



## TRAVEL, CONFERENCE, TRAINING AND BUSINESS EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

### I. PURPOSE AND GENERAL POLICY

- A. Purpose.** This document establishes a set of policies relating to travel, conference, training and business expenses, and establishes procedures for reimbursement of eligible San Francisco County Transportation Authority (Transportation Authority) Commissioners and employees, herein referred to as Transportation Authority personnel, for such expenses. These rules and guidelines are designed to safeguard public funds and to ensure the Transportation Authority and its personnel are using the most economical and well-documented procedures in a consistent manner.
- B. General Policy.** The Transportation Authority recognizes that in some instances it is necessary and/or convenient for authorized Transportation Authority personnel to incur expenses for travel, training and other business purposes in connection with the official business of the Transportation Authority. Additionally, the Transportation Authority recognizes the benefit of attendance at meetings, conferences and other functions which advance professional knowledge and provide opportunities to exchange information related to transportation, government operations and issues. The policy of the Transportation Authority is to pay or reimburse Transportation Authority personnel for such expenses, travel and fees that a reasonable and prudent person would incur when traveling on official business and which serve a Transportation Authority purpose and are deemed necessary and/or advantageous to the Transportation Authority.
- C. Limitations.** Travel and meeting expenditures shall not exceed the approved budget, except with justification and documentation, and shall be consistent with associated policies established by the Transportation Authority. Eligible Transportation Authority personnel are entitled to claim reimbursement for actual, reasonable and necessary expenses for eligible expenses incurred in the discharge of their official duties, subject to the limitations set forth herein.

### II. ELIGIBILITY

- A. Eligible Personnel.** Expenses are authorized for Transportation Authority Commissioners and employees (Transportation Authority personnel). Travel expenses may be authorized for the purpose of conducting business on behalf of the Transportation Authority, including employment interviews.
- B. Eligible Travel Expenses.** The following expenses are eligible for reimbursement in connection with authorized Transportation Authority business, travel, conferences, meetings, and training, subject to the restrictions identified in this policy. Travel expenses are subject to review by the Deputy Director for Finance and Administration and will only be approved if deemed reasonable and proper. Reimbursements shall be for actual expenditures (receipts required for expenses greater than \$25) for amounts not to exceed the per diem rates and allowances established by the



General Services Administration (GSA) and/or United States Department of Defense (USDOD) as appropriate<sup>1</sup>:

1. Meals;
2. Lodging;
3. Transportation charges (including commercial carrier fares, rental car charges, private car mileage allowances, parking, bridge and road tolls, and necessary taxi, transportation network company or public transit fares); and
4. Miscellaneous expenses:
  - a. Local and long distance business telephone calls, faxes and internet access by the most economical practicable commercial service, ~~subject to review by the Deputy Director for Finance and Administration and only approved if deemed reasonable and proper;~~
  - b. Registration fees for attending conferences, seminars, conventions, meetings, or other training of professional societies or community organizations;
  - c. Tips to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel staff, and stewards or stewardesses ~~not to exceed \$2 per bag;~~
  - d. Purchase of necessary training or conference materials or supplies;
  - e. Business expenses in connection with the preparation of clerical or official reports while on training or travel status; and
  - f. Unforeseen or unusual expenses which are justified, necessary and substantiated.

**C. Non-Eligible Travel Expenses.** Transportation Authority personnel are not eligible to claim reimbursement for the following items:

1. Personal telephone calls;
2. Alcoholic beverages and entertainment expenses;
- ~~2.3.~~ 3. Constructive expenses, which are those which might have been incurred for Transportation Authority business but were not; such as:
  - a. if two individuals traveled together to a meeting in one car and each claimed full transportation costs, then one would be making a “constructive” claim; or
  - b. if an individual on a trip stayed with friends or relatives, it would be “constructive” to claim a lodging expense.
- ~~3.4.~~ 4. Expenses which are excessive or unreasonable as determined by the Deputy Director for Finance and Administration ~~Transportation Authority.~~

**D. Expense Limitations.** Reimbursement of costs shall be based on the minimum number of days and hours required to transact Transportation Authority business. Costs incurred due to early or late arrival shall be at the traveler’s expense unless it is shown that the savings in airfare outweighs other costs. In that event, it is up to the traveler’s discretion as to whether he or she wishes to take advantage of the reduced airfare by traveling at an earlier/later date.

<sup>1</sup> Per diem is an allowance for lodging (excluding taxes), meals and incidental expenses. The GSA establishes per diem rates for destinations within the Continental United States. The United States Department of State establishes the foreign rates.



