

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES – CITY OF KNOXVILLE

9 – Travel Regulations

9.01 **POLICY**

This policy governs travel on official business for the City of Knoxville. These regulations cover all City personnel, elected and appointed officials along with their employees, and other travelers using City money for travel. The Mayor, the Department of Finance, and Departmental Directors have full responsibility for the enforcement of these regulations. As a general rule, travel is defined as work-related activities outside of a 50 mile radius of the respective employee's normal physical place of work.

9.02 **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

- A. All travel on official business must be authorized by the responsible authorities prior to occurrence. Travel must be pre-approved by the Department Director, and travel by all Department Directors and members of the Mayor's staff must be pre-approved by the Mayor. Unauthorized travel costs will not be reimbursed.
- B. Prior to any and all travel, the employee must complete a Travel Request/Reimbursement Form. All proposed expenditures related to the travel must be estimated. The availability of funds must be certified by the Director of Finance, or his/her designee, for all proposed expenditures as part of the travel authorization process prior to travel.

Additionally, the form must be approved in one of the following ways:

- All travel must be approved by the Department Director. (Department Directors must get approval from the Mayor)
 - All travel outside of the State of Tennessee must be approved by the Department Director and the Mayor.
- C. All travel that does not require an overnight stay must be pre-approved by the Department Director (or by the Mayor in the case of Department Directors and the Mayor's staff), and the Travel Request/Reimbursement Form must be completed prior to travel. The form shall be submitted after the travel occurs, regardless of whether reimbursement for expenses is required.
 - D. While not "travel," as defined above, the City understands that employees are occasionally required to attend events outside their normal physical place of work but within a 50-mile radius. In those instances, an approved Travel Request/Reimbursement Form is required if the employee is requesting reimbursement, even if the event is within a 50-mile radius of their normal physical place of work.
 - E. To minimize costs to the traveler, advance invoicing of registration fees, airfares, and similar expenses can be made directly to the City, and the various City departments will endeavor to pay for such known "pre-travel" expenses once the upcoming travel has been approved by the proper approving authorities.

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For travel within the United States, the amount reimbursed for meals and incidental expenses shall be equal to the per diem rates as listed in the Federal Travel Regulations. The amount allocated for lodging shall not exceed the maximum per diem rates as listed in the Federal Travel Regulation. Exceptions to the maximum lodging allocation must be requested with justification to the Department of Finance.

- F. If a prospective traveler does not have sufficient funds to front their allowance for meals and incidentals until the City is able to reimburse him/her upon return, the City may (on a case-by-case basis) provide the traveler a cash advance by depositing the appropriate per-diem amount into their personal bank account (or by some other means as appropriate) prior to the traveler's departure.

Cash advances are only to be used (on a case-by-case basis) to assist persons who cannot travel without receiving funds in advance of travel. Cash advances are only to be requested by the respective department director and must be approved by the Director of Finance or his/her designee. Additionally, requests for cash advances must be submitted to the Director of Finance at least five (5) business days prior to the anticipated travel. A memorandum, signed by the director, is to be attached to the travel form.

- G. All costs associated with the travel shall be reasonably estimated and shown on the Travel Request/Reimbursement Form. The form must be approved by the proper authority before any advance fees or other expenses are paid. A copy of the conference program, where applicable, must be attached to the form. If the program is unavailable prior to the travel, it must be submitted when requesting reimbursement.
- H. A reconciled Travel Request/Reimbursement Form must be submitted to the Department of Finance within five (5) days of return.
- I. Receipts for lodging, vehicle rental, conference fees, and other reimbursable costs are required.
- J. Employees shall make full use of discounts which are given for advance registrations or advance airline reservations. Employees must request the conference, governmental, or weekend rate, whichever is cheapest, when making lodging or car rental reservations.
- K. Travelers are responsible for accurately describing their travel requirements and for certifying the accuracy of their reimbursement request. Any person attempting to defraud the City by misuse of City travel funds will be prosecuted.
- L. Travel outside the United States will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

9.03

TRANSPORTATION

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All potential costs should be considered when selecting alternative modes of transportation. For example, airline travel may be cheaper than automobile when time away from work and increased meal and lodging costs are considered. When time is important, or when the trip is so long that other modes of transportation are not cost-beneficial, air travel is encouraged. In the event an employee chooses a more expensive mode of transportation for personal reasons, the City will only reimburse up to the cost of the most cost-beneficial mode of transportation.

