

# TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY TEXARKANA



## *Travel Guidelines*

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**Purpose:** These guidelines are to assist Texas A&M University-Texarkana faculty and staff in their understanding of the university's travel rules in order for them to properly apply for the application of and eventual reimbursement of any expenses incurred by them for their business related travel for the university. These rules supplement, but do not supersede any State of Texas or Texas A&M University System travel laws, policies or procedures. Understanding and proper application of these guidelines will insure employees little if any inconvenience when requesting reimbursement of their travel expenses.

If you have questions about these guidelines or need additional information, contact the university's travel specialist at (903) 223-3112 or (903) 223-3122.

## TRAVEL APPLICATION

- A travel application is required for all travel and must be completed at least two weeks prior to departure.
- If reimbursement of travel expenses is expected, the application must have all estimated amounts relative to the travel included:
  1. Airfare, hotel, meals, rental car or taxi, parking fees, conference registration fees, mileage estimates and other eligible incidental expenses must be included,
  2. Regardless of how the expenses are paid.
  3. The travel application must be properly completed and include all relevant information.
- The **traveler** must sign and date the application. The traveler's supervisor, the account manager and VP must also sign to approve the travel application. The original application with required signatures must be routed to the travel specialist for processing.
- If traveler will not be reimbursed for expenses, a zero dollar travel application must be completed, signed by their supervisor and submitted to the travel specialist.
- Faculty and staff are required to complete a travel application **regardless** of their status when traveling (i.e., a staff employee traveling as a student or advisor) unless their travel is taken on their personal time off.
- All amounts on the application will be encumbered prior to the trip so please be as accurate as possible.

- Travel applications must be completed including all signatures two weeks before the first day of travel. On the rare occasion where completing the travel application prior to travel is not possible, a letter from the supervisor must be attached to the travel application stating that the travel was authorized.
- The travel application must be initialed by the account manager to acknowledge that estimated travel is exceeded by actual travel claimed on the travel voucher.

See the [travel information](#) link on the Faculty & Staff section of the university's website to obtain various travel related forms.

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND RESERVATIONS

It is the responsibility of each college/department to make reservations and other travel arrangements for their faculty and staff. This includes air transportation, car rental and hotel reservations. Please note that if employees use on-line agents such as [Orbitz](#), [Travelocity](#) or [Expedia](#), it is recommended that the traveler avoid making packaged travel arrangements (airfare, hotel or rental car in combination). These agents do not provide adequate documentation required for reimbursement when more than one service is provided for travel under one itinerary number. If the traveler elects to make packed arrangements from one of these agents, the traveler will be responsible for obtaining the required documentation from the hotel, airline, and/or car rental agency before reimbursement can be processed.

Note: If a state agency or employee purchases a package of at least two travel arrangements (i.e. meals, lodging, transportation, incidental expenses, registration fees), each type is reimbursable only to the extent it would have been reimbursable had it not been included in the package. The travel voucher form must separately state the cost of each type of travel arrangement.

**Example:** Jill, a state employee planning a business trip to Amarillo, finds a great deal for a packaged trip online. The package deal includes airfare for \$200, rental car for \$30 per day and lodging for \$90 per day. If Jill were to book the airfare separately, it would cost \$400. Reimbursement of each cost is limited to what would have been reimbursable if it had not been included in the package. For example, if the applicable lodging rate is only \$85, the additional \$5 spent on lodging is not reimbursable. When Jill submits her travel voucher for reimbursement, she will need to include required documentation that states separately each type of travel cost combined in the package.

If you are requesting that your reservations be paid on your behalf with the university's Centrally Billed Account (CBA) or if you would like the travel specialist to assist you with your reservations, you must complete the Request for Travel Assistance form that can be found on the university's travel website. Your completed travel application with this form attached must be received by the travel specialist at least two weeks prior to your departure.

## CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

Conference Registration Fees are sometimes required to be paid in advance. The traveler has two options:

The fees can be charged on the traveler's personal State issued credit card. Reimbursement will be made when the traveler return's from travel and completes a travel voucher for reimbursement. Registration fees are a travel expense and cannot be reimbursed to the traveler until after the travel is complete.

A last resort option is to have the registration fee paid through Accounts Payable on a purchase requisition. The documents that need to be mailed with the check should be included with the requisition. Deadlines will be the responsibility of the traveler.

**Remember that conference registration fees must be listed on the travel application regardless of the manner of payment.**

## CASH ADVANCES

Cash advances for travel are not authorized for faculty and staff.

## MEALS AND LODGING

According to Article IX, Part 5 of the General Appropriations Act (GAA), state employees are reimbursed for ACTUAL meal and lodging expenses up to the maximum daily rates established by the Comptroller of Public Accounts. The current rates for the State of Texas are \$36.00 for meals and \$85.00 for lodging, unless your destination is listed in the [Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates](#) guide published by the US General Services Administration.

