



# TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

RON DAVIS  
Commissioner, Pct. 1

SAMUEL T. BISCOE  
County Judge

BRUCE TODD  
Commissioner, Pct. 2

GERALD DAUGHERTY  
Commissioner, Pct. 3

MARGARET J. GÓMEZ  
Commissioner, Pct. 4

June 17, 2014

David D. Duncan, General Counsel  
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles  
4000 Jackson Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78731

Via email: [rules@txdmv.gov](mailto:rules@txdmv.gov)

Dear Mr. Duncan:

For years, the Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office has deputized local auto title companies to process auto title and registration transactions for customers purchasing or registering automobiles. The auto title companies are allowed to charge reasonable fees for providing this service, which typically fall in the \$15-25 range. The customer could also handle the transaction directly with the Tax Office, which may only charge a \$5 for processing the transaction.

The private option has proven popular, since about one-third of the 300,000 auto titles and about 10 percent of the 875,000 vehicle registrations processed each year in the county are handled this way. In turn, this has reduced our staffing and administrative needs at the county level; our Assessor-Collector, Bruce Elfant, estimates that this partnership saves county taxpayers about \$1 million a year.

The Department of Motor Vehicles is seeking comment on proposed new Sections 217.111-217.116 that would prohibit the auto title companies from recovering their costs of providing the service, capping allowable fees at \$5. If this happens, the companies may cease to offer these titling and registration services, with the result that the workload will fall to the Tax Office. Because the \$5 statutorily-capped fee the Tax Office can charge is insufficient to cover the transaction costs, county taxpayers will shoulder more of the burden

This seems to us to be a solution in search of a problem. We have not heard any complaints from our constituents about the current process; in fact, many undoubtedly appreciate the convenience. Imposing a fee cap will thus inconvenience citizens, reduce compliance rates, and increase taxpayer-borne costs of administering the State's vehicle titling and registration laws. This is a textbook case of creating an unfunded mandate where none is necessary.

We urge you to reject the proposed rule and to work with the tax offices at the county level to fashion a more reasonable approach to providing this important service.

On Behalf of the Court,

SAMUEL T. BISCOE  
County Judge