**City of Takoma Park**

**Travel Reimbursement Policy**

**Purpose**

To ensure uniform treatment of all employees traveling on behalf of the City and establish procedures for administering reimbursement of travel related expenses to employees.

**General**

1. Only employee's travel expenses related to City business will be covered by the City’s travel reimbursement policy.
2. Employees are advised to keep all receipts related to reimbursable expenses not covered by the per diem allowance.
3. Personal entertainment expenses (i.e., rental cars used for sightseeing, movies, tour buses, etc.) are not legitimate reportable expenses.
4. Departments or the traveling employees are responsible for making all travel arrangements.
5. Seminars or Conferences must be City or job related.
6. Cancellation fees incurred due to circumstances within the control of the employee are the responsibility of the employee and not the City.
7. If there is a conflict with any provision of this procedure and the provisions of a current Union Contract, the provisions of the contract will prevail.

**Hours Worked and Compensation**

Compensation for time spent in transit will be afforded to employees attending conferences, training, and other activities identified as part of the City's principal activity, pursuant to the provisions of J470-476 in the Fair Labor Standards Handbook. This section generally applies to employees covered by the FLSA.

 A. Local Travel

* 1. Home-to-work travel- the normal travel between work and home is not working time, no matter how long the commute. Transportation expenses between home and work are personal commuting expenses which are not reimbursable.
	2. Travel during the workday- travel time during the work day is compensable if the employee is engaged in travel as part of the City's principal activity. If the travel time, before or after the work day, is *not* for the benefit of the City or part of the City's principal activity, the travel time is non-compensable.

B. Out-of-Town Travel.

1. Same-Day Travel

If travel is performed for the City’s benefit and at its request, it is part of the "principal activity" of the City; therefore the employee must be compensated. Travel time between the employee's home and the airport or railroad station is excluded as "home-to-work" travel time (not otherwise compensable).

2. Overnight Travel

1. During Work Hours- travel time is compensable work time when it occurs during the employee's regular working hours. If an employee travels during normal working hours on non-working days (i.e., Saturday or Sunday for an employee who works Monday to Friday), the time is compensable.
2. Outside Work Hours- travel as a passenger occurring outside of work hours, is not compensable. Travel as a driver occurring outside of work hours is compensable unless the City offered the employee the option of traveling on a common carrier.

 C. Transportation Furnished by the City

Employees are not entitled to compensation for home-to-work travel merely because the City furnishes the transportation. An employee who uses a City car is working while driving on business, but not while going to and from home unless he/she is directed by the City to conduct work or otherwise proceeds to do work (e.g., in the case of police officer who responds to a call while in route) .

**Travel Advance Requests**

1. Prior to submitting a travel advance request, the employee will consult with the Finance Department which will be responsible for identifying the applicable federal meals and incidental expense (per diem) rate for the locality of travel and providing this information to the employee. The full list of rates for each locality is available at http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877. For any locality that is not on the list, the per diem rate is $30.
2. Travel advance requests should be forwarded to the Finance Department, via the requisition process in Tyler’s Accounts Payable system, a minimum of 5 days prior to the travel date to allow sufficient time for processing.
3. Travel advance requests less than $25 will be forwarded to the Finance Department for validation by advancement of petty cash.
4. Any unspent travel advance money with the exception of the per diem allowance must be repaid within 10 days of the completion of the travel.
5. An employee with an outstanding Expense Report Form must finalize the transaction before another travel advance may be issued.

**Reimbursements**

1. Employees must submit an Expense Report Form (Exhibit 1) within 10 days of the completion of travel. Receipts for transportation, lodging and other reimbursable expenses must be attached.
2. If per diem was advanced to the employee for meals, no additional reimbursement will be made for the cost of meals unless approved by Department Head with written justification. The amount by which an approved reimbursement exceeds the applicable per diem rate will be reported as income on the employee's W-2 form and should be subject to withholding.
3. Checks for reimbursement of travel expenses are issued each Friday. Expense Report Forms submitted by close of business on Tuesday are eligible for reimbursement the same week. Expense Report Forms submitted later than Tuesday are eligible for reimbursement on the following week.

