

City of Austin Police Department

Towing Fee Study

December 2022

Towing Services

Towing is vital to maintaining the infrastructure of a city. Without towing services, Austin would have a hard time functioning. Towing services are necessary for several reasons:

- Towing disabled crash or broken down vehicles from high speed roadways helps prevent secondary crashes and relieves traffic congestion that occurs when roadways are blocked;
- Impounding vehicles left after an arrest;
- Removing abandoned or junked vehicles;
- Towing illegally parked vehicles;
- Tow and hold impounded vehicles involved in police investigations at a secure facility.

City of Austin Ordinance

20060608-019

13-6-141 Towing Fee Study

A “towing fee” study is a study to determine fair market value of non-consent tows originating in the City of Austin – including the consideration of financial information provided to the city by the towing company that requested the study.

History of City of Austin Non-Consent Towing Fees

Year	Increase	Non-Consent Towing Fee
October 2019	23%	\$185
June 2006	58%	\$150
March 2001	46%	\$95
July 1996	18%	\$65
January 1989		\$55

Consent vs Non-Consent Tows

Consent Tows: Means a tow of a motor vehicle initiated by the owner or operator of the vehicle or by a person who has possession, custody, or control of the vehicle. The tow does not include a tow of a motor vehicle initiated by a peace officer investigating a traffic accident or traffic incident that involves the vehicle.

Non-Consent Tows: Means a tow that is not a consent tow.

The towing fee request is for the following non-consent tows:

- Any type of police impound where a tow truck is summoned to the scene
- Crash Scenes
- Private Property Impounds
- Other than Private Property Impounds

Types of Vehicle Tows & Associated Fees

- * Light duty vehicle is your standard vehicle with a total Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) of 10,000 lbs or less
- * Medium duty vehicle is a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) in excess of 10,000 lbs and less than 25,999 lbs
- * Heavy duty vehicle is a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) in excess of 25,999 lbs

Towing Fee Study Methodology

The City utilized the following methodologies as part of the Towing Fee Study:

- I. Financial Information from towing companies
 - ❖ Per City of Austin Ordinance
- II. Consumer Price Index
- III. Austin Metropolitan Area fee comparison
- IV. Texas Large Cities fee comparison
 - ❖ Austin is the 4th largest city in the survey

I. Financial Information from Towing Companies Requesting Study

The towing companies request that the fee increase include consideration of the extenuating cost increases associated with:

- ❖ Fuel Cost
- ❖ Labor Cost (employee compensation)
- ❖ Equipment Cost (Tow Trucks & Tools)
- ❖ Maintenance of Equipment
- ❖ Insurance
- ❖ Rent
- ❖ Property Taxes
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Inflation

I. Financial Information from Towing Companies Requesting Study

City of Austin Non Consent Towing Fees	Current Fee	Note	Towing Companies Request	Notes
Light Duty Tow (Category A Tow Truck)	\$ 185		\$ 340	
Exceptional Labor (i.e. clearing debris)	\$ 35	per hour	\$ 70	
Winching	\$ 35	per hour	\$ 70	
Wait Time (if it exceeds 30 minutes)	\$ 20	per hour	\$ 50	
Fully Prepared for Transport	\$ 50		\$ 170	
Toll Fee		each	\$ 4	New Fee
Electric Vehicle Exceptional Labor			\$ 150	New Fee
Medium Duty Tow (Category B Tow Truck)	\$ 350		\$ 566	Private Property
Medium Duty Tow (Category B Tow Truck)	\$ 400			Other than Private Property
Exceptional Labor (i.e. clearing debris)	\$ 35	per hour	\$ 70	
Winching	\$ 35	per hour	\$ 70	
Wait Time (if it exceeds 30 minutes)	\$ 20	per hour	\$ 50	
Fully Prepared for Transport	\$ 50		\$ 283	
Toll Fee		each	\$ 7	New Fee
Heavy Duty Tow (Category C Tow Truck)	\$ 800		\$ 1,132	
Work Time (Winching)	\$ 15	per 1/4 hour	\$ 50	
Exceptional labor (manpower)	\$ 15	per hour per man	\$ 70	
Additional Category C Tow Truck	\$ 800		\$ 1,132	
Additional Specialized Equipment	\$ 300	per hour per man	\$ 425	
Air Bags	\$ 75	per bag per hour	\$ 150	
Fork Lift	\$ 125	per hour per man	\$ 175	
Haul Trailers	\$ 500		\$ 700	
Trailer Dollies	\$ 300		\$ 566	
Wait Time	\$ 20	per hour	\$ 100	
Large Slide Trucks/Rollbacks	\$ 200	maxmium	\$ 566	
Fully Prepared for Transport	\$ 50		\$ 566	
Toll Fee		each	\$ 10	New Fee

