

October 12, 2017

Auditor's Project Lowers Vehicle Tax Bills

According to a release from the [Beaufort County Auditor's Office](#), a change in the motor vehicle valuation method is now complete after two years, due to the recent reprogramming of a system that has been in place since 2009. Previously, a vehicle's value was determined using the highest trim level for that model in the [Department of Revenue's \(DOR\)](#) valuation guide. Beaufort County Auditor Jim Beckert indicated that the vast majority of vehicles on the road are base or mid-level models, many of which have been over valued. Consequently, the Auditor's Office sought to change practices to reflect guidance given by DOR and be in line with neighboring and peer counties.

The new programming selects the lowest-valued vehicle in a model group from the DOR valuation guide if the vehicle's trim level is not clearly identified. It is estimated that this valuation change will impact hundreds, if not thousands, of vehicles each month. Over the past four months, the fair market value (FMV) on vehicle renewal bills has been reduced by millions of dollars in FMV, reducing vehicle taxes for many taxpayers. During this calendar year, new vehicles that were added to the tax rolls resulted in very modest growth of the total FMV of vehicles county-wide.

The Auditor's new project is aimed to help reduce vehicle tax bills even further. State law allows citizens to appeal the DOR mandated value of their vehicle. When the DOR guide is issued to counties and available for use, it is already six months old. By the time the tax year ends, the guide values are 18 months old. By using the appeal process, Beaufort County taxpayers have the opportunity to have their vehicle value reviewed by the Auditor's Office to take any depreciation that has accumulated into consideration where the DOR guide does not.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: The appeal process takes into account many details to determine a current FMV. Prior to submitting an appeal, careful consideration needs to be taken by the taxpayer because the tax bill can decrease or increase based on additional information. The tax calculator on the Auditor's web page [here](#) can assist the taxpayer in determining whether or not to appeal the value. Taxpayers can appeal the DOR tax assessment based on state law by submitting an appeal in writing up to 30 days from when the bill was generated or the last day to pay the bill timely. Requests received after those dates are untimely and cannot be considered per state law.

For more information, contact the Auditor's Office at 843-255-2500 or visit the [Auditor's web page](#).

[Related release.](#)