

**City of Minneapolis**

**OVERNIGHT BUSINESS TRAVEL PROCEDURES  
RELATED TO THE TRAVEL POLICY -  
OVERNIGHT TRAVEL SECTION**

These procedures are approved by the **City Finance Officer**

Dates Approved as of .....

Contacts: **Finance and Property Services Controller Division 673-5445 or 673-2004**

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## **1. Overview of Overnight Business Travel Procedures**

City of Minneapolis recognizes the constructive value of professional seminars, meetings, and training conferences and provides travel funds for City elected and appointed officials (“Officials”), and employees who attend such official events.

To constitute “official business of City of Minneapolis”, the activities of an official or employee (collectively “Traveler”) of the City of Minneapolis must clearly demonstrate that there is a valid City interest to be served or gained through the travel; and there is:

- Relevance to City operations or the individual’s role in such operations; and/or
- Promotion or development of City programs, methods or administration.

Travelers shall be entitled to reimbursement for their reasonable expenses associated with travel, meals, lodging and other actual and necessary expenses associated with attending such events in a manner and in the amounts as set forth in this Procedure. The purpose of this Procedure is to establish consistent, reasonable, and accountable standards to record and control the cost of Business Travel.

Controlling travel costs is the responsibility of each Traveler. It is expected that good judgment be exercised when authorizing the use of and/or when utilizing City funds. All Travelers must comply with the public purpose doctrine as set forth by the [League of Minnesota Cities information memo](#).

Business Travel means conducting City business at a location other than Traveler’s usual designated work site. Overnight Business Travel refers to either Local or Long-Distance Travel, for which the Traveler stays overnight.

## **2. Alternatives to Long Distance Travel**

Training and education related Conferences for City employees and Officials are important element of building and maintaining a cadre of skilled City employees and Officials. Departments must ensure, however, that these services are obtained as economically as possible and that they meet the public purpose doctrine.

When evaluating a Long-Distance Travel request, the Department Head must first consider carefully if the trip's purpose, whether for a general business meeting or for a conference, could be accomplished locally. Nearby locations could involve limited travel time and expense when compared to long distance travel. Other alternative training options and arrangements are City educational resources, webinars, other providers offering the same training at a lower cost, or a different event date that would result in a lower overall trip cost. Departments must review a six month period to identify a more economical training schedule and location, unless the training or education related conference has a time constraint and must be completed at the selected date and location. Department Heads must indicate other possible options on the Travel Authorization Form and explain why the chosen trip was preferred.

In some cases, providers will sometimes conduct private training- or education-related conference sessions at facilities arranged by the department. Under these arrangements, departments normally need to pay travel, lodging, and other instructor costs, agreed under a written contract. However, these costs can be more than offset by the savings from individual

registration fees combined with travel and lodging expenses. Per person costs can be reduced further by teaming up with other departments, groups or agencies interested in the same training or education related conference.

### **3. Ethics Policy and Business Travel**

Travelers on City business shall review the [City of Minneapolis Ethics Policy](#) (contained in Chapter 15 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances) prior to the trip. In general, City employees and Officials must not engage in activities that could create conflicts of interest. The safest choice is to neither solicit nor accept personal gifts, favors, food or beverages from any person or entity, although there are a few narrow exceptions to this rule listed in the Ethics Policy. For example, Travelers on City business are usually allowed to accept meals and beverages from an organization of which the traveler is a member, as long as the same item is given to the other members of that organization. This situation commonly arises at conferences given by professional organizations where free beverages or food are made available to attendees as part of the conference hospitality service.

Any use of one's official position for personal gain is also forbidden. Among other things, the Ethics Policy forbids employees and Officials from seeking reimbursement from the City for any City business travel expenses that have been paid or will be paid by a non-City entity. In addition, honorariums given to the traveler must be surrendered with the Travel Expense Reimbursement Request anytime the City pays for all or part of the Traveler's business trip.

### **4. Procedure Violation and Fraudulent Expense Claims**

Violations of this Procedure including falsifying expense reports may result in any or all of the following:

- 1) Loss of reimbursement privileges,
- 2) Demand for restitution to the City,
- 3) Disciplinary actions, including termination of employment
- 4) Any other applicable state and federal penalties, including criminal prosecution.

