



Pennsylvania Car Title Transfer Checklist

Pennsylvania is one of a small number of states that require notarization on every vehicle title transfer. The seller's and buyer's signatures on the title's assignment section, plus Form MV-4ST (Vehicle Sales and Use Tax Return/Application for Registration), must be witnessed by a PennDOT-authorized notary public, messenger service, tag service, or licensed dealer. Most Pennsylvanians visit a notary or local tag service to complete the transfer in one stop. The buyer must complete the title transfer within 20 days of the date of sale; Pennsylvania charges 6% state sales tax (7% in Allegheny County, 8% in Philadelphia) on the purchase price.

QUICK ANSWER

Pennsylvania title transfers use Form MV-4ST (Vehicle Sales and Use Tax Return/Application for Registration) and are processed at a PennDOT Driver License Center or authorized agent within 20 days of transfer. Pennsylvania sales tax generally applies on the purchase price — verify the current rate and any exemptions with PennDOT. Pennsylvania license plates generally stay with the seller.

KEY FACTS

State	Pennsylvania
Agency	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)
Process	In person · By mail
Notary required	Yes
Bill of sale	Conditional
Odometer disclosure	Yes
Filing deadline	20 days
Last reviewed	May 21, 2026

QUICK REFERENCE

NOTARY Yes	BILL OF SALE Conditional	ODOMETER Yes	INSPECTION Conditional
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IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Within 20 days
Buyer must apply for the title within 20 days of the date of sale

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Buyer checklist

- ☐ Signed, notarized title from seller **REQUIRED**
- ☐ Completed and notarized MV-4ST **REQUIRED**
[Form MV-4ST](#)
- ☐ Proof of Pennsylvania auto insurance **REQUIRED**
- ☐ Government-issued photo ID **REQUIRED**
- ☐ Payment for title fee, sales tax, and registration fee **REQUIRED**
- ☐ MV-13 if claiming family gift tax exemption **CONDITIONAL**
[Form MV-13](#)

Seller checklist

- ☐ Signed and notarized Pennsylvania title (assignment section) **REQUIRED**
Sign in front of a PennDOT-authorized notary, messenger service, tag service, or dealer.
- ☐ Odometer disclosure on the title assignment **REQUIRED**
- ☐ Lien release letter (if applicable) **CONDITIONAL**



- ☐ **Remove license plates** REQUIRED
Pennsylvania plates stay with the owner, not the vehicle.
- ☐ **Bill of sale (recommended)** RECOMMENDED

Required forms

- ☐ **MV-4ST — Vehicle Sales and Use Tax Return / Application for Registration** REQUIRED
[Form MV-4ST](#)
Primary title and tax document. Must be notarized along with the title assignment.
- ☐ **MV-1 — Application for Certificate of Title (for new/non-Pennsylvania titles)** CONDITIONAL
[Form MV-1](#)
Used when bringing an out-of-state title or a manufacturer's certificate of origin into PA.
- ☐ **MV-39 — Notification of Assignment / Correction of Vehicle Title Upon Death of Owner** CONDITIONAL
[Form MV-39](#)
Used to transfer a vehicle from a deceased owner.
- ☐ **MV-13 — Affidavit of Gift** CONDITIONAL
[Form MV-13](#)
Used to claim Pennsylvania's family-gift exemption from sales tax.

FEES

\$58 — Title transfer fee (Standard PA title fee. Confirm current amount with PennDOT.)

6% statewide (7% Allegheny County, 8% Philadelphia) — Sales/use tax (Collected on Form MV-4ST based on the purchase price. Family gift transfers using MV-13 are exempt.)

sourceNeeded — typically \$39 for passenger vehicles — Annual registration fee (Pennsylvania has a relatively low base registration fee. Special plates and additional services add cost.)

sourceNeeded — varies, typically \$10–\$50 — Notary/tag service fee (Tag services and notaries charge a service fee for handling the title transfer paperwork. This is separate from PennDOT fees.)

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Notary: Yes — Pennsylvania requires notarization of the seller's and buyer's signatures on the title assignment AND on Form MV-4ST. This must be done by a PennDOT-authorized notary public, messenger service, tag service, or licensed motor vehicle dealer.

Bill of sale: Conditional — Form MV-4ST serves as the primary tax/title document, so a separate bill of sale is not required by statute. A bill of sale is recommended to document the price, date, and odometer reading independently.

Odometer disclosure: Yes — Required for vehicles less than 20 model-years old, completed on the title's assignment section and Form MV-4ST.

Inspection: Conditional — Pennsylvania requires annual safety inspection statewide and emissions inspection in 25 designated counties (mostly southeast and southwest PA metros). Newly registered vehicles must be inspected within 10 days of registration (sourceNeeded — confirm current rule).

Plates: Pennsylvania plates stay with the owner, not the vehicle. The seller removes plates before delivery; the buyer transfers plates from another vehicle they own (with a transfer fee) or buys new plates at registration.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

- 1 Confirm the seller is the titled owner of record on the front of the PA title.
- 2 Check the title for liens — outstanding liens must be released before transfer.
- 3 Both parties together visit a PennDOT-authorized notary public, messenger service, tag service, or licensed dealer.
- 4 Seller signs the title assignment section in the notary's presence; notary witnesses and stamps.
- 5 Both parties complete and sign Form MV-4ST in the notary's presence; notary witnesses and stamps.
- 6 Seller removes Pennsylvania plates from the vehicle.
- 7 Buyer obtains Pennsylvania auto insurance in their name.
- 8 The notary/tag service submits the title application, MV-4ST, and payment to PennDOT on the buyer's behalf (most common workflow).
- 9 PennDOT issues new registration card; the new title arrives by mail in approximately 4–6 weeks.
- 10 Buyer completes annual safety inspection (and emissions inspection if in a covered county) within the required window.

COMMON MISTAKES



- Signing the title or MV-4ST before reaching a PennDOT-authorized notary — signatures must be made in the notary's presence, not in advance.
- Going to PennDOT directly without notarized paperwork — PA title transfers require notarization before submission.
- Forgetting that PA plates stay with the seller — driving the seller's plates is illegal.
- Missing the 20-day deadline for title application.
- Skipping MV-13 on a family gift — without it, sales tax applies even on gifts.
- Wrong sales tax rate — buyers in Allegheny County (7%) and Philadelphia (8%) pay more than the 6% state rate.
- Confusing 'tag service' with PennDOT — a tag service is an authorized private business that handles paperwork. PennDOT issues the title.

OFFICIAL SOURCES**PennDOT — Title and Registration**<https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/dmv/vehicle-services/title-and-registration.html>**Form MV-4ST**<https://www.dot.pa.gov/Documents/forms/MV-4ST.pdf>**Form MV-1**<https://www.dot.pa.gov/Documents/forms/MV-1.pdf>**Form MV-13 (Affidavit of Gift)**<https://www.dot.pa.gov/Documents/forms/MV-13.pdf>**PA Department of Revenue (Sales Tax)**<https://www.revenue.pa.gov/>**PennDOT**<https://www.penndot.pa.gov>