



City of El Paso de Robles

Travel Policy and Procedures

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The City shall be responsible for paying for expenses incurred by employees, elected, or appointed officials of the City (hereafter collectively referred to as the “Traveler”) while traveling to an authorized meetings and/or educational events for City business. Authorized meetings and/or educational events (hereafter collectively referred to as “Training”), for purposes of this Policy, includes but is not limited to, attendance at a conference, class, or educational event or attendance at trade meetings/events, boards or committees to which the Traveler has been appointed by the City or other entity related to City issues. Travelers will endeavor to maintain a standard of economy that generates the highest function and effectiveness at the lowest costs to the City as possible. As such, all expenses related to travel should be limited to those deemed as “reasonable and necessary.” The allowances and amounts to Travelers on official City business shall be established based on the guidelines set forth below; however, this policy is subject to administrative exception subject to approval by express and written consent of the City Manager as is appropriate to the circumstances.

Compensable Work Time During Travel

In general, time spent driving, or as a passenger on an airplane, train, bus, taxicab or car, or other mode of transport, in traveling to and from an authorized meeting and/or educational event, and time spent waiting to purchase a ticket, check baggage, or get on board, is considered compensable “hours worked.” However, time spent taking a break from travel in order to eat a meal, sleep, or engage in purely personal pursuits not connected with traveling or making necessary travel connections (such as, for example, spending an extra day in a city before the start or following the conclusion of a conference in order to sightsee), is not compensable. If the Traveler’s travel from their home to the airport is the same, or substantially the same as the distance (and time) between their home and usual place of reporting for work, the travel time would not begin until the Traveler reaches the airport. The Traveler must be paid for all hours spent between the time they arrive at the airport and the time they arrive at their hotel. No further “travel” hours are incurred after the Traveler reaches their hotel and is then free to choose the place where they will go.

Pre-Approval Requirements

Travel and training for the City Manager does not require pre-approval unless otherwise directed by City Council. Travel and training for City Councilmembers does not require pre-approval as long as cost do not exceed \$5,000 per Councilmember per year. Councilmember travel and training expenses in excess of \$5,000 requires pre-approval by the City Council at a regularly scheduled Council meeting. This \$5,000 limit applies to all city-related travel, including representation on other board and committees.

All other staff on travel and training shall require the pre-approval from their Department Director. Additionally, the City Manager pre-approval is also required if 1) the Traveler is a Department Director; or 2) requires the Traveler to travel out-of-state; or 3) is estimated to cost more than \$5,000.

Same-Day Travel

In instances when travel and training does not require an overnight stay, expenses (e.g., conference or class registration, certification test fees, etc.) can be incurred within compliance of the purchasing authority provisions established in the Purchasing and Payment Procedures Manual. For training within San Luis Obispo County—regardless of multi-day session—overnight stays are **NOT** permitted.

Adopted by City Council 08/02/2022 – RESO 22-107



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Travelers engaged in same day travel and training are not eligible for per diem allowance and meal reimbursements unless it is in conjunction with working sessions, included in the class registration, or reimbursed by another granting agency. See 'Per Diem and Meal Functions' section of this policy for further detail.

Expenses incurred by a Traveler during same day travel and training (e.g., mileage, parking fees, etc.) will be paid either with a City-issued credit card or on a reimbursement basis through petty cash (if less than \$100) or by warrant request. Approval for reimbursement must be obtained by employee's direct report or supervisor, or in the case of elected or appointed officials, the City Manager.

Overnight Travel

Travel and training on City business, which calls for an overnight stay, requires the completion of the City's Travel and Meeting Authorization (TMA) form (see attachment for instructions on how to complete the TMA form). The "Pre-Travel" section of the TMA form is to be completed and approved prior to incurring any expenses. The "Pre-Travel" section shall include the name of the traveling employee, date of departure/return, date of conference, the location, and the budgeted account number. Additionally, the "Pre-Travel" section shall itemize all estimated costs including registration, lodging, meals and per diems, mileage and other costs, along with the method of payment for each of the costs to be incurred. Should a Traveler be eligible for expense advances, the TMA form should be received by the Department of Administrative Services a minimum of two (2) weeks before the travel is to occur. If the TMA form is received less than two weeks before the travel, the Traveler may not receive an advanced payment, but rather reimbursed for expenses upon return and after the "Final Accounting" section is completed. Additionally, changes to pretravel arrangements made prior to two weeks before travel, will be reconciled during the final accounting section is completed.

