

## CHAPTER 3

### REPORT IDENTIFYING MOTOR-VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS AND TAXATION

This chapter details the procedures for completing form FHWA-561, Report Identifying Motor-Vehicle Registration and Taxation. This form has been developed to report motor-vehicle ownership and registration features, including all fees and charges (except motor-fuel tax) associated with vehicles and their operation.

States may prepare form FHWA-561 on either a calendar year or State fiscal year basis. The selected 12-month reporting period must be indicated on page 1 of form FHWA-561. (See Chapter 1 for more information on report period options.)

The FHWA collects motor vehicle registration information from the States and disseminates that information to the public. Registration information is used by regulators and analysts at both the national and State levels to perform such tasks as forecasting tax revenue, highway deterioration, fuel consumption, and motor vehicle emissions. The raw data used to address these tasks and produce the tables published in *Highway Statistics* come mainly from the States. Thus it is critical that the registration information that FHWA receives and publishes is accurate, comprehensive and timely. FHWA also uses other sources of information on the vehicle fleets such as the Truck Inventory and Use Survey (TIUS), which is conducted by the Bureau of the Census every five years.

A microcomputer template using Lotus 1-2-3 is available for form FHWA-561. States are encouraged to use the microcomputer template. See Appendix B for information about the template and options for electronic transmission of data to FHWA.

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM FHWA-561

Form FHWA-561 is designed to record the total number of motor vehicles registered during a year, classified by types of vehicles, kinds of use, and the corresponding payments of registration fees, together with miscellaneous receipts connected with motor-vehicle registration and operation. Federally owned vehicles should be excluded from all entries on form FHWA-561.

#### Section I. Registration of Motor Vehicles, Trailers, etc., Classified by Type of Vehicle

The registrations recorded in section I should not include animal-drawn vehicles, streetcars, trolley buses, or such vehicles as agricultural tractors or road machinery not designed or licensed for highway transportation. All other vehicles, registered for use on the highways, whether operated privately or for hire, should be reported by vehicle type in section I.

Section I is designed to facilitate the recording of the net number of licenses sold or issued for individual vehicles of each type or class. It is recognized that the classification of registered vehicles called for in section I does not coincide with the registration classes in effect in some States. However, the States are urged to make an effort to fit the vehicles into these classes if at all possible. It is most important for national summaries and studies to have consistency and comparability among the States. The proper identification of light trucks and truck tractors is especially critical to studies of the highway costs occasioned by different vehicle types and their corresponding contributions to highway revenues. The number of truck tractor-trailer combinations is crucial because these are the heaviest vehicles, cause the most pavement damage and require design and structural features not needed for other classes. The light trucks, which have weights and operating features closer to automobiles, tend to bias study results when included with heavier trucks.

Whenever a space opposite a given type of vehicle is left blank, a note should explain where the missing entry is included—for example, "Included with personal passenger vehicles," "Included with light trucks," and so forth.

The following discussion includes some major considerations for determining types of vehicles and for supplying the information called for in section I.

*Item I.A.1. Automobiles.*—Record all sedans and station wagons, including taxicabs, rentals, ambulances and hearses.

*Item I.B.1. Commercial buses.*—Record here all buses used in intercity, charter and local transit operations.

*Item I.B.2. School and other.*—Record here school and other nonrevenue buses (e.g., buses owned by churches and social groups). This classification does not include buses operated by commercial carriers in transportation of school children that should be included in item I.B.1.

*Item I.C.1. Light trucks.*—All single-unit trucks of 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) or less GVW other than those classified as farm trucks should be reported here. This class will include all pickups, panels, freight vans, and most two-axle, four-tire delivery vehicles. Indicate by footnote whether vans or sport-utility type vehicles are included with automobiles or with light trucks. Trucks that cannot be classified into one of the above categories are to be classified as other light vehicles. “Other” include a small number of large trucks, car-based pickups, unknown truck types and trucks older than 15 model years. If the State cannot give the break at 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds), the closest verifiable approximation to it or an estimate should be given. When a weight break other than 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) or an estimate is given, it should be indicated in a separate note. If no entry is given, the FHWA will estimate.

