

License Plate Reissue 101 and FAQ

This memo is intended to provide BMV and SOS staff with basic information about the upcoming standard issue license plate reissuance to the Pine Tree Plate. Plans for a reissuance had already been underway ahead of the 2023 Legislative Session where the new plate issuance bill passed and became law. That planning and project management has now kicked into high gear so that we can begin issuing the new design to customers in **May 2025**. We'll issue further guidance to you as the details of the reissuance are finalized, but we wanted to be sure you had this basic information as we know customers are already asking questions.

As always, members of the press should be referred to Emily Cook, Director of Communications, at the Secretary of State's Office. If someone tells you that they are a member of the press, please take down a name and a contact phone number and/or email address. Tell them that our Director of Communications will reach out to them to answer their questions. Pass the name and phone number on to your supervisor. Your supervisor will provide the information to Emily Cook. If you are uncertain whether someone is a member of the press, ask your supervisor for guidance. Inquiries from legislative offices or legislators should be referred to Joann Bautista, Deputy Secretary – Policy Advisor at the Secretary of State's Office. Please follow the same process and procedure as above.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do we need a new plate?

The current standard issue plate – the chickadee plate – has been in use in Maine for almost 25 years. Many plates are peeling and unreadable, which is a public safety issue. The ability for law enforcement, tolling authorities, and citizens to identify license plates quickly and easily is essential, especially in the case of crashes or serious crimes. Older plates also lose their reflectivity – their extra-shiny appearance – as they age, making them less visible at night and in poor weather conditions.

2. Can't people with deteriorating plates just ask for new ones?

If someone has a plate that's peeling or otherwise deteriorating, they can and should ask for new ones. Our current registrations tracking system doesn't have a mechanism for us to know how long someone has had a plate, though, and too often people think that they can get away with keeping an old plate on their vehicles and avoid paying their registration fees or tolls, which isn't fair to law abiding Maine drivers.

3. When will the new plates be ready?

Starting May 1, 2025, when a customer registers or re-registers their vehicle, they'll receive the new Pine Tree Plates.

4. What if someone wants to keep their current plate number/sequence?

Starting June 3, customers will be able to reserve their current plate number, including vanity and low-digit plates. Reserving a plate number sequence will cost \$25. Customers will have a few options for how to complete their reservation:

- When using Rapid Renewal to renew their vehicle's registration
- Through an online portal at maine.gov/online/reservemyplate
- At a branch office
- By mailing in a paper form, which will be available at municipal offices and our website at maine.gov/sos/bmv/forms

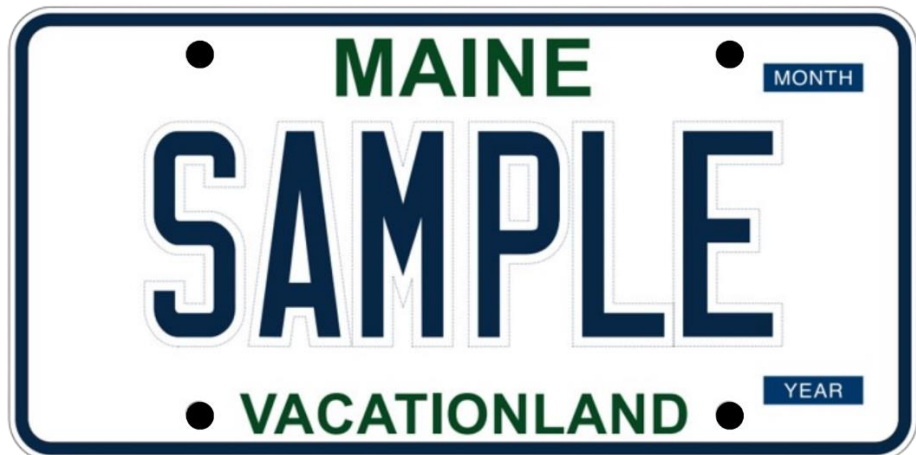
When the reservation systems are ready, we will be conducting a publicity campaign to get the word out and will be contacting vanity plate holders directly.

5. What will the new plates look like?

This is the Pine Tree Plate:



This is the No Tree Plate:



6. What if someone does not like the tree and star design?

Vehicles registered with the PC (passenger car) class code will be able to choose a plate with the same colors but no design. All other plate classes currently displaying the chickadee design, will only have the Pine Tree Plate option.

7. What if someone doesn't have a chickadee plate?

Unless the customer would like to change from a specialty plate or other plate class that does not have the chickadee design to the Pine Tree Plate, they will register their vehicle as usual. The reissuance is solely for the general issue chickadee plate.

8. What will customers do with the chickadee plates when they get the Pine Tree Plate?

Customers will be able to recycle their old plates. We will send more information about recycling plates in the future.