decals within seven to 10 business days.

By Mail

You can renew by mail by simply filling out your renewal notice and submitting payment to the address printed on the notice or:

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 3279
Milwaukee, WI 53201-3279

Your annual vehicle registration costs $75, and you must pay a $10 late fee if you do not renew by the date of expiration. You must make checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. The DMV will send your new registration documents and decals within 10 business days.
Lost Registration Notice

If you lose your registration notice, it is important that you do not delay in getting a replacement notice. The DMV sends out the original notice at least 30 days before the expiration date to the last address it has on file. If necessary, make sure to update your DMV address records to avoid this issue in the future. If you lost or never received your renewal form, you can renew your registration online or in person. Otherwise, you may fill out a Substitute Renewal Notice form (MV2016), include a check for renewal fees and mail it to:

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 7911
Madison, WI 53707-7911

Your annual vehicle registration costs $75, and you must pay a $10 late fee if you do not renew by the date of expiration. You must make checks payable to Registration Fee Trust. The DMV will send your new registration documents and decals within 10 business days.
Driving without your vehicle registration documentation may lead to severe penalties and fines. In the event of a lost, stolen or damaged certificate of registration, you must replace your paperwork as soon as possible.

Continue reading below to learn about the duplicate registration request procedures available online and by mail.
Online

Replacing your certificate of registration online is a simple and convenient process. To request a duplicate copy of your car registration, you can begin the process by clicking here. You must have access to a standard printer and Adobe Acrobat Reader to print out a copy of your most recent registration. To request a duplicate certificate of registration online, you must provide:

- A current email address.
- Your driver’s license number.
- The last four numbers of your Social Security Number.
- Your date of birth.
- Your car’s vehicle identification number (VIN).

You must also use your credit card, debit card or Automated Clearing House (ACH) service for payment. A duplicate copy of your certificate of registration costs $2, but payments made with a debit or credit card will also have an additional convenience fee.

By Mail

To obtain a copy of your vehicle registration by mail you must fill out a Duplicate Certificate of Registration Application (MV2026), provide payment and send the request to:

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
PO Box 7911
Madison, WI 53707-7911

Checks for $2 must be made payable to Registration Fee Trust.
Updating Your Vehicle Registration

When you move to a new place of residence or legally change your name, you must inform the DMV to update your records.

Although you do not need to make changes on your physical vehicle documents immediately, it is important to make the changes in the DMV database so your future vehicle documents are accurate.
Change of Name

After you update your Social Security records with your new name, you can update your name with the DMV. You must change your name on your driver’s license documents in person at the nearest DMV office. When your registration is up for renewal, the DMV will issue updated records for your certificate of title and vehicle registration paperwork. If you want to update your registration documents before renewal, you may submit your vehicle’s title of ownership or confirmation of ownership. You may submit your certificate of title in person at a DMV office or by mail to:

Driver Information Section
P.O. Box 7983
Madison, WI 53707-7983

If you change your name on your title in person, you must pay a $5 fee. Methods of payment may vary based on the type of provider you visit. DMV offices accept cash, debit cards, checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. The Wisconsin DMV accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards. The DMV charges a convenience fee for all card payments. If you make the change by mail, the update is free of charge.

Change of Address

When moving to a new address, you must make sure to update your address information with the United States Postal Service. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation updates its vehicle registration address information with the information listed by the USPS. If you do not update your address with the USPS, the DMV will continue to use your old address for mailing out vehicle registration notices. The DMV will also continue to list your old address on your registration documents if you do not make the necessary changes with the USPS.
License Plates

When you register and title your vehicle, the DMV issues license plates and license plate decals for your vehicle. Submitting your annual registration renewal also renews your license plates.

For standard automobiles, the DMV issues decals and two license plates. When you renew your plates, the DMV will issue new decals that indicate the date of expiration. If you need new decals or license plates, you must order replacements as soon as possible to continue driving legally.

The Wisconsin DMV also offers specialty and personalized license plates for motor vehicles. These types of license plates can display a personalized license plate number or show your support for a particular organization. Some plates, such as an antique license plate, indicate a special designation of the vehicle.
Replacing License Plates

Your license plates help authorities identify your vehicle, which is why it is crucial that you always have legible license plates displayed on your car. If your license plate is lost, stolen or defaced, you must request a new one from the DMV. You may make this request online, in person or by mail, depending on the eligibility of your plates.

