

May a golf cart be driven on a city street?

Yes, if allowed by city ordinance and in other, very limited circumstances. Three sections of two Texas Transportation Code provisions govern whether a golf cart may be driven on a city street:

1. A golf cart may be driven on a street if the street is: (1) in a master planned community that meets certain conditions; (2) on a golf course; or (3) on a public or private beach. TEX.

TRANSP. CODE § 551.403(a). Because state law provides no definition of “master planned community,” a pending attorney general opinion request seeks clarification of this provision (<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/opinions/opinions/50abbott/rq/2012/pdf/rq1052GA.pdf>);

2. A golf cart may also be driven on a city street that has a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less, if the golf cart is operated to and from a golf course during the daytime and no more than two miles from the place where the golf cart is usually parked. *Id.*; and/or

3. A city council may, by ordinance, authorize a golf cart to be operated on any street in the city that has a posted speed limit of not more than 35 miles per hour, so long as the golf cart has special safety equipment, including headlamps, tail lamps, reflectors, parking brakes, mirrors, and—if operating at a speed of less than 25 miles per hour—a slowmoving vehicle emblem. *Id.* § 551.404; 547.703.

In addition, a golf cart may be driven across an intersection of any street if the cart is being lawfully operated under one of the provisions above. *Id.* § 551.405.

May a city completely prohibit the use of golf carts on its streets?

Yes, if the city council determines that the prohibition is necessary in the interest of safety. *Id.* 551.403.

Must an owner have liability insurance to drive a golf cart on city streets?

An owner must have liability insurance, the same as for a car, if his cart is driven on a city street pursuant to a city ordinance that authorizes the cart to be operated on any street in the city that has a posted speed limit of not more than 35 miles per hour under Transportation Code Section 551.404. Insurance is not required if the cart is driven pursuant to the state law exceptions allowing its use: (1) in a master planned community that meets certain conditions; (2) on a golf course; (3) on a public or private beach; or (4) on a city street that has a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less, if the golf cart is operated to and from a golf course during the daytime and no more than two miles from the place where the golf cart is usually parked. [(1) – (4) are the limited uses allowed by Section 551.403.] TEX. TRANSP. CODE § 601.052.

Should a golf cart be registered?

No. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles does not register golf carts. TEX. TRANSP. CODE § 551.402.

Should a golf cart have a license plate?

No. Only golf carts driven in Grayson County on property owned or controlled by the United States Corps of Engineers are required to have license plates.

Must a golf cart have certain equipment if it is driven on city streets?

Yes. A golf cart must have headlamps, tail lamps, reflectors, a parking brake, mirrors, and—if operating at a speed of less than 25 miles per hour—a slow-moving vehicle emblem to drive on any city street. *Id.* §§ 547.703; 551.404.

How is a “golf cart” defined?

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles defines a golf cart as a vehicle that has no less than three wheels, has a normal maximum speed of between 15-25 mph, and is manufactured primarily for operation on golf courses (http://www.txdmv.gov/vehicles/drivers/golf_carts.htm).

Must a golf cart follow the rules of the road under the Transportation Code?

Yes. Chapters 541-600 of the Transportation Code outline the rules of the road for all “selfpropelled” vehicles. TEX. TRANSP. CODE § 541.201; ch. 545. A golf cart is a self-propelled vehicle and must follow the rules of the road, except those for which specific exceptions have been made. For example, golf carts operating under Section 551.403 do not have to follow the equipment requirements if they are driven only as allowed under that section (the statute allowing driving in master planned communities and on beaches). *Id.* § 547.002.

What is a “Neighborhood Electric Vehicle,” and can one be driven on city streets?

Golf carts should not be confused with Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs). Subchapter D of Chapter 551 of the Texas Transportation Code allows NEVs on city streets with a speed limit of 45 miles an hour or less, *unless* a city prohibits them. NEVs are larger than golf carts, but smaller than most passenger vehicles. The Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard requires that NEVs be equipped with headlamps, stop lamps, turn signal lamps, tail lamps, reflex reflectors, parking brakes, rear view mirrors, windshields, seat belts, and vehicle identification numbers. In any case, the law governing NEVs is separate from the law governing golf carts.

For more information on the statutes and rules regarding golf carts and neighborhood electric vehicles, visit the Texas Department of Motor Vehicle’s Web site at

http://www.txdmv.gov/vehicles/drivers/golf_carts.htm.

What is the age requirement for operating a Golf Cart on a public roadway/street?

“The Department of Public Safety’s interpretation of the law is that a driver’s license is required to operate a golf cart on a publicly maintained roadway,” said Tom Vinger, Texas Department of Public Safety media and communications press secretary. The answer is 16 years of age as defined by the Texas Transportation Code. Texas law defines golf carts as a “motor vehicle” within the purview of the statutes. In other words, attaining the required age, possessing a current and valid operator's permit or license, and all of the other usual responsibilities (not driving while intoxicated or impaired, etc.) apply to gold carts. They are treated just like a car or a truck for this purpose.

How many people can ride on a golf cart?

The number of passengers on a golf cart is not limited, and seat belts are not required by code.