A. Air:

The City will pay for tourist or economy class air travel. The traveler must obtain the most cost effective fare and is expected to take advantage of any discount fares available. Air travel costs also include the cost of one carry-on bag.

Mileage credits for frequent flyer programs accrue to the individual traveler. However, the City will not reimburse for any additional expenses such as circuitous routing, extending stays or layovers due to scheduling a particular carrier, upgrading from economy fare to first class (to accumulate additional mileage), or additional overnight stays, etc. for employees participating in such programs.

The City will not reimburse travel by private aircraft unless authorized in advance by the Mayor.

B. Rail or Bus:

The City will pay for actual cost of ticket.

C. Automobile:

Automobile transportation may be used when common carrier transportation cannot be scheduled, when it is more economical than common carrier transportation, or when expenses can be reduced when two or more City employees are traveling together.

1. Personal Car

For liability purposes, employees must use City vehicles when possible. Use of a private vehicle is discouraged and must be approved in advance by the Director of Finance and/or the Mayor. If approved for use of a personal vehicle for travel, then the City will reimburse the traveler based on the current mileage rate published in the GSA Travel Resources Guide found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel>. The City will base said reimbursement on the round trip mileage from the employee's normal physical place of work within the City to the travel destination and back.

If a privately owned automobile is used by two (2) or more authorized travelers on the same trip, only the traveler who owns or has custody of the automobile will be reimbursed.

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Travelers will not be reimbursed for automotive repairs or breakdowns when using a personal vehicle.

2. City Car

Personnel traveling in City vehicles must furnish original (not photocopied) receipts for gas, oil, and any necessary automotive repairs for reimbursement. When using a City car, the traveler shall acquire a City Fleet pool fuel credit card from Fleet Services so that he/she can pay fuel expenses with said card.

3. Rental Cars

Rental cars shall be requested and approved on the Travel Form prior to beginning travel. Use of a rental car is only allowed if the cost is less expensive than public and private transportation such as bus, taxi, subway, Uber, Lyft, etc.. [Groups of three (3) or four (4) traveling together can usually obtain a rental car for less than public transportation and some forms of private transportation.] Rental cars must be from the standard, midsize, or economy category unless an exception is pre-approved by the Department of Finance.

Approval of rental cars is required in advance by the Departmental Director. Travelers are encouraged to use the City credit card while on official City business where it is accepted for rental car purposes. (Liability coverage is not required when renting a car.)

4. Fines for traffic or parking violations will not be reimbursed by the City.

D. Taxi, Limousine and Other Transportation Fares:

When an individual travels by common carrier, reasonable fares (as determined by the Finance Department) will be allowed for necessary ground transportation. Bus or shuttle service to and from airports should be used when available and practical. Peer-to-peer ridesharing such as Uber, Lyft, etc. may also be used in such instances.

For travel between lodging quarters and meetings, conferences, or meals, reasonable travel fares will be allowed. Tips to taxi, limousine, peer-to-peer, and other ground transportation service providers are limited to no more than 20% of the “reasonable” (as determined by the Finance Department) travel fare. Original receipts are required for reimbursement. Transportation costs in excess of twenty dollars (\$20.00) in any single day must be explained on the travel form. Taxi or transportation to and from shopping, entertainment, or other personal trips is the choice of the traveler and therefore is not reimbursable.

The City will reimburse local airport parking fees provided that such fees do not exceed normal taxi/limousine fares to and from the airport. Receipts are required.

9.04

LODGING

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- A. The City uses the Federal Travel Regulation guidelines to determine the maximum a traveler can be reimbursed for lodging. These amounts are available online in the GSA Travel Regulations found at <https://www.gsa.gov>. This is the maximum an employee will be paid for the hotel unless the traveler receives a waiver from the Director of Finance for such situations as needing to stay in a “conference hotel” that exceeds the GSA Travel Regulations amount or other extenuating circumstances. (Taxes on lodging are not subject to the per diem limitation.) The City is exempt from sales tax on lodging within the State of Tennessee. Travelers shall submit the appropriate tax exemption form to the hotel. Tennessee state sales tax, if incurred and not credited, will be deducted from the employee’s travel reimbursement. If there are no items to reimburse, it will be deducted from the employee’s pay check.
- B. The employee must obtain an original receipt when requesting lodging reimbursement. Photocopies are not acceptable.
- C. Unless pre-authorized by the Department of Finance and Accountability, a traveler who chooses to exceed the maximum lodging per diem is responsible for excess costs. (Room taxes will be prorated based on the allowed per diem).
- D. If two or more city employees travel together and share a room, the lodging per diem can be doubled for the room.