**Credit Card Use**

1. Any prepayment made using the City's VISA card should be noted on the Expense Report Form.
2. Use of the City's credit card should be minimal when a travel advance has been provided. Receipts must be included with the Expense Report Form and returned to the Finance Department within 10 days from return of travel status.
3. An employee who is an authorized credit card holder should use the credit card within the limits of the allowable per diem rate and other provisions of this procedure, and should not be issued a travel advance unless approved by the City Manager.

**Per Diem**

1. Per Diem Allowance is a meal allowance payment under a reimbursement or other expense allowance arrangement that meets the standard travelling requirements. Per Diem is authorized to employees who are required to travel and stay overnight on behalf of the City.

The per diem rate for an area is actually three allowances: the lodging allowance, the meals allowance and the incidental expense allowance. Most of the municipalities are covered by the standard CONUS per diem rate of $140 ($89 lodging, $51 meals and incidental expenses).

1. Per Diem will be paid at the applicable federal meal and incidental expense (M&IE) rate for the locality of travel and will cover the cost of meals, gratuities and other authorized expenses. The City Manager has the authority to increase the amount of the per diem allowance for travel that relates to certain destinations; however, any additional amount reimbursed over the M&IE per diem rate will be subject to withholding tax and included in the employee's W-2.
2. Meals included in registration fees will be deducted from the per diem allowance. Partial per diem will be prorated as follows:
	1. Breakfast = 20%
	2. Lunch = 30%
	3. Dinner = 50%
3. With the exception of employees who are authorized City credit card holders, employees will not be required to submit receipts to substantiate the per diem allowance UNLESS the employee intends to request the City Manager's consideration of a reimbursement over the federal M&IE rate.
4. Per Diem should be issued for days of conference/training only. However, the Department Head has the discretion to approve per diem for travel days if lodging is required the night before the conference/training or the employee is required to travel the day after. In this instance, per diem for meals will be provided based on the rates identified in Section VII(C) of the procedure.
5. Additional per diem will not be paid for personal expenses (For example, dry cleaning, laundry, etc.)
6. No expense will be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.
7. Meal expenses will be reimbursed unless the training program, conference or business-related activity/event is one that can be attended within a working day, in which case meals shall not be reimbursed unless they are a part of the program or have been pre-approved by the supervisor.

**Transportation**

A. General

* 1. Employees traveling outside the metropolitan area shall utilize the least costly, quickest and most convenient means of transportation as determined by the City.
	2. Normally, for short distances (less than 250 miles), automobiles or public transportation shall be used, and for long distances (250 miles or more), commercial airlines shall be used. First-class rail transportation (e.g. sleeper car) is permitted if it does not add excessively to travel time.

B. Air Fare

* 1. Employees should fly in coach class. An employee preferring a more costly or time-consuming means of travel may, with permission of the Department Head, use it if he/she pays the added expense and if extra time required *to* travel as a result, is taken as annual leave.
	2. Reimbursements will be for the exact amount of the airfare only. Whenever possible, the employee shall make reservations at the earliest possible date. When the employee makes personal stops on route to a business destination point, the employee will only be reimbursed for the round-trip coach fare from the point of departure (B.W.I., Reagan National or Dulles) to the business destination point.
	3. The City does not pay for in-flight movies or beverages.
	4. Employees can use any frequent-flyer mileage earned for their own nonbusiness travel.
	5. Air fare should be noted on the Expense Report Form.

