

Travel Policy



Metro
600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Policies and procedures

Subject Travel Policy
Section Finance and Regulatory Services
Approved by Andrew Scott, Chief Operating Officer

POLICY

This policy provides guidelines for allowed travel expenses. Individuals should strive to select the most cost effective and efficient manner of travel possible for conducting Metro business, and to avoid any personal gain as a result of the travel.

Applicable to

This policy applies to all Metro employees, elected officials' employees, interns, volunteers, and other individuals authorized to travel on Metro business (travelers). Elected officials are encouraged to adhere to the policy's guidelines and procedures in order to meet their constituents' expectations of transparency and accountability, and to help ensure compliance with specific sections of the Oregon Government Standards and Practices Act.

Where provisions of an applicable collective bargaining agreement directly conflict with this policy, the provisions of that agreement will prevail.

Definitions

Alternate meal: Full meals paid for as part of an event's registration fees or other travel expense (hotel room rate, etc.). Full meals include continental breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Continental breakfasts consisting of pastries and beverages, hors d'oeuvres served at social events and coach airfare food items are not considered full meals.

Combined business and personal travel: Travel that incorporates both business and personal purposes. Travelers that depart earlier or return later than required by business, or are accompanied by individuals not associated with a Metro business purpose are engaged in combined business and personal travel.

Hotel: Any hotel, bed and breakfast, etc. which is held out to the public as available for use and occupancy by guests for compensation.

Local travel: Travel within a one hundred mile radius of the Metro Regional Center.

Qualifying day travel: Defined as out-of-town travel which requires an employee to be away from their regular work station for at least 12 hours, but does not require an overnight stay.

Official work station: Defined as the physical location an individual is permanently assigned to.

Out of town travel: Travel outside a one hundred mile radius of the Metro Regional Center.

Travel status: An individual is on travel status from the time they start from and return to their official workstation or place of residence or other specified location as appropriate to the travel situation.

Guidelines

1. Exceptions to the provisions of this policy may be made on a case by case basis to meet unusual or unexpected circumstances. Exceptions must be supported by written documentation explaining the policy exceptions, and signed by the individual assigned approval authority.
2. Individuals assigned approval authority may, at their discretion, impose stricter guidelines than outlined in this policy for travel conducted by their staff in order to meet program goals or budgetary constraints. The stricter guidelines should be imposed consistently in order to avoid actual or perceived inequities.
3. For personnel with disabilities, Metro will provide reasonable accommodations during travel on Metro business. Decisions regarding specific situations not addressed by this policy shall be made by the individual assigned approval authority, in consultation with Human Resources, and shall be documented in writing.
4. Travel expenses listed below are allowed provided they are properly authorized, are reasonable and necessary for conducting Metro business and sufficient funds are available within the appropriate budget. Variations to business travel arrangements due to combined business and personal travel are addressed in Appendix A.
5. Metro reserves the right to seek reimbursement from individuals incurring travel expenses determined to be lavish or inappropriate by the authorized approver.
6. For local travel, travelers are strongly encouraged to use public transit or fleet vehicles whenever possible. Travelers going to the same destination should share fleet or personal vehicles whenever possible.
7. Employees will be required to provide documentation and receipts for travel-related expenses as noted below.

Allowed Expenses - Local Travel

Public transit: Metro will pay public transit fees.

Metro fleet vehicles: Metro fleet vehicles are available for local travel subject to the standard policies governing their use, including Metro's Driving and Vehicle Use Policy.

Individual's personal vehicle: Metro will reimburse individuals for use of their personal vehicles when accessing public transit or use of Metro fleet vehicles is impractical. The reimbursement will be based on the trip's mileage and the IRS standard mileage rate. Mileage will be determined based upon the most direct travel route to and from the business destination and the traveler's official work station. If the traveler has approval to leave from their residence or other location rather than their official workstation, mileage will be calculated based upon the lesser of the distance to and from the business destination and the traveler's official work station or the other approved location. Metro will not pay for mileage costs associated with an individual's normal commute. Metro will pay parking expenses for the traveler's personal vehicle. Drivers must comply with

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Metro's Driving and Vehicle Use Policy when on Metro business. Required documentation: Support for mileage claimed (direct route mileage per an internet website).

Parking: Metro will pay parking expenses for the traveler's fleet or personal vehicle.

Required documentation: Parking receipts or invoices, unless unavailable.

Registration fees: Metro will pay for individuals to attend professional conferences and seminars relevant to Metro business.

Required documentation: A copy of the event's registration form and daily agenda.

Meals: Metro does not provide meal allowances for local travel other than any meal costs that may be included in registration fees of conferences or similar events.