In Person
To renew your plates in person, you must bring the necessary payment and application to your local DMV office. You may click here to download the Replacement License Plate application (MV2118). To replace your plates, you must also submit a payment for $4 to renew your standard motor vehicle plates. Specialty or personalized license plates have additional fees listed on form MV2118. When you replace your license plates in person, you must pay an additional $5 service fee. DMV offices accept cash, debit cards, checks made payable to Registration Fee Trust. The Wisconsin DMV accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover credit cards. The DMV charges a convenience fee for all card payments.

By Mail
To renew your plates by mail, you must send the necessary payment and application to:

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 7911
Madison, WI 53707-7911

You may click here to download the Replacement License Plate application (MV2118). Checks for $4 must be made payable to Registration Fee Trust. Specialty or personalized license plates have additional fees listed on form MV2118.

Online
Depending on the type of license plate your currently hold, you may be eligible for online license plate replacement. You make click here for a full list of license plate types you may replace through the online service. For example, a standard license plate without personalization is eligible for online replacement. To use the online service, make sure you have a printer with standard sized paper to print your temporary license plate and receipt. To request a duplicate license online, you must provide:

- A current email address.
- Your driver’s license number.
- The last four numbers of your Social Security Number.
- Your date of birth.
- Your car’s vehicle identification number (VIN).

You may submit payment by a debit card, credit card or Automated Clearing House (ACH) service. The DMV only accepts Visa, American Express, MasterCard or Discover cards. If you submit payments by credit or debit card, you must also pay a convenience fee. To replace your car’s standard license plates, you must pay $4. Specialty license plates can cost up to $12 to replace, depending on the type of plate requested. Click here for a full list of prices on the Personalized and Special Plates FAQ page.

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Once you complete the transaction online, you must print out your temporary license plate and certificate of registration. Follow the instructions here for properly displaying your temporary license plate and make sure to keep your certificate of registration in your car at all times. If you only order one license plate for your car, make sure to remove the other plate when displaying your temporary license plate. The DMV will send you replacement tags and decals in seven to 10 business days.
Custom License Plates

Custom license plates allow you to select a unique combination of letters and numbers to display on your car. You may only complete this application by mail, and custom license plates are not eligible for replacement online. Before deciding on a personalized license plate number, you must check the database here to make sure your chosen number is available. To apply for personalized license plates, you must:

- Complete a Personalized License Plate Information and Application form (MV2428).
- Fill out the desired license plate personalization. When choosing a number for a standard vehicle, your requested license plate number must be one to seven characters long. You may only use numbers and/or capital letters. You must provide an explanation of the chosen license plate number.
- Provide payment. You must submit a check or money order made payable to Registration Fee Trust.
- If you only wish to reserve your chosen license plate personalization, do not fill out the section on vehicle information and make sure to check the Reserve Only box.

Mail the application and payment to:

Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Special Plates Unit
P.O. Box 7911
Madison, WI 53707-7911

Custom plates for a car cost an additional $15 each year, in addition to the standard registration fee of $75. You will receive your plates in four to six weeks after placing your order.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about personalized license plates, contact the Special Plates Unit:

- By email: special-plates.dmv@dot.wi.gov
- By phone: at 608-266-3041

Surrendering Wisconsin License Plates

License plates in Wisconsin are your property. When you sell a vehicle, you must keep the plates to either transfer them to another vehicle or destroy them on your own. The WI DMV does not require you to surrender your plates at any time. However, if you are coming from another state you may want to check with that state’s DMV to inquire about license plate disposal. The Wisconsin DMV will assign you a new set of plates when you register your car in the state.

If you wish to make sure nobody else uses a plate combination assigned to you, you may fill out a License Plate Cancellation Application (MV2514). This also applies to stolen or destroyed license plates, or plates left on the vehicle after a sale.
Vehicle Safety Tips

Before getting behind the wheel, it is important that your vehicle be prepared for a trip.

This means checking the safety features and making any needed changes to your vehicle to guarantee a safe drive.
Emergency Kit

One of the essentials to safe driving is having a basic emergency kit available in your vehicle at all times. This kit should include items such as water, extra batteries, rope, first-aid kit, matches and a whistle. During the winter months, it is also important to carry items such as blankets, non-perishable foods, extra gloves and socks, and a shovel.

