

# Handicap Information

## How to Get a Reserved Handicapped Parking Space

If you have a handicapped plate or placard, you may apply to have a handicapped space outside your residence. Please fill out the [Handicap Sign Request Form](#) and send it to the Department of Planning and Development (address shown at bottom). Alternatively, you can petition the City Clerk, and your request will be forwarded to our department.

## Massachusetts Handicapped Plate and Placard Law

HP plates and placards are issued through the Registry of Motor Vehicles to eligible people with disabilities. They entitle holders:

- to park in designated HP spaces,
- to park longer than usual time limits,
- to park at parking meters free of charge, and
- to make use of the gas station law.

**The rights, responsibilities and privileges of plate holders and placard holders are the same.** The Registry's Bureau of Medical Affairs determines eligibility according to physician's documentation. Only people who meet the disability definition and who are the registered owner of the vehicle and who are licensed drivers may receive plates. Anyone who meets the disability eligibility requirements can get a placard. Individuals who meet the disability eligibility requirements for both plates and placards can choose either a plate or a placard. The only practical difference between them is that a plate is permanently attached to one car, while a placard is a card that can easily be moved from one car to another. The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles also issues temporary placards in some circumstances.

The law allows eligible individuals to obtain both a placard and a plate. An individual who uses an HP placard without proper authorization is the individual who will be penalized, as opposed to the individual with a disability to whom the placard was issued.

A placard may be utilized for parking in association with the transportation of the authorized user of the placard. A driver picking up or dropping off the authorized placard user, however, may not idle in an accessible parking space for more than ten minutes. The law allows workers with disabilities to use their placard when driving a commercial vehicle, but preserves the time limitations for the utilization of commercial spaces.

**Note:** Commercial vehicles do not include "livery" vehicles (i.e. limousines). Therefore, livery drivers and passengers with disabilities are prohibited from using an HP plate/placard on a livery vehicle.

The fines for unauthorized utilization of an HP placard are five hundred dollars (\$500) for the first offense and one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for subsequent offenses. License suspension for violation of this law run from 30 Days for a first offense to one year for a third or subsequent offense. The fines and penalties in this section are in addition to those specified in Section 37E of Chapter 266 for the fraudulent use of another's identity. If a plate or placard user voluntarily allows someone else to use his or her placard or plate, it can result in revocation of the placard or plate.

Also, whoever falsely makes, steals, alters, forges or counterfeits or procures or assists another to falsely make, steal, alter, forge or counterfeit a special parking identification disability placard, or whoever has in his possession, or utters, publishes as true or in any way makes use of a falsely made, stolen, altered, forged or counterfeited special parking identification disability placard shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars or by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than five years or in jail or house of correction for not more than two years.

Applications for plates and placards are available at the Registry of Motor Vehicles Offices or by contacting:

Website: <http://www.massrmv.com/rmv/forms/disabled.htm>  
Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, Medical Affairs  
P.O. Box 55889  
Boston, MA 02205-5889  
(857) 368-8020

Hand Deliveries to:  
Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles,  
25 Newport Avenue Extension,  
Quincy, MA. 02171

**Primary Contact:**

Eric B. Eby, P.E., Transportation Engineer  
Department of Planning and Development  
Phone: (978) 674-4252

# Frequently Asked Questions

- Parking
- Signs and Signals
- Speeding
- Snow Emergencies
- Miscellaneous

## Parking

- Where can I find public parking in the downtown?

Public parking is available at parking meters located downtown and in a limited number of off-street parking garages. Meter rates are in effect Monday through Saturday, from 8 AM through 6 PM. Parking at meters is free at night and on Sundays and Holidays. To minimize your chances of being ticketed for a meter violation, you should park in a parking space with an appropriate time limit for your anticipated length of stay. As a general rule, parking spaces located curbside on streets in front of most stores allow for parking up to 2 hours. Please park within the delineated spaces, and avoid parking in handicapped parking spaces, loading zones, or taxicab stands.

The City's sign shop maintains and repairs all mechanical parking meters. If you should notice a parking meter that has been vandalized, or is currently malfunctioning, please report the problem by calling (978) 674-4014. When reporting a meter problem please provide the meter location and identification number.

Republic Parking Services is responsible for the collection and maintenance of the kiosks that manage and meter hundreds of spaces. To report a broken Kiosk for service:

- Call 978-551-3072
  - Monday thru Friday, 7:00 AM - 3:00 PM
  - Mention the Kiosk ID# which is located on the front top section and/or on the back of the Kiosk.
- What do I do if I get a parking ticket?

If you receive a parking ticket and you are not sure what to do, please call the City Parking and Garages Department at (978) 674-4014. Below is a list of common parking violations:

- **Parking in Front of a Driveway:** Do not block a driveway or park in such close proximity to a driveway that a person will have a difficult time either entering or exiting a driveway.
- **10 Feet from Fire Hydrant:** Do not park within 10 feet of a fire hydrant in any location. It does not have to be posted by signs or a yellow curb.
- **20 Feet from an Intersection:** Do not park within twenty (20') feet of an intersection. It does not have to be posted by signs.
- **Curb:** Park both front and rear "curbside" tires within 1 foot from the curb or the curb line to avoid parking too far into the street. Do not park over the curb.
- **Sidewalks:** Do not park on the sidewalk. These areas between the curb and property lines, whether paved or unpaved, are for pedestrians.
- **Divided Highway:** Do not park in the area between the roadways of a divided highway whether marked or unmarked.
- **Crosswalk & Handicapped Access Ramp:** Do not park in a crosswalk, whether marked or unmarked, or in front of a handicapped access ramp.
- **Parallel Parking:** Parallel park unless sign, marking, or permit allows angle parking. Motorcycles may angle park in a parallel space.