### **5. Reimbursement Procedure: General Guidelines and Travel Expense Reimbursement Request**

An expense incurred by a Traveler during a City business trip will be reimbursed if all of the following requirements are met:

- 1) The item is a reasonable and necessary expense related to the performance of official work related activities while travelling on City business and not an incidental covered by Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem; and
- 2) The primary purpose of the expenditure is to facilitate a public or government interest for which the City is responsible, rather than a private or personal interest; and
- 3) The Traveler provides adequate documentation of the expense and obtains the approval of an authorized signatory on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Request; and
- 4) The Traveler has not and will not receive reimbursement for the claimed expense from any other source.

- 5) The expenditure meets the public purpose doctrine.

All eligible travel expenses that were not pre-paid by the City directly will become part of reimbursed expenses upon submission of the [Travel Expense Reimbursement Request](#) to the Payroll Department.

Travel arrangements, including airline and rail tickets, lodging, and rental cars, must be booked at the most economical pricing. Travel expenses shall be allowed or reimbursed for days actually spent on City business, for programmed days of a conference or meetings, and for time spent in travel to and from these events. Documents such as conference brochure or meeting schedule showing the dates and times of the event must be included with all travel requests. Expenses shall be computed for the days of the conference or event attended and for travel days not to exceed one day before and after the event which shall be allowed only if time and/or travel schedules prohibit travel at reasonable hours on the actual beginning and ending days of a conference. See section 9 – Lodging: Nights Eligible for Payment for further details.

Complete expense reimbursement requests must be fully supported by original receipts and forwarded to the Payroll Department **no more than 45 days from return of travel**. If a travel advance was issued, the advance must be liquidated and any unused funds returned to the City within 45 days of return. Reimbursement requests with incomplete documentation will be returned. Reimbursement requests submitted past the 45 day period will not be processed.

It is the Traveler's responsibility to obtain and submit the correct receipts. If a receipt is lost, Traveler must obtain a duplicate receipt, if possible, in order to be reimbursed. If a receipt cannot be obtained bank statements may be used to support the expense if they indicate date, amount and merchant information. If no supporting documentation is provided for cash purchases, they will not be reimbursed.

The Travel Expense Reimbursement Request must be filled out and signed by the Traveler and the appropriate approver at the end of the trip. The Traveler must disclose items pre-paid by the City and items paid by the Traveler. Travelers may not request reimbursement for a charge that the City has already paid.

Travel costs improperly paid to the Traveler must be promptly reimbursed to the City.

## **6. Cost Constraint, Travel Savings**

The City encourages purchasing decisions that minimize the total cost of business trips. Travelers should always request government or group rates, when available, for transportation, lodging, meals, and all other travel-related expenses.

When a purchasing decision results in discounts for a travel expense, the amount saved belongs to the City. The savings cannot be used at the traveler's discretion to pay for other aspects of the business trip.

Airline frequent flyer miles or credits received from an airline as a result of air travel paid for by the City must not be used by the employee for personal travel but must be reported and turned over to the City as required by Minn. Stat. 15.435. If a City business traveler claims the mileage on a personal frequent flyer account, the City must be reimbursed within 30 days when the miles are later redeemed for a travel award or benefit. The reimbursement to the City shall be

at the rate of 2 cents for each redeemed mile earned from airline tickets purchased for City business. This section of the Travel Procedures shall be automatically amended or repealed whenever Minnesota Statutes Section 15.435 is amended or repealed.

## **7. Travel Authorization**

A Traveler must first receive permission from his/her supervisor prior to researching costs for business travel. In addition, a Traveler must receive written permission for the travel from the Department Head or a City Coordinator prior to reserving travel. For departments with a department travel coordinator who the Department Head has assigned to coordinate business travel when requested, the Traveler should decide whether to use this service or coordinate their own travel plans. Also, Department Heads may require stricter policies and procedures than those required for the City in general. Check with your Department Head or department travel coordinator for details before you travel.