*Item I.C.2. Heavy single-unit trucks.*—All single-unit trucks exceeding 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) GVW other than those classified as farm trucks should be recorded here.

*Item I.C.3. Farm trucks.*—States having a special registration class for farm trucks should report them here. Space is provided for truck tractors if registered as farm vehicles and if the number is readily available.

*Item I.C.4. Truck tractors (other than farm).*—Enter the number of truck tractors registered other than those classified as farm trucks. Truck tractors are defined as motor vehicles designed primarily for pulling truck trailers and semitrailers and constructed to carry part of the weight and load of a semitrailer. Truck tractors registered as farm vehicles should be entered in item I.C.3.(b).

In some States, truck tractor-semitrailer and/or truck-trailer combinations, although segregated as a class from single-unit trucks, are registered as a single entity. In reporting such combinations, enter the number of these units in the appropriate category under item I.C., Trucks, and also item I.E.1.(a) or I.E.1.(b), Commercial trailers or semitrailers, as applicable. The exact situation regarding the registration of these combination vehicles should be explained in a note.

*Item I.C.5. Motorhomes.*—Self-propelled vehicles equipped as living quarters, if they can be identified as a distinct vehicle type, should be entered here. Do not include house trailers which should be reported in item I.E.1.(c).

*Item I.E.1. Trailers and semitrailers.*—A trailer (full trailer) is a vehicle without motive power that is designed for carrying property or passengers wholly on its own structure and must be drawn by a motor vehicle. A semitrailer is used in conjunction with a motor vehicle so that some significant part of its weight and load rests upon or is carried by the other vehicle. Numbers of trailers and semitrailers including extra trailer units should be entered opposite the appropriate sidehead under item I.E.1.

*Item I.E.2. Motorcycles.*—This item includes two-wheeled and three-wheeled motorcycles. Sidecars are not regarded as separate vehicles—a motorcycle and sidecar are reported as a single unit.

*Item I.E.3. Motor bicycles and scooters.*—Mopeds should be included with motor-driven cycles (motor bicycles) in the States that require their registration.

*Item I.E.4. Miscellaneous motorized equipment.*—This class includes cranes, snowmobiles and any other equipment registered for highway use, that does not readily fit into one of the regular vehicle types. Special equipment, such as repair vehicles, fire trucks and tow trucks should be classed with trucks. The type of vehicles shown in this category should be identified by a footnote. If fees are collected for these vehicles, they should be reported under this category in section II.

The information tabulated in columns (1) through (4) should be based on the registration procedure in the individual State. Columns (2), (3), and (4) should be deducted from the total transactions in column (1). However, in some States, the deductions from gross registrations indicated by columns (2) and (3) are not applicable. The number of transfer tags or re-registrations reported (column (2)) should not be deducted from gross registrations (column (1)) unless failure to do so would result in a duplication or overstatement of registrations. Similarly, the number of nonresident registrations (column (3)) should not be deducted unless they represent temporary or limited permits that are not bona fide registrations. Regular registrations by nonresidents are not a deductible item. The objective is that columns (4) and (5) should give the net total number of registrations issued, subdivided as indicated between those for publicly owned vehicles and those for privately owned vehicles.

The instructions below should be followed to obtain the net figure in column (5).

*Column (1) Total license tags sold or issued.*—Record the total number of sets of license tags issued or sold.

*Column (2) Transfer tags or reregistrations.*—Record additional registrations caused by transfers. If no extra registrations are involved, the number of transfers may be tabulated with a note to the effect that the entries are not deductible; such a note is important, since column (2) ordinarily will be deducted from column (1).