- Double Parking: Do not stop or park next to another parked vehicle.
- For Sale on Public Street: Vehicles parked for the principal purpose of displaying "For Sale" signs must be parked off of the public right-of-way.
- Expired Registration: Vehicles parked on the public right-of-way must have current registration.
- Street Storage and Abandoned Vehicles: Any type of vehicle abandoned and/or stored on the public right-of-way in excess of 72 hours will be subject to CITATION and TOW AWAY. This includes boats, campers, trailers, etc.
- Loading Zones: 30 minute time limit for ANY vehicle actively loading and unloading.
- Time Limits: A vehicle may not be parked in a metered space longer than the time limit designated - regardless of additional coins deposited or meter malfunction.
- Handicap Parking: ONLY vehicles with an authorized handicap plate/placard may park in a handicapped space whether on a public street, or in a parking lot open to the public.

How do I get a reserved handicapped space?

- If you have a handicapped plate or placard you may apply for a handicapped space outside of your residence. Please fill out the handicap request form which is available on our web page, or at our office. Alternatively, you can petition the City Clerk, and your request will be forwarded to our department.
- Is it OK if I don't park in my driveway?

Parking is limited throughout the City. Please be considerate of your neighbors without driveways. Use your own driveway and leave space on the street for your neighbors and visitors. If you would like to purchase a residential parking sign in order to reserve ONE space, either in front or to the side of your residence, contact the Parking and Garages Department at (978) 674-4014.

- Does the City have a winter parking ban?

Not on a daily basis. However, the Police Department will occasionally declare a Snow Emergency No Parking Ban in advance of major snowstorms, which will ban all parking on all city streets until the Snow Emergency is lifted. To find out if a snow emergency has been declared tune into your local TV and radio stations, or call the Police Department at (978) 937-3200.

Signs & Signals

- How do I report a traffic signal that has a burned-out bulb or seems to operate inefficiently?

Signal problems or questions can be directed to the City Electrician at (978) 674-1813.

- Who do I call to get a sign replaced?

The City's Sign Shop manufactures, installs, and maintains most regulatory signs, street name signs, warning signs and no parking signs. Signs are replaced ONLY when damaged or faded. Pavement markings, such as crosswalks and street lane designations, are also repainted each spring. To have a sign replaced, please call the Sign Shop at (978) 674-1973. To get tree limbs or vegetation cut back for visibility, please call DPW at (978) 674-1807.

Speeding

- What can I do to help prevent speeding in my neighborhood?

If you think you see cars routinely speeding through your neighborhood, request enforcement by calling the Police Traffic Section at (978) 674-4505. When calling to report an incident, be sure to include details, like location and time of day. By contacting the Police Bureau, residents and businesses alert police officers to speeding problems in their neighborhoods. These calls usually bring extra patrols to the trouble spot. In the long run, police may lead to traffic engineering solutions to slow traffic. When you call the Traffic Bureau, be prepared to provide details about speeding on your street. Let them know the specific location and time of day speeding usually occurs. When police enforcement alone isn't solving the problem, the Police Department or the City Council will recommend that the DPD do a traffic study.

- Will a speed limit sign help prevent speeding?

Installing speed limit signs may seem to be a logical solution to remind drivers not to speed. But new speed limit signs don't seem to change people's driving behaviors. Speed limit signs cannot be posted without a state approved special speed study. Unless otherwise posted, the speed limit throughout the City is 30 mph (and as slow as 20 mph in areas designated as school zones).

- Will STOP signs help slow traffic?

The city of Lowell does NOT generally install stop signs as a way to slow traffic. The city installs stop signs where there might be a question about who should have the right-of-way to prevent crashes at intersections with high accident rates. When stop signs are installed to slow down speeders, drivers may, in fact, increase their speed between signs to compensate for lost time. This creates an even more dangerous situation. Stop signs in inappropriate places could result in more drivers running stop signs and speeding through neighboring streets.

- What are some creative solutions that will help curb speeding in my neighborhood?

Some communities have pursued 'traffic calming' measures such as narrower intersections, on-street parking, street trees, textured crosswalks, etc., to reduce the urge to comfortably speed on city streets. For example, sidewalk "bump outs" allow for more sidewalk space for pedestrians and slow down drivers with a larger sidewalk and a narrower street. Simple things such as writing letters to the editor of your neighborhood and community papers can work. Let drivers know that speeding threatens our sense of community and personal well-being. Learn more about transportation and traffic issues. Click on our Helpful Transportation Links page on our web page.

## Snow Emergencies

- Does the City have a winter parking ban?

Not on a daily basis. However, the Police Department will occasionally declare a Snow Emergency No Parking Ban in advance of major snowstorms, which will ban all parking on all city streets until the Snow Emergency is lifted. To find out if a snow emergency has been declared tune into your local TV and radio stations, or call the Police Department at (978) 937-3200.

- What do I do if my car has been towed in the event of a snow emergency?

Call the Police Department at (978) 937-3200.