



Towing Advisory Board: City's Towing Fee Analysis

March 19, 2026





Background



Trespass towing timeline

COA increased its initial trespass towing fee of \$135 to \$150 and increased the after-hours charge of \$25 to \$30.

November 16, 2024

November 30, 2024

The VA State Corporation Commission (SCC) Report was released. The report examined trespass towing fees and identified policy options, recommending the state maximum initial towing fee be raised from \$150 to \$200-\$210.

The State increased its upper limit on initial towing fees (\$150 to \$210) and the provision surrounding the \$20 fuel surcharge expired (VA code § 46.2-1233.1)

July 1, 2025



How current City towing fees compare to State caps

	Tow	After Hours (holidays, weekend, 7p-8a; can be charged up to 2x)	Fuel Surcharge	Storage (after 24 hours, daily)	Notify /Admin (after 3 days)	Hooked-Up, Not Towed (drop fee)
City	\$150	\$30	N/A	\$50	\$75	\$50
State	\$135- \$210	\$25-\$30	N/A	(Not regulated)	(Not regulated)	(Not regulated)
Difference	(\$60)	\$0	N/A	\$50	\$75	\$50





Analysis



The following will be used to consider rate changes:

1. Inflation

- Staff will normally consider a rate adjustment when cumulative inflation*, since the last rate change, equates to roughly a \$10 (or 6.7%) change in the towing fee, subject to community impact and Council direction

2. Comparator rates

- The City will be within the range of other Planning District 8 jurisdictions

3. Actual community experience

- Consideration of the actual towing experience of the community

4. State rate adjustments

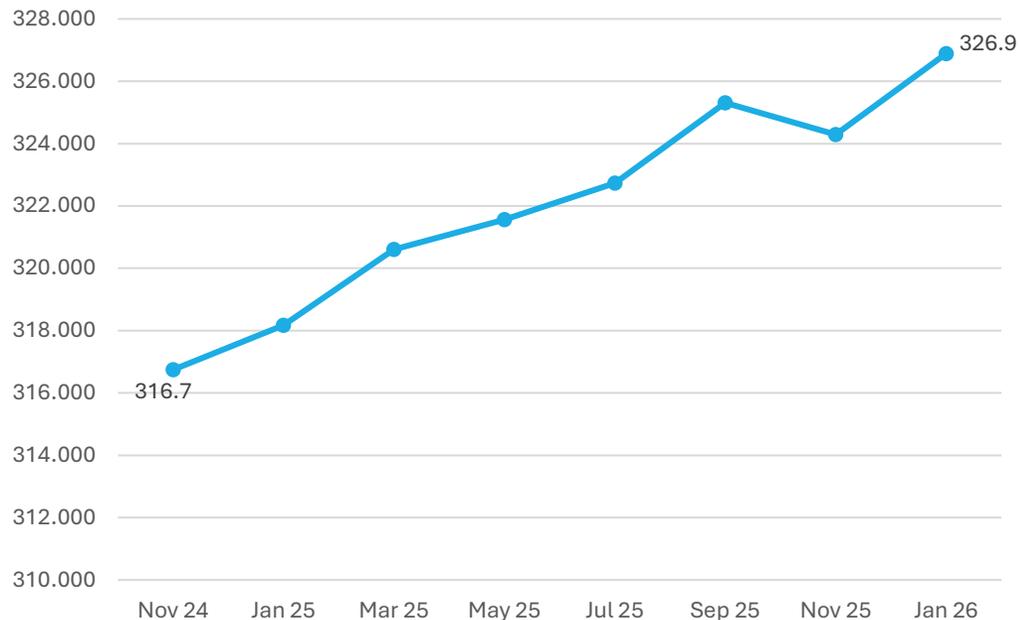
- Evaluate the basis for any state-level changes to the maximum trespass towing rates and assess their applicability to city circumstances

*Inflation is measured using the overall DC-metro Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) and the DC-metro transportation CPI-U.

