

MTA and Law Enforcement Partners Celebrate 100th

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MTA and Law Enforcement Partners Celebrate 100th Ghost Plate Enforcement Operation

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Through 100 Joint Agency Operations, Officers Have Impounded More Than 5,300 Vehicles

View [Photos, Video](#) and [Drone Video](#) of Enforcement Operations

View [Photos](#) and [Video](#) of Event

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Bridges and Tunnels along with regional law enforcement partners today highlighted results of 100 operations following the launch of a multi-agency City and State-led task force dedicated to removing “ghost cars” — vehicles that are virtually untraceable by traffic cameras and toll readers because of their forged or altered license

plates — from New York roadways. The 100 joint enforcement operations, which began on March 11, 2024, have resulted in 5,343 vehicles towed for suspended registrations and fraudulent, obstructed or altered license plates. Unbillable tolls from ghost plates have dropped 20%. So far in 2025, there have been 38 enforcement operations, which resulted in 1,893 towed vehicles with approximately \$11.5 million in unpaid tolls and fees, judgments and debts owed to all task force partners. MTA Police and Bridge and Tunnel officers alone have issued 16,000 summonses year-to-date.

The number of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument (CPFI) or “ghost plates” confiscated this year is 48 and 126 throughout 100 joint enforcement operations. Since the launch of congestion relief in January 2025, the role of the task force has expanded to include operations targeting vehicles committing violations in and around the Congestion Relief Zone (CRZ). The 11 CRZ operations have resulted in 97 towed vehicles.

“We won’t tolerate bad actors using obscured and fraudulent license plates to avoid detection while committing crimes,” **said MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber**. “Public safety is the priority, and if you cover your plates, you will get caught and you will pay the price – not just the toll you evaded.”

“New Yorkers deserve streets that are safe for families and communities, and that’s what this multi-agency city-state task force has helped deliver for more than a year. Through 100 joint operations with the MTA and our city and state partners, thousands of ghost cars and illegal vehicles have been removed from our streets, and those violating the law know that the days of ‘anything goes’ are over,” **said New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. “Since the start of our administration, city agencies alone have removed over 110,000 additional ghost cars and illegal vehicles, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to public safety. Together, with our partners, we are holding drivers accountable, sending a clear message, and making our streets safer for everyone, while simultaneously continuing to tackle crime and unsafe behavior across the city.”

“The coordination between B&T officers and our regional law enforcement partners has resulted in increased accountability on our roads,” **said MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Catherine Sheridan**. “Our enforcement efforts continue to drive down the use of covered, obstructed, and altered license plates and I commend our B&T and MTAPD officers, as well as those of our partners, for their dedication to this important mission.”

“Ghost cars aren’t just illegal – they are a public safety threat,” **said NYC Police Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch**. “Since March 2024, the NYPD and our law enforcement partners have worked together to crack down on unregistered and untraceable cars that are often used to evade police and enable other crimes. One hundred operations later, the results are clear: more than 5,300 illegal cars taken off the streets. I want to thank Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams for providing the tools necessary to keep our streets safe, and I am grateful to every state and local agency that has stood with us in making sure all drivers understand the rules of the road.”

The primary focus of the task force's work is to remove vehicles with fraudulent or modified license plates — and those with no tags at all — as these vehicles are often unregistered, uninsured, or stolen. While the illegal practice of forging or altering license plates is not new, the crime proliferated during the pandemic, with drivers masking their identities by using counterfeit temporary paper plates to evade detection. Fake “temp tags” appeared as though they were issued by out-of-state dealerships, making them difficult to verify. In some cases, vehicle operators used this cloak of anonymity to commit more serious violent crimes, including hit-and-runs, robberies and shootings.