The \$36.00 per day rate for meals means you need to either keep your original receipts or keep a log of expenses and claim *only* what you spend on meals, up to the \$36.00 maximum. For example, if you spend \$25.75 for one day, then you put \$25.75 for that day's meals on your travel voucher, not \$36.00. Any expense claimed above the daily allowance will not be reimbursed. **NOTE: Reimbursement for meals expense is allowed only for overnight travel.**

For lodging, if your rate is higher than \$85.00 per night, you must attach the documentation from the Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rate Guide to substantiate the additional expense. Any lodging expense claimed above the standard or per diem rate, if applicable, will not be reimbursed unless you fall under one of the following exceptions.

**Exception 1: If you are attending a conference at a hotel and your lodging is at the conference hotel, you are allowed additional reimbursement for your lodging if you meet all the following conditions:**

1. The hotel room rate exceeds the Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rate Guide for your destination,
2. Your accommodation is one of the hotel's standard rooms, and
3. You attach a properly completed Contract Travel Vendor Exception Form (found on the TAMUT travel website) to the travel voucher.

Institutional funds can be used for the total reimbursement (accounts beginning with a 2 or 3; **note:** restricted accounts beginning with 4 are also permitted if the grant document permits the excess cost). If the account to reimburse travel is a state account (accounts beginning with a 1), reimbursement will be up to the state maximum; the balance must be reimbursed with institutional funds and room taxes must be prorated between the state funds and the institutional funds. Two travel applications and vouchers will be necessary if both state and institutional funds are used; one application and voucher for the state portion and a supplemental application and voucher for the reimbursement requested from institutional funds.

**Exception 2: Reducing meal reimbursement rate to increase lodging rate:**

A state employee may claim less than the maximum meal reimbursement rate for a duty point and use the amount of the reduction to increase the maximum lodging reimbursement rate for the duty point. This is allowable for in-state and out-of-state travel.

**Example:** Gloria is a state employee who is planning to travel to Florida for a business meeting. The maximum lodging rate for Florida at the time is \$100 per day and the maximum meal reimbursement rate is \$45 per day. Gloria finds a hotel very close to where her business meeting is being held, but the hotel charges \$110 per night. Gloria decides that she would like to reduce her meal reimbursement from \$45 to \$35 so that she can use the \$10 reduction to stay in the convenient hotel.

The traveler must indicate their election to apply their excess meal expense to their lodging on their travel voucher. **Note:** You are not permitted to reduce your lodging expense in order to increase your meals allowance.

For travel outside the State of Texas, meal and lodging maximum rates are based on the [Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates](#) guide published by the US General Services Administration. The rate schedule is applicable only to out-of-state locations within the contiguous United States. Travel to Alaska, Hawaii, a U.S. possession or a foreign country are reimbursed for actual expenses.

**Note: The meal and lodging rates specified in the Maximum Per Diem Rate schedule are not flat per diem rates. Employees may only be reimbursed for their actual meal and lodging expenses, which cannot exceed the maximum rates specified in the schedule for their destination. Note that meals are reimbursable for overnight travel only.**

Lodging reservations should be made in advance at a contract hotel in the area. If there is not a contract hotel in the area you are traveling to, then you must find the least expensive hotel in the area that does not exceed the in-state or GSA per diem rates, as applicable. If you need help locating a contract hotel, call the Travel Specialist for help.

If you do not have a State issued credit card, you have the option to have your hotel reserved on the university's CBA. You will need to contact the Travel Specialist at least two weeks in advance for assistance.

## **INCIDENTAL EXPENSES**

Examples of such expenses include items such as:

- Hotel tax
- Fuel for rental car
- Toll charges
- Parking
- Airline baggage fees, it is assumed that the first checked bag is necessary to complete business travel.
- Entry fees
- Service fees
- Copying charges
- Freight charges for state equipment or materials
- Passport or visa charges
- Departure taxes and inoculations
- Postage
- Notary fees
- Books or documents purchased for use while attending a seminar or conference
- Fax charges
- Business telephone calls
- Internet fees to conduct university business
- Trip insurance

Original receipts should be turned in for all of the above charges.

In certain cases, an explanation of charges must also be given for:

- Freight charges - an explanation of what is being shipped and why should accompany the receipt.
- Books or documents purchased - a list should be included stating the reason for purchase and the intended use of the materials.
- Business telephone calls - must include the person being called or the person the call was received from and the purpose of the phone call for each individual phone call.

Non-reimbursable expenses are not reimbursed regardless of whether incurred while conducting official state business. This is a partial list. Additional travel information can be found at [Textravel](#), a web resource developed by the State of Texas:

- Any expense that does not relate to official state business
- Any expense, except parking and tolls, that is related to the operation of a personally owned or leased motor vehicle such as traffic fines
- Personal expenses such as rental or purchase of videos for personal entertainment, alcoholic beverages, dry cleaning or laundry
- State use tax for hotels within the State of Texas

## **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

If you have purchased an alcoholic beverage with your meal, you must subtract this charge and the prorated tax from the total as alcohol is not reimbursable from any fund.