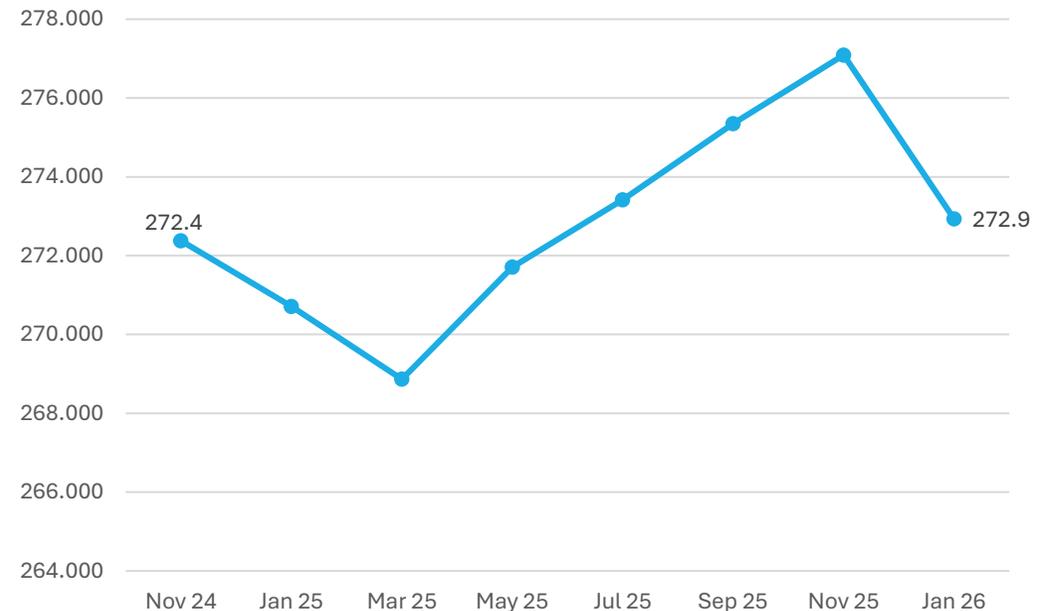


1. Inflation increased moderately, but below 6.7% (or \$10) threshold, since the City last updated towing fees in November 2024