Prior to making any travel arrangements or incurring any travel expenses, a Travel Authorization Form (Attachment 1) must be completed for any business travel in connection with official duties as defined in this Procedure whether or not the Traveler is authorized to receive a reimbursement from the City. The form must be signed by the Traveler and approved by the Department Head, supervisor or travel coordinator. Information required on the authorization form includes:

- Date(s) of travel and location
- Business purpose of travel
- Estimated expenses including registration fee, cost of air ticket, other transportation costs (i.e. taxi, shuttle, or car rental), and lodging. Fully itemized detail in accordance with the guidelines in this document must be provided for estimated expenses. A copy of the conference/event brochure is required indicating the scheduled dates, time and location as well as accommodations provided as part of the event (such as meals, lodging options and/or transportation).

The purpose of the Travel Authorization Form is to provide the most complete overview of the estimated travel expenses whether pre-paid by the city or to be paid by the employee and reimbursed later. This allows for easier expenditure accruals and tracking.

Upon completion of the trip, the Travel Authorization form must be compared to the Travel Expense Reimbursement Request. If the difference between the estimated and the actual costs is more than 10% or over \$300, it must be reviewed and explained in a separate attached document. This procedure improves planning process and increases the overall accountability.

Reservations must be made as far in advance as possible. Travelers should take advantage of the early registration and booking discounts for airfare and lodging and other discounts whenever possible. Travel authorization requests made within 14 days before the travel date must be authorized by the Department Head and be properly justified prior to travel.

## **8. Pre-Payments and Advances**

The City allows prepayment of travel costs directly to vendors, so long as there is appropriate documentation of the amounts payable and the payees.

Conference, seminar or convention registration fees and airfare may be pre-paid once approval from the Department Head has been received. Provide registration information to your department travel coordinator (or finance staff-person assigned to your area, if a department travel coordinator has not been assigned for your department).

Travel Advances to Travelers are discouraged because of their high administrative costs. A Travel Advance must have the written approval of the traveler's Department Head and can be given only to full-time elected or appointed City officials and permanent City employees. The maximum advance payment is equal to the applicable federal per diem rate for Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) times the number of approved business travel days. No travel advance will be given to a traveler who has not filed a Travel Expense Reimbursement Request for a previous trip. The form for requesting travel advance can be found [here](#).

## **9. Lodging Expenses**

The accommodations must be reasonable and consider factors such as travel purpose, location, cost, safety and convenience. Lodging costs will be reimbursed at the “single occupancy” rate for a standard room. Travelers should consider nearby hotels for conventions or seminars that specify hotels. Travelers should request local government rates, promotional rates, Internet rates or other discounts in order to locate the lowest hotel rates. The federal government travel tool web site: <http://www.fedtravel.com/hotel-search.html> is a good resource in locating hotels that offer government rates. The [University of Minnesota contract](#) hotels are another good resource as the discounted rates are typically available to local government usage.

When a spouse, domestic partner or other companion travels with a Traveler on official business, reimbursement for the Traveler's lodging will be at the single occupancy rate for the accommodations. If the Traveler arranges for the lodging, it is the responsibility of the Traveler to obtain the lodging rate for both single and double occupancy and to present the supporting documentation to the travel coordinator.

*Lodging in a Private Residence:* Travelers who stay in a private residence with relatives or friends while traveling on business are not eligible for reimbursement of lodging costs.

*Lodging at short-term rentals such as Airbnb or similar service:* Costs for lodging other than hotels are not approved by the City and will not be reimbursed.

### Nights Eligible for Payment

Payment for overnight lodging is generally allowed for the evening of any day that business is conducted. To limit lodging costs to the greatest degree practicable, it is expected that the Traveler will arrive on the day the official business starts and will return immediately on the day the official business concludes.

Lodging costs for additional nights are not eligible for reimbursement, except if approved due to one or more of the following circumstances:

- 1) If the conference, or general business meeting begins before 8 am, or it would constitute a hardship for the Traveler to travel and arrive in time for the start of the meeting; or
- 2) When the Traveler stays an additional night because:

- The meeting or other business ends too late for the Traveler to make the last available transportation to the Traveler's return destination or the scheduled carrier's first practical departure time is 9:00 p.m. local time or later; or
- If staying additional nights, either prior to or subsequent to the date(s) of the general business meeting or conference, results in a net savings to the City when all costs are considered. As an example, this rule may be applied when savings afforded by a Saturday night stay over, due to airline pricing structures, results in a lower net cost.