The "Final Accounting" section of the TMA report is required to be completed by all Travelers, regardless of pre-approval requirements, and submitted to the Administrative Services Department no more than two (2) weeks after the last day of travel. The "Final Accounting" section shall itemize the actual travel expenses including copies of receipts or paid invoices as well as amounts advanced to the employee and amounts paid by City credit card and be reviewed by either: 1) Department Director for employees of the department; or 2) City Manager for Department Directors, elected and appointed officials; or 3) Administrative Services Director for City Manager. If the actual cost of travel and training exceed 15% of the "pre-travel" estimated costs, the City Manager's review is also required, regardless of the total cost of the travel and training. The review process is intended to verify that all expenses incurred by the Traveler are reasonable and necessary. Any question about the necessity and reasonableness of travel costs should be made aware to the Administrative Services Director and the City Manager.

If the Traveler incurred any additional expenses above what is covered by their per diem (e.g., parking fees, toll fees, etc.), and did not use a City-issued credit card, the Traveler may receive reimbursement in form of petty cash (if less than \$100) or through warrant request as soon as the finalized TMA form is completed and submitted to the Administrative Services Department.

Per Internal Revenue Service regulations, if a "Final Accounting" for final travel expenses is **NOT** submitted, the amount paid by the City to the Traveler will be reported as taxable income. Once per month, the Administrative Services Department will report to Department Directors all TMA forms outstanding for their respective departments.

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Transportation

All travel arrangements shall be made using the most economical mode of transportation consistent with scheduling needs and cargo space requirements using a direct and time-efficient route.

a. Air Fare

Generally, air travel should utilize the coach fare class with a common air carrier and should not be used to areas in which travel distance by ground transportation is less than 200 miles. Air travel other than the lowest possible fare class can be utilized but should be limited to when scheduling constraints occur or when the flight is four (4) consecutive hours or more in duration.

Travelers shall also endeavor to book air travel and take advantage of discounts offered for purchasing flight tickets in advance of departure and/or take advantage of non-refundable ticket fares. Normally, round-trip tickets shall be purchased and be paid by a City-issued credit card. Travel expenses of a family member(s) of a Traveler are not eligible for payment by the City. Should travel arrangements include a family member, the City will reimburse the Traveler the total cost of the flight divided by the number of tickets purchased. For example, if an employee utilizes a buy-one, get-one free coupon, the City will reimburse the employee for one-half of the total cost of the flight.

b. Personal Vehicles

Use of personal vehicles, when approved as a mode of travel to and from destinations, will be reimbursed at the established IRS mileage rate. When airfare is used, a Traveler will be reimbursed for personal vehicle mileage to and from the airport and the actual cost of airport parking. Payment of mileage will be based upon the most direct route from point of departure to point of destination using the website Google Maps. A Traveler may leave directly from their home for a meeting, conference, seminar, or training session, however, the mileage from home to the destination should not exceed the mileage from work location to the destination. Travelers that receive an auto allowance shall not be eligible for mileage reimbursement for use of personal vehicles when travel is within San Luis Obispo County.

Travelers who utilize personal vehicles during the travel shall maintain automobile insurance coverage in an amount not less than \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence (or a combined single limit of \$300,000) and property damage coverage in an amount not less than \$25,000 per occurrence.

In the event of an accident, the Traveler is responsible for paying any deductible required by the insurance company. The City shall not be responsible for any increase in the Traveler's automobile insurance premium as a result of an accident.

c. City or Rental Vehicles

A City-owned vehicle or a vehicle from a rental dealership, if available, may be used to travel to and from destinations. In these instances, the Traveler will not be eligible for mileage reimbursement. If a City vehicle requires fuel, the City's fuel card system shall be utilized (the fuel card can be used at all JB



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Dewar stations as well as Texaco, Flying J, Loves, Pilots, Chevron and Shell stations). If a car rental requires fuel, the Traveler should use City-issued credit card whenever possible. Otherwise, the Traveler will be reimbursed the actual cost of fuel upon return of travel and completion of the TMA form.