DC area inflation increased by 3.2% from Nov 24 to Jan 26



Transportation inflation* in the DC area increased by 0.2% from Nov 24 to Jan 26



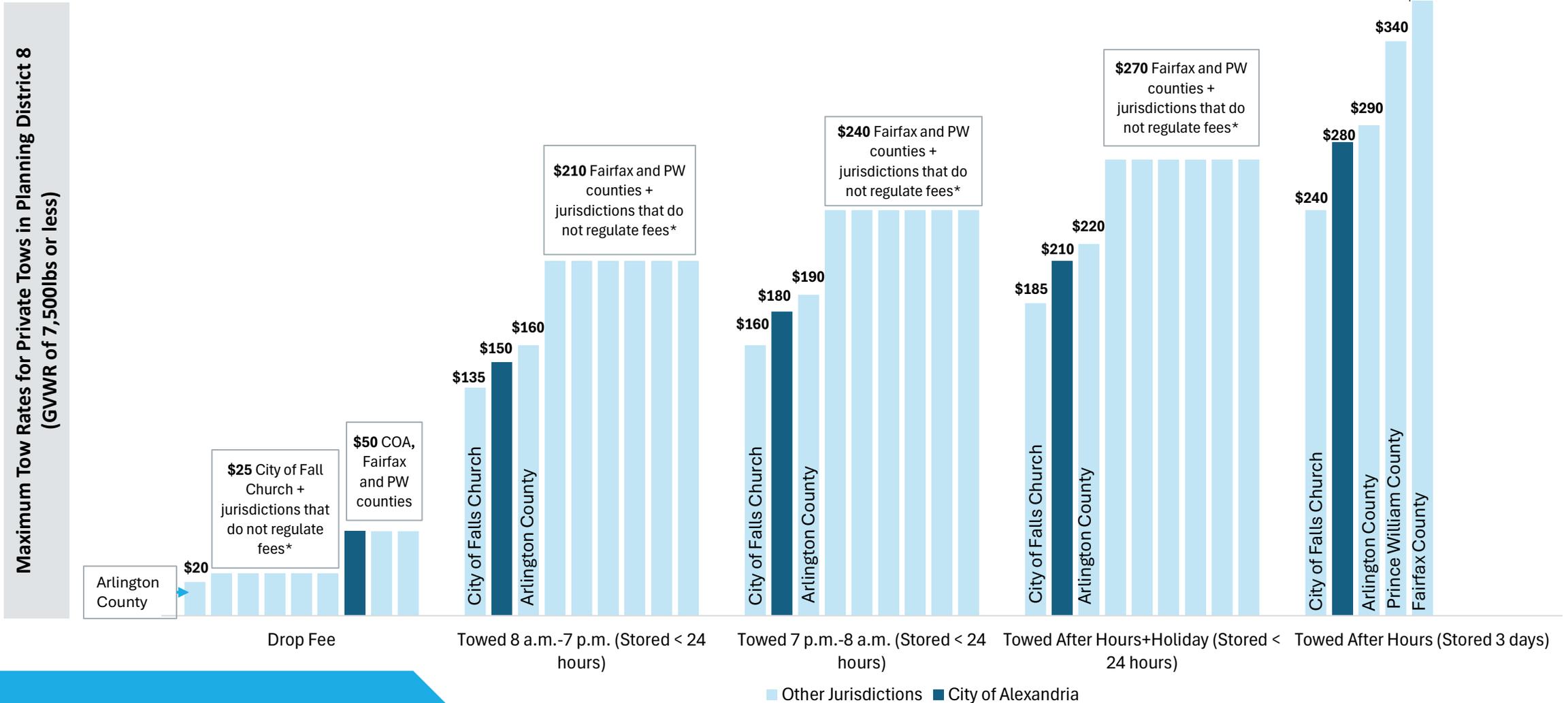
Consumer price index data retrieved from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

*For more information on what's included in BLS's CPI-U transportation inflation see Appendix 1