Allowed Expenses - Out of Town Travel

Air transportation: Metro will provide coach class airfare. Airfare includes additional costs for checked bags not covered in the base airfare. Additional costs for checked bags paid for by Metro are subject to the following limitations:

- Bags containing personal items: Limit of one bag for every five (5) working days of travel
- Bags containing items for conducting Metro business: As necessary with appropriate pre-approval.

Air fares vary widely depending on travel dates and departure times, routes flown, booking dates and whether or not the fares are subject to change or refund. Travelers should arrange to fly the most cost-effective and efficient direct route available for the departure and return dates and times required to conduct Metro business.

Required documentation: Airline confirmations, original receipts or similar documentation for all airfare expenses.

Rail transportation: Metro will provide coach class rail fare up to an amount equal to the most cost effective and efficient direct route airfare for the same destination. Rail travel should be booked using the most direct route available for the departure and return dates and times required to conduct Metro business.

Required documentation: Rail confirmations, original receipts or similar documentation for all rail fare expenses.

Metro fleet vehicle: Metro fleet vehicles are available for out of town travel following the guidelines outlined above in the Local Travel – Metro fleet vehicle section of this policy.

Individual's personal vehicle: Metro will provide reimbursement following the guidelines outlined above in the Local Travel - Individual's personal vehicle section of this policy. Note: Mileage reimbursements may not exceed the amount of the most cost effective and efficient direct route airfare for the same destination.

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Ground transportation: Metro will cover the expense of transportation (airport shuttles, taxis, etc.) between the traveler's official work station and departure point, or airport economy lot parking expenses for the traveler's fleet or personal vehicle. If the traveler has approval to leave from their residence or other location rather than their official workstation, Metro will cover ground transportation expenses based upon the cost of travel to and from the traveler's official work station and departure point. Metro encourages all travelers to consider public transit options for traveling to and from departure points and destinations. Travelers should evaluate access, cost, and personal safety in reaching their decision.

Metro will cover transportation expenses incurred at destination (hotel shuttles, rental cars, etc.). Rental vehicles should be compact class or smaller unless the business purpose of the trip requires a larger vehicle.

Required documentation: Original receipts for all ground transportation expenses (i.e.: each taxi ride, shuttle fare, etc.).

Lodging: Metro will provide lodging for each day of travel when an overnight stay is necessary to conduct Metro business. All lodging expenses paid by Metro must be incurred at a hotel, and will be based on the actual single occupancy rate of the hotel. Should Metro staff share a hotel room, however, the double occupancy rate will be paid by Metro. Whenever possible, travelers should provide the hotel with a completed Government Tax on Occupancy of Hotel and Motel Rooms Exemption Certificate in order to preclude the tax assessment.

Metro reserves the right to deny payment of any portion of lodging expenses greater than the standard per diem allowance (found at www.gsa.gov) for a hotel in the same city. Metro, however, may allow higher cost lodging based upon mitigating factors including proximity of the selected hotel to the location where Metro business will be conducted, the availability and cost of public transportation between the business location and other lower cost hotels, and traveler safety.

Individuals will be required to provide original itemized hotel bills detailing room charges, taxes, and additional charges for all lodging expenses.

Registration fees: Metro will pay for individuals to attend professional conferences and seminars relevant to Metro business. Individuals will be required to provide a copy of the event's registration form and daily agenda.

Meals: Metro provides per diem meal allowances for out of town travel, or when an overnight stay is necessary to conduct Metro business. Individuals may choose between receiving meal allowances based on GSA per diem rates or actual meal costs. The method selected must be applied consistently for the entirety of each trip. Travelers are not allowed to receive a per diem allowance for some meals and actual cost for other meals on the same trip.

In general, travel advances are not permitted. Department directors have the authority to approve individual exceptions to this requirement on a case by case basis only for per diem for meals and incidental expenses. The intent of allowing such an exception is to avoid creating a financial hardship for an individual traveler.

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Per Diem Meals allowances are provided based upon the following schedule:

- First day of travel 75% of the daily GSA per diem rate.
- Full days of travel the daily GSA per diem rate.
- Last day of travel 75% of the daily GSA per diem rate.

The full day per diem meal allowances provided based upon the above schedule will be reduced for each meal provided the traveler through other expenses paid by Metro such as meals included in a conference registration.

When out of town travel requires an employee to be away from their regular work station for at least 12 hours, but does not require an overnight stay, per diem meal allowances will be provided as follows:

- 75% of the daily GSA per diem rate.