**EXAMPLE**

The event takes place in Seattle, WA on Monday, 8:30 am through Wednesday, 3:00 pm. The first available Monday flight from MSP arrives to the destination at 9:30 am. It is not possible to arrive on time for the event if Monday flight is booked. Sunday night hotel expenses are justified and will be reimbursed.

On Wednesday (return day), the reasonable expectation is for the Traveler to catch a flight leaving 4 hours after the end of the event or later unless the carrier's departure time is 9:00 pm or later. The only available flight from Seattle between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm is a red-eye at 8:12 pm arriving to MSP at 6:10 am. This travel schedule would constitute a hardship for the Traveler and Wednesday night hotel is justified and reimbursable. Had the event been in Baltimore with a return flight leaving at 7:55 pm and arriving to MSP at 9:35 pm, the Traveler would be expected to book this flight and no additional nights would be allowed.

If Traveler indicates the desire to stay through Sunday in Seattle for personal reasons, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights or any expenses incurred after the first available flight on Thursday are not reimbursable. Traveler must indicate additional days on Travel Authorization Form and Travel Expense Reimbursement Request form.

Documentation: Actual receipts must be presented. Hotel booking confirmation instead of the receipt for payment of the hotel bill is not acceptable.

## **10. Miscellaneous Expenses**

“Miscellaneous expenses” means City business travel costs other than airfare, registration fees, lodging charges, rental car fees or items that are not included in the M&IE definition. Miscellaneous expenses include, but are not limited to, items such as internet access charges, fax charges and business telephone charges. Some miscellaneous expenses incurred during business travel may not be eligible for City reimbursement due to not meeting all of the reimbursement requirements described in Section 5. Also, Department Heads may decide reasonable and reimbursable miscellaneous expenses. Decisions will be based on a case-by case basis and need to be justified and properly documented in writing. For example, if a Traveler needs to use a laptop to access work materials such as email, the Traveler should ask the hotel about internet costs prior to travel and seek Department Head pre-approval.

Documentation: An itemized bill from the vendor must be submitted. If the bill shows an outstanding/unpaid amount and the traveler claims that the bill has been paid, proof of payment documentation must be submitted. Proof of any required approvals must be provided.

## **11. Transportation**

Traveler should choose the most efficient and economical method of transportation. Transportation costs include transportation to and from destination, to and from the airport and the place of lodging or event and local transportation if necessary to travel to event locations. This includes air, train, mileage, rental car, parking, etc. When selecting a method of local transportation, Travelers shall consider Public Transit or courtesy shuttle first and then taxi or a



rental car if more economical means is deemed to be inappropriate or unavailable. Side trips not related to the business purpose will not be reimbursed.

### **Airfare**

- The City will reimburse for economy/coach air only. Business or First Class is not reimbursable. Upgrades are not reimbursable.
- Air ticket must be purchased in advance to take advantage of the most economical fares available. Same day or near travel day ticket purchases are not reimbursable unless approved by the Department Head and properly justified.
- Air travel itinerary is required to be submitted with travel claim documentation.
- If airline charges for checked luggage, the City will reimburse the cost of first checked bag only. Additional baggage check-in costs will not be reimbursed.
- Any reimbursements can only occur after travel has been completed.
- Travelers are encouraged to schedule their business flight arrival and departure times during the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. as per the [City Council Resolution 98R-499](#) (page 1209). The Resolution's goal is to prevent public dollars from paying for flights that disturb residential neighborhoods during sleeping hours.

If a Traveler stops over in another location for personal reasons, then the Traveler pays the fare difference. Documentation of the fare difference must be provided. The internet may be used to procure lower cost travel, although penalties for changing or canceling itineraries must be considered when making a selection. Travelers should consider nearby cities when seeking low cost travel. For example, airfare to Newark, NJ plus taxi fare into New York City is often far cheaper than a direct flight to New York City.

Documentation: The remainder of the used airline ticket, boarding pass, E-ticket voucher and receipt showing flight details and cost must be submitted.

### **Travel to Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport**

Taxi is allowable between the Traveler's home and the airport or the Traveler's work site and the airport. Shuttles and light rail should be considered where available and cost-effective. When using a personal car, mileage or airport parking with mileage may be used if cheaper than taxi. Mileage is calculated from the Traveler's residence or from the Traveler's work site to the airport, whichever is less. Taxi expenses to and from the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport are reimbursed at actual cost.

