

ORDINANCE

WHEREAS, the Office of the City Clerk administers the Wheel Tax of the City of Chicago, also known as the “City Sticker”; and

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago has data that shows the majority of debt from tickets for failing to display a City Sticker is held by residents in zip codes predominately on the South and West sides of the City; and

WHEREAS, in 2025 and 2026, the Office of the City Clerk hosted an “Amnesty April,” which allowed residents to purchase a City Sticker while waiving any late charges and back charges; and

WHEREAS, comparing revenue from April 2024 with revenue from April 2025 and April 2026 shows that the Office of the City Clerk made an additional 1.6 million dollars in both 2025 and 2026; and

WHEREAS, the Office of the City Clerk introduced a reduced term sticker, offering residents the opportunity to purchase a four-month sticker; and

WHEREAS, the results from Amnesty Month and the introduction of the reduced term sticker show that when people are given a reasonable and affordable option to do so, they will come into compliance; and

WHEREAS, in San Francisco people with incomes below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level can get their traffic citations discounted by 80% or more through their ability-to-pay ticketing program; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco’s ability-to-pay ticketing program data shows that for every \$100 increase in the ordered payment amount there was a corresponding 10% decrease in the likelihood of full payment, suggesting meaningful ability to pay programs improve accountability and justice, because people are more likely to pay when capable of doing so;

WHEREAS, establishing an ability to pay model would reduce the financial burden on our lowest income residents, while likely increasing revenue for the City;

WHEREAS, establishing this model as a pilot program and tracking data on compliance and revenue will better inform a future, potentially expanded and permanent program;

THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO the establishment of a pilot program implementing an ability to pay model for any citations for the failure to display a wheel tax emblem:

9-64-125 Display of wheel tax license emblem.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in Section [3-56-020](#)(b) or Section [3-56-125](#)(d) of this Code, no person shall park or stand on any portion of the public way, or on any City-owned property, or in a public parking garage as defined in Chapter [4-232](#), or in any parking lot open to pedestrian traffic any vehicle requiring a wheel tax license under Chapter [3-56](#) of this Code, unless the wheel tax license emblem is displayed in the manner required by subsection (d) of this section. Pursuant to Section [3-56-021](#), any person alleged to have violated this section may raise as an affirmative defense that (1) such person resided in the City for less than 30 days at the time the individual was cited for the violation, or (2) the cited vehicle was purchased less than 30 days prior to the issuance of the violation; (3) in the case of a renewal of a valid and current wheel tax license, such person obtained a current wheel tax license within the grace period provided for under Section [3-56-043](#)(b); or (4) the violation has been corrected prior to adjudication of the citation pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

(b) It shall be a violation of this section for a vehicle of under or equal to 16,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight to fail to comply with subsection (a) of this section.

(c) It shall be a violation of this section for a vehicle of over 16,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight to fail to comply with subsection (a) of this section.

(d) If display is required by this section, the wheel tax license emblem shall be (1) affixed in accordance with the instructions printed thereon or accompanying the emblem, which are made a part hereof, and (2) affixed without the use of supplemental adhesives, and (3) positioned to be clearly visible, (4) and maintained in a clearly legible condition on the front windshield in the lower right-hand corner farthest removed from the driver's position; provided, however, that if the wheel tax license emblem takes the form of a license tag, such license tag shall be affixed to the vehicle's rear license plate in a manner that does not obstruct the visibility of the license plate or any information set forth on such plate.

(e) Any individual cited for violation of subsections (a), (b) or (c) of this section may raise as an affirmative defense that the violation has been corrected prior to adjudication of the citation. The affirmative defense provided in this subsection shall apply to all citations issued within a 30 day period prior to the date of compliance for the same violation, and it shall be limited to only one such defense per a permanent vehicle license plate number of a vehicle registered in the name of an individual defendant as a sole or joint owner.

(f) As part of a pilot program, any low-income individual cited for a violation of subsections (a), (b), or (c) may apply for a citation waiver or partial waiver during adjudication based on financial need.

(1) If the administrative law officer finds the applicant is an indigent person, such that the applicant's available income is 200% or less than the Federal poverty level, the administrative law officer shall grant the applicant a full waiver of a citation related to the failure to comply with sections (a), (b), or (c), so long as the applicant comes into compliance with the wheel tax by purchasing a four-month, one-year or two-year term wheel tax license emblem.

(2) The administrative law officer shall grant the applicant a partial waiver of the citation related to the failure to comply as follows:

(A) 75% of the citation shall be waived if the applicant's available income is greater than 200% but no more than 250% of the poverty level.

(B) 50% of the citation shall be waived if the applicant's available income is greater than 250% but no more than 300% of the poverty level.

(C) 25% of the citation shall be waived if the applicant's available income is greater than 300% but no more than 400% of the poverty level.

(3) The administrative law officer shall consider the following when assessing the applicant's waiver or partial waiver of citations:

(A) the applicant's receipt of needs based governmental public benefits, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or "food stamps"); General Assistance; Transitional Assistance; or State Children and Family Assistance; Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; Chicago Housing Authority Housing Choice Voucher System;

(B) Written verification on official letterhead issued by a public government agency, hospital, health clinic, social services agency (including domestic violence shelter), homeless shelter, or religious institution located within the City of Chicago confirming residency by the Applicant and including the direct phone number of the organization/agency for verification;

(C) the employment status of the applicant and amount of monthly income, if any;

(D) income received from the applicant's pension, Social Security benefits, unemployment benefits, and other sources;

(E) income received by the applicant from other household members;

(F) the applicant's monthly expenses, including rent, home mortgage, other mortgage, utilities, food, medical, vehicle, childcare, debts, child support, and other expenses; or

(G) financial affidavits or other similar supporting documentation provided by the applicant showing that payment of the imposed assessments would result in substantial hardship to the applicant or the applicant's family.

(4) If the administrative law officer finds the applicant is eligible for a citation waiver or partial waiver, the applicant shall be issued a document stating that the applicant is eligible for the waiver or reduction and the new citation amount; and

(A) the applicant shall present the document to the Office of the City Clerk, who shall issue a wheel tax emblem for the term of the applicant's choice: four months, one year, or two years. For any person with a citation waiver or partial waiver document, the Office of the City Clerk shall issue a wheel tax emblem pursuant to the pricing table listed in Municipal Code Section 3-56- 050 without any late fees or back charges;

(B) once the applicant has purchased their four-month, one-year, or two- year wheel tax emblem, they shall present their emblem and the citation waiver or reduction document to the Department of Finance, who shall reissue a ticket with the updated amount.

(5) The Office of Administrative Hearings may establish rules and regulations as needed to facilitate the administration of this program. During the pilot program, the Office may establish procedures that would allow for zoom hearings to be conducted;

(6) This subsection shall go into effect upon passage and publication and shall sunset on December 31, 2028.