

Article IX

Travel and Transportation

It is the policy of the City to reimburse its employees, Council members and Mayor, volunteers, and appointed officials for out-of-City travel and transportation expenses directly related to official business of the City. All travel costs will be paid directly to the individual incurring the expense or through a pre-approved City credit card and may not be billed to the City.

This policy is intended to address out-of-pocket expenses for employees, council members, volunteers, and appointed officials on official City business. It is not intended to replace travel allowances given to employees as a condition of employment that are required to provide a vehicle in their work. The City Manager is responsible for determining if additional reimbursement of travel expenses is appropriate.

This policy applies to all City employees and anyone else who seeks reimbursement of travel for City purposes.

Prior Approval for Travel

The City recognizes the need for flexibility in obtaining approval for travel. It is the Finance Director's responsibility to determine if travel is necessary and reasonable and to set standards for approval. All travel out-of-state and travel requiring an overnight stay shall be approved in advance by the City Manager. It is always the responsibility of the Finance Director to ensure that sufficient appropriations are available to cover all travel expenses.

Eligible Transportation Expense

Transportation expenses that are ordinary and necessary while conducting official business for the City are eligible. Eligible transportation expenses include the cost of travel by air, rail, bus, taxi, and personal auto. All transportation by commercial carrier must be economy class unless such rates are not available and no other travel options are available.

Reimbursement for use of an employee's personal auto is allowable at the prevailing rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service for business mileage. Generally, reimbursement the use of an employee's private auto is limited to travel incurred in the general area or within the state.

An employee may take his personal auto for travel with the approval of the Finance Director. In those cases, reimbursement will be limited to the mileage rate or an equivalent air fare, whichever is less.

The following are some examples of transportation expenses that are allowable:

1. Ground transportation such as taxi fares, public transportation, car rental or other costs of transportation between the airport or station, and employee's hotel or from one place of business to another. Ground transportation charges are also allowable between the hotel and temporary work assignment.
2. Baggage charges.
3. Tips that are incidental to any of the above transportation expenses.

Eligible Subsistence/Miscellaneous Expense

Expenses for lodging, subsistence and miscellaneous other expenses other than for alcoholic beverages incurred while traveling away from home and/or related to official duties, are eligible for reimbursement and will be paid. Employees attending functions where certain meals are provided, at no charge to the employee, shall not be reimbursed for those meals purchased elsewhere.

The reimbursement per meal will be based on the state and city location according to the United States General Services Administration rate. <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>.

Pre-approval from the City Manager is sought to cover extra-ordinary travel circumstances. The City Manager may approve a travel advance based on the subsistence reimbursement rate. Receipts are not required for travel advancements. However, they may be requested upon return.

Other actual cost reimbursement as supported by receipts submitted includes:

1. Lodging - employees are encouraged to obtain governmental rates whenever possible.
2. Communication expenses that are related to official business if supported by receipts
3. Tips associated with the costs listed above as noted on memoranda of actual expenditures.
4. Expenses incurred for personal entertainment are not allowable.

Employees who require an overnight stay due to training, courses, conferences, etc. may occur an overnight stay for the following reasons:

1. If the session is more than (1) one hour away and session starts at or before 8:00am and there is another session the following day
2. If there is another session the following day and the current session ends on or after 3:00pm

An overnight stay is not required if the training, courses, conferences, etc. if the following occur:

1. If the session is less than (2) two hours away and the session ends on or before 2:00pm and the is only (1) one session.

2. If there is a series of sessions and the last session ends on or before 2:00pm and the session is less than (2) two hours away.

Note: If there is a health reason for an employee to drive during nightfall, that employee shall occur another night for health reasons. However, the additional night must be approved both by the City Manager and Finance Director (*expenditure appropriations*).

Reporting Expenses for Reimbursement

All employees authorized to travel should keep all receipts and memoranda of actual expenditures from which they can prepare on the official Reimbursement Request and Expense Report form. The employee must provide a copy of the following attached with their Reimbursement Request and Expense Report form.

1. Training, course, conference, etc. Schedule
2. Google Maps Directions
3. Hotel receipt (if applicable)
4. Proof of requested Per Diem (US General Services Administration)

Claims for mileage reimbursement should indicate the point of departure and destination and shall be computed in a manner that is most reasonable and favorable to the City. The business purpose of each trip for which reimbursement is claimed must be clearly stated.

Travel Advances

If a travel advance is necessary to conduct official City business, the request for such advance must be previously approved by both the City Manager and Finance Director submitted no later than (3) three business days prior to the time travel is anticipated. Travel advances may not exceed the estimated cost of travel and must be accounted for on the Reimbursement Request and Expense Report form.

Travel from work to home is not eligible for reimbursement.

Lodging

Travelers are expected to use good judgment and fiscal prudence when making reservations. Employees should seek reasonably priced hotel accommodation. If an employee is attending a conference given in a hotel or resort, then the employee is allowed to seek accommodation at the same hotel/resort even though lower priced accommodation may be available.

If an employee chooses not to stay at the conference hotel, the employee will only be reimbursed up to the conference rate and should choose comparably priced hotels. Exceptions to this will be allowed only if it is demonstrated that the conference hotel was full, and no other more reasonable locations were available.

Employees are expected to shop for the best price for transportation/accommodation and all other travel arrangements when possible.

Governmental and/or early-bird rates should be sought whenever possible.

When two or more City employees share a room, all room expenses shall be on one employee's Reimbursement Request and Expense Request form. The Reimbursement Request and Expense Request form for the other employee should clearly state that lodging was shared and reference the employee with the receipt(s).

Room service charges for food, including tips, and phone calls are not allowable. These expenses are considered to be covered by the per diem allowance. Baggage handling tips are to be paid by the employee using personal funds. The City will reimburse the employee according to the established per diem allowance limits after an accounting of trip expenses has been authorized by the Department Head, City Manager, and Finance Director.

Employees will not be reimbursed for in-room movie rentals, laundry fees, valet charges, in-room bar charges, fitness room fees, hotel room upgrades, or other voluntary, unspecified hotel amenity charges.

Reimbursement for internet is only permitted if a specific business requirement is properly identified and approved.

Cancellations

In the event of cancelled travel, all efforts must be made to eliminate related expenses. It is the employee's responsibility to cancel the lodging reservation, registration, and any other travel plans.

The employee should request and record the cancellation confirmation number for lodging in case of billing disputes. The employee may be held personally responsible for no show fees if they fail to take appropriate action to cancel travel plans. In the event of accidents, serious illness, or death within the traveler's immediate family, or other critical circumstances beyond the control of the employee, the City may elect to pay the penalties and charges. The employee will not be penalized if travel is cancelled by and for the convenience of the City.