Documentation: Vendor receipts with payment must be submitted. If mileage is requested, information must be provided from a recognized website, such as MapQuest or Google Maps that details the number of miles between the home or work site and the airport.

### **Parking**

For all ground transportation, reimbursable parking is limited to the lowest rate daily parking at destination hotel and destination business site (except for airport parking at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport as described under Personal Car). Valet parking and all other parking are not allowable.

Documentation: Parking receipts must be provided.

### **Ground Transportation in the Trip Destination Area**

Every effort must be made to use shuttle services or other transportation provided by Event hotels or sponsors for transportation between the lodging establishment and the Event Site. Costs of ground transportation within the trip destination area between the business site, airport and hotel (whether by personal car, rental car, shuttle, light rail, subway, City vehicle, taxi or bus) are reimbursable expenses.

Documentation: Vendor receipts with payment documentation, if not shown on receipt, must be submitted except for personal car use, which is addressed in Personal Car.

## **12. Rental Car**

Travelers should use public transportation (taxis, airport shuttles, buses, etc.) whenever it is more economical than a rental car. When other means of transportation, which would be expected to be more economical, are deemed to be inappropriate or are unavailable, travelers may use a rental vehicle. Pre-approval is required by departments.

The City has a vendor contract with Enterprise Rent-a-Car and National Car Rental. All car rentals must be booked directly through these companies using the following websites: [www.enterprise.com](http://www.enterprise.com) or [www.nationalcar.com](http://www.nationalcar.com). Use the **client code XZ19113** when making reservations.

The Contract Vendor (Enterprise Rent-a-Car or National Car Rental) may not require, nor request, the Traveler/Driver to pay any supplemental liability protection insurance or require them to agree to any collision and loss damage waivers. Traveler/Driver must decline additional insurance if offered at the Contract Vendor's counter as coverage is included in the Contract Price.

Contract Prices also include a Roadside Assistance Program (RAP) and renters must decline any RAP programs that may be offered at the Contract Vendor's counter.

Generally, a rental car may be requested when:

- Multiple business meetings require travel between locations and public transportation is impractical.
- Three or more Travelers are attending the same meeting and one rental car for the group would be more economical compared to other public transportation options.
- It is less expensive to rent a car overall compared to alternative forms of transportation. Parking and fuel costs must also be considered.

Rental vehicles must always be booked at the most economical prices. The following guidelines for car rentals apply:

- One or two people – compact or economy
- Three or four people – mid-size

If a higher level car is used, the Traveler is responsible for paying for the upgrade.

**Fuel:** Travelers must fill the gas tank before returning a rental car to avoid fuel surcharges. Fuel pre-payment at the counter is not allowed and will not be reimbursed. Receipts are necessary for reimbursement of fuel costs.

**Documentation:** An itemized receipt from the rental agency and payment documentation, if not shown on the receipt, must be submitted. Fuel receipts must be submitted.

**EXAMPLE**

Event is taking place in Henderson, NV at the Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort and Spa. The resort has several restaurants on site. Traveler gets dropped off at MSP by the spouse. Mileage from the Traveler's residence or from the office to the airport, whichever is less is reimbursed at the IRS tax deduction mileage rate. Upon arrival the Traveler has an option to take a Super Shuttle to the hotel at \$32.00 or a cab at \$75.00 or to rent a car at \$35/day plus fuel cost (self-parking is free at the resort). A car rental is not justified as no travel is required between the lodging and the meeting sites and will not be reimbursed. For 1-2 travelers Super Shuttle would be the most economical option. For 3-4 travelers, a taxi would be of the least total cost. In case of a taxi, only \$75 total each way will be reimbursed, travelers must not submit duplicate claims for the same expense.

If a Traveler wants to go to Las Vegas in his/her free time and rents a car at the airport and uses it to travel between the airport and the hotel, the estimated cost equal to the Super Shuttle/taxi round trip fare will be reimbursed. If the Super Shuttle were free, none of the car rental costs would be reimbursed.

If a Traveler does not like any of the 5 dining options on site and prefers to eat elsewhere, the cost of transportation to get to other restaurants is part of the incidental expenses discussed below. It will not be reimbursed above or in addition to the incidental expense allowance.