- E. Cash Advance.** Cash advances may be requested to cover anticipated travel expenses for out-of-area or overnight travel if requested a minimum of ten working days before departure. Cash advances shall not be less than \$100 nor more than the estimated expenses listed on the approved travel authorization form. Advances must be refunded immediately when an authorized trip is canceled or indefinitely postponed.

### III. TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

- A. Approval.** Before any Transportation Authority paid or reimbursed overnight or out-of-area travel may take place, Transportation Authority personnel must first submit a travel authorization form to their supervisor for approval, who will forward the approved form to the Deputy Director for Finance and Administration to verify that sufficient funds are available in the Transportation Authority's budget for the travel. The Deputy Director for Finance and Administration will forward the approved form to the Executive Director for final approval. Transportation Authority Commissioners must submit the travel authorization form to the Executive Director for pre-approval. The Executive Director is authorized to approve travel requests for Transportation Authority personnel consistent with this policy. The Executive Director will inform the Chairperson of the Finance Committee and the Chairperson of the Transportation Authority of all Commissioner travel requests in excess of \$5,000. All travel requests must be approved in advance, prior to incurring any reimbursable expenses.
- B. Local Travel.** Local travel, which does not involve overnight travel, can be reimbursed by the Transportation Authority without pre-verification of travel funds availability but staff shall obtain verbal approval from their respective supervisor and the Executive Director. If overnight travel is necessary, a travel authorization form shall be submitted prior to incurring reimbursable expenses.
- C. Out-of-Area Travel.** Out-of-area travel is defined as 50 miles or more beyond the San Francisco city limits.
- D. Travel Authorization Form.** The travel authorization form shall list the destination, purpose and justification for the trip, departure and return dates, and the estimated costs for transportation, meals, lodging, registration, and other expenses.

### IV. PROCEDURES FOR CLAIMING EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

- A. Expense Report.** Any reimbursement for expenses incurred on behalf of the Transportation Authority shall be claimed on an expense report. Expense reports shall be submitted within 45 days of incurring the expenses, and the reports shall be accompanied by adequate documentation supporting the expenses.

The total amount of all expenses pertaining to a particular trip should be accounted for the traveler on an expense report form. If the total actual cost of a trip exceeds the amount listed on the travel authorization form, justification and documentation of the excess cost must be provided. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, any amount in excess of the estimated cost approved on the travel authorization form shall not be allowed. If the cash advance exceeds the actual reimbursable expense, then the traveler shall immediately return the excess amount with the expense report.



- B. Nature of Claim.** Claims must be for actual and necessary expenses consistent with this document; not for “constructive” expenses.
- C. Per Diem Adjustments.** Per diem claims will be adjusted, using the appropriate per meal rate, in those instances where meals are provided gratis or as part of a registration or any other fee claimed on the expense report.
- D. Required Information.** Each claim must clearly indicate the date, nature of expense and amount for which reimbursement is being claimed.
- E. Receipts.** Receipts or proof of payment must be submitted with the claim to substantiate expenditures for public carrier fares, rental cars, lodging (indicating the single rate), meals, conference or seminar registration fees, and for any unusual items or items not specifically related to travel. Claims must be recorded and certified on an expense report. For any official business in-transit travel destination, Transportation Authority personnel must provide a receipt and narrative to substantiate claimed travel expenses for lodging and a receipt for any authorized expenses incurred costing over \$25. Itemized receipts shall be obtained and submitted with the expense report. If a receipt cannot be obtained or has been lost for expenses greater than \$25, a statement to that effect shall be made on the expense report and the reason given. In absence of a satisfactory explanation, the amount involved shall not be allowed.
- F. Commissioner Reports.** Transportation Authority Commissioners attending a meeting, conference, or training at the expense of the Transportation Authority shall provide a brief **written and oral** report of such at the next regular Board meeting of the Transportation Authority. The report must include a statement of how the Commissioner’s attendance has an impact on, or was associated with, Transportation Authority business, and include any materials distributed at the meeting, conference, or training that could be helpful to other Commissioners.
- G. Expenses Not Covered by Transportation Authority Policy.** In the event where an expense does not qualify for reimbursement under this policy, to be reimbursable, the expense shall be approved by the Transportation Authority Board, in a public meeting before the expense is incurred, unless the expense is related to lodging in connection with a conference or organized educational activity conducted in compliance with California Government Code s. 54952.2(c), including but not limited to ethics training required by Article 2.4 (commencing with §. 53234) of the Government Code. ~~Lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor, provided that the lodging at the group rate is available to the member of a legislative body at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available, the member of a legislative body shall use comparable lodging that is consistent with the requirements of this policy.~~

## V. PREPAYMENT OF CONFERENCE/SEMINAR/TRAINING FEES

All requests for prepayment of conference/seminar/training will be submitted for approval a minimum of ten working days in advance of the conference/seminar/training, unless reasonable justification is provided. If the ten-day requirement cannot be met, Transportation Authority personnel may personally pay registration fees and other expenses at their own risk and seek reimbursement on the expense report.



