

Administrative Procedures

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Administrative Procedures

Reference Number: MTAS-1163

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Travel Requests

Reference Number: MTAS-1164

To ensure reimbursement for official travel, an approved travel authorization form is required. This assures reimbursement within the limits of the city travel policy. Lack of pre-approval does not prohibit reimbursement. All costs associated with the travel should be reasonably estimated and shown on the travel authorization form. An approved authorization form is needed before advanced expenses are paid or travel advances are authorized. A copy of the conference program, if applicable, should be attached to the form. If the program is not available prior to the travel, submit it with the reimbursement form.

Travel Documentation

Reference Number: MTAS-1165

It is the responsibility of the authorized traveler to

- Prepare and accurately describe the travel;
- Certify the accuracy of the reimbursement request;
- Note on the reimbursement form all direct payments and travel advances made by the city; and
- File the reimbursement form with the necessary supporting documents and original receipts.

The reimbursement form should be filed with the finance department within 10 days of return or at the end of the month, whichever is more practical.

Transportation Documentation

Reference Number: MTAS-1169

All potential costs should be considered when selecting the 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.

If the traveler goes outside the state by means other than air, the reimbursement will be limited to air fare at tourist or economy class, ordinary expenses during the meeting dates, and one day's meals and motel before and after the meeting. The traveler will be required to take annual leave for any additional time taken beyond the day before and the day after the meeting dates.

Exceptions: When the traveler extends the trip with personal time to take advantage of discount fares, the reimbursement will be limited to the lesser of the:

- Actual expenses incurred; or
- Amount that would have been incurred for the business portion only. The calculations for the business portion of the trip must be made using the least expensive rates available.

All expenses and savings associated with extending the trip must be submitted with the expense reimbursement form.

A. Air

When possible, the traveler should make full use of discounts for advance airline reservations and advance registration. The traveler should request conference, government, or weekend rates, whichever is cheaper, when making lodging or rental car reservations. The city will pay for tourist or economy class air travel. The traveler should get the cheapest reasonable fare and take advantage of discount fares. Airline travel can be paid by direct billing to the city.

Mileage credits for frequent flyer programs accrue to the individual traveler. However, the city will not reimburse for additional expenses — such as circuitous routing, extended stays, layovers to schedule a particular carrier, upgrading from economy to first class — for travelers to accumulate additional mileage or for other personal reasons.

The city will not reimburse travel by private aircraft unless authorized in advance by the CAO.

B. Rail or Bus

The city will pay for actual cost of ticket.

C. Vehicles

Automobile transportation may be used when a common carrier cannot be scheduled, when it is more economical, when a common carrier is not practical, or when expenses can be reduced by two or more city employees traveling together.

- **Personal Vehicle.** Employees should use city vehicles when possible. Use of a private vehicle must be approved in advance by the CAO. The city will pay a mileage rate not to exceed the rate allowed by the federal or state schedule, whichever the city adopts. The miles for reimbursement shall be paid from origin to destination and back by the most direct route. Necessary vicinity travel related to official city business will be reimbursed. However, mileage in excess of the Rand-McNally mileage must be documented as necessary and business-related. If an indirect route is taken, the Rand-McNally mileage table will be used to determine the mileage to be reimbursed.
- If a privately owned automobile is used by two or more travelers on the same trip, only the traveler who owns or has custody of the automobile will be reimbursed for mileage. It is the responsibility of the traveler to provide adequate insurance to hold harmless the city for any liability from the use of the private vehicle.
- In no event will mileage reimbursement, plus vicinity travel and associated automobile costs, exceed the lowest reasonable available air fare and associated air fare travel costs.
- Travelers will not be reimbursed for automotive repair or breakdowns when using their personal vehicle.
- **City Vehicle.** The city may require the employee to drive a city vehicle. If a city vehicle is provided, the traveler is responsible for seeing that the vehicle is used properly and only for acceptable business. The employee will be reimbursed for expenses directly related to the actual and normal use of the city vehicle when proper documentation is provided. Out-of-town repair cost to the city vehicle in excess of \$100 must be cleared with the proper city official before the repair is authorized.
- **Rental Cars.** Use of a rental car is not permitted unless it's less expensive or otherwise more practical than public transportation. Approval of car rental is generally required in advance by the CAO. Always request the government or weekend rate, whichever is cheaper. Anyone who uses a rental car for out-of-state travel must obtain liability coverage from the vendor.
- Fines for traffic or parking violations will not be reimbursed by the city.
- Reasonable tolls will be allowed when the most direct travel route requires them.

D. Taxi, Limousine and Other Transportation Fares

When an individual travels by common carrier, reasonable fares will be allowed for necessary ground transportation. Bus or limousine service to and from airports should be used when available and practical. The city will reimburse mileage for travel to and from the local airport and parking fees, provided such costs do not exceed normal taxi/limousine fares to and from the airport. Receipts are required.

For travel between lodging quarters and meetings, conferences, or meals, reasonable taxi fares will be allowed. Remember, original receipts are required for claims of \$5 or more. Transportation to and from shopping, entertainment, or other personal trips is the choice of the traveler and not reimbursable.

Reimbursement claims for taxis, limousines, or other ground transportation must be listed separately on the expense form, claiming the destination and amount of each fare.