### **13. Ground Transportation: Personal Car**

The traveler is encouraged to use a City vehicle in lieu of personal vehicle whenever possible and when pre-approved by the Department Head. When multiple Travelers are attending the same business activity (i.e. out of town meeting, conference, etc.), Travelers are strongly encouraged to carpool. Travelers are personally responsible and will not be reimbursed for traffic violations or other penalties for infractions of any law.

The maximum reimbursement for ground transportation will be the lesser of:

- 1) Personal Car: the actual business trip mileage times the IRS mileage rate.
- 2) Rental Car: the actual cost of the transportation

**Or,**

- 3) The cost of the lowest round trip non-business commercial airfare purchased at least 14 days before the travel starts and which includes a Saturday night stay in the destination area.

**Documentation:** The traveler is responsible for providing documentation that states what the coach round trip airfare would have been if personal or rental car is used instead.

Reimbursement is based on distance from the Traveler's home or office to the destination whichever is less. The City uses the IRS tax deduction mileage rates to calculate reimbursements to Travelers who use their personal car for overnight business travel. Payment of this mileage rate is considered full payment for all costs of the private vehicle's operation, such as depreciation, financing costs, maintenance, repairs, gasoline, oil, insurance, taxes and vehicle registration fees. Mileage shall be paid for the shortest direct route. The route can be obtained through MapQuest or Google Maps.

Tolls and parking expenses that meet the eligibility criteria described in Section 5 are reimbursable. When parking at airports, long-term parking must be used when available, and when its usage would result in a net savings to the City, including the cost of taking Public Transit between long-term parking and the airline terminal.

Documentation: Information must be provided from a recognized website, such as MapQuest or Google Maps that details the number of miles from starting point to the final destination.

### **Choosing Ground Transportation Instead of Airlines for Long Distance Trips**

In situations where Travelers would normally travel by air, but a Traveler chooses to drive or use other forms of ground transportation instead, reimbursement will be the lower of the two options, driving or flying.

Travelers with trip destinations more than 250 miles one-way from the Minneapolis City Hall are not entitled to reimbursement for additional meals, nights of lodging or other miscellaneous expenses resulting from their personal choice to use ground transportation instead of commercial airlines. However, Travelers may be reimbursed for transportation costs as allowed under the Personal Car or Ground Transportation sections of this Travel Procedure.

## **14. Other Methods of Travel**

Business travel using motorcycles, limousines (other than flat-fee airport limousine shuttles), boats or personal or rented airplanes is not allowed. Travelers who travel using these methods do so at their own risk and will not be reimbursed for any trip expenses.

## **15. Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE)**

The City will pay for meals, tips and related taxes and service charges using the current per diem schedules as set by the federal government. These schedules can be found at: <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/104711> (M&IE column). The Per Diem allowance is a daily amount as set by federal schedule and is used instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for meals and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses, lodging expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. The Per Diem allowance covers all charges, including any service charges where applicable for:

- 1) Meals including expenses for breakfast, lunch, dinner and related taxes; and
- 2) Incidental expenses, including.
  - Fees and tips given to wait staff, baggage carriers, maids, and
  - Transportation and tips between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken, if suitable meals can't be obtained at site.

Meals for which the City pays directly, such as meals included in a conference registration fee or as part of airfare, or hotel costs, must be excluded from per diem and will not be further reimbursed. The Traveler must note on the expense report if a meal is included in the cost of the travel fare, conference fee, or hotel lodging. If a lodging facility provides a hot breakfast the breakfast allowance is excluded from the Per Diem amount. This provision does not apply to "continental breakfast". When the Traveler receives a meal at no cost, the Traveler is not eligible to be reimbursed for that meal and that meal allowance must not be included in the combined total.

Reimbursement may be allowed if the Traveler has special dietary needs that cannot be accommodated by the available meal options. The department reviews the circumstances and determines when reimbursement is warranted.

On travel days Travelers must meet the following conditions to be eligible for per diem meal reimbursement:

Meals	Departure on Initial Day of Travel (local time)	Return on Final Day of Travel (local time)
Breakfast	Before 7:00 AM	After 10:00 AM
Lunch	Before 11:00 AM	After 2:00 PM
Dinner	Before 4:00 PM	After 7:00 PM

“Travel Days” are defined as the first and last day of travel (departure and return). Time refers to the time when the Traveler leaves his/her home or office and returns to his/her home or office.