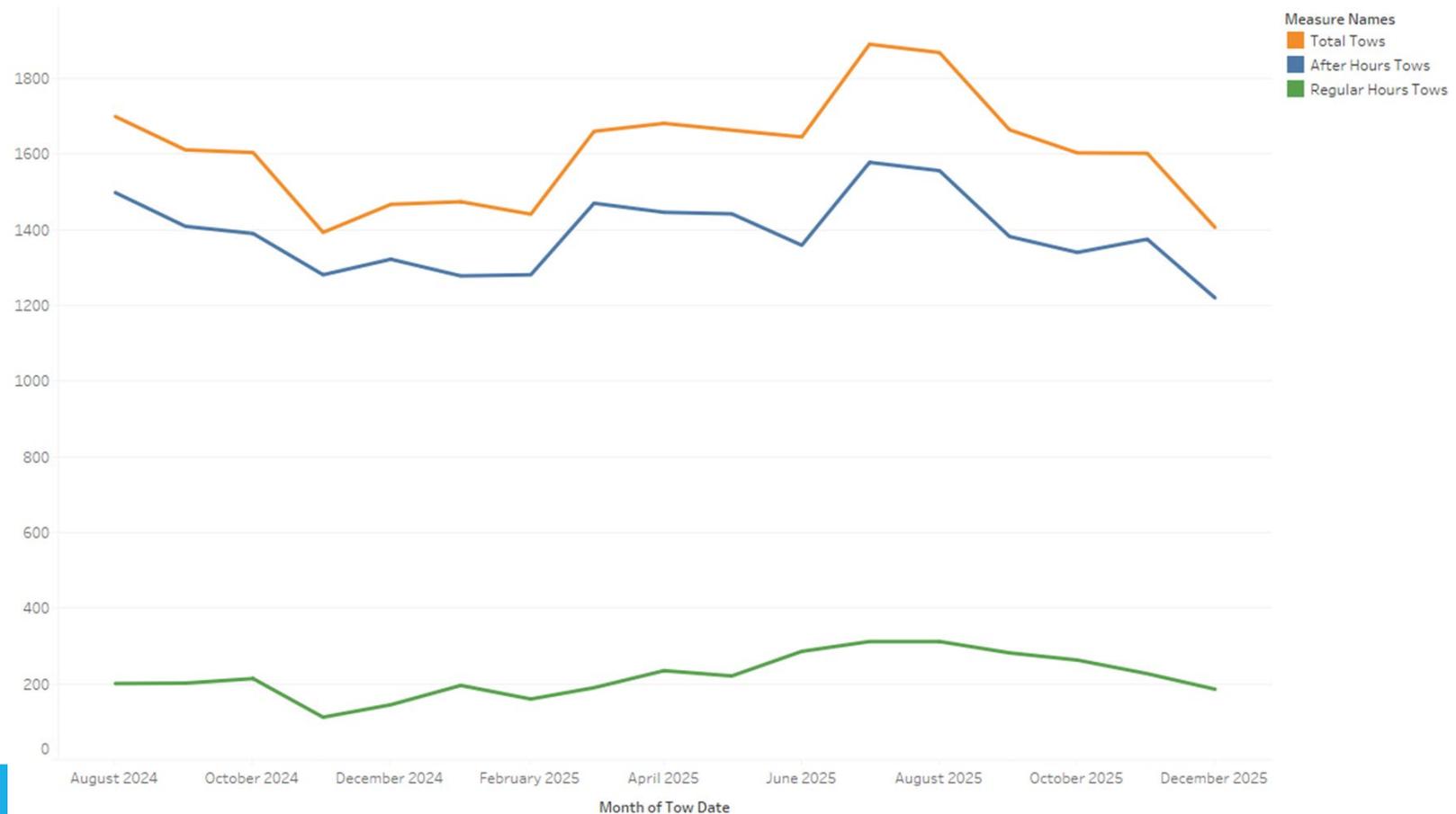
2. The City's towing rates are within range of other Planning District 8 jurisdictions



*City of Fairfax, City of Manassas, City of Manassas Park, and Loudon County do not regulate trespass towing fees. Towing companies thus can charge no more than maximums provided in Va. Code § 46.2-1233.1. Jurisdictions that do not regulate fees do not have fixed storage fees. See Appendix 2 for more rate comparisons.



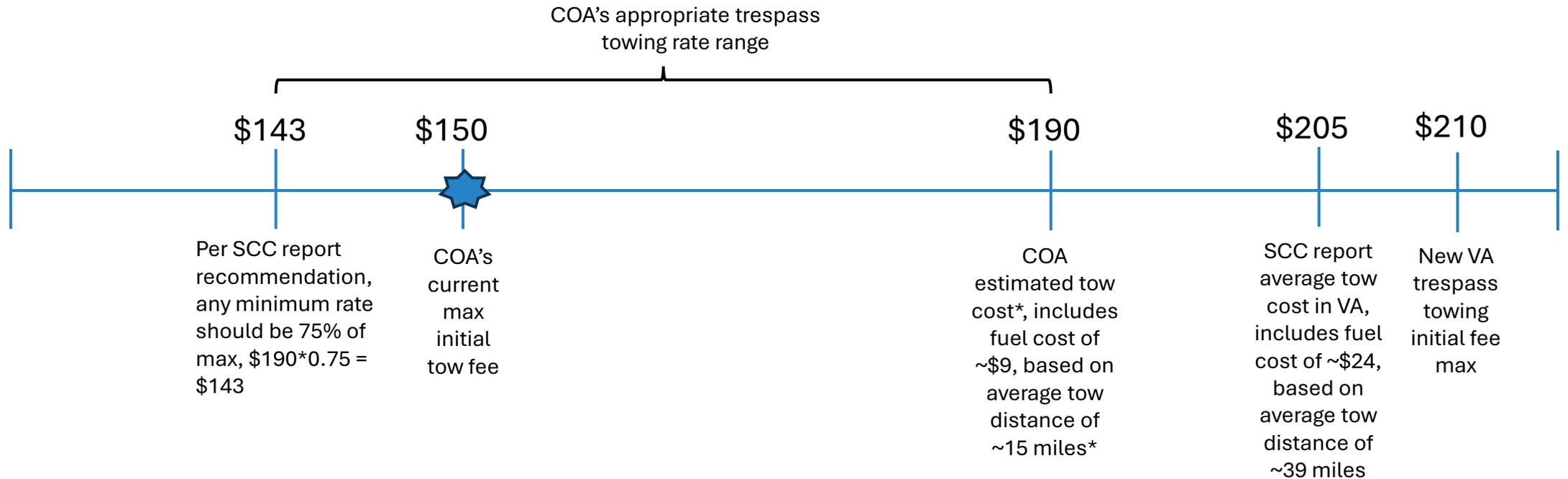
3. Actual tow experience of the community: 86% tows are already charged after-hours fee, meaning most tows cost \$180



