

Travel Policy

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT: This policy addresses travel expenditures for City employees traveling on City business. In order to best utilize the resources available to the City, employees are expected to minimize the costs of necessary business travel. Reimbursements for official travel will be made for expenses actually incurred and approved. However, it is the employee's responsibility to adequately document the expenditures in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

2.0 PROCEDURES: Employees are expected to minimize travel related expenses by making selections that result in the least expense to the City. These policies represent the normal business approach that should be taken by individual employees when they incur travel related expenses. Employees shall exercise reasonableness and practicality in selecting the most economical means available when traveling at City expense; shall thoroughly document all expenses incurred; and shall complete all necessary travel requests and reports according to the following guidelines:

2.1 *Transportation/Public Transportation* - The City will pay the actual cost of coach or regular fare for public transportation by air. Employees are expected to make air travel arrangements at the most economic rates available, using regularly scheduled airlines whenever possible. No reimbursement will be allowed for additional expenses - such as circuitous routing, extended stays, layovers to schedule a particular carrier, upgrading from economy to first class - for travelers to accumulate additional mileage or for other personal reasons. The following procedures are applicable for employees using air travel:

- 2.1.1 Employees will only be reimbursed for economy fares;
- 2.1.2 All airline tickets must be booked at least two (2) weeks in advance in order to receive lower fares;
- 2.1.3 If tickets cannot be purchased within the two week time frame, written documentation regarding the necessity of purchasing the tickets without two weeks' notice must accompany the Request for Travel form;
- 2.1.4 A valid receipt or the ticket stub must accompany the expense claim for all air travel; and
- 2.1.5 The City will not reimburse employees for the purchase of travel insurance.

- 2.2 *Transportation/Automobile* - Automobile transportation may be used when a common carrier cannot be scheduled, when it is more economical, when a common carrier is not practical, or when expenses can be reduced by two or more city employees traveling together. If a City vehicle is used, the City will pay only the cost of actual expenses for gasoline, oil, and emergency repairs. If a private vehicle is used, the City will reimburse at the standard mileage rate as established by the State of Tennessee. The miles for reimbursement will be paid from origin to destination and back by the most direct route. Origin is considered to be the employee's typical workplace location or home residence, whichever mileage is less. Travel within Johnson City and the Tri-Cities vicinity related to official City business may also be reimbursed. All mileage reimbursement for out-of-town travel must be approved in advance.
- 2.2.1 If a private vehicle is used by two or more official travelers on the same trip, only the traveler owning or having custody of the vehicle will be reimbursed for mileage in accordance with the rate outlined above.
- 2.2.2 In no event shall reimbursement for use of a private vehicle, meals, and lodging while in transit to and from destination exceed the cost of economy class airfare.
- 2.2.3 Additional travel days required due to automobile travel rather than air travel, when automobile travel is selected as a matter of personal preference by the traveler rather than by the City, shall be taken as annual leave or other appropriate leave.
- 2.2.4 City vehicles are required to be used in lieu of private vehicles whenever available and practical. Only city employees are authorized to drive a city vehicle. City vehicles shall not be utilized when the employee intends to combine business travel with annual leave away from the city.
- 2.2.5 The City may require the employee to drive a City vehicle. If a City vehicle is provided, the traveler is responsible for insuring that the vehicle is used properly and only for acceptable City business. Employees are authorized to use city procurement cards for out-of-town fuel purchases when traveling on city business.
- 2.2.6 The employee will be reimbursed for expenses directly related to the actual and normal use of a City vehicle when proper documentation is provided. Emergency repairs to city vehicles while out-of-town shall be done so in accordance with the procedures established by Motor Transport.
- 2.2.7 The City will reimburse for car rental, including gasoline purchases, when an employee can justify the necessity for a vehicle.

Typically, this means the cost of a rental car is less expensive or otherwise more practical than public transportation. The employee must include this expense in estimating the cost of the trip beforehand, choose the most economical rental car available, and be prepared to justify the need for a car at the location. Whenever possible, public transportation (including taxis) should be utilized in lieu of rental vehicles. All car rentals must be approved in advance of the planned trip. If a rental car is approved, employees shall observe the following procedures:

- a. Refuel the rental car just prior to returning it to the vendor;
- b. All receipts for car rental and gas purchases must be attached to the Travel Expense Report; and
- c. Employees may be reimbursed for collision insurance offered through the rental company.

2.2.8 Employees will not be reimbursed for any fines for traffic violations or parking tickets. Costs incurred to private vehicles due to accidents or the cost of repairs due to breakdowns of private vehicles will not be reimbursed to employees. Employees will be reimbursed for travel related expenses, such as parking, tolls, etc., with the submission of proper documentation.

2.2.9 The spouse of an employee, with prior approval, may travel in a City vehicle on approved City travel, although the City will not pay other expenses for the spouse. Employees of the State of Tennessee, other local governments, and local government agencies may travel in City vehicles.