**EXAMPLE**

If a conference starts at 9 AM and the Traveler leaves his/her home or office at 7:00 AM to drive to the destination and stay overnight, breakfast reimbursement for the travel day is not allowed. If a conference starts at 8 AM and the Traveler has to leave at 6:00 AM, breakfast reimbursement is allowed. If the conference ends at 3 PM and the Traveler drives back and arrives at 5:00 PM to his/her home or office, only breakfast and lunch reimbursements are allowed for the return day of travel.

If Traveler travels by plane and leaves the home or office before 7 AM to get to the airport, breakfast reimbursement is allowed.

Departure/return location (home vs office or any other regular place of business) is determined by the shortest distance to the travel destination or airport (if flying) as shown by MapQuest/Google Maps.

If actual expenses exceed the applicable Per Diem rate, the excess amount is a personal expense of the traveler. If actual expenses are less than the Per Diem rate, the traveler is not required to refund the difference to the City.

Full day incidental expenses are allowed on travel days.

Documentation: For items in the M&IE category, receipts are not required. However, event brochure and airplane tickets/boarding passes are required to confirm the travel and event dates.

**EXAMPLE**

Let's refer back to the Seattle, WA example. The event location has several dining options nearby and lunch is included in the conference fees. Event dates: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. As we determined earlier, expected business travel is arriving Sunday and leaving Thursday. The Per Diem rate for Seattle is \$74.00 (breakfast \$17.00, lunch \$18.00, dinner \$34.00, incidentals \$5.00). The Traveler will be reimbursed \$39.00 for dinner and incidentals on Sunday night if he/she leaves between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm. The Traveler will be reimbursed \$22.00 for breakfast and incidentals on Thursday if he/she comes back after 10:00 am but before 2:00 pm. This provision applies even if the Traveler stays for personal reasons after completing the business portion of the trip. In this case the return time is estimated. The Traveler will be reimbursed \$56.00 for each of the event days (\$74.00 total less \$18.00 allowance for lunch as it is already paid through the registration fees).

Hotel the Traveler is staying at also provides hot breakfast. Per Diem allowance will be further reduced by \$17.00. Traveler cannot claim reimbursement for a hot breakfast provided as part of the hotel rate even if breakfast is eaten elsewhere. If continental breakfast is provided, no reduction will take place. .

If no breakfast or lunch was provided and the Traveler ended up spending \$83.00 at the end of the day for all three meals, the reimbursement amount would remain at \$74.00.

## **16. Extending Business Travel with Personal Travel**

Travelers should be discouraged from extending business travel and combining it with personal travel and departments may prohibit it. Among other reasons, the practice might encourage, or appear to encourage, business trips that are not essential, or to encourage business trips when alternatives to travel exist (e.g. meetings via Conference call).

When a Traveler combines personal and business travel reimbursable expenses will cease to accrue as of the expected return date and time. The City will reimburse the Traveler only for the documented expenses that are directly related to the business portion of the trip. Excess travel time and activities not required for the business trip purposes shall be at the traveler's own expense. Days added to the business trip for personal reasons and that fall within the traveler's normal workweek must be taken as vacation time, compensatory time or as unpaid leave. Any additional costs caused by a personal extension must be borne by the Traveler (e.g., when a personal return flight is more expensive than the original business return flight at the conclusion of the business purpose of the trip, the difference in cost must be borne by the Traveler).

## **17. Extending a Trip to Get Lower Airfare or Hotel Rates**

If the Traveler chooses to extend the number of travel days to get lower airfare or hotel rates, the City will reimburse the Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem amount and lodging for the extra days, only if the following four conditions are met:

- 1) The Traveler stays only for the shortest number of additional days needed to qualify for the cheaper rate AND
- 2) The amount saved as a result of the longer stay is documented and is equal to or more than the extra M&IE and lodging costs AND
- 3) The commercial airfare prices being compared are both based upon the lowest round trip non-business fare purchased at least 14 days before the travel starts AND
- 4) The Traveler uses vacation time, compensatory time, or unpaid leave for the additional travel days that fall within the traveler's normal workweek.