Towing data from APD. Only private towing included which may include other types of tows in addition to trespass tows (initiated by private companies, typically on private property per APD), aggregated at a monthly level.



4. City's current trespass towing rates remain reasonable, after City conditions were factored into the State's increased maximum



*See Appendix 3 for more information on COA Estimated Tow Cost



Conclusion





Staff recommendation is to not increase rates

- 1. *Inflationary impact:*** Inflation since November 2024 does not suggest a \$10 or greater increase to the initial towing fee
- 2. *Comparator rates:*** COA is currently within the range of rates compared to other Planning District 8 jurisdictions
- 3. *Community experience:*** Seems to indicate most private tows are charged at the after-hours rate
- 4. *State Rate Adjustments:*** COA's current initial tow fee falls within appropriate range (\$143-\$190), given evidence provided in SCC report to raise VA's trespass tow fee maximum



Appendix 1



Items in BLS Transportation CPI-U

- ▶ **New and used motor vehicles**
- ▶ **Motor fuel (all types)**
- ▶ **Motor vehicle parts and equipment**
- ▶ **Motor vehicle maintenance and repair**
- ▶ **Motor vehicle insurance**
- ▶ **Motor vehicle fees (i.e. registration, parking fees, etc.)**



Appendix 2



Comparator rates: Initial tow & after-hour fees

Maximum Tow Rates for Private (Trespass) Tows in Planning District 8

Jurisdiction	Hookup and Initial Towing Fee (GVWR of 7,500lbs or less)	Towing between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m.	Towing on Saturday, Sunday, or Holiday
City of Alexandria	\$150	\$30	\$30
Arlington County	\$160	\$30	\$30
City of Falls Church	\$135	\$25	\$25
Prince William County	\$210	\$30	\$30
Fairfax County	\$210	\$30	\$30
City of Fairfax*	\$210	\$30	\$30
City of Manassas*	\$210	\$30	\$30
City of Manassas Park*	\$210	\$30	\$30
Loudon County*	\$210	\$30	\$30

Key: Purple (Above City) Green (Equal to City) Red (Below City)

*Note: These Planning District 8 localities do not regulate trespass towing fees. Towing companies thus can charge no more than maximums provided in Va. Code § 46.2-1233.1.



Comparator scenarios

Maximum Tow Rates for Private (Trespass) Tows in Planning District 8 (GVWR of 7,500lbs or less)

Key: Purple (Above City) Red (Below City)

Jurisdiction	Towed 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Stored < 24 hours)	Towed 7 p.m. - 8 a.m. (Stored < 24 hours)	Towed After Hours + Holiday (Stored < 24 hours)	Towed After Hours; stored 3 days
City of Alexandria	\$150	\$180	\$210	\$280
Arlington County	\$160	\$190	\$220	\$290
City of Falls Church	\$135	\$160	\$185	\$240
Prince William County	\$210	\$240	\$270	\$340
Fairfax County	\$210	\$240	\$270	\$364
City of Fairfax*	\$210	\$240	\$270	Base \$240**
City of Manassas*	\$210	\$240	\$270	Base \$240**
City of Manassas Park*	\$210	\$240	\$270	Base \$240**
Loudon County*	\$210	\$240	\$270	Base \$240**

*Note: These Planning District 8 localities do not regulate trespass towing fees. Towing companies thus can charge no more than maximums provided in Va. Code § 46.2-1233.1.