## **TIPS AND GRATUITIES**

Reimbursement for tips or gratuities of any amount or kind from state funds (accounts beginning with a 1) are not allowed unless the gratuity is a mandatory charge (for example room service). ***Reasonable*** tips and gratuities are reimbursable from institutional funds (accounts beginning with a 2 or 3 and restricted accounts beginning with a 4 if the grant document permits the reimbursement).

## **TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT LIMITATIONS-CONSERVATION OF FUNDS**

Texas Government Code Section 660.007 requires Conservation of State Funds by mandating that state travel be by the most cost-effective method, considering all relevant circumstances.

In addition to state funds, Texas A&M University-Texarkana is committed to this principal when utilizing institutional funds and, unless specifically addressed otherwise within grant documentation, restricted funds as well. Faculty and staff are expected to conserve the university's limited funds by making sensible decisions when selecting

their method of travel. In all cases, travel, by whatever method, is expected to be by the most cost-effective method after considering all relevant circumstances and reimbursement of travel expense will be based upon this principle.

**400 mile rule** - Travel to any destination within 400 miles, point-to-point, one way, of the campus is limited to automobile travel only. Other methods, such as air transportation, is permitted if it can be clearly and objectively demonstrated by the traveler that this mode of travel is the most cost-effective method. Factors that are considered when weighing the costs of other methods of travel, other than by automobile include but are not limited to the following:

- The cost of airline, rail or bus ticket
- Baggage or other incidental travel fees
- Rental car ,fuel and tolls
- Public transportation (taxi, shuttle or limo)
- Mileage to/from airport and campus
- Airport parking fees
- Health and safety issues
- **Note:** Personal time is not a consideration since the university grants employees a travel day

**Use of state funds for travel:** The traveler will only be reimbursed with state funds for the amount that the traveler would have incurred if their travel had been by the most cost-effective method after considering all relevant circumstances.

Any additional costs must be reimbursed to the traveler by institutional funds (accounts beginning with a “2” or a “3” or restricted funds if available). The use of institutional funds for any additional costs that may occur must be estimated and approved by the account manager responsible for these funds by attaching a completed supplemental travel application that details the additional costs and provides a justification for the need for the alternate method of travel.

**Use of institutional funds for travel:** The traveler can be fully reimbursed with institutional funds for the amount of travel for 400 miles or less; however, any additional costs incurred over and above the cost for the most efficient and cost effective method of travel must be estimated and approved by the account manager responsible for these funds by attaching a completed supplemental travel application that details the additional costs and provides a justification for the need for the alternate method of travel.

Use the following method to calculate the estimated amount of automobile expense you may incur to determine how you will be reimbursed under the 400 mile limit:

Take the total one way trip mileage and multiply that amount by the number of nights you will stay during your trip and then multiply that amount by 10%. This will be the total daily allowance for your incidental travel at your destination;

Then multiply the one way point-to-point mileage times 2, add your daily allowance calculated above and then multiply the total by the current mileage reimbursement rate.

An additional tab is included on the travel voucher form named "400 Mile Rule" to help you to calculate these amounts.

Example: Charles must attend a three day business conference in Houston, Texas. Charles selects a hotel in Houston and makes his reservation. Charles goes on-line to [Mapquest](#) and determines **reimbursable miles** for the one way trip from the campus in Texarkana to his hotel is 295 miles. Since Charles intends to fly to Houston and since his one way mileage is less than 400 miles, he must determine if the cost to fly is less than the cost to drive. Assume the current mileage reimbursement rate is \$0.50 per mile.

Charles makes the following calculation to determine the total mileage he is expected to drive in Houston during his stay:

One way mileage	295
Number of nights	3
10% daily allowance	10%

Charles multiplies these three amounts:  $295 \times 3 \times .10 = 88.5$  miles

Charles then completes the calculation by doubling the one way mileage to obtain the total round trip mileage and adds the total daily mileage to arrive at the estimated reimbursement to drive to Houston and back to his campus:

$$\begin{aligned} 295 \times 2 &= 590 \text{ (round trip mileage)} \\ 590 + 88.5 &= 678.5 \text{ (round trip plus daily allowance miles)} \\ 678.5 \times \$0.50 &= \$339.25 \text{ (total estimated miles at the current reimbursement rate)} \end{aligned}$$

Charles will be expected to drive unless the total cost for flying to Houston (taking into consideration the cost of the airline ticket and all other relevant expenses) is less than \$339.25. In this example, if the total estimated expense to fly to Houston is \$750 and if Charles still elects to fly, he will only be reimbursed \$339.25 in state funds for travel unless there is a convincing health or safety issue that requires Charles to travel by air or another method rather than by automobile. In order for Charles to be reimbursed the additional \$410.75 from institutional funds, he will need to complete a supplemental travel application form that details the additional expense and the justification for the necessity to utilize the alternative form of travel.