*Column (3) Nonresident tags.*—Enter any registrations issued for nonresident vehicles. Include in this number, as a deductible item, any nonresident vehicles that are being counted in their home States.

*Column (4) Official vehicles, State, county and municipal.*—Enter the total number of vehicles owned by State, county, and municipal governments, so far as the State records make such a tabulation possible. If only State-owned vehicles are included, or if any considerable group of publicly owned vehicles is omitted, the fact should be stated in a note. Segregation of publicly owned vehicles, by type, is very useful, and every effort should be made to provide this distribution each year.

In some States, license tags are issued, under certain circumstances, to private individuals or corporations without charge. Such free registrations should be included in the tabulation in column (5). The number of free registrations issued for privately owned vehicles of each type should be given in a note.

*Column (6) Active Registrations.*—Record the number of active registrations. Specifically, the data reported in column (1) is based on transactions (registrations) in a given year and is therefore not necessarily an estimate of all registered vehicles “in use” at a particular time. The problem of providing an estimate of the total number of registered vehicles based on a single year of issuances is particularly troublesome in States that use multi-year registration. The data recorded in column (6) will provide this vehicle total.

*Item G. Diesel and alternative fuel vehicles.*—Vehicles using other than gasoline should be reported as part of the appropriate group in Items A through E, above, and also reported by fuel type.

## **Section II. Registration Fees Paid by Motor Vehicles, Trailers, etc., Classified by Type of Vehicle**

In this section, enter the receipts, classified by type of vehicle, from fees charged for the registration of vehicles. Omit cents.

The vehicle classification scheme used in section II is the same as that used in section I. This permits a direct correspondence (for example, between column (5) in section I and column (5) in section II) between numbers of licenses issued for each type of vehicle and the fees derived from them. The decisions made regarding vehicle type segregation in section II should follow the same reasoning used in section I. For example, sidecars are not regarded as separate vehicles and are included with motorcycles in section I (item I.E.2.); thus, in section II, sidecar fees are included with motorcycle registration fees (item I.E.2.).

The receipts reported in section II should be the actual collections during the report year of fees for vehicles registered during the year. Do not include: (1) registration fees assessed but not collected during the report year or (2) back collections of fees charged for the registrations in prior years.

Do not report refunds paid during the year of excess fees charged on registrations of the year; deduct these refunds before tabulation of section II. If State records do not provide a segregation of current year refunds by type of vehicle, the total amount of the refunds may be entered as a deduction in one of the blank spaces of item III.G. (miscellaneous receipts).

Refunds on payments in prior years should not be deducted in section II. Collections and refunds related to prior years should be shown in item III.G.

In some States, registration fees are collected by county or local officers who make a deduction (usually a fixed amount per registration issued) for collection expenses. The amounts tabulated in section II should be the total registration fees collected and should include the actual amounts deducted by county or local collecting officers if these deductions are of record in the State motor-vehicle department. Those States where the amounts of such service charges are not of record, the State motor-vehicle department should provide either an estimate for each type of vehicle or the information from which an estimate can be developed by the FHWA. If estimated rather than of record, service charges should be given in a note to section II or in a schedule attached to form FHWA-561.

To prevent duplication, do not report any portion of the registration fees collected for another State or jurisdiction under a proration agreement such as the International

Registration Plan (IRP) on any FHWA form. Show only the portion retained by the State in this section. The portion of State registration fees collected by, and received from, other States under a proration agreement should be entered on form FHWA-571.

The instructions below should be followed for the entries in columns (1) through (5) of section II.

*Column (1) Gross collections including transfer or reregistration fees.*—Enter the gross registration receipts (which should equal the sum of columns (2) through (5)).

*Column (2) Transfer or reregistration fees.*—Enter transfer or reregistration fees.

*Column (3) Nonresident tag fees.*—Show the receipts from the sale of temporary or limited registrations of nonresident vehicles.