**Jurisdictions that do not regulate fees do not have fixed storage fees. \$240 is the base rate, given the after-hours tow.



Trespass fee analysis

The City's additional towing fees match **most** neighboring jurisdictions*.



Hooked up, but not towed
\$50 or less in **3/5** jurisdictions, incl. City



After Hours
\$30 in **4/5** jurisdictions, incl. City



Storage
\$50 in in **3/5** jurisdictions, incl. City



Notify/Admin
\$75 or less in **2/3** jurisdictions, incl. City*
*Arlington does not assess and Falls Church data unavailable



Fuel Surcharge
Expired in state law as of 7/1/2025

*Neighboring jurisdictions comprise Planning District 8 jurisdictions that regulate trespass towing fees, which include Fairfax, Prince William, and Arlington Counties and the City of Falls Church. The Cities of Fairfax, Manassas, and Manassas Park, along with Loudon County do not regulate private towing fees.





Appendix 3



SCC report shows \$205 average tow cost in VA, given itemized costs

ITEMIZED SCHEDULE 2024 NON-CONSENT LIGHT DUTY TRESPASS TOWS					
	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	Costs	Cost Category Percentages	Percentage of Total Costs	Cost Per Tow
DIRECT EXPENSES	LABOR EXPENSES				
	TOTAL WAGES - LABOR EXPENSES				
	Hourly Wage - Tow Driver	\$26.92			
	Hourly Wage - Office Admin	\$23.05			
	Total Annual Labor (Tow Driver) 2080 Hours/Year	\$55,994	100.00%		
	Less - Indirect Labor (OH) 20% - 416 Hours	-\$8,399	-15.00%		
	Less - Fringe Labor (Holiday/PTO) 160 Hours	-4,307	-7.69%		
	Net Direct Labor (Towing)	\$43,287	77.31%	15.53%	\$27.75
	FUEL EXPENSES				
	Average Fuel Cost of Diesel per Gallon	\$4.00			
Number of Miles Driven per Year	60,000				
Mileage Efficiency (MPG)	6.5				
Fuel Costs	\$36,923		13.24%	\$23.67	
EQUIPMENT EXPENSES	EQUIPMENT EXPENSES				
	Purchase Cost - New Class 5 Tow Truck	\$140,000			
	Tow Truck Depreciation (5 Year Term)	\$28,000	45.70%	10.04%	
	Tow Truck Financing (Calculated 5 Years @ 9%)	\$6,874	11.22%	2.47%	
	Licensing, Truck Property Taxes, Etc.	\$2,000	3.26%	0.72%	
	Truck Insurances (Vehicle, Cargo)	\$12,000	19.58%	4.30%	
	Towing Supplies (Cables, Straps, Chains, Etc.)	\$4,000	6.53%	1.43%	
	Routine Maintenance & Repairs (\$700/mo.)	\$8,400	13.71%	3.01%	
	Total Equipment Costs	\$61,274	100.00%	21.98%	\$39.28
	FRINGE BENEFITS	FRINGE BENEFIT EXPENSES			
Social Security Match (6.20%)		\$3,472	6.20%	1.25%	
Medicare Match (1.45%)		\$812	1.45%	0.29%	
Workers Comp Insurance (5.66%)		\$3,169	5.66%	1.14%	
Federal (FUI) and State (SUI) Unemployment 1.85%		\$1,036	1.85%	0.37%	
Fringe Labor: PTO (80 Hours/Year)		\$2,154	3.85%	0.77%	
Fringe Labor: Holiday Pay (80 Hours/Year)		\$2,154	3.85%	0.77%	
Health, Dental, Vision Ins. (28% of Total Wages)		\$16,000	28.57%	5.74%	
Life Insurance		\$520	0.93%	0.19%	