Lodging

Reference Number: MTAS-1166

The amount allocated for lodging shall not ordinarily exceed the maximum per diem rates authorized by the federal or state rate schedule, whichever is chosen by the city.

A. If the city reimburses using the federal rates, the Government Services Administration provides guidelines for determining the maximum that can be reimbursed for lodging. These amounts are available on line at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105307> [1]. The rates are the maximum reimbursable rates for hotel rooms plus appropriate taxes.

If the city chooses Tennessee's reimbursement rate, the amount varies according to location, and does not include appropriate taxes. State rates for travel reimbursement can be found in the state regulations online at https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/finance/documents/fa_policies/policy8.pdf [2].

B. Original lodging receipts must be submitted with the reimbursement form. Photocopies are not acceptable.

C. If a traveler exceeds the maximum lodging per diem, excess costs are the responsibility of the traveler.

D. If the best rate is secured, and it still exceeds the maximum lodging per diem, the CAO may authorize a higher reimbursement amount.

Even if it costs more, travelers may be allowed to stay at the officially designated hotel of the meeting; however, more moderately priced accommodations must be requested whenever possible. It will be the traveler's responsibility to provide documentation of the "officially designated meeting site" room rates, if these rates are higher than the normal reimbursable amounts.

E. If two or more city employees travel together and share a room, the lodging reimbursement rate will be the maximum of two single rooms. If an employee shares a room with a non-employee, the actual cost will be allowed up to the maximum reimbursable amount. The receipt for the entire amount must be submitted with the expense form.

Meals and Incidentals

Reference Number: MTAS-1167

Meals

Receipts are not required for meals and incidentals. The authorized traveler may be reimbursed the daily amount based on the rate schedule and the authorized length of stay. The per diem meal amounts are expected to cover meals, tips, porters and incidental expenses. The authorized traveler will not be reimbursed more than this.

Whether meals may be claimed depends on when the traveler leaves and returns to the official station. The traveler's official station is home or work, whichever produces the least cost to the city. Under the state travel regulations, reimbursement for meals is not permitted for one-day travel status with no overnight stay.

Regardless of which reimbursement rate the city uses, the amounts include tip, gratuity, etc. The hour and date of departure and return must be shown on the expense reimbursement form.

The excess cost of an official banquet may be allowed provided proper documentation or explanation is submitted with the expense reimbursement form. 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 should be subtracted from the total allowance for the day. For example, if a dinner is included as part of the conference fee, the maximum meal allowance for the day should be reduced by the allowed dinner amount.

PLEASE NOTE:

The municipality has selected to reimburse travelers at the _____ [enter either federal or state] travel regulation rates. The city's rates will automatically change when the selected agency rates are adjusted.

Miscellaneous Expenses

A. Registration fees for approved conferences, conventions, seminars, meetings and other educational programs will be allowed and will generally include the cost of official banquets, meals, lodging and registration fees. Registration fees should be specified on the original travel request form and can include a request for pre-registration fee payment.

B. A \$5 allowance will be reimbursable for hotel/motel check-in and baggage handling expenses.

C. Laundry, valet service, tips and gratuities are considered personal expenses and are not reimbursable.

D. For travel outside the United States, all expenses claimed must be converted to U.S. dollars. The conversion rate and computation should be shown on each receipt.

Entertainment

Reference Number: MTAS-1168

The city may pay for certain entertainment expenses provided that the:

A. Entertainment is appropriate in the conduct of city business;

B. Entertainment is approved by the CAO;

C. Group or individuals involved are identified; and

D. Documentation is attached to the expense form to support the entertainment expense claims.

To request reimbursement for authorized entertainment expenses, be sure to include with the expense reimbursement form:

A. Required receipts. All requests must be supported by original receipts from the vendor (restaurant, caterer, ticket office, etc.) Reasonable tips and gratuities included on the receipt by the vendor are reimbursable.

B. A disclosure and explanation statement, explaining the purpose of the entertainment and identifying the group and the number of people entertained (or individual names listed if not a recognized group).

If the CAO is the person filing the claim, then it must be approved by the governing board before the finance officer authorizes payment.

Travel Reconciliation

Reference Number: MTAS-1170

A. Within 10 days of return from travel, or by the end of the month, the traveler is expected to complete and file the expense reimbursement form. It must be certified by the traveler that the amount due is true and accurate. Original lodging, travel, taxi, parking and other receipts must be attached.

If the city provided a travel advance or made advanced payment, the traveler should include that information on the expense form. In the case of advances, the form should have a reconciliation summary, reflecting total claimed expenses with advances and city pre-payments indicated. The balance due the traveler or the refund due the city should be clearly shown below the total claim on the form or in a cover memo attached to the front of the form.

B. If the traveler received a travel advance and spent less than the advance, the traveler should attach a check made payable to the city for that difference.

C. The CAO will address special circumstances and issues not covered in this ordinance on a case-by-case basis.

Disciplinary Action

Reference Number: MTAS-1171

Violation of the travel rules can result in disciplinary action for employees. Travel fraud can result in criminal prosecution of officials and/or employees.

Links:

[1] <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105307>

[2] https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/finance/documents/fa_policies/policy8.pdf

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