Agencies involved in the joint enforcement operations include:

MTA Bridges and Tunnels (TBTA)

MTA Police Department

New York Police Department

New York State Police

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department

NYC Sheriff

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Police

NYC Business Integrity Commission

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles

US Park Police

NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission

Suffolk County Sheriff's Office

Suffolk County Police Department

Nassau County Police Department

Clarkstown NY Police Department

Westchester County Police Department

As part of her comprehensive strategy on enforcement, Governor Hochul secured in the FY 2025 final Budget agreement an increase in fines and penalties for driving with altered plates, a prohibition of the sale or distribution of covers that obscure license plates and the restriction of DMV registration transactions for vehicles with suspended registrations for failure to pay tolls or

failing to remove plate-obscuring materials. To encourage payment and equitable enforcement and better align with its regional partners, MTA Bridges and Tunnels also reduced fees assessed for toll violations on its major bridges and tunnels.

Notable Arrests

On April 13, 2025, MTAPD officers were made aware of a stolen vehicle being pursued by Westchester County Police heading towards the Throgs Neck Bridge. By using live GPS locations, the officers were able to locate the vehicle and driver, who was found to be in possession of crack cocaine and had multiple warrants out of New Jersey. Port Authority Police informed the officers that the driver had been caught on video stealing the vehicle from Newark Airport.

On June 24, 2025, MTAPD officers were conducting an enforcement on the Bronx Whitestone Bridge and received an alert for a stolen license plate. Officers tried to conduct a traffic stop but the vehicle fled and ended up crashing into another car. The officers chased the driver on foot and placed him into custody. The vehicle had been stolen, and the driver was in possession of a loaded firearm and large amount of marijuana.

During an enforcement operation last year at the Queens Midtown Tunnel, a New York State Trooper stopped a vehicle with tinted windows and no front license plate. The driver was unable to provide a license, registration or proof of insurance. A check of the license plate revealed it belonged to a different vehicle, and a check on the driver showed their learner's permit was suspended. During a search, the officers found three bags of narcotics. The driver was arrested and charged with criminal possession of a controlled substance,

During the May 2, 2024 enforcement on the Willis Avenue Bridge, a New York State Trooper stopped a vehicle with multiple registration and inspection violations, including a missing front plate and an altered Georgia temporary tag. The driver claimed he had just bought the vehicle, and an investigation revealed the temporary tag was invalid and the public VINs on the door and dashboard were forged. The actual VIN confirmed the vehicle had been reported stolen days earlier and the driver was placed under arrest.

Latest Technology Combating Ghost Plates and Toll Evasion

Drones

In 2024, MTA Bridges and Tunnels deployed drones to assist in revenue recovery. Essentially an aerial license plate reader; drones are feeding video into the License Plate Reader (LPR) system to search for a potential Persistent Toll Violator (PTV) match. The LPR systems are preloaded with the license plates of those whose registrations have been suspended by the DMV and when the LPR system detects one of these PTVs with a suspended registration, an alert is sent to the officer in the patrol car who can pull the vehicle over.

Mobile License Plate Reader Trailers

In 2023, MTA Bridges and Tunnels' internal security department expanded its LPR capability through the addition of mobile LPR trailers. These trailers are strategically deployed at B&T approaches, and in and around the Congestion Relief Zone, maximizing opportunities to apprehend PTVs. Information collected from these mobile units also provides additional insight to patterns and trends that aid in data-driven enforcement.

Avoid Scams and Pay Your Tolls the Right Way

Toll operating agencies will never send a text with a link to pay tolls. While the overwhelming majority of motorists — over 90 percent — are signed up with E-ZPass, motorists that are sent a Tolls by Mail bill can pay online, by mail as instructed on the bill itself, via the Tolls NY app, or calling 1-844-826-8400.

"The use of fraudulent and obstructed or defaced license plates undermines public safety and puts everyone on the roadway at risk," **said New York State Police Superintendent Steven G. James.** "Enforcements such as this are an integral part of protecting all New Yorkers and for maintaining the welfare of the roads they rely on each day. I applaud the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on this milestone detail and thank them for their continued partnership."