Retirement - 401K (5.00% of Total Wages)		\$2,800	5.00%	1.00%	
Shift Differentials	\$0	0.00%	0.00%		
Total Fringe Benefits	\$32,116	57.36%	11.52%	\$20.59	
OVERHEAD	GENERAL OVERHEAD (INDIRECT EXPENSES)				
	Indirect Labor - Tow Driver - 20% - Idle, Training, Etc.	\$11,199	10.64%	4.02%	
	Office Admin - Dispatch Support - Shared Cost	\$23,972	22.78%	8.60%	
	Fringe Benefits - Office Admin Support	\$13,749	4.93%	4.93%	
	Towing Software (Dispatch, Records, Etc.)	\$3,600	3.42%	1.29%	
	Accountant, Software, Payroll	\$4,800	4.56%	1.72%	
	Office Space & Truck Garage - Shared Cost	\$12,000	11.40%	4.30%	
	Office Equipment (Computer, Tablets, Copiers, Etc.)	\$2,400	2.28%	0.86%	
	Software Subscriptions (Microsoft, Adobe, Etc.)	\$1,800	1.71%	0.65%	
	Communications - Office (Internet, Phone, Fax)	\$2,400	2.28%	0.86%	
	Communications - Field (Cell Phone & Tablets)	\$1,200	1.14%	0.43%	
	Office Supplies (\$200/Month)	\$2,400	2.28%	0.86%	
	Office Cleaning and Maintenance	\$1,800	1.71%	0.65%	
	Utilities (\$500 per Month)	\$6,000	5.70%	2.15%	
	Postage	\$1,500	1.43%	0.54%	
	Outside Printing and Copy	\$1,500	1.43%	0.54%	
	Insurance - General Liability	\$600	0.57%	0.22%	
	Insurance - Office Rental	\$1,200	1.14%	0.43%	
	Office Furniture	\$1,200	1.14%	0.43%	
	Financial - Credit Card Transaction Fee (2%)	\$6,000	5.70%	2.15%	
	Training - Professional & Safety	\$1,200	1.14%	0.43%	
	Business Licenses, Registrations, Etc.	\$500	0.48%	0.18%	
	Signing, Trespass Properties	\$2,400	2.28%	0.86%	
	Marketing - Websites, Business Cards, Flyers	\$1,200	1.14%	0.43%	
	Medical, Drug Testing, Background Checks	\$600	0.57%	0.22%	
Total General Overhead (Indirect Expenses)	\$105,220	91.86%	37.74%	\$67.45	
TOTAL Costs Before Profit	\$278,820		100.00%	\$178.73	
Profit 15%	\$41,823			\$26.81	
Total (Expenses + Profit)	\$320,643				
Number of Tows per Truck per Year (130 per month)	1560				
Average Cost - Light Duty Tow				\$205.54	



SCC report overestimates fuel costs for smaller jurisdictions

- ▶ SCC report estimates an avg private tow costs \$205 in VA, based on avg tow distance of ~39 miles
- ▶ In COA, vehicles must be towed within the city or no more than 3 miles outside city limits
- ▶ Alexandria covers 15.75 square miles, significantly constraining tow distances
- ▶ Thus, the max practical tow distance is ~15 miles, based on furthest possible distance one can travel in COA (including truck travel to vehicle and the tow itself)



Overall tow cost decreases with shorter tow distances

- ▶ With a max tow distance of 15 miles, avg fuel costs are reduced to ~\$9 from ~\$24 in SCC estimate, a reduction of ~\$15/tow
- ▶ SCC report estimates market cost of private tow in VA is \$205
- ▶ Therefore, adjusting for local conditions places the est. avg tow cost in COA at roughly \$190, ($\$205 - \$15 = \190)