9.05 MEALS AND INCIDENTALS

- A. Receipts are not required for meals and incidentals. You will be reimbursed the daily amount based on the city being visited and the authorized length of stay less any meals that were provided. The Federal Travel Regulation identifies these amounts. This meal per diem is expected to cover meals, tips, porters, and incidental expenses. The traveler will not be reimbursed in excess of this amount. However, if registration includes full meals, the per diem will be adjusted accordingly. Department Directors also have the authority to reduce the per diem as needed. In no cases shall the City pay more than the authorized per diem rate for the destination.

Where partial day travel is involved, the per diem allotment may be reduced. The meal reimbursement may be prorated based on arrival and departure times. Breakfast may be claimed if the departure time is before 7:00 a.m. or the return time is later than 8:30 a.m. Lunch may be claimed if the departure is before 11:30 a.m. or the return is later than 1:30 p.m. Dinner will be reimbursed when the departure is before 5:30 p.m. or the arrival later than 6:30 p.m.

<u>Departure</u>	<u>Return</u>		
7:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.	Morning	25%
11:30 a.m.	1:30 p.m.	Midday	25%
5:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	Evening	50%

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- B. If a meal is included as part of a conference or seminar registration or is included with the air fare, then the allowance for that meal will be subtracted from the total allowance for that day. For example, if a dinner is included as part of the conference fee then the maximum meal allowance for that day may be reduced by 50%.
- C. If the travel period is less than one (1) day, and no overnight lodging is required, there is normally no reimbursement for meals and incidentals. However, the Department Director may choose to authorize reimbursement according to the above schedule.

9.06 MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES/ITEMS

- A. Registration fee will be allowed for approved conferences, conventions, seminars, meetings, etc., generally including cost of official banquets and/or luncheons. Travel must be approved by the proper authority before payment for registration is issued. Registration fees shall be submitted on the original Travel Request/Reimbursement Form.
- B. Whenever travel occurs outside the United States, all expenses claimed must be converted to US dollars. The conversion rate and computation must be shown on each receipt.
- C. All signatures on the Travel Request/Reimbursement Form must be original. No stamped signatures will be allowed. Furthermore, the traveler must sign the Travel Request/Reimbursement Form before travel and when reconciling after travel. Alternate or substitute signatures are not permissible.

9.07 TRAVEL RECONCILIATION

- A. Within five (5) days of return from travel, the traveler is expected to turn in the Travel Request/Reimbursement Form with the "actual" column completed. It must be certified by the traveler and the Department Director that the amount due is true and accurate. All original lodging, travel, taxi, and parking receipts shall be attached. If the city owes the traveler money, the payroll clerk will make the adjustment in the payroll system.
- B. For delays greater than the five (5) days allowed, the traveler's department must contact the Department of Finance for an extension.
- C. If the traveler does not have receipts to justify the amount that the City paid on his/her behalf, the traveler must attach a check made payable to "City of Knoxville" for the difference. If the City still owes the traveler money, the payroll clerk will make the adjustment in the payroll system. Conversely, if the traveler owes the City money, then the payroll clerk will make the appropriate adjustment in the payroll system unless the City has already been reimbursed.

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- D. Reconciled travel forms shall be returned to the department's financial analyst for approval and payroll reimbursement. Travel reimbursement requests received in the Department of Finance by 4:30 p.m. on the Thursday before the end of the pay period will be processed on the payroll for the upcoming week. Requests received by the Department of Finance after this deadline will be processed on the next available pay cycle.

9.08 **TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES**

The Director of Finance and Accountability will address special circumstances and issues not covered in these rules on a case by case basis. Travel outside the continental United States must be coordinated through the Department of Finance in advance.

9.09 **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Violation of the travel rules can result in disciplinary action. Travel fraud can result in criminal prosecution.