C. Ground Transportation */* Rental Vehicles

1. Information should be obtained about available ground transportation and costs from the organization sponsoring the conference (often conference materials will contain such information). Employees should use the most economical means of transportation available (e.g., shuttles, buses, taxis, etc.). Taxis are identified as a reimbursable expense and may be considered the preferable type of transportation in certain cases where arrival late at night could cause an employee to feel unsafe in taking other means of local transportation.
2. Employees should check ahead to see if a shuttle service is available for airport pick-up to conference or seminar locations. Transportation and parking at the airport should not ordinarily exceed the cost of using an airport shuttle.
3. If car rental is necessary for City business, the car rental must be approved by the Department Head prior to use, and the rate should be noted on the Expense Report Form.
4. Car size requested should be appropriate to the circumstances. In most instances, employees should rent a small size car.
5. Employees should not obtain insurance when renting a vehicle as this is covered under the City's insurance policy.

D. City Vehicle.

1. When City vehicles are used, employees must gas-up the vehicle at the Public Works Compound prior to and after completion of travel, and are required to comply with existing rules and the City's Administrative Procedure #2001-01 "City-wide Motor Pool Policy and Procedures."
2. If the employee is required to purchase fuel or incur related vehicular expenses, the employee shall be reimbursed for the actual expenses incurred. Receipts must be submitted with the Expense Report Form.

 E. Personal Vehicle.

1. An employee must obtain authorization to use his/her personal vehicle prior to travel in order to be eligible for any reimbursement of travel-related expenses.
2. If a City vehicle is not available for in-state travel, the use of personal vehicles will be permitted at the current, federally-allowed reimbursable rate. However, daily transportation expenses between home and work are personal commuting expenses which are not reimbursable. If the distance from home to conference is longer than the daily commute distance, the employee will be reimbursed only for the net difference of the mileage expense. For example, an employee lives in Rockville and commutes on a regular basis to work in Takoma Park (Approximately 27 miles from home). If the employee is asked to attend a meeting for the day in Baltimore City (Approximately 59 miles from home), the employee can seek total mileage reimbursement of 64 miles (round trip for difference between 59 miles and 27 miles). If the distance of conference from home is shorter than the normal daily commute distance, the employee will NOT be reimbursed with the mileage expense.
3. Consult the mileage table below or from the Map-quest website for standard distances to frequently traveled cities.

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| **Mileage Table** |
| DESTINATION | STANDARD MILEAGE |
| Annapolis | 36 |
| Baltimore | 35 |
| College Park | 8 |
| Gaithersburg | 20 |
| Hyattsville | 5 |
| Ocean City | 150 |
| Rockville | 15 |
| Upper Marlboro | 30 |

1. Employees who drive a personal vehicle to their business destination, whether in-state or out-of-state, are reimbursed at the current, federally-allowed rate, plus parking and tolls. Beginning on Jan. 1, 2016, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car will be: 54 cents per mile for business miles driven.
2. The total reimbursable cost for transportation shall not exceed the cost of air fare.
3. When City or personal vehicles are used for out-of-state travel, lodging, meals and travel time will be allowed on the same basis, as if the employee had traveled by air. With few exceptions, time used in excess of air travel will be charged to vacation time unless it occurs on regularly scheduled days off such as weekends.
4. In accordance with applicable State law an employee should maintain liability insurance on his/her personal vehicle. If liability insurance is not maintained, a personal vehicle cannot be used to conduct City business.

**Lodging**

Lodging expenditure is not allowed for local training and workshops, unless the employee has traveled beyond 75 mile radius from the residence or from the City. Invoice from the conference location itemizes lodging and/or meals by person, reimbursement of travel expenses will be processed as an individual employee reimbursement using the Travel Expense Report Form (exhibit 1). During inclement weather condition, first tier city employees (Public Work or Police Officer) require to respond to emergency condition are allowed lodging reimbursements if the required activity last more than one day. The Department Manager is given the discretion to approve or disapprove the lodging expenses for persons who are engaged in activities as described above. In addition, the City manager can waive the distance requirement for lodging if an employee or councilman has late evening or early morning meeting on the following day.