This amount shall be adjusted for meals provided to the traveler as part of conference registration or other hosted events, and may be reduced further at the discretion of the traveler.

Per Diem meal allowance: The GSA per diem rates for various destinations can be viewed at www.gsa.gov Individuals traveling to more than one location in a single day should use the per diem rate effective for the city where the night's lodging will be. The per diem rate used for the last day of travel should be the same as the prior day.

Required documentation: Receipts are not required for meal expenses when the per diem allowance is selected, although written evidence of the GSA per diem rate for the destination city is required.

Actual meal expenses: Gratuities for meal service up to 20% are allowed and should be included on the meal receipt.

Required documentation: Original itemized receipts for all actual meal expenses including up to 20% gratuity.

The purchase of alcoholic beverages is never an allowed expense. Due to business needs of the MERC Venues, the venue directors and General Manager of Visitor Venues are allowed to approve and submit a list of positions annually that are eligible to expense full client entertainment expenses consistent with the Drug and Alcohol Use Policy and Appendix A: Business Development Waiver.

Personal telephone calls: Metro will provide travelers without access to a personal cell phone, an allowance for personal telephone calls up to a maximum of \$10.00 per eligible day. Eligible days include the day of departure and every other subsequent full day of travel. No allowance is made for the final (returning) day of travel. No allowance will be provided for minutes used on any personal cell phone.

Required documentation: Original itemized hotel bills or telecommunications invoices for all personal telephone call expenses reported.

Internet access: Metro will pay the costs of travelers' internet access for reasonable time necessary to conduct Metro business. When long distance telephone fees are bundled with the internet access fees, no additional allowance will be provided for personal telephone calls. No allowance will be provided for internet access minutes on any personal data device unless the traveler has approval to use personal data device for work related purposes.

Required documentation: Original itemized hotel bills detailing internet access fees not included in the standard room rate.

Related Topics:

Lost receipts: In limited circumstances, after reasonable efforts to obtain duplicate receipts or invoices have been made by the traveler, authorized approvers may allow the reporting of travel expenses without the required documentation. Metro reserves the right to deny payment for any travel expenses not properly supported by invoices and receipts. Employees will need to submit a lost receipt form.

Shared meal expenses: A traveler reporting shared meal expenses is required to include the names of all Metro staff present at the meal on their Detailed Travel Expense Report. Other Metro individuals present at the meal should exercise care to not erroneously report a per diem meal allowance for the same meal in their Detailed Travel Expense Report.

Metro travel agent: Metro's designated travel agent is available to quote travelers the negotiated State government rates for travel expenses. Government rate airfares are fully refundable, and generally higher than standard coach airfare. The Metro travel agent will also quote individuals non-cancellable coach airfares. Agent contact information is available from the Accounting Division.

Travel expenses paid or reimbursed by outside entities: Individuals should exercise care that travel expenses paid or reimbursed by outside sources are necessary, in support of Metro's missions, in line with ethical rules and that the travel does not appear lavish or contain an element of personal gain. Such travel must be authorized and reported in accordance with this policy.

All travel costs paid by Metro, including any amounts reimbursed by outside entities, must be recorded as expenses, and thereby reductions to budgeted appropriations. Reimbursements of travel expenses received by Metro must be recorded as revenues, and should not be used to offset (reduce) travel expenses. Individuals are not allowed to receive travel expense reimbursements directly from outside sources for Metro travel expenses. Payments should be made directly to Metro. Certain federal agencies, however, will only reimburse travel expenses via ACH transactions to the bank account of the traveler, and these agencies will not deviate from their standard procedures. In all such instances, Metro staff should contact the Accounting Division and receive additional information on how to report these reimbursements and the related travel costs. Travel expenses for Metro individuals that are paid directly to vendors by outside entities will not be recognized as expenses by Metro.

Procedures

Travel authorization: Individuals are required to receive written authorization prior to making travel arrangements by completing a Travel Authorization form. Individuals must attach documentation to the form that supports the estimated travel costs. Examples of appropriate documentation include pricing information from travel websites, airline and hotel websites, etc. Travel Authorization forms must be reviewed, approved and signed by the traveler's authorized approver.

Payments: Pre-authorized travel expenses may be paid for as follows:

- Metro travel agent: Travel booked through the Metro travel agent will be paid for by Metro.
- Metro check: Metro will make direct payments to vendors for travel expenses processed using standard Accounting Division procedures.
- Metro procurement cards: Individual and departmental procurement cards may be used to pay for travel expenses.
- Personal credit cards: Personal credit cards may not be used to pay for airfare. Metro issued procurement cards are strongly recommended for all travel expenses.

