

For Sale Vehicles on Public Property

2003-2008 Pilot Programs

In 2003, Alderman Robert Donovan proposed a pilot program that required any vehicle for sale on City of Milwaukee public property to display a permit. The permit requires the seller to be the owner or authorized by the owner and that the vehicle be checked for being stolen. Vehicles lacking a permit could be cited and towed. The ordinance was initiated as a quality of life ordinance “to keep Milwaukee streets and public lots from resembling used car lots” and to discourage attempts to sell stolen vehicles.

2003-2008 Summary

Vehicles Issued Citations	2,043	
Vehicles Dispatched for Tow	1,369	
Vehicles Towed	1,017	
Vehicle Sales Permits Sold	198	9.7%
Violations Disputed	140	6.9%
Violations Released	104	5%
District Towed		

2009 Citywide

On May 1, 2009, the Common Council expanded the pilot program citywide.

2009 Summary

Vehicles Issued Citations	1,756	
Vehicles Dispatched for Tow	1,244	
Vehicles Towed	829	
Vehicles Sales Permits Sold	187	10.6%
Violations Disputed	123	7%
Violations Released	87	5%

2009 Citations Issued and Permits Sold by MPD District

MPD District	Citations Issued	Percent Cited	Permits Sold	Percent Permits Sold
1	88	5%	13	7%
2	760	43%	92	51%
3	148	8%	10	8%
4	74	4%	9	4%
5	118	7%	6	7%
6	321	18%	40	18%
7	247	14%	10	14%

Vehicle Sales Permit Review

Municipalities and States with Similar Ordinance or Statute

The majority of states and municipalities have laws regarding the sale of motor vehicles on private property, public property, or signage restrictions. These laws vary greatly in enforcement and applicability. However, a common denominator is the majority of these rules is prohibited signage and placement on public right of ways. In an internet search, the following municipalities were found to have restrictions and enforcement similar to the City of Milwaukee:

Partial Listing of Municipalities with For Sale Restrictions	
Chicago, Illinois	San Antonio, Texas
Fair Fax, Virginia	San Diego, California
Indianapolis, Indiana	San Mateo, California
Lenexa, Kansas	Tacoma, Washington
New Jersey, New Jersey	Virginia State of
Redwood, California	Wasilla, Arkansas
Salina, California	Waukesha, Wisconsin

Discourages Illegal Car Sales and Title Transfers

This ordinance reduces the number of illegal vehicle transfers. The permit process identifies vehicles that could not be sold or transferred because of emissions test failures, outstanding warrants, or other situations where the potential buyer would be unable to register the vehicle.

Used Car Dealerships Using Public Streets

One of the prevalent constituent complaints leading to this ordinance was the use of the public streets by used car dealers. One obvious benefit to the ordinance is the reduction in for sale vehicles by used car dealers on city streets. A large percentage of the vehicles cited and towed were located in areas in and around used car lots.

Vehicles Identified as Stolen

Stolen vehicles are identified and recovered because of this ordinance. When officers run the plates of "for sale" vehicles, they identify vehicles that have been stolen. These vehicles are towed as recovered stolen, processed through the Milwaukee Police Department, and then returned to the rightful owner.

Prevents Owners from Receiving Improper Citations or Other Fees

Impounding vehicles ensures that the rightful owner retrieves the vehicle. Persons possessing or operating a vehicle not registered to them have a high probability of receiving citations under the name of the previous owner. Towing these vehicles prevents previous owners from being charged for tickets that are not theirs.