2.2.10 Employees who receive a monthly car allowance for use of the employee's personal automobile shall not be reimbursed for mileage while using his/her automobile except when the use of the vehicle exceeds 75 miles round trip; and then all mileage above 75 miles will be reimbursed at the current City mileage rate.

2.3 *Lodging* - Reimbursement for hotel/motel expenses will be based upon the locality, purpose for travel, and availability of accommodations. Reasonableness and economy should be exercised by the traveler in all instances. Travelers should always take advantage of the special hotel rate for conferences, conventions or seminars, *and request government rates when available*. The original lodging receipt must be attached to the Travel Expense Form.

2.3.1 The City will not reimburse for suites or resort accommodations unless the expense is approved in advance of the trip.

2.3.2 The employee will reimburse the City for the difference in cost between a single room rate and a double room rate if the employee shares the room with his or her spouse. The amount to be reimbursed by the employee will be limited to the difference in the room rates and will not include any related taxes or other charges on a pro-rata basis.

2.4 *Meals* - Employees shall be provided a meal per diem allowance for each day while attending a conference, training seminar, or while on other official City business travel that involves an overnight stay. Official travel less than a full day that does not involve an overnight stay is not eligible for individual meal allowances, unless the employee is required to travel in excess of 175 miles one-way. In these circumstances, receipts are required with reimbursement based on the actual cost of the meal, not to exceed the amounts listed in Section 2.41.

2.4.1 Eligibility to claim meal allowances is determined by the time the employee commences and returns from travel. To claim an allowance for a particular meal, the employee must be traveling or be out of town on official City business during the following time periods:

Breakfast	Prior to 7:00 a.m.
Lunch	12 noon to 1:00 p.m.
Dinner	After 7:00 p.m.

2.4.2 *When reviewing travel forms, the reasonableness of the departure and arrival times will be considered in relation to the destination and the average driving time.*

2.4.3 Expenses for meals and incidentals for overnight travel will be reimbursed based on the domestic per diem rate schedule established by the U.S. General Services Administration (www.gsa.gov - see Per Diem Rates). The per diem is compensation for meals, tips, and incidental expenses. Generally, the applicable maximum per diem rate for each calendar day of travel shall be determined by the location of the meal for the traveler (see addendum to CONUS rate table). A copy of the applicable GSA schedule is required to be submitted with the Request for Travel.

2.4.4 Reimbursement for meals is subject to when the traveler departs and returns to the official station. The traveler's official station is Normally the location the business travel originates from (i.e. home

or work). For travel less than a full day, typically the first and last day of a trip, the following schedule is used to determine the daily per diem amount: Breakfast - 25%, Lunch - 25%, Dinner - 50%.

- 2.4.5 Exceptions to these rates may be considered on an individual basis by the City Manager for highly unusual, extenuating circumstances. For example, taking a Congressional member or federal agency staff member to dinner in Washington D.C. A receipt shall be required for reimbursement to be considered.
 - 2.4.6 Meal allowances will not be provided when meal events are included in conference registration or are otherwise provided at no cost to the employee. If an employee has received an advance for a meal that is included in the registration or is provided at no cost, they shall reimburse the City.
 - 2.4.7 If any meal is part of the official program at a conference or a seminar, the City will reimburse an employee for the actual cost.
 - 2.4.8 Receipts for meals shall not be required except if a part of the official program, in which case the City will reimburse for the actual cost, as directed in 2.44 above.
 - 2.4.9 Business Meals - For a business meal to be eligible for reimbursement the purpose of the meal must relate to official City business and a receipt is required with notation of the meeting and a list of participants on the receipt.
- 2.5 *Conference Expenses* - The City will pay for all actual charges for registration fees and official luncheons/banquets. The cost of other educational seminars and related tours associated with a conference may also be included. Under no circumstances will the cost of recreational/social events and sightseeing tours be paid by the city. Registration fees are required to be specified on the Request for Travel form and can include a request to prepay the registration fee, or fees may be charged to a City Procurement Card.
- 2.6 *Miscellaneous Expenses* - The City will reimburse actual charges for intra-city taxi, airport bus, other modes of ground transportation, tolls, and parking expenses. Receipts, if available, should be attached to the Travel Expense Report. Employees are encouraged to use hotel courtesy vans when available. Tips for sky cabs, hotels, etc. will not be reimbursed. Receipts are required for parking fees of \$5.00 or more.
- 2.6.1 Laundry, valet service (unless self-parking is not available), tips and gratuities, etc. are considered personal expenses and are not reimbursable. If the employee does not have a City cell phone,

business related phone calls will be reimbursed. All other phone charges are considered personal.