**For travel greater than 400 miles** - if the travel is to be reimbursed with institutional funds, the account manager may use their discretion as to whether they want to allow travelers to consider other methods of travel. However, travel reimbursed with state funds are always limited by the statutes found in Texas Government Code Section 660.007 requiring Conservation of State Funds. The traveler will only be reimbursed travel with state funds for the cost of travel that is equal to that amount calculated to be the most cost-effective method, considering all relevant circumstances. Any costs that

may exceed the state amount considered to be the most cost effective are required to be reimbursed with institutional funds.

If travel is greater than 400 miles and reimbursement is expected with state funds, use the “400 Mile Rule” tab on the travel application to help estimate the cost of travel.

**Route determination/reimbursable miles:** The number of reimbursable miles *may not* exceed the number of miles of the most cost-effective reasonably safe route between two *duty points*. In determining the most cost-effective reasonably safe route, a state agency may consider the route that provides the shortest distance, the quickest drive time or the safest road conditions.

**Note:** An increase in the number of miles incurred due to an employee receiving inadequate directions or being lost is not reimbursable.

**Automobile travel** - Private versus rental versus university vehicle. It is the responsibility of faculty and staffs to carefully consider their choice of a vehicle since substantial savings are possible if consideration is given to the possibility of using a university owned or a rental vehicle rather than the employee’s private vehicle. A university vehicle should be the utilized if one is available. If one is not available, the employee should next consider the cost a rental car. Generally, if travel exceeds 100 miles for non-overnight travel, a rental vehicle is more cost effective than travel by private vehicle. Factors contributing to the decision to use a locally rented vehicle must include distance traveled and length of stay.

## **PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES**

Travel expenses are allowed for the prospective employee **only**.

**Prospective employees are treated as State employees for reimbursement purposes.**

The department bringing the prospective employee to TAMUT should make the travel arrangements. This will ensure that contract vendors are used and reduce travel expenses to be reimbursed. Prospective employees who make their own travel arrangements can only be reimbursed up to the contracted airfare. A statement must be added on the front of the voucher indicating that the prospective employee made their own travel arrangements. Prospective employees should be advised of these restrictions. Caution: be sure to use the university’s CBA if airfare is booked with a contracted vendor.

Hotels in Texarkana will direct bill for the lodging (make sure that the lodging is reserved at a contracted hotel).

If the prospective employee has expenses to be reimbursed, i.e. meals, mileage or parking, complete a travel voucher and remember to please have the prospective employee sign it before they leave the university.

If all expenses will not be known until he or she returns home, have them fax or email odometer readings for mileage, parking receipts, etc. In the event that a reimbursement will be required, the department is required access the [IRS Website](#) to obtain a Form W-9 to be completed and signed by the prospective employee in order to set them up in the accounts payable vendor file. This is required before any travel expenses can be reimbursed. The travel voucher and documentation requirements for payment to a prospective employee are the same as those for current employees.

The supporting documentation must include all the receipts necessary for reimbursement. Note: **DO NOT** use social security numbers on the travel voucher.

No travel application is required for prospective employees; however, the Authorization Request for Payment of Travel of Prospective Employee form found in the travel section of the university's website must be completed and approved.

## **TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON, D.C.**

NOTE: ONLY STATE TRAVELERS WHO INTEND TO CONFER ON LEGISLATIVE OR APPROPRIATIONS ISSUES WITH U.S. CONGRESS/THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, STAFF OR OFFICIALS, SHOULD SUBMIT TRAVEL INFORMATION TO OSFR.

If these conditions apply to the purpose of your trip, please go to the link for Washington D.C. Travel Notification <http://www.osfr.state.tx.us/travelform.asp>, this will take you to the electronic form for Washington D.C. travel. Complete this form and click the submit icon. You will receive a confirmation after you submit the form. Print this confirmation and attach it to your travel application. This verifies that you have completed the required form and submitted it to the State. This form is required to be submitted to the State of Texas at least 7 days prior to travel. A copy should also be forwarded to the Vice Chancellor of Technology Commercialization for System-wide reporting purposes at the address below:

Vice Chancellor of Technology Commercialization  
The Texas A&M University System  
Office of Technology and Commercialization  
1700 Research Parkway, Suite 250  
College Station, TX 77843  
Fax (979) 845-1402

## CONTRACT TRAVEL SERVICE

The State of Texas has developed the State Travel Management Program (STMP) in an effort to reduce the cost of travel expenses. All travel expenses paid from state funds are required to adhere to the Program guidelines, unless the specific exemptions mentioned below apply. For more information about STMP, go to:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us//procurement/prog/stmp/>

### Airfare

The state of Texas airline fares are designed for last minute and/or fully-refundable travel requirements. These city-pairs provide maximum flexibility in traveling as fares are not subject to restrictions or penalties on last minute, refundable tickets. However, this flexibility means the rates are not always at the lowest cost to the state.

