

CITY OF WILLOWICK TRAVEL POLICY

A. General Requirements

1. This policy is intended to provide employees who are duly authorized to travel on behalf of the City with adequate levels of transportation, lodging, meals and other services necessary to conduct the City's business. The City intends that employees travel in reasonable comfort when away from home on business. However, accommodations, meals, transportation and services used should be in keeping with those to which the individual is accustomed in normal circumstances and should never be lavish or extravagant. City employees who are traveling at the City's expense, and/or for City business, are expected to exercise the same care in incurring travel expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds.
2. Each employee shall be responsible for his/her own travel expenses.
3. Receipts must be presented for all reimbursement requests.
4. Expense paperwork should be submitted to the Finance Department on the Travel Expense Report. Include a copy of the approved Travel Authorization Request Form with your receipts attached to the reimbursement form.
5. All requests for reimbursement **MUST** be received by the Finance Department within sixty (60) days of travel. Any requests more than 60 days old will not be reimbursed.
6. City employees will be held responsible for unauthorized costs and additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.
7. The Internal Revenue Service imposes specific requirements for business expenses. Therefore, travel expenses must be adequately documented and accounted for. In the absence of proper accounting and documentation, IRS regulations require that expense reimbursements be considered taxable wages.
8. This policy, while comprehensive, does not address every issue, exception or contingency that may arise in the course of an employee's travel. While the City recognizes the need for flexibility in administering travel guidelines, few exceptions will be allowed. Requests for reimbursement or payment of expenditures which appear to be in conflict with the intent of these guidelines will be submitted to the Director and Mayor or their designee for review, who may use their sound judgment provided they do not contradict any specific provision herein.

B. Authorization

1. Prior approval of the Director and Mayor must be granted in order for employees to travel at City expense.
2. The employee's Director and Mayor or their designee must approve the Travel Authorization Request Form before the submission of the reimbursement form to the Finance Department.
3. Travel requests should be submitted a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the date of travel. Failure to submit a request timely may result in the request being denied.
4. An individual may not approve his/her own travel.
5. Directors or their designees are required to review expenditures and withhold payment if there is reason to believe that the expenditure is inappropriate or extravagant.

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C. Transportation: Method

The use of vehicle, air, train, or bus transportation shall be selected on the basis of the most reasonable and appropriate method, taking into account distance, time, and total costs.

The Director and Mayor or their designee shall, within the provisions of this policy, determine the appropriate method or methods of transportation to be utilized by a City employee for travel.

D. Transportation: Vehicle

1. City-owned vehicles shall be used in place of private vehicles whenever practical.
2. City employees are encouraged to carpool with other city or government employees to the same function.
3. **City-owned vehicle**
 - a) Employees having access to City vehicles must possess and show proof of a valid State of Ohio driver's license.
 - b) Is authorized only for City employees and for other parties who are properly designated by the City, or the Director and Mayor or their designee, and endorsed onto insurance coverage through the City of Willowick.
 - c) Reimbursement is authorized for incurred service expenses necessary to the efficient and safe operation of a City-owned vehicle.
 - d) The names of all persons traveling in the same City-owned automobile and names of their respective City departments shall be listed on the Travel Expense Report.
4. **Privately-owned vehicle**
 - a) Employees operating their own private vehicle while on City business must possess a valid State of Ohio driver's license.
 - b) Employees operating their own private vehicle while on City business must be insured, personally and for the vehicle, under a policy of liability insurance complying with the requirements of section 4509.51 of the ORC.
 - c) Reimbursement of mileage expenses incurred on City business is established at the Internal Revenue Service's business standard mileage rate.
 - d) Rates established in Collective Bargaining Agreements shall be followed in lieu of rates established by the Internal Revenue Service.
 - e) Reimbursement shall be made for actual miles driven.
 - f) All such travel shall be supported by a Travel Expense Report showing the trip date, purpose, MapQuest or some similar fashioned report showing roundtrip total mileage from the departure point and point of final destination will be utilized to determine mileage.
 - g) Reimbursement shall be made to only one of two or more City employees traveling in the same privately owned automobile and the names of their respective City departments shall be listed on the Travel Expense Report.
 - h) During business hours, mileage reimbursement for travel within Lake County is calculated for miles between the employee's headquarters and the destination, unless the mileage is less from an employee's home.
 - i) Outside of business hours, mileage will be calculated from the employee's home.
 - j) The costs and expenses to operate a privately owned vehicle, but not limited to gasoline, damages, necessary service, or repairs are the sole responsibility of the City employee, as those costs are included in the per mile cost reimbursement.

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5. City and Privately-Owned Vehicles

- a) In the event the City approves the use of a City-owned or private vehicle, reimbursement shall not exceed the airfare rate, plus transportation at the destination.
- b) Charges for parking and other reasonable travel expenses directly related to authorized travel are reimbursable with receipts.
- c) The City is not responsible for any costs incurred as a result of an employee's illegal actions, including vehicular violations, even if the employee is conducting City business.