1. Employees should request government, seminar or conference discount rates.
2. Expenses will be allowed for adequate housing necessary and appropriate to the purpose of the travel.
3. In the event that an employee is required to incur expenses for overnight accommodations while on City business, the employee shall endeavor to stay at a hotel/motel providing a municipal or governmental discount. In the event that a spouse or companion is traveling with the employee, the City will reimburse the employee for the single rate only.
4. Employees are reimbursed for hotel room rates and all applicable taxes. Employees are expected to exercise judgment in selecting a hotel that is convenient but not extravagant. The City does not pay for in-room movies or use of a hotel fitness facility.
5. All expenses related to lodging must be recorded on the Expense Report Form.

**Registrations**

1. A The cost of registration should be included on the Expense Report Form, even if paid directly by the City, so that the total cost of the trip can be determined.
2. One copy of the completed registration form should be attached to the Expense Report Form.

**Miscellaneous Expenses**

1. Receipts are required in order to receive reimbursement. The Department Head has the discretion to grant exceptions when receipts are not available. The following are examples of reimbursable expenses:
	1. Garage and parking fees
	2. Taxis (receipts are required for any fare in excess of $15
	3. Postage and telephone charges as needed for City business
	4. Fax and Internet charges related to City business
	5. Any other city business related expenses should be documented and will be reimbursed pending approval by Department Head.

Tips and gratuities for baggage, maid service, meals, etc. should be paid with the per diem allowance. No additional allowance will be made for tips or gratuities.

2. The following are examples of non-reimbursable expenses:

* 1. Laundry
	2. Personal entertainment (movies, bowling, etc.)
	3. Personal phone calls (except the one call allowed per day; see Sec. Xl(A))
	4. Traffic and parking tickets
	5. Theft, loss or damage to personal effects (should be submitted under the appropriate insurance)
	6. Incidentals - haircuts, manicures, massages, etc.
	7. Purchase of luggage, briefcases, etc.
	8. Trip insurance polices
	9. Medical expenses (should be submitted under employee's medical insurance)
	10. Travel in personal car, unless prior authorization has been obtained.

Any exceptions to this policy must be authorized by the appropriate Department Head or the City Manager or designee, and documented in writing.

 **Spouse/Companion Expenses at Conferences**

* 1. It is the City's general policy not to approve expenses of a spouse attending a conference. The City will not pay for the transportation or meal expenses for spouses, and will reimburse for hotel rooms based upon the single person occupancy rate.
	2. The City will pay for a spouse or companion's attendance at conference functions at which it is customary for both the City employee and his/her spouse/companion to be in attendance. Such expenses might include conference registration fees and such functions as a conference banquet or all-conference event. Not included, however, would be such things as special social programs for spouses and companions, or recreational conference events.

**Documentation of Expenses**

While it may not be possible to provide documentation for all the expenditures incurred, employees should obtain receipts whenever possible. The better an employee is able to document and justify the expenditures incurred, the less apt the employee is to be subjected to scrutiny or criticism by persons who may review the expenditure documents. Expenditure records of employees for attending conferences, meetings or training courses are public documents subject to review by any citizen upon request.

**Employee Responsibility**

Employees are permitted to attend conferences, meetings and training courses because it is expected that the employee will obtain knowledge that will benefit the employee in the performance of his/her job. The employee has an obligation to make every effort to achieve that objective as a result of attending the conference, meeting or training. Employees always have the obligation to conserve City resources and to see to it that the City obtains a reasonable return for money expended.

**Authorization and Payment Procedure**

Whenever possible, any expenses discussed in this Administrative Regulation and/or miscellaneous other expenses incurred by a City employee shall be authorized in advance by the Department Head. The City Manager shall authorize attendance by Department Heads for conferences and/or meetings. The City Manager shall have final approval of any and all reimbursements pursuant to this Regulation. Any expense incurred under this Regulation shall be paid in the normal manner after a properly completed Expense Report Form and corresponding Requisition Request has been submitted to the Finance Department.

Employees are expected to follow the procedures prescribed by this document. Failure to do so will be treated as misconduct.