When possible, state agencies and institutions of higher education should utilize 14-day advance or other lower cost airline fares for planned travel requirements to obtain the lowest possible cost to the state. City-pair listings are one-way, in alphabetical order only, and applicable in both directions. Contract airlines can be found at:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-airline-contract/>

The Comptroller of Public Accounts has contracted with JPMC to provide state corporate travel charge card accounts, central bill and individual bill, to travelers for travel expenses. The state corporate travel charge card accounts are mandatory forms of payment for the state contracted airline fares and must also be utilized for all other airline fares as provided in 34 TAC §20.303. The only exception allowed is in the instance where an employee receives airfare lower than the contracted airfare, if a contracted airfare exists.

When the state has a contract airfare between two cities, the contract airline must be given preference when making reservations to travel between those two cities.

Exceptions to the requirement to use contract airfare are as follows (see **Contract Travel Vendor Exceptions** on page 17):

- Contract travel agency alternative.
- Lower total cost to the state.
- Efficient use of services.
- Health and safety issues.
- Corporate travel charge card alternative.

In 1984, the State Ethics Advisory Commission issued an opinion about whether a public servant may use a travel discount or bonus for a private purpose if the discount or bonus is earned because of travel paid with public funds. The commission found that the personal use of a travel discount or bonus under these circumstances would not violate Section 39.01 (a), Penal Code, if the discount or bonus cannot be used for a public purpose. The determination of whether a discount or bonus can be used for a public purpose must be made by each public entity. Section 39.02, Texas Penal Code, effective September 1, 1994, addresses the issue further. Frequent flier miles and other awards or discounts given for frequent use of a commercial airline (or motor vehicle rental company) are not "things of value" belonging to the state government because the administrative difficulty and cost involved in recapturing the award for state government.

However, an employee may occasionally purchase a ticket from a commercial transportation company (for state business) and received a free second ticket under a promotional program sponsored by the company.

The employee may not use the free ticket for a private purpose until the A&M System Member determines whether the use is prohibited by law. The A&M System Member may choose to request an Ethics Commission or Attorney General opinion regarding the proposed use. Please contact the fiscal office for assistance. When two people travel to the same place at the same time they should use the free ticket for Texas A&M University – Texarkana business.

### **Other Issues**

- Excess baggage charges for personal belongings are not reimbursable. However, the fees may be reimbursable if they are incurred for checking state-owned equipment.
- When travel arrangements must be canceled, contact the travel agency and State of Texas Corporate Travel Card carrier immediately to begin the process to receive credit or a refund.
- If airfare was prepaid, apply credit to future payments and state on the front of the voucher the business reason for cancellation.

## **Cancellation Charges**

In general, a state may pay or reimburse a state employee for a cancellation charge if:

- The charge is incurred for a reason related to official state business; or
- The charge is incurred for a reason related to official state business that could not be conducted because of a natural disaster or other natural occurrence; or
- The charge is related to a transportation expense that was paid in advance to obtain lower rates and is incurred because the employee was unable to use the transportation because of an illness or a personal emergency.

Cancellation charges are not reimbursable if the employee should have, but failed to, cancel a travel reservation or plan in time to avoid the charge.

## **Hotels**

The TPASS contracts with hotels for discounted rates for state employees on transient travel while doing business for the State of Texas. TPASS also arranges agreements with motels, bed and breakfasts, inns and other lodging establishments; however, the word "hotel" is used as an all-inclusive term.

State contract rates are available based on the hotel's available inventory. In many instances, contract hotels have offered more than the required discount and there is no limitation on the number of rooms available to state travelers.

In some instances, the contract rates may not be available during holidays or special events or lower rates may be available during low occupancy periods.

The individual hotel listing contains all the contract services offered by the contract hotel, listed as amenities. Some hotels offer free meals, airport transportation and newspapers. Hotels may extend contract rates to state employees for personal travel; however, that option is not a requirement of the agreement. Contract hotels can be found at:

[http://portal.cpa.state.tx.us/hotel/hotel\\_directory/index.cfm](http://portal.cpa.state.tx.us/hotel/hotel_directory/index.cfm))

## **Rental Cars**

TPASS has contracted with **Avis** and **Enterprise** to provide discounted rental car services for state travelers. Reservations for a rental car may be made through your designated travel agency or by contacting the rental car company directly. If a traveler is flying somewhere and then picking up a rental vehicle, have the travel agency book the rental car at the same time they book the airfare.

When making a reservation, be sure to provide the name of the state entity of which you're employed and the state entity or TPASS Co-Op contract rate identifier number. This number along with the appropriate Direct Bill account numbers is listed on the Travel Website under State Contracts.

Upon completion of the reservation, be sure to verify the rates and get a confirmation number. When picking up the vehicle, give the rental agent the confirmation number and, again, provide the name of the state entity of which you're employed and the state agency or TPASS Co-Op contract rate identifier number.