- 2.7 *General Information* - Employees shall complete a Request for Travel form **14 days prior** to any travel and submit the request to the Department Director, Assistant City Manager, or City Manager for approval. A copy of the conference or meeting program, where applicable, must be attached to the form. Upon approval by the appropriate party, and upon return of the form with any necessary advance, the employee will be authorized to travel. Completed travel forms are also required if the trip is made at the expense of an agency other than the City in order to authorize the travel and to pay the employee for the time away from the City.
- 2.8 Only one cash advance is permitted per trip and it will be issued no sooner than five (5) working days prior to the travel date. No advance less than \$30.00 will be made. Only one cash advance per employee may be outstanding at any time.
- 2.9 A Travel Expense Report must be completed within five (5) working days after returning from travel. All travel advances must be accounted for on the form, and a check for excess or unused advances received by the employee must be included.
- 2.10 The Travel Expense Report must detail all expenses incurred by the employee and include supporting documentation such as original receipts. Meals and parking expenses charged on the lodging bill must be reported separately. For travel outside the United States, all claimed expenses must be converted to U.S. dollars. The conversion rate and computation should be shown on each receipt.
- 2.11 All Travel Expense Reports will be reviewed and approved by the respective Department Director, Assistant City Manager, or City Manager for accuracy, adequate supporting documentation, and reasonableness of expenditures. Travel Expense Reports will also be reviewed by the Finance Department and the external auditors for accuracy, adequacy, reasonableness, and compliance with the travel policy.
- 2.12 If the Travel Expense Report is not submitted promptly, the employee will not be allowed additional travel advances. If the Travel Expense Report is not submitted within 30 days, the advance will be deducted from the employee's next paycheck.

- 2.13 For the City to be able to take advantage of its sales tax exempt status as a municipal organization, a direct payment must be made from the City to the vendor for travel or lodging services. Therefore, prepayment of these expenses should be made whenever possible. If prepayment is not made, employees should carry a tax-exempt form and present it with payment to the hotel/motel.
 - 2.14 Before departure, employees will provide to their department an address and phone number where they can be contacted if the need arises while they are away.
 - 2.15 Travel reimbursement by any outside source may be considered a conflict of interest. This restriction, however, shall not apply for grant or educational sources, including, but not limited to, Governmental Agencies, University Grants, etc. Travel arrangements or expenses are not typically allowed to be accepted from a vendor-related source; however, under special circumstances, and with the prior approval of the City Manager, vendor funded travel may be considered if it is in the city's best interest.
 - 2.16 *Local Use of Private Vehicle* - From time to time, various employees may find it necessary to use a private vehicle in the performance of their duties. The City will reimburse the employee for travel related to official city business at the standard mileage rate as established by the State of Tennessee. Documentation of such use must include the destination, date, beginning and ending mileage, and the purpose of the trip. A Travel in a Personal Vehicle form must be submitted to the Finance Department within three months following the travel. It is the responsibility of the traveler to provide adequate insurance for any liability resulting from the use of the private vehicle. Further, costs incurred to private vehicles due to accidents or the cost of repairs due to breakdowns of private vehicles will not be reimbursed to employees.
- 3.0 PROCUREMENT CARDS - TRAVEL:** City employees are authorized to use procurement cards to pay for approved travel expenses. The use of these cards for travel provide a safe and convenient means for doing so.
- 3.1 *Allowed Uses* - Procurement cards may be used for registrations for conferences, classes and seminars, hotel or other lodging payments, airfare (including baggage fees), car rental, fuel purchases, and miscellaneous expenses as identified in Section 2.6. Food related expenses are NOT allowed to be charged to a procurement card while on city travel, as these expenses are reimbursed based on per diem.

Charging meals, with the exception of Section 2.4.8, will result in the employee being required to reimburse the city for those expenses and can result in the suspension of procurement card privileges. In addition to meals, no personal expenses shall be charged to procurement cards. Prior to the use of a procurement card for travel, a travel request form must be approved by department supervision. All requirements incorporated in the travel policy apply to the use of procurement cards for approved travel expenses.

3.2 *Employee Responsibility* - The employee is responsible for obtaining vendor receipts. The procurement card statement is NOT a substitute for a vendor receipt. Any charges not properly documented will be the responsibility of the employee. The employee is responsible for completing a Travel Expense Report within five (5) working days after returning from travel. No additional travel authorization requests will be approved or advances issued until all outstanding travel Statement of Expense Claims have been submitted. Misuse of the procurement card for travel activity shall be grounds for disciplinary action.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY: All Assistant City Managers and Department Directors are responsible for the dissemination and administration of this policy within their departments, and for monitoring travel expenses of their employees. All employees who travel on City business are responsible for compliance with the requirements of this policy and for the exercise of sound judgment in their travel expenditures. Violation of travel rules can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Travel fraud can result in criminal prosecution of City officials or employees. Any person attempting to defraud the City or misuse City travel funds is subject to legal action for recovery of fraudulent travel claims and/or advances.



Travel forms
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TRAVEL CARD USER
AGREEMENT FORM.do

APPROVED:

M. Denis Peterson
City Manager

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