II. Consumer Price Index

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.

The CPI from January 2019 to November 2022 increased 13.84% at an average rate of 4.45% per year based on data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Using the CPI increase since 2019, Austin's \$185 non-consent towing fee would now equal \$215.

II. Consumer Price Index Current Fees & Proposed Fee

City of Austin Non Consent Towing Fees	Current Fee	Proposed Fee based on Increased CPI	Fee Notes
Light Duty Tow (Category A Tow Truck)	\$ 185	\$ 215	
Exceptional Labor (i.e. clearing debris)	\$ 35	\$ 40	per hour
Winching	\$ 35	\$ 40	per hour
Wait Time (if it exceeds 30 minutes)	\$ 20	\$ 25	per hour
Medium Duty Tow (Category B Tow Truck)	\$ 350	\$ 380	Private Property
Medium Duty Tow (Category B Tow Truck)	\$ 400	\$ 455	Other than Private Property
Exceptional Labor (i.e. clearing debris)	\$ 35	\$ 40	per hour
Winching	\$ 35	\$ 40	per hour
Wait Time (if it exceeds 30 minutes)	\$ 20	\$ 25	per hour
Heavy Duty Tow (Category C Tow Truck)	\$ 800	\$ 915	
Work Time (Winching)	\$ 15	\$ 20	per 1/4 hour
Exceptional labor (manpower)	\$ 15	\$ 20	per hour per man
Additional Category C Tow Truck	\$ 800	\$ 915	
Additional Specialized Equipment	\$ 300	\$ 345	per hour per man
Air Bags	\$ 75	\$ 85	per bag per hour
Fork Lift	\$ 125	\$ 145	per hour per man
Haul Trailers	\$ 500	\$ 575	
Trailer Dollies	\$ 300	\$ 345	
Wait Time	\$ 20	\$ 25	per hour
Large Slide Trucks/Rollbacks	\$ 200	\$ 230	maxmium

III. Austin Metropolitan Area

Travis County

In January 2018, the Travis County Commissioner's Court approved an increase in non-consent towing fees from \$175 to \$275.

Williamson County

In June 2013, the Williamson County Commissioner's Court accepted a request from the Williamson County Towing Association to increase the non-consent towing fee from \$110 (set in October 2006) to \$195.

Austin Metro Area

Kyle has the highest towing fee at \$300.

Round Rock has the lowest towing fee at \$130.

The average fee for the Austin Metropolitan area is \$205.

III. Austin Metropolitan Area Light Duty Tows (10,000 lbs or less)

Average =
\$205

Lowest =
\$130

Highest =
\$300

Round Rock	\$130
San Marcos	\$150
Cedar Park	\$175
Austin	\$185
Georgetown	\$195
Williamson County	\$195
Leander	\$195
Pflugerville	\$200
Hays County	\$250
Travis County	\$275
Kyle	\$300



III. Austin Metropolitan Area Medium Duty Tows (excess of 10,000 lbs. & less than 25,999 lbs.)

Average =
\$368

Lowest =
\$350

Highest =
\$450

Austin	\$350
Georgetown	\$350
Williamson County	\$350
Leander	\$400
Pflugerville	\$400
Hays County	\$450
Travis County	\$450
Round Rock	No Medium Duty Fee
San Marcos	No Medium Duty Fee
Cedar Park	No Medium Duty Fee
Kyle	No Medium Duty Fee