If you are unsure of the appropriate contract rate identifier, contact your travel coordinator. (**Important: Be sure your rental is booked on the state contract rate. If not, your rental will not be covered under the contract provisions or with the appropriate insurance coverage.**) Contract car rentals can be found at:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-rental-car-contract/>

Current university procedures for rental of a vehicle require:

- Each college/department is responsible for making reservations for their faculty and staff.
- Rental must be done for a “state employee” conducting “official business” for costs to be reimbursed.
- Reimbursable costs include applicable taxes and similar mandatory charges. The contracts with certain rental car agencies include unlimited mileage, free Loss/Damage waiver, and free primary liability coverage. These charges should never be included in your final bill. Always check invoice as these are not reimbursable costs. A “state employee” that includes a supplemental insurance is personally responsible for that portion of payment.
- Gasoline expenses incurred as a result of state business will be reimbursed.
- When sharing a rented vehicle the total amount of vehicle charges along with mandatory reimbursable costs will be reimbursed to employee whose name appears on the rental invoice.
- Sharing a rented vehicle with non-state employees will be reimbursed by allocating the total rental car contract plus all reimbursable costs divided among the total number of state employees *and* non-state employee travelers sharing the vehicle.
- Car rental is limited to full size cars. A larger car or van can be rented if more than “four state employees” from the same agency will be sharing the vehicle.

- A state employee using a rented vehicle for both personal business and official state business may be reimbursed only for the portion of the rental charge that is attributable to official state business.
- Coordination of travel (four-per-car rule) - When employees from the same agency travel on the same dates with the same itinerary, they must coordinate travel. When four or fewer employees travel on the same itinerary, only one may be reimbursed for mileage. When more than four employees travel on the same itinerary, only one out of every four may be reimbursed for mileage. Texas Government Code Section 660.044

## **Travel Agency**

TPASS secured a contract with Short's Travel Management (STM) to provide state travelers with reservation and ticketing services for airlines, rail and bus travel, rental cars, and hotels. Institutions of higher education may use this service.

STM offers an online booking program that will enable the traveler to select her/his flights and the appropriate airfare. Once the traveler has selected her/his flights, she/he will be able to book and send the reservation(s) to STM to confirm accuracy and complete the transaction.

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-travel-agency/>

**Note:** Currently, there are no contracted airfares available out of the Texarkana Regional Airport. If your air travel originates in Texarkana, you are not required to use the university's CBA or your state issued travel charge card for air travel. However, if you will be driving to a location (or flying) to another location and book additional airline tickets from that location, you are required to use contracted airfare (if available) and you are required to use the university's CBA or your state issued travel charge card for payment unless a contract travel vendor exception exists.

## **Contract Travel Vendor Exceptions**

The following travel vendor contract exceptions are allowed:

- Contract travel agency alternative-Use of an authorized alternative method is allowable because the state traveler is already in travel status which renders the use of a contract travel agency impractical or unnecessary; airline reservations are not required; reservations can be secured through a different source that results in a lower overall cost to the state; or travel is undertaken as part of a group program for which reservations must be made through a specified source to obtain a particular rate and/or service.

- Lower total cost to the state-Use of non-contract travel vendor is less than the contract fare or rate which is offered to the general public, and/or when all trip expenses are evaluated, including ground transportation, insurance fees, parking fees, taxes, and travel time, the use results in a lower total cost to the state. If the contract travel vendor offers the same lower fare or rate, the contract travel vendor must be used, unless a valid exception exists.
- Efficient use of services-Use of a non-contract travel vendor is necessary because the contract travel vendor is sold out, is not available to provide services at the time or location necessary to accomplish the purpose of the trip, has a real or anticipated labor disruption, or is providing negotiated rates for group travel.
- Health and safety issues-Use of a non-contract travel vendor may be allowed when a state traveler finds that the accommodations provided by the vendor may reasonably present a risk to the state traveler or person under the state's custody in the following circumstances:
  - a) Accommodations may lack a reasonable amount of security or safety, and/or may present a health risk based on the state traveler's individual needs;
  - b) Accommodations fail to provide an adequate amount of services required for a person with disabilities; or
  - c) Accommodations have limited availability of medical emergency facilities or equipment that may be required by a state traveler or person under the state's custody.

The Corporate Travel Charge Card Alternative-Use of a personal charge card is allowable only for non-contract airfares.

**Exceptions must be documented on the Contract Travel Vendor Exception Form (found on the TAMUT travel website) only when the cost is greater than contract travel services rates.**

## **REIMBURSEMENT -THE TRAVEL VOUCHER**

### **General Discussion**

A travel voucher is a submitted by a current or prospective state employee for reimbursement of travel expenses relating to official state business after travel has occurred.