Employees that receive an auto allowance shall not be authorized to use a City vehicle when travel is within San Luis Obispo County. Exceptions for special circumstances can be authorized by the City Manager.

Only Travelers are authorized to operate or travel in a City-owned vehicle or vehicle from a rental dealership. A Traveler wanting to travel with a non-City-related individual (e.g., family members or employees of another government agency), must use their personal vehicle.

d. **Trains, Buses, Taxis, Uber and Other Modes of Transport**

In some instances, other modes of transportation will be the most beneficial method of transportation including travel to and from conference centers and hotel accommodations. In these instances, the actual cost of transportation will be the responsibility of the City. However, whenever possible, Travelers should utilize hotel courtesy buses or local shuttle services.

Travelers should use City-issued credit cards for expenses related to this type of travel, whenever possible, but will reimburse the Traveler for expenses incurred upon return of travel and completion of the TMA form. No advanced payment will be made to the Traveler for costs associated with trains, buses, taxis and similar modes of transportation.

Lodging

The City will pay for a single room (including taxes and parking) for as many nights as necessary; no more than one day before and one day after the training event. The accommodations used should not only be economical but practical. For example, it is preferable to stay at the hotel where a conference is held, even if that hotel may be slightly more expensive than other in the area. In general, lodging should be conducted at the most reasonably priced accommodations available consistent with the purpose and goals of the travel and training.

When making lodging reservations, it is best practice to seek exemption from the local transient occupancy tax (TOT); some cities exempt Travelers on City business. Additionally, seek discounted government or group rates as this can reduce lodging costs as well.

Additional room charges, such as internet access and telephone charges are authorized as long as it is used for business purposes. Other charges such as room service, including movies and other miscellaneous sundries are not an authorized travel and training expenses. Any charges incurred should be paid personally by the Traveler prior to check-out. If any charges have been incurred on the City-issued credit card, the Traveler is responsible for reimbursing the City for such costs.



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Per Diem and Meal Functions

Travelers engaged in same day travel and training are not eligible for per diem allowance and meal reimbursements with the exception of:

- Instances where the travel and training is in conjunction with working sessions or class registration, the City will pay for the actual costs of the meal with a maximum gratuity of 18% and shall be accompanied by an itemized receipt and/or other documentation including the customer copy of the merchant card charge slip. Additionally, the receipt and/or payment request should clearly identify the purpose of the meeting, the general attendees (e.g., lunch with auditors) and the budgetary account number.
- Instances where the City is reimbursed by another granting agency, the amounts eligible will be based on the parameters set forth by the granting agency. For example, if the State Department of Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) allows for a \$15 per diem for officer training, said officer would be eligible for a \$15 per diem allowance.

Travelers engaged in an overnight stay, the City will provide the Traveler a per diem allowance for meals, tips and incidentals based on the U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) (www.gsa.gov/perdiem) thresholds for the region where the conference/training is located regardless of the meals provided during the conference. Per diems will be paid in advance of travel and no receipts are required upon return, unless the TMA is received less than two weeks before travel, in which per diem will be paid upon return and submission of the final TMA.

Per diem allowances will be paid only for days away from the City; personal time used before or after the conference/training will not be eligible for per diem allowances. Consistent with GSA, the per diem allowance will be reduced by 25% on the first and last day of travel regardless of distance between the City and the conference or the time of departure to/from the training event. For distances greater than 225 miles one-way, the Traveler's supervisor should consider travel days one day before and one day after the conference dates.

Meals and food charged to a hotel room via room service should be paid personally by the Traveler prior to check-out. If any charges have been incurred on the City-issued credit card, the Traveler is responsible for reimbursing the City for such costs. In instances, when the Traveler was not advanced a per diem, the room service charge will be deducted from the Traveler's eligible per diem reimbursement.

Registration Fee

Registration fees charged for any authorized convention, conference, seminar or meeting will be paid by the City, preferably by City-issued credit card. Travelers should include the conference itinerary or schedule with the payment invoice and TMA form, if travel and training is overnight. Meals provided by the conference does not require a reduction in the per-diem amounts identified above.