Subsequent reporting: All travelers are required to report travel expenses within thirty days of the end of travel by completing a Detailed Travel Expense Report. Original receipts, hotel bills and other documents that substantiate actual expenses must be attached to the form and the traveler is required to personally sign the disclosure statements contained in the form. Unused travel advances are required to be returned by the traveler within fourteen days of the end of travel. Detailed Travel Expense Reports must be reviewed, approved and signed by the traveler's authorized approver. Metro reserves the right to disallow any travel expenses not reported within thirty days of the fiscal year end.

Responsibilities

Travelers:

- Familiarize yourself with Metro travel policies prior to planning or conducting travel.
- Complete Travel Authorization forms (and receive written authorization from the authorized approver) prior to executing travel arrangements.
- Drivers of personal or fleet vehicles must comply with Metro's Driving and Vehicle Use Policy.
- Retain all documents necessary to support travel expenses reported (airfare reservations/confirmations, hotel invoices, restaurant receipts, transportation invoices, etc.) Complete a Detailed Travel Expense Report form no later than thirty days after the completion of travel. Include all required documentation and receipts.
- Return any unused travel advances no later than fourteen days after the completion of travel.
- Personally sign the disclosure statements contained in the required forms, although you may obtain assistance from program travel coordinators in organizing documents and preparing required forms, the responsibilities outlined above reside with you.
- Additional travel research or booking of reservations required as a result of combined business and personal travel is your exclusive responsibility. Refer to Appendix A for specific information on combined business and personal travel.

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- Receipt and use of marketing rewards and incentives, such as frequent flyer miles, is subject to Metro's Marketing Rewards and Rebates Policy

Authorized approvers:

- Confirm funds are available within the appropriate budget prior to approving Travel Authorization forms.
- Determine that travel expenses are reasonable and necessary for conducting Metro business.
- Resolve any variances greater than ten percent between estimated travel expenses requested on the Travel Authorization form and the actual travel expenses reported on the subsequent Detailed Travel Expense Report. Initial your approval of the overage on the Travel Authorization form.
- Review and, when appropriate, approve Travel Authorization forms and Detailed Travel Expense Reports submitted by assigned travelers.
- Review and approve annual reports on the use and cost savings associated with the redemption of travel awards reported by assigned travelers.

Accounting:

- Process all travel advances, reimbursements and vendor payments.
- Notify Human Resources and traveler of any adjustment to wages for unreported and unreturned travel advances.
- Conduct periodic review of selected travel expense records designed to evaluate compliance with the provisions of this policy.
- Update travel policy documentation and forms.

Appendix A – Combined Business and Personal Travel

Individuals are allowed to combine business and personal travel plans subject to appropriate approval. Combined personal and business travel cannot exceed the cost of the business travel. Individuals will not be reimbursed more than amount for business travel for items such as—but not limited to—ground transportation, lodging, and meals. Any costs in excess of the business travel expenses must be paid for with the traveler’s personal funds. Travelers must attach documentation to their Travel Authorization form that allows authorized approvers to determine both the business only travel costs and the combined business and personal travel costs.

Specific Guidelines:

Air and rail transportation: Metro will pay for airfare or rail fare up to the cost of the business only fare. If the business purpose of a trip is cancelled, Metro reserves the right to fully retain any residual value associated with non-refundable airfare, such as credit towards future travel for cancelled airfare. Reimbursement to the traveler for any personal portion of the airfare will be at Metro’s discretion.

Vehicles: Travelers will be reimbursed for use of their personal vehicle up to the amount that would have been paid for business only use of the vehicle. Metro fleet vehicles will not be authorized for out of town travel extended by personal travel plans. Other types of combined business and personal travel use of a Metro fleet vehicle are subject to the standard guidelines for use of a Metro fleet vehicle.

Lodging: Costs paid by Metro will be limited to the lodging expense that would have been paid for based upon business only travel. If a Saturday layover would result in a reduced business only airfare, Metro will pay for additional lodging up to the amount saved on the Metro individual’s airfare

References

- Internal Revenue Service Publications, Bulletins and Interpretations on Accountable Plans including Publication 535 and 463.
- Oregon Government Standards and Practices Act – ORS Chapter 244
- Oregon Government Standards and Practices Act – Advisory Opinion 01A-1006
- Oregon Government Ethics Commission- A Guide for Public Officials
- Drug and Alcohol Use Policy
- Driving and Vehicle Use Policy
- Marketing Rewards and Rebates Policy

Attachments

Attachment 1: Travel Authorization Form

Attachment 2: Government Tax on Occupancy of Hotel and Motel Rooms Exemption Certificate