

**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Personnel Policy Adopted by City Council: AB19-204

8.5 Travel Policy

Personnel Procedures Approved: 12/3/2019

1. PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the authorization and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred by all employees when they are on City business, including those involving overnight stays.
2. ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED: All departments/divisions.
3. REFERENCES: RCW 42.24

4. POLICY:

The City Manager shall establish guidelines and procedures for the authorization and reimbursement of travel expenses incurred by all employees when they are on City business. The City will follow the US General Services Administration (GSA) schedules that provide for maximum reimbursement rates for meals, and incidental expenses for authorized staff traveling on official business. Amounts exceeding those rates, except as noted below, may be deducted from reimbursement claims or repaid by the employee.

5. PROCEDURES:

- A. All reasonable transportation expenses for approved travel (as defined in the following paragraphs) will be reimbursed.
- B. Travel Involving an Overnight Stay. Any travel involving an overnight stay for employees must have the prior approval of the department director or the City Manager, as outlined in chart in section C.
- C. Pre-authorization of Travel. Employees traveling on City business on a trip that involves an overnight stay shall submit a travel authorization form to the Finance Department seven calendar days prior to the trip. The travel authorization form will include a complete estimate of the costs of the trip, including conference registration, transportation, lodging, meals, vehicle rentals, and incidentals. The travel authorization form will also include the purpose of the trip, the dates of travel and other pertinent details.

The completed travel authorization form, including the appropriate authorizing signatures must be submitted to the Finance Department before departure. The appropriate authorizing signatures required are as follows:

Type of Travel	Required Approval
Overnight travel by Department Director	City Manager or designee
Overnight travel by other City employees	Department Director

Use of rental vehicle by other City employees	Department Director
Out of state travel by any City employee	Department Director

Nothing herein precludes department directors from authorizing travel in emergency conditions without following the pre-authorization procedures outlined herein.

D. Reimbursement of Travel Expenses.

1. **Transportation Costs.** Reimbursement costs for transportation will be at the cost of the most reasonable means of transport. In all cases, expenses for travel, including air travel, should pass the Reasonable Person test: "Would the average, reasonable Bothell resident agree that the expense was a legitimate use of their taxes?"
  - a. Air Travel. Where a trip requires air travel, reimbursement will be based on the price of a base coach ticket. Every effort should be made to book air travel in advance to ensure the City is paying the lowest rates. Department directors are responsible for ensuring the method of travel chosen by their employees is the most cost effective. Frequent flyer miles earned, accrue to the individual and not the City, but should not be the criteria for selecting a flight if lower cost alternatives are available.
  - b. Vehicle Expenses. When automobile transportation is necessary, employees are encouraged to use a City vehicle or public transportation.
    - i. City Vehicle. Employees are encouraged to use City owned vehicle for travel on City business. Costs of transportation and vehicle operation are acceptable, such as gas, oil, tires, tolls, ferry charges, parking and necessary repairs. Except in emergency situations, employees should contact the Public Works Department before incurring any repair expenses.
    - ii. Use of Personal Vehicle. Employees are encouraged to utilize vehicles provided by the City, but they have the option to decline a City vehicle or rental car and utilize their personal vehicle. In such case, reimbursement of mileage for utilizing personal vehicles is contingent upon available budget and pre-approval of the Department Director. Generally, the Department Director will only approve reimbursement of a personal vehicle for travel within a 300 mile or less radius of City Hall.

Mileage for the approved use of personal vehicles by the department director will be reimbursed at the IRS allowable mileage rate. Employees using their personal vehicle from home to a destination different from their usual work site are reimbursed for miles driven in excess of their usual commute to and from work. Employees using their personal vehicles for City business are advised to review their personal auto insurance for coverage of such use, and maintain automobile liability insurance in accordance with RCW 46.30.020. Employees who do not maintain minimum liability coverage shall not operate privately-owned vehicles in an official capacity.

- iii. Rental Vehicles. The use of a rental vehicle must be approved in advance by the department director and must be justified by the employee on the Travel Authorization Form. The employee's automobile insurance will be considered the primary coverage on the vehicle. The employee should purchase Collision Damage Waiver insurance provided by the rental vehicle. The cost of the CDW insurance is reimbursable. The City's insurance policy provides excess liability coverage while the employee is conducting City business, but only after the CDW coverage is totally exhausted. The City's insurance policy does not cover damage to the rental vehicles.
  - iv. Incidental Expenses. Reasonable costs for parking, taxis, buses, rental cars (if necessary), etc. will be paid if itemized on the claim form and accompanied by a receipt. The City will also reimburse tipping up to 20% after an itemized paper receipt has been provided.
2. Accommodations. Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed at the rate of the single room rate per person. Government or discount rates should be obtained whenever possible. Department directors are responsible for determining the most cost-effective means of arranging for accommodations.
  3. Meals. All City employees and officials shall be entitled to reimbursement for meals consumed while traveling on City business. Reimbursement rates will be based on the final destination of travel as established by the GSA and adjusted annually. Per diem rates issued by the GSA differ based on locations. Tips and tax are included in these rates. Current GSA rates are available at [www.gsa.gov/perdiem](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem). Excluding breakfast, per diem will not be paid for meals provided at conferences.

- a. Per diem rates should be claimed for the first through the last day of travel. Employees are responsible for ensuring their meal costs during travel on City business does not exceed the GSA per diem rates. Costs of invited business guests will be paid for by the City. The City will reimburse the actual expense of the meal at the GSA rate if the employee's travel is not overnight. These amounts are inclusive of any tip or tax.
  - b. Receipts are not required for per diem reimbursements. Receipts are required for actual expense reimbursement for non-overnight travel. Reimbursement requests must specify the function attended, date, and place for purposes of auditing.
  - c. Reimbursement will not be paid for alcoholic beverages.
  - d. Reimbursement will not be paid for expenses for spouses, guests, non-employees or other persons not authorized to receive reimbursement under these procedures or State regulations.
- E. Travel time. Generally, compensation for travel time shall be pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act. In some cases the department director may authorize employees traveling as passengers outside their normal work hours to be compensated for their travel time if doing so would be more cost effective and more convenient than having the employee travel the day before and stay overnight.
- F. Advance Travel Fund. An Advance Travel Fund was created by City ordinance. The purpose of this fund is to provide reasonable allowances in advance of travel to minimize the impact on the personal finances of employees and officials when they are traveling for the benefit of the City. This fund is to provide cash for what would normally be out of pocket expenses for the employee. It is not to provide room deposits or pay conference fees that should be paid by a City credit card or through accounts payable. Requests for advance travel funds must be made on the travel authorization form and submitted to the Finance Department seven calendar days in advance of the employee's travel. Amounts requested shall be available in the Finance Department the week before travel, provided the completed form has been submitted with all the required signatures.
- A fully itemized claim for expense reimbursement, along with any unexpended portion of the advance, must be submitted to the Finance Department within fifteen days of the close of the authorized travel period for which expenses have been advanced. Per RCW 42.24.140 only one travel advance per employee is allowed at a time. Any amounts not accounted for with the fifteen day period shall bear interest at the rate of ten percent per annum from the date of default until paid (RCW 42.24.150).
- G. Responsibilities. The Finance Director is responsible for administration of these procedures, including the design of forms and review of forms

submitted for compliance with state regulations and guidelines established by the State Auditor. The employee is also responsible for filling out a travel reconciliation form when they return, obtain the necessary supervisor approvals, and file it with the Finance Department in a timely manner. For department directors, the City Manager shall approve expenses and travel pre-authorization forms.