Inclement Driving Weather

If you live in an area with snow or icy conditions during winter, you must take extra precautions when driving. Even rainy weather can create hazardous driving situations. Consider the below tips below to drive safely during inclement weather.
Do Not Rush!

Ice, snow and rain can create slippery and dangerous roads. Instead of driving fast and risking an accident as you hurry to get to your destination, try leaving a few minutes earlier than usual. This will allow you to drive slower and avoid other dangerous drivers without being late for an appointment. You should also slow down further back than you might normally do in favorable weather conditions so you can avoid abrupt and dangerous stops or turns.

Do Not Panic If You Skid or Slip

In the event that your vehicle does skid or slip while driving, make sure you do not panic and slam down on your brakes. Instead, apply slow and even pressure on your brakes until you stop. You must also gently steer your vehicle in the direction you need to go. You must not make sharp wheel turns or brake suddenly. Following this advice will prevent you from spinning further out of control.

Check Your Vehicle

Before you leave your house, make sure your vehicle’s controls, brakes, tank, tires, antifreeze, and exhaust are all in working order. You should make sure your tires are not worn down are too smooth, as poor tire tread can cause an accident. If you need to, you can replace your tires during the winter with snow tires or add snow chains to help provide safe driving conditions. It is also important that you remove all ice and snow from your car before you begin driving. You should never leave your windows icy or covered in snow, as this can obstruct your vision.
Drinking and Driving

Driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is a dangerous situation that can kill or severely injure drivers and passengers alike. You can prevent a tragedy by planning ahead and making responsible choices. Before you begin drinking, arrange for someone else to be the designated driver. If the designated driver also becomes intoxicated, it is important that you take a taxi. If you need to stop someone from driving while intoxicated, take away his or her keys and call for alternative transportation.

If you see someone who you suspect is drunk and showing signs of intoxication while driving – such as making wide turns, weaving, swerving, breaking erratically or turning abruptly – call 911 and contact authorities immediately. Make sure to avoid impaired drivers on the road to ensure your own safety. This could mean you pulling over until the driver is at a safe distance from your car.

Phone Use

Driving while using your cellphone is incredibly dangerous. Distracted driving can cause accidents, injury and death. Wisconsin legislation banned texting while driving and using cellphones in a construction zone. If you need to use your cellphone, you should pull over and come to a complete stop or wait until you get to your destination. Additionally, you can use a hands-free device to make calls while operating a vehicle. Click here for more information on cellphone use while driving in Wisconsin.

Things to Avoid

Driving is not always a relaxing experience. There are certain actions that can be both an annoyance and dangerous to you while driving on the road. Read the below tips to see potential behaviors and actions that can help you improve your driving experience.

Car Accidents

One way to avoid car accidents is to ensure that your vehicle is safe to drive. You should perform routine maintenance on things like your brakes, tires and steering. Tires may lose traction or inflation and you can easily lose control of your vehicle. You should also check to see that your brakes are functioning correctly or if the car needs any maintenance or replacement. You can take your vehicle to a mechanic or car dealership to make sure everything runs smoothly and safely.

Wasting Gas

If you drive often, start looking for ways to save on those expensive trips to the pump. You should avoid sudden acceleration and excessive speeding to make the most of your gasoline. Another way to save on gas is to make sure that your vehicle is functioning properly. You can do this by checking that your tires are properly inflated, your engine is well tuned, and that you use the correct type of fuel in your vehicle.

Aggressive Driving

Some drivers may exhibit dangerous and aggressive behavior while driving. Some of these aggressive driving tactics can include verbal or physical harassment of another motorist and unsafe vehicle operation. Aggressive driving can lead to reckless and dangerous behavior that can cause serious injuries on the road. Drivers should pay close attention to the road and avoid aggressive drivers when possible.
DMV Hours

and Locations

The DMV has offices conveniently located across the state. Click here to find your closest DMV customer service center and the services it offers. The DMV also offers online services for tasks like registration renewal or replacement.

You may contact the DMV by filling out an email form here. For general questions about your title or vehicle registration, you may contact the DMV by calling 608-264-7447. The best times to contact the DMV are between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The central office for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is located at:

Hill Farms State Transportation Building
4802 Sheboygan Avenue
Madison, WI 53705