## VI. MEAL EXPENSE

- A. General.** Transportation Authority personnel may incur expenses for the purchase of meals for persons not employed by the Transportation Authority, with whom the Transportation Authority is transacting business. The name and business affiliation of the person, as well as the purpose of the business meeting, must be included in the expense report. The maximum per-person expenditure shall not exceed a reasonable amount under the particular circumstances and shall not exceed the set per diem amount established by the GSA or USDOD as appropriate. Actual costs shall include reasonable and customary gratuities, but not the cost of alcoholic beverages. All such expenditures for personnel must be approved in advance by the Executive Director.
- B. Restrictions.** The purchase of non-travel-related meals is authorized only when Transportation Authority personnel are required, and where approved in advance by the Executive Director in the following circumstances:
1. to attend a breakfast, lunch or dinner meeting concerning Transportation Authority business affairs because of the official position or duties of the individual;
  2. to attend a meeting between Commissioners and staff when required to conduct Transportation Authority business outside of normal business hours;
  3. to attend consecutive or continuing morning and afternoon and night sessions of a Transportation Authority, Board of Supervisors, city council, commission, district or other public agency meeting to cover an agenda;
  4. to act as host for official guests of the Transportation Authority, such as members of examining boards, official visitors, and speakers or honored guests at banquets or other official functions; and
  5. to attend off-site training events (training workshops, seminars, and retreats) and ready access to reasonably priced meals is not available. The Executive Director may elect to either provide meals to the attendees or authorize individuals to purchase their own meals and claim reimbursement in accordance with provisions of this document.
- C. Local Area Meals.** Reimbursement for employee meals in the local area must be associated with Transportation Authority business and must be approved in advance by the Executive Director. Meal expenses incurred prior to authorization will be at the risk of the employee. Meals should not exceed the per diem rates and allowances established by the GSA or USDOD as appropriate. Unusual costs must be justified in writing.
- D. Out-of-Area Meals.** Reimbursement for employee meals during periods of approved trips out-of-area must be approved on the travel authorization form. Reimbursement for out-of-area meals will be based on either actual costs, for which receipts must be provided for expenditures exceeding \$25, and in accordance with the per diem of the federal standard meal allowance, including single day and total trip meal rates, as established by the GSA or USDOD as appropriate. Unusual costs must be justified in writing.
- E. Special Functions.** Reimbursement for meals at special functions, such as banquet meals at authorized conferences, professional meetings, or special events or functions, may be eligible for reimbursement at rates different than the per diem allowances. Eligibility for such reimbursements is based on pre-approval by the Executive Director, or the Transportation Authority Board in accordance with this policy.



## VII. LODGING EXPENSES

Reimbursement is allowable for single-room lodging expenses associated with attendance at out-of-area conferences or meetings. The cost of a single room will be reimbursed when travel exceeds the day's duration. Where available, government and group rates must be requested. No reimbursement is authorized for overnight accommodations within the nine Bay Area counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma unless prior authorization is granted.

Transportation Authority personnel will be expected to be prudent in the choice of lodging and will submit proper documentation to justify the expense. The Executive Director will approve the lodging as part of the approval of the travel request, and reserves the right to determine which lodging is prudent, based on economic, comfort, safety, and reasonability considerations. ~~If lodging is required in connection with a conference or activity, the lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the sponsor of the conference. Lodging shall be at the location where the conference or activity is being held. Lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor, provided that the lodging at the group rate is available at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available and the hotel has no remaining vacancies, comparable lodging that is consistent with the requirements of this policy shall be used. No lodging shall be reimbursed on the final day of a conference or activity unless reasonable justification is provided or unless authorized by the Executive Director. If no group rate is available at the time of booking, the Transportation Authority will reimburse its personnel for lodging up to the rates established by the GSA or USDOD as appropriate.~~

## VIII. MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION

**A. General.** All travel must utilize the most efficient, direct and economical mode of available transportation. Transportation Authority personnel shall use government and group rates offered by providers of transport where available. If for personal convenience, Transportation Authority personnel travel an indirect route and travel is interrupted, any resulting extra expense will be borne by the individual except for reasons beyond the control of the individual. For employees, any resulting excess travel time, except where beyond the control of the employee, will not be considered work time, but will be charged the appropriate type of leave.