E. Transportation: Air and Other

1. Air:

- a) In any instance where airfare plus transportation at the destination is less expensive than using a private or City-owned vehicle, then the air flight by common carrier shall be used.
- b) To maximize discount fare possibilities, air travel arrangements should be reserved as far in advance of the travel date as possible.
- c) Air travel will be reimbursed at actual cost but not in excess of coach airline fare. Travel insurance is not reimbursable. Reimbursement is authorized at the lowest available rate.
- d) City employees are authorized to travel within or out-of state by common air carrier at the lowest rate **only** if flying is more economical than other modes of travel.

- 2. **Airport Transfers:** The airport to downtown limousine / bus service should be the preferred method of transportation to a hotel or meeting site. Taxis and private limousines should be used only when they represent a more reasonable alternative or are essential due to time constraints.

- 3. **Taxis:** Taxis may be used if public transportation is unavailable or inadequate for local travel. Trips should be of minimal length, and each trip separately identified on the Travel Expense Report.

4. Car Rental:

- a) Reimbursement is authorized if car rental is more economical than any other mode of transportation.
- b) Reimbursement is authorized for car rental at a designation after arrival if it can be shown that for an employee (or group of employees) that the aggregate cost for local ground transportation (e.g. taxi to and from airport) or a combination of air flight car rental is less expensive than alternative options.

- 5. Travel by other alternative methods, such as bus or train, is authorized if it is more economical than other modes of travel when all related costs are taken into consideration.

F. Conference or Seminar Registration

- 1. Conferences or seminar registration fees may be reimbursed to the City employee, or conference registration fees may be paid directly by the City in advance of the conference.
- 2. If the conference or seminar registration fee includes any meals, the City employee shall not be reimbursed for those same meals.
- 3. All requests for registration should be supported by invoice or notice.

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4. Employees may be personally liable for unused registration fees that are not reimbursed by the sponsoring organization.

G. Lodging

1. Employees shall use the “government rate” or lowest single-room rate available within a hotel, unless sharing the room with another City employee, in which case it shall be the lowest applicable room rate available.
2. Employees shall take advantage of tax exemptions whenever possible.
3. Lodging shall be reimbursed at a rate per calendar day at actual cost when such cost is reasonable as determined by Director and Mayor or their designee.
4. Lodging at the conference site or lodging at a hotel identified in the conference registration materials as one of the conference hotels may be reimbursed at actual cost, provided such cost is reasonable as determined by the Director and Mayor or their designee.
5. Lodging shall not be reimbursed if the distance is less than:
 - a) 45 miles from both the employee’s headquarters and home.
 - b) 30 miles from both the employee’s headquarters and home for a periodic or annual conference or convention (applies to conferences or conventions for professional association).
 - c) Exceptions may be made by the Director and Mayor for good cause to the 30 miles from both the employee’s headquarters and home for a conference or convention.
6. If sharing a room, the Director or their designee shall designate one of the employees as the employee responsible for billing/payment for the employees sharing the room.
7. Receipts should be obtained before leaving the hotel.
8. The City may pre-pay the hotel directly.
9. The employee is responsible for any changes in the room reservations or cancellations. Any “no show” charges will normally be the employee’s direct responsibility.

H. Meals

Meal reimbursement will be:

1. For a Full Day of Travel

- a) The actual cost of meals to a maximum of \$75.00 per day, per person.
- b) A full day of travel is a day that is both preceded and followed by an overnight stay.
- c) A full day of travel does not require an allocation for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Meal reimbursement in that amount may be allocated for meals as the employee chooses.

2. For Less Than a Full Day of Travel

For less than a full day, reimbursement for meals on the day of departure and day of return is limited to:

- a) Actual cost up to a maximum rate of ten (15) dollars if the City employee is on travel status any time after midnight but no later than 8:00 a.m.
- b) Actual cost up to maximum rate of fifteen (25) dollars if the City employee is on travel status any time after 9:00 a.m. but no later than 3:00 p.m.

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- c) Actual cost up to a maximum rate of twenty-five (35) dollars if the City employee is on travel status any time after 6:00 p.m. but no later than midnight.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Full Day
\$15.00	\$25.00	\$35.00	\$75.00

- d) On the day of departure or return, if the City employee is on travel status for more than one of the above specified time periods, meal reimbursement is authorized in the amount of the total of the individual amounts specified for those time periods.