The fourth requirement above may be waived in writing by a traveler's supervisor and counted as a workday if the traveler is normally subject to varying work shifts due to the 24/7

scheduling needs of the Department. Department Heads cannot require the travelers to extend their trip in order to save money for the Department when the business trip purpose does not require the additional days. However, an alternative traveler may be selected.

Documentation: Documentation of the comparison airfare, extended hotel, extended transportation and extended per diem for the extra days that meets the above conditions, along with proof of any required approvals, must be submitted.

## **18. Trip Changes or Cancellation Costs**

Generally, tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable and fees will be incurred for any changes made once the reservations are booked.

- 1) If cancellation occurs due to a City-related change or circumstances beyond the traveler's control, the City will pay for the cancellation fee (reschedule if possible or Traveler may reimburse City if a personal use is desired).
- 2) If the cancellation fee is due to a cancellation penalty for not canceling in a timely manner, then the Traveler is responsible for the fee
- 3) If cancelled or changed due to personal demands, then all charges are payable by traveler, including the cost of the ticket.
- 4) In either case, the City is not responsible for costs for companions

Unused tickets or portions of unused tickets must be returned to the department Travel Coordinator. For tickets purchased through the Internet, the Traveler should work with the Travel Coordinator to ensure credit is received for unused tickets or portions of unused tickets.

Documentation: Documents showing the charges due to changes in travel plans due to work demands must be provided.

## **19. Foreign Travel, International Currency Exchange**

ALL expenses incurred when traveling outside of the US that were not listed on the Travel Authorization Form must be pre-approved by the Department Head or City Coordinator.

Travelers must be mindful of additional costs that may be associated with foreign travel. For example, to avoid cellphone roaming charges, an email should be used for communication whenever possible. Other more cost effective options include landline or pre-paid calling cards.

The Per Diem rates when traveling abroad are determined by the US Department of State. These rates can be found [here](#).

For foreign travel, all reimbursable expenses that were not paid using a credit card or US currency must be converted to US currency before listing them on the Travel Expense Reimbursement Request. A [conversion tool](#) is available in the City Travel web site. The interbank rate with 0 percent increase must be used.

## **20. Exceptions to Travel Procedures**

Department Heads may request exceptions to the Travel Procedures for unusual circumstances. An exception will be granted only if the written rationale is signed by the Department Head and the Finance Officer.

Expenses that may be reimbursed

Type of Expense	Documents Required	Comments
Expenses of being a “goodwill ambassador” to others, such as meals, entertainment, gifts, or activities for “sister cities”	Itemized invoice or receipt and payment documentation	These expenses are normally allowed for elected or appointed officials acting in an official capacity only

Expenses that will not be reimbursed

Type	Examples
Travel/Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Unjustified car rental and/or upgrade from standard compact size vehicle.</li><li>- Auto/flight/travel insurance.</li><li>- Air travel ticket higher than coach/economy class.</li><li>- Parking/moving violation tickets or other penalties for infractions of any law, repair of automobiles and towing charges.</li><li>- Passport application fees.</li><li>- Unjustified cancelled travel tickets and change/cancellation costs</li><li>- Late charges of any kind.</li></ul>
Lodging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lodging other than “standard” room rate. Upgrades are not reimbursable.</li><li>- Payment for accommodation with friends/relatives.</li><li>- Hotel movies.</li><li>- Added refrigerators</li><li>- Dry and laundry cleaning charges for trips less than 7 days.</li><li>- Unjustified internet access and personal calls.</li></ul>
Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Per diem meal expenses in lieu of conference provided meals.</li><li>- Alcoholic beverages</li></ul>
Other expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Personal grooming, fitness or therapeutic services, such as salon services or health clubs.</li><li>- Costs incurred at home because the Traveler is on a business trip (babysitting, snow shoveling, etc.)</li><li>- Annual fees, interest or late payment charges on an Traveler’s personal credit card, even if used for trip expenses.</li><li>- Cost of replacing personal items needed for the trip but left at home.</li><li>- Personal loss incurred while on City business.</li><li>- Expenses related to side trips not related to the business purpose of the trip.</li><li>- Expenses submitted more than 45 days following the Traveler’s return from the approved trip.</li></ul>



## **ATTACHMENT 1 – Travel Authorization Form**



Travel Authorization  
Form.pdf

## **ATTACHMENT 2 – Travel Expense Reimbursement Request**



Travel Expense  
Reimbursement Requ