The following items need to be provided when preparing the travel voucher:

- Agency approval
- Agency object code
- Agency voucher number
- Approved travel application (original will be attached by Travel Specialist)
- Certification by traveler
- Payee identification number
- Account to which trip expenses will be charged and departmental sequence number, where applicable (a supplemental voucher is required when more than one account is charged)
- Departure and arrival times
- Designated headquarters of person claiming reimbursement
- Destination
- Mode of travel
- Name and title of person claiming reimbursement; and
- Statement as to reason for the trip and how it will benefit agency

Where applicable, this information also should be included:

- Original receipts for lodging costs (with zero balance);
- Meal cost breakdown per day (shown on the Travel Worksheet);
- Original receipts to support claims for reimbursement of public transportation, parking, or taxis; public accommodations; registration fees; etc.;
- Point to point mileage breakdown; and

The IRS has issued publication 463; Travel, Entertainment, Gift and Car Expenses. This document requires accountable plans, such as TAMUT's, to have employees account for their expenses in a reasonable period of time. This means that all business related expenses are to be submitted to the travel specialist no later than sixty (60) days from the date they were incurred. Failure to follow these terms could jeopardize TAMUT's accountable reimbursement plan and possibly require the employees' reimbursements to become taxable income; therefore, requests that exceed sixty (60) days from the date they are incurred will not be reimbursed.

Reimbursement for travel must be requested by a properly completed travel voucher. The travel voucher can be found on the TAMUT travel website. This is an Excel document that includes formulas to assist you in calculating your expenses.

### **Receipts/Reimbursements**

The lodging receipt must be original and complete. A receipt that has been altered by any person other than the commercial lodging establishment is unacceptable. A receipt

to which additional information has been added is considered unaltered if the additional information does not conflict with or obscure the original information on the receipts. The name and address of the lodging establishment, the name of the employee or board member, the single room rate, and a daily itemization of the lodging charges must be included on the receipt. The receipt should reflect a final balance of zero. If the individual listed on a lodging receipt is different from the state employee named on the voucher, the lodging receipt is acceptable if supporting documentation includes proof that the employee paid the lodging expenses for which the employee is claiming reimbursement. The proof may be in the form of a credit card slip, a credit card statement, a canceled check, or a receipt from the individual whose name appears on the lodging receipt.

Receipts for meals are not required to be submitted with your travel voucher. However, employees are encouraged to attach receipts to the travel voucher or to keep a record of meal expenses incurred since each employee will be reimbursed only for **actual expenses incurred**, up to the maximum rate allowed. Reimbursement will not be made for the purchase of alcohol or alcoholic beverages. Meal tips that are paid with state funds are also non-reimbursable. Grant accounts **require actual meal receipts**. In all other cases, you should keep your original meal receipts until you are reimbursed since meal receipts are subject to review by the accounting department if irregularities appear on your travel voucher.

The original airline ticket receipt from the airline ticket booklet should be attached to the travel voucher. An itinerary alone is unacceptable. A receipt that has been altered by any person is unacceptable. A receipt to which additional information has been added is considered unaltered if the additional information does not conflict with or obscure the original information on the receipt. If the ticket is in the form of an Electronic "Ticket less Ticket, the passenger itinerary or receipt must be attached to the voucher. The name of the employee and airline, the ticket number, the class of transportation, the fare basis code, the travel dates, the amount of the airfare, and the origin and destination of each flight must be included on the receipt.

If the passenger receipt is unavailable, then the supporting documentation must include the canceled check or credit card slip used to pay for the transportation, the credit card billing on which the transportation charges appear, or a copy of the receipt, check, slip or billing.

Original receipts are required for parking. Charges must be itemized on a daily basis and must include information about where the parking expense was incurred.

The original receipt must be attached when requesting reimbursement for a rental car. The receipt must separately itemize all charges, including the starting and ending dates of the rental, the name of the renter and any other charges. If the receipt does not provide all the preceding items and the rental contract provides the missing items, then the contract may also be included in the supporting documentation. The contract must also be original, complete, and unaltered.

State agencies are allowed to reimburse for Loss Damage Waivers (LDWs) but not for personal insurance. Most state contracts include unlimited free mileage within the state, free LDW and liability.

If the receipt and the contract are both unavailable, then the supporting documentation must include a copy of the receipt or contract, the original or a copy of the canceled check or credit card slip used to pay for the rental car, or the original or a copy of the credit card billing on which the rental charges appear.

Original receipts are required for taxis, buses, or limousines. Trip-by-trip itemization is required, including date, destination and fare for each trip. If limousine is used, it must be documented that this was the most cost efficient means of transportation

All required receipts must be the original copy and must be attached to the travel voucher. Any receipts smaller than 8 ½" x 11" must be taped down to a blank piece of paper before being attached to the travel voucher.

Receipts for all other expenses must be original. If original is not submitted, an explanation must be written on the copy of the receipt.

**Each employee must file their own expenses.** One employee cannot be reimbursed for another employee's expenses.

For example, if employee A pays travel expenses for employee B, both employees must file their own travel vouchers for reimbursement for their expenses. Then employee B must personally reimburse employee A.

An employee can be reimbursed for student expenses only by submitting an L-Doc or Request for Expenditure form. Student expenses must be separated from the employee's expenses.