*Column (4) Fees for official vehicles, State, county, and municipal.*—Enter the receipts from the fees, if any, charged for the registration of publicly owned vehicles. Do not include Federally owned vehicles.

*Column (5) Net regular registration fees collected.*—To show the net regular registration fees collected for private and commercial vehicles of each type, enter the amount remaining after deducting the total of columns (2), (3), and (4) from the amount entered in column (1).

If the data available cannot be tabulated exactly in the form indicated, the method may be adapted to the individual case while placing the greatest emphasis on the entries in column (5).

Additional fees (commonly called "excess weight fees") charged when registration tags are transferred to a heavier vehicle should be included with the net regular registration fees in column (5) and not with transfer fees.

In some States, special taxes are imposed on State-based for-hire carriers in lieu of registration fees. In such cases, the special taxes paid in lieu of registration fees should be regarded as registration fees and included, with an explanatory note, in the amounts entered in columns (1) and (5) of section II. Otherwise, special taxes paid by motor carriers should be reported on form FHWA-571 instead of on form FHWA-561. The regular registration fees paid by motor carriers should, in all cases, be included under the proper vehicle types in section II of form FHWA-561.

### Section III. Receipts Other than Regular Registration Fees

In this section, enter all receipts of the motor-vehicle department other than the regular registration fees dealt with in section II. Omit cents.

*Exceptions.*—The following types of receipts are exceptions to the general requirement that all receipts of the motor-vehicle department should be included in sections II and III:

! *Receipts not related to motor-vehicle ownership or operation.*—If the department that handles motor-vehicle registrations collects fees or taxes not related in any way to the ownership and operation of motor vehicles, such receipts should be omitted from form FHWA-561.

! *Agricultural tractors and other vehicles.*—Receipts from the licensing of agricultural tractors, motorized equipment not used on the highways, and animal-drawn vehicles should be omitted from form FHWA-561.

! *Special taxes imposed on motor carriers.*—The collection of special taxes imposed, in addition to registration fees, on vehicles operated for hire and other special classes of commercial carriers is frequently a function of the State public service commission or similar body. In some States, however, the motor-vehicle department collects these taxes. The classes of special taxes referred to are gross receipts taxes; distance, weight-distance, or passenger-distance taxes; special license fees or weight taxes; franchise or permit fees; and fees for certificates of convenience or necessity. As the receipts from these types of taxation are to be entered on form FHWA-571, ordinarily they should not be entered on form FHWA-561, even though they are a part of the receipts of the motor-vehicle department. The one exception is when such taxes are imposed in lieu of registration fees on State-based vehicles and, thus, are regarded as registration fees and reported in section II of form FHWA-561.

In some States, certain items of motor-vehicle revenue, such as driver-license fees, highway patrol fines, and fees for periodic inspection of motor vehicles, are collected by the State highway department (in which case they will be reported as motor-vehicle revenue on form FHWA-531) or by some other agency independent of the motor-

vehicle department. All such receipts, however, should be reported on form FHWA-561 or form FHWA-562, as appropriate, or on a schedule attached thereto, regardless of which agency collects them.

Some States have enacted special taxes to be paid at the time of purchase, first registration, or titling of a motor vehicle. As such taxes are usually imposed in connection with a general State sales tax, there may be some question whether a given excise tax of this character is a special impost upon the motor-vehicle user or merely a part of a general State tax. The following discussion should be used as a guide in determining whether the receipts from such an impost should be reported on form FHWA-561.

If there is a general sales tax that applies to the purchase of motor vehicles as well as all other commodities (or to commodities in general with stated exceptions, such as food), the receipts from the tax as applied to motor vehicles should not be reported on form FHWA-561.

If, however, the excise tax was imposed under a separate act and the law states or implies that the tax is to be paid as a compensation for the use of the highways, it is to be considered as a special tax on the motor-vehicle user. Also, if the tax is imposed on motor vehicles alone, it is to be considered as a user tax, even though the consideration is not stated or implied in the law. If, judged by these considerations, the impost is found to be a highway-user tax, the proceeds therefrom should be reported as miscellaneous receipts in item III.G. on form FHWA-561.