1. Reimbursement for meals will **NOT** take place unless the meal(s) is (are) either associated with an overnight stay, and/or the meal is outside Lake County or the City of Willowick (or an approved exception for an annual conference or convention for a professional association).
2. Reimbursement for meals shall not occur for any meal(s) that are included in a conference registration fee or included in single hotel room rate.
3. **Conference Meals**
 - a) Meals that are not included in the registration fee but are an integral part of the conference may be reimbursed at actual cost, provided such cost is reasonable as determined by the Director and Mayor or their designee.
 - b) Meals are considered to be an integral part of the conference when the meals are provided at the conference site as an organized group activity for all conference participants.
 - c) If a conference includes or provides a meal, the City employee shall not be reimbursed for that same meal, and any amount reimbursed to the City employee for meals shall be adjusted.
4. The City recognizes that actual meal costs vary widely throughout the country. Therefore, with the prior approval of the Director and Mayor or their designee, the City may reimburse meal expenses which exceed the per diem allowance, provided a maximum per diem is established in writing prior to travel on an individualized and specific case by case basis.
5. The City depends on its employees to exercise prudence in selecting restaurants. Meals should always commensurate with the City employee's normal eating practices. The City will not reimburse meal costs deemed lavish or otherwise extravagant.
6. Actual receipts are required for reimbursement of all meal expenditures.
7. Gratuities for meals shall not exceed 20%. The amount of the gratuity shall count against the maximum reimbursement amount and the applicable meal rate. Any gratuity in excess of 20% shall not be reimbursed and shall be the sole responsibility of the employee.
8. There will be no reimbursement for alcoholic beverages.

I. Prepayment of Travel Expenses

1. In order to obtain the lowest available rate for air flight by common carrier, an employee, with the approval of the Director and Mayor or their designee, may authorize advance purchase/prepayment of airline tickets.

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2. If advance purchase or prepayment of airline tickets is authorized, the employee may be reimbursed in advance for said purchase **provided** that the employee is **personally liable** for any charges assessed for unused travel reservations, which are not reimbursed within the time limits specified by the airline.
3. City funds **may** be expended to pay for unused reservations on common carriers **if** the Director and Mayor or their designee is satisfied that failure to cancel within the time limits specified by the airline or to use the reservation was unavoidable (e.g., death or serious illness/injury in family).
4. If City funds are expended to pay for unused reservations on common carriers (or other expenses) and if the Director and Mayor or their designee is satisfied that failure to cancel within the time limits specified by the airline or to use the reservation was unavoidable (e.g., death or serious illness/injury in family), then the City shall receive any and all refunds or credits (e.g., air travel credit).
5. If City funds are expended to pay for unused reservations on common carriers (or other expenses) and **if** the Director and Mayor or their designee is **not** satisfied that failure to cancel within the time limits specified by the airline or to use the reservation was unavoidable (e.g., death or serious illness/injury in family), then the employee shall reimburse the City of any and all expenses. The City may deduct said expenses from the employee's pay if the employee does not make satisfactory arrangements to reimburse the City.

J. Receipts

Reimbursement of travel expenses is based on reasonable and actual expenses supported by original, itemized receipts. **CITY EMPLOYEES MUST SUBSTANTIATE TRAVEL EXPENSES WITH ORIGINAL ITEMIZED RECEIPTS.** The lodging bill may be used as a receipt when charges are included as part of any overnight stay.

1. Itemized receipts are required for:

- a) All service expenses incurred in connection with the operation of City-owned automobiles.
- b) All car rental expenses.
- c) All common carrier expenses, i.e. Bus, boat, ferry, or subway.
- d) All lodging expenses.
- e) All miscellaneous transportation expenses, including taxicab and parking.
- f) Meals.
- g) Conference receipts shall include registration fees, conference meals not included in a registration fee, conference lodging, and all miscellaneous expenses exceeding one dollar.

2. Retention of Report and Required Receipts

The Finance Department shall retain the original "Travel Expense Reports" and the original receipts required by this policy. The Finance Department may specify the manner in which receipts shall be submitted.

K. Spousal Accompaniment

The City does **not** reimburse for spousal accompaniment. Under no circumstances will expenses for spousal travel be reimbursed. If a spouse accompanies an employee for personal purposes, the difference in hotel charges (if any) for a double room must be deducted before the expense report is submitted. If meals are charged to one's hotel account, only the employee's meal amount can be charged to the City.

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L. Frequent Flyer Miles

In accordance with Ethics Commission opinion 91-010:

1. Divisions (D) and (E) of Section 102.03 of the Ohio Revised Code prohibit a state official or employee from accepting, soliciting, or using the authority or influence of his/her position to secure, for personal travel, a discounted or free “frequent flyer” airline ticket or other benefit from an airline if he/she has obtained the ticket or other benefit from the purchase of airline tickets, for use in official travel, by the department, division, agency, institution or other entity with which he/she serves, or by which he/she is employed.
2. Division (A)(4) of Section 2921.42 and Division (A) of Section 2921.43 of the Ohio Revised Code prohibit a state officer or employee from accepting or using, for personal travel, a discounted or free “frequent flyer” airline ticket or other benefit from an airline if he/she has obtained the ticket or other benefit from the purchase of airline tickets, for use in official travel, by the department, division, agency, institution, or other entity with which he/she is connected.

Obtaining or retaining (securing) for personal travel, a discounted or free “frequent flyer” airline ticket or other benefit from an airline if the official or employee has obtained the ticket or other benefit from the purchase of airline tickets, for use in official travel for/by the City is prohibited.