"Working in partnership with the MTA on an interagency enforcement task force, the Nassau County Police Department has worked to help keep our streets safe," **said Nassau County Police Department Commissioner Patrick J. Ryder.** "Targeting violators who commit dangerous acts; we have intensified patrols and conducted enforcement of violations that have wide spread effects. Our enforcement operations on the interagency task force target many violations, including violators who attempt to avoid detection by obscuring or forging their license plates and operating vehicles without insurance. We are proud to work together to combat crime and ensure the safety of residents and visitors in Nassau County."

"Collaboration between law enforcement agencies is critical to effective policing," **said Suffolk County Police Commissioner Kevin Catalina.** "The use of ghost plates enables criminals to sneak under the radar of responsibility for infractions of all levels. We are proud of the results these operations have produced and will continue our efforts to ensure compliance."

"We see what happens with these 'ghost' plates and these plates that are altered, it affects everyone from accident victims to victims of crime," **said Clarkstown Chief of Police Jeffrey Wanamaker.** "We're proud to be part of this great task force and protect our citizens in Clarkstown and Rockland, and the state of New York."

"Illegal 'ghost' plates and other deceptions pose a serious threat to public safety and will not be tolerated in Suffolk County," **said Suffolk County Sheriff Errol D. Toulon, Jr.** "These tools are often used to conceal a driver's identity, evade detection, and facilitate dangerous criminal activity. The Suffolk Sheriff's Office is proud to work alongside nearly a dozen partner agencies to crack down on fraudulent plates, plate covers, illegal tints, and other violations—sending a clear message to criminals that they can't hide from us."

“We have zero tolerance toward any motorists who seek to circumvent the law and intentionally thwart payment of the tolls used to maintain our bridges and tunnels that millions of people rely on to get around our region,” **said Port Authority Police Superintendent Edward Cetnar**. “Make no mistake: If you do not pay your fair share, you are stealing from the hard-working men and women who do the right thing and pay when they drive on our crossings. We will use every tool available to us and our law enforcement partners to make you pay.”

“We’re incredibly proud of the Interagency Task Force and the TLC Police Officers who form an integral part of it,” **said NYC Taxi & Limousine Commissioner and Chair David Do**. “The fact that we are now at our 100th operation is testimony to how effective and important these operations have become. Week in and week out, they deliver results that help keep us the safest large city in America.”

“I commend the work of the task force in holding accountable the people who would try to use fraudulent plates to avoid paying a toll or ticket, or who would use them to cover up some wrongdoing on their part,” **said Mark J.F. Schroeder, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles and Chair of the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee**. “The results of these 100 enforcement details are proof of what state and local agencies working together can do to keep New Yorkers safe and secure on our roads, and I look forward to seeing what we can continue to accomplish in the future.”

“In addition to New York State’s vehicle and traffic laws, DEC Environmental Conservation Police Officers (ECOs) enforce the 71 chapters of the State’s Environmental Conservation Law, protecting our natural resources, from fish and wildlife to air and water,” **said New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Law Enforcement Director Karen Przyklek**. “Our Officers are proud to partner with the MTA and other law enforcement agencies once again on this 100th detail and will be out in force checking diesel truck exhaust emissions and hazardous waste haulers to ensure our highways and byways are safer, less congested, and less polluted.”

“BIC is proud to join the MTA, NYPD, and our other enforcement partners to acknowledge one hundred joint enforcement operations conducted to improve public safety on our roads,” **said Business Integrity Commission (BIC) Commissioner and Chair Elizabeth Crotty**. “Without proper regulation and enforcement, dangerous drivers especially of commercial trucks can pose a risk to all New Yorkers. BIC enforcement personnel have removed hundreds of unsafe drivers and vehicles that failed inspection off the road since this interagency effort began, and we are committed to continuing this crucial work to protect New York City.”

[MTA Press Release Bridges and Tunnels](#)