In case of doubt as to whether the receipts from a given tax on motor vehicles should be reported on form FHWA-561 or regarded as part of a general State tax and thus omitted from form FHWA-561, the matter should be taken up by correspondence with the FHWA.

The instructions below should be followed for the entries in the specific items in section III.

*Item III.A. Dealers' licenses or permits.*—Report special dealers' or garage licenses issued by the agencies regulating or licensing motor vehicles, inspection, repair, and so forth. Do not include regular licenses that are required of all businesses. Include all dealers' license plates whether "original" or "extra" plates, as well as motorcycle plates.

*Item III.B. Certificates of title.*—Enter the number of certificates of title (called certificates of ownership in some States) issued and the amount of collections.

*Item III.C. Fines and penalties.*—Enter here all receipts of the motor-vehicle department (or other State agencies) from fines and penalties imposed for infractions of motor-vehicle laws and regulations, including oversize and overweight penalties. (Excess weight fees, however, should not be reported in item III.C., but should be included in column (5) of section II.)

The State's receipts from fines and penalties imposed for infractions of traffic laws, i.e., moving violations and parking violations, should not be shown in this report.

*Item III.D. Transfer or reregistration fees.*—Enter the amount of these fees that were shown as deductions in column (2), section II.

*Item III.E. Estimated service charges, local collections.*—The instructions for section II state that deductions by local collecting officers of a part of the registration fee for collection expenses should be included in the receipts from regular registration fees reported in section II. Item III.E. should be restricted to those service charges by local officials that are in addition to the regular registration fees. For example, the State registration fee may be \$10.00, but the local collection officer is permitted to charge \$10.50 and to retain \$0.50 as a service charge. These charges, and similar ones levied for titles or other transactions, should be shown in item III.E. and explained fully in notes.

*Item III.F. Caravan fees.*—Enter special in-transit fees, towing fees, auto transporter fees, and so forth.

*Item III.G. Miscellaneous receipts.*—This item provides for adding back into FHWA-561 (in items III.G.1. and III.G.3.) the receipts deducted in columns (3) and (4) of section II. Item III.G.2. provides for any receipts related to temporary entry permits that were not accounted for in column (3) of section II. In item III.G.4., enter all receipts derived from the issuance of duplicates of all kinds (tags, registration cards, and so forth). In item III.G.5., enter receipts derived from vehicle inspection fees. In item III.G.6., enter receipts from additional fees charged for personalized (vanity) license plates; the regular registration fees should be shown in section II. In item III.G.7., show the receipts for oversize and/or overweight permits permitting use of large vehicles, generally for a limited time. This item should not be confused with the excess weight fees that are described above under section II and included with the net regular registration fees in column (5) of section II. In item III.G.8., enter receipts for title liens. In item III.G.9. enter special titling taxes and do not include special titling taxes that are included under general sales tax levies. In

item III.G.10., report all adjustments such as unclassified refunds (deductions).

Items III.G.11. through III.G.12. provide for other miscellaneous receipts of the motor-vehicle department or other agencies involved that do not fit the categories above. As noted in the instructions under section II, this is also the proper place to record collections and refunds related to prior years. Very small items need not be detailed, but any item in excess of \$10,000 should be reported separately. If the space provided is not sufficient, the complete classification of miscellaneous receipts may be given in a note or a supplemental statement.

Note that the section IV grand total should agree or be reconciled to the amount reported in item I.A., column (A), FHWA-566.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

To assist the FHWA in interpreting the data on form FHWA-566, the States should provide supplemental schedules (such as balanced statements of the motor-vehicle inspection fund or highway patrol fund) with form FHWA-561 where appropriate. Also any new motor-vehicle registration forms and sample title forms should be sent when they become available.