Charges or loss of refunds resulting from failure to cancel reservations in accordance with the carrier's rules and time limits will not be reimbursed, unless it can be shown that such failure resulted from circumstances beyond the control of Transportation Authority personnel.

Unused portions of transportation tickets are subject to refund and, when purchased by the Transportation Authority, the individual traveler is responsible to see that they are turned in promptly to secure such a refund.

**B. Local Travel.** Transportation Authority personnel are encouraged to make optimum use of available public transit services and carpooling for local area travel. The following modes of transportation are to be used in the following priority:





1. public transportation;
2. privately-owned motor vehicles; and
3. taxis, cabs, or transportation network companies; and
- ~~3.4~~ rental cars, after exhausting all other available options.

**C. Air and Rail Travel.** ~~Transportation Authority personnel shall use Air coach-class (or similar reduced fare equivalent accommodations) shall be used for air and rail travel if it is available whenever possible. Any additional fees for seat location upgrades, seat spacing upgrades, or preferential boarding will not be reimbursed unless documentation is provided that there were no other reasonable options available and unless authorized by the Executive Director for special circumstances (e.g. physical or medical conditions). All reasonable fare reductions or reduced fare flights as appropriate shall be utilized.~~

#### **D. Automobiles**

1. Privately-owned Automobile for Official Business
  - a. In instances where Transportation Authority personnel use their private automobiles for transportation between their normal work location and other designated work locations (e.g., the site of a meeting), Transportation Authority personnel may be reimbursed for such mileage based upon the standard mileage rate as established by the GSA. When actual mileage exceeds by 10% the reasonable distance between points, Transportation Authority personnel must justify such excess. Inability to do so will result in the reimbursement being based on mileage for the most direct route. Mileage rate of reimbursement will be adjusted as required. Mileage reimbursement for out-of-area trips shall not exceed the cost of the most efficient and economical direct air rate. Transportation Authority personnel who use their privately-owned motor vehicles for transportation while on official Transportation Authority business must carry at least the minimum automobile liability insurance for privately-owned motor vehicles as required by the State of California. Reimbursement for this minimum automobile liability insurance coverage shall not be allowed. When using privately-owned motor vehicles, Transportation Authority personnel will not be reimbursed for any damages that may occur.
  - b. Charges for ferries, bridges, tunnels, or toll roads will be allowed. Reasonable charges will also be allowed for necessary parking.
  - c. Property damage to the automobile owned by Transportation Authority personnel incurred without fault or cause of the traveler shall be reimbursed in an amount up to \$250 or the amount of the deductible on the traveler's auto insurance policy, whichever is the lesser amount, for each accident. The Transportation Authority will assume an assignment of subrogation rights up to the amount expended, for recovery of such sums from third parties, known or unknown at the time of such payment.
  - d. In order to be paid mileage for travel which originates other than at the normal work location, the mileage must be in excess of that normally driven from the traveler's residence to and from the normal work location. The requesting traveler will include justification in attach an explanation to the expense report. In the absence of a satisfactory ~~explanation~~ justification, the mileage expense shall not be allowed.



## 2. Rental Automobiles

- a. Rental automobiles may be used when such rental is considered to be more advantageous to the Transportation Authority than the use of other means of transportation. Advance reservations should be made whenever possible and Transportation Authority personnel are expected to be prudent in the selection of an automobile model.
- b. The traveler must obtain full collision coverage. Any additional charge for this coverage will be allowed for reimbursement.
- c. Charges for ferries, bridges, tunnels, or toll roads will be allowed. Reasonable charges will also be allowed for necessary parking.

**E. Other Modes of Transportation.** Limousine ~~and~~, taxi and transportation network company fares will be allowed for travel where public transportation is not practical or available. Examples may include, but are not limited to, travel between transportation terminal and hotel, between hotel and place of business, and between places of business.

**F. Reimbursement.** Unless otherwise provided above, the Transportation Authority will reimburse its personnel for transportation at the rates established by the GSA or USDOD as appropriate.

## IX. BAGGAGE

Charges incurred for excess baggage will be reimbursed if justified as necessary for the purpose of the trip. An explanation of the circumstances and payment receipts must accompany the claim for reimbursement. Charges for checking and handling of baggage, including reasonable and customary gratuities (~~\$2 per bag/package~~) will be allowed.