III. Austin Metropolitan Area Heavy Duty Tows (excess of 25,999 lbs.)

Average =
\$675

Lowest =
\$400

Highest =
\$800

Cedar Park	\$400
Round Rock	\$450
San Marcos	\$500
Travis County	\$600
Austin	\$800
Georgetown	\$800
Williamson County	\$800
Leander	\$800
Pflugerville	\$800
Hays County	\$800
Kyle	No heavy tow fee

LOWER
Price
HIGHER

IV. Large Texas Cities

Of the ten Large Texas cities surveyed, Austin has the highest towing fee of \$185. Laredo has the lowest towing fee of \$110.

The average non-consent towing fee for Large Texas cities is \$155.

IV. Large Texas Cities Light Duty (10,000 lbs or less)

Average =
\$155

Lowest =
\$110

Highest =
\$185

Laredo	\$110
Plano	\$127
Dallas	\$139
Fort Worth	\$150
Corpus Christi	\$150
El Paso	\$161
Houston	\$174
Arlington	\$175
San Antonio	\$175
Austin	\$185

LOWER
Price
HIGHER



IV. Large Texas Cities Medium Duty Tow (excess of 10,000 lbs. & less than 25,999 lbs.)

Average =
\$314

Lowest =
\$219

Highest =
\$357

Dallas	\$219
Arlington	\$250
Austin	\$350
El Paso	\$350
Plano	\$357
San Antonio	\$357
Corpus Christi	No Medium Fee
Fort Worth	No Medium Fee
Houston	No Medium Fee
Laredo	No Medium Fee

LOWER

Price

HIGHER



IV. Large Texas Cities Heavy Duty Tow (excess of 25,999 lbs.)

Average =
\$520

Lowest =
\$450

Highest =
\$800

El Paso	\$450
Plano	\$459
San Antonio	\$459
Corpus Christi	\$475
Arlington	\$500
Fort Worth	\$500
Dallas	\$509
Houston	\$529
Austin	\$800
Laredo	No Heavy Duty Fee

LOWER
Price
HIGHER



Traffic Incident Management Program Considerations (TIMs)

In 2015, the City of Austin Wrecker Ordinance was updated to accommodate the use of AutoReturn, APD's contracted towing dispatching vendor.

As part of this contract, the TIMs program is unique to the City of Austin and used to rapidly clear disabled vehicles from high speed roadways during rush hour traffic.

The Austin Police Department Towing Rules State:

- A towing company must participate in the TIMs program if it is on a non-consent rotation list.
- This program requires towing companies to stage tow trucks in a zone and clear high speed roadways at no charge.

On average, Austin towing companies report removing approximately 3 to 4 vehicles off of Austin roadways, free of charge, during their required 6 hour shifts in the TIMs program.

Final Recommendation

After extensive review and consideration of the towing fee study results, particularly:

- the increased Consumer Price Index of 13.84%
- the Austin fee of \$185 compared to neighboring communities is below average
- the towing company request to include the following 2 new fees:
 - * Toll Fee (\$4 - \$10) – Fee to cover the cost of using toll roads to efficiently transport towed vehicles
 - * Electric Vehicle Exceptional Labor (\$150) – Fee for exceptional labor related to clearing a towing scene of an electric vehicle (i.e. additional drying solvent is necessary if the battery leaked or exploded)

Recommendation

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Fully Prpared For Transport Fee	\$ 50	\$ 60	\$ 283	
Toll Fee		\$ 7	each \$ 7	New Fee
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Trailer Dollies	\$ 300	\$ 345	\$ 566	
Wait Time	\$ 20	\$ 25	per hour \$ 100	
Large Slide Trucks/Rollbacks	\$ 200	\$ 230	maxmium \$ 566	
Fully Prpared For Transport Fee	\$ 50	\$ 60	\$ 566	
Toll Fee		\$ 10	\$ 10	New Fee