For example, if a meal is purchased for the employee and the students, the employee should note which meal was for the employee. Hotel receipts should list who stayed in each room on the receipt denoting Student or Employee.

A current or prospective state employee must attest to the accuracy of a travel document by signing the travel voucher. The signature is valid only if the signature is original. The signature is automatically revoked if new information is added to the voucher after it is signed or information on the voucher is modified after the voucher is signed, unless the new or changed information is authorized by the traveler. It is strongly recommended that authorization also be obtained from the authorized departmental approver. The automatic revocation of a signature means that the travel document is no longer approved. Travel voucher corrections should NOT be made with white out. When corrections have to be made, mark through the incorrect information, make the correction in blue ink, and initial the correction. Remember only the traveler can modify and initial a voucher.

## **MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT RATE**

The mileage reimbursement rate for travel of TAMUT personnel utilizing their personal vehicles is the same as the rate established by the Internal Revenue Service and is normally updated every January 1<sup>st</sup>. The travel application and travel voucher forms will automatically calculate the mileage reimbursement amount based upon the mileage entered into the forms. The current mileage rate may be found on the Textravel website under [Travel Reimbursement Rates](#) or you may contact the travel specialist for information.

The amount of mileage reimbursement may not exceed the product of:

- The number of reimburseable business miles traveled and
- The current applicable mileage rate

Reimbursement for all local mileage should be submitted monthly. This applies to all local mileage approved under a blanket travel application. Blanket travel applications with unused balances will automatically expire on the last day of the fiscal year and must be renewed for travel applicable for the next fiscal year. Please do not confuse fiscal year (September 1st thru August 31st of the following year) with academic year as all travel is budgeted and accounted for on a fiscal year basis.

One of the changes made during the last legislative session was to direct the Comptroller of Public Accounts to discontinue the publication of the state mileage guide beginning January 1, 2010. This legislation requires that all state agencies adopt a standard mileage guide service for agency employees to use to determine mileages for their travel. The university has adopted [Mapquest](#) to calculate your mileage for your trip. If Mapquest is used, the Mapquest page must be printed out and attached to the travel voucher.

Another option is to use your actual odometer readings to calculate your mileage. A Travel Mileage Worksheet is available on both the travel voucher and travel information link on the university's website to help you calculate your mileage if you elect to use this method. If use the website version to calculate mileage, you must print and attach this worksheet to your travel voucher.

### **Combining State and Personal Business**

A state agency may reimburse a travel expense only if the purpose of the travel clearly involves official state business and is consistent with the agency's legal authority. If a traveler combines personal travel with official state business travel, the traveler is only allowed reimbursement amounts specifically addressed by Textravel. Any meal, lodging or car rental expenses that were incurred on personal days cannot be reimbursed.

Overnight meal and lodging expenses incurred while traveling to and staying at a duty point the day before official state business begins at the duty point are reimbursable. Overnight meal and lodging expense incurred while traveling to and staying at a duty point more than one day before official state business begins at the duty point are not reimbursable unless the expenses are incurred to qualify for a discount airfare according to Textravel, or traveling to the duty point reasonably requires more than one day and the expenses are reimbursable under Textravel.

Overnight meal and lodging expenses incurred while staying at and traveling from a duty point the day after official state business ends at the duty point are reimbursable. Overnight meal and lodging expenses incurred while staying at and traveling from a duty point more than one day after official state business ends at the duty point are not reimbursable unless the expenses are incurred to qualify for a discount airfare according to Textravel, or traveling to the duty point reasonably requires more than one day and the expenses are reimbursable under Textravel.

If the requirements of Textravel do not apply, then generally a state employee who uses a rented motor vehicle for both personal business and official state business may be reimbursed only for the portion of the rental charges that is attributable to official state business. A state employee may not be reimbursed for the rental of a motor vehicle if the rental was necessary only because the employee combined personal business with state business.

### **STUDENT TRAVEL**

The Student Services Department is responsible for student travel guidelines; however, coordination is necessary with the Accounting Department in order to assure that all forms and supporting documentation necessary to process payments to and on behalf of students are properly completed and submitted in a timely manner.

It is not necessary for a student to prepare a travel application; however, a TAMU-T employee that will be traveling with student groups, regardless of their capacity or status (i.e. student or advisor) must complete a travel application in accordance with guidelines applicable to employees unless they are traveling on their personal time (on a leave status).

Student travel expenses cannot be paid from state funds unless the student is considered an employee. The same guidelines used for state employees would be used. If the student is not considered an employee, student travel expenses can only be paid from institutional funds on an account that allows student travel.

In addition to submitting a travel application, employees traveling with student groups must also submit a travel voucher if they will be requesting reimbursement for their travel. An employee can be reimbursed for student expenses only by submitting an L-Doc or Request for Expenditure form. Student expenses must be separated from the employee's expenses.

The employee may be reimbursed for student expenses either on one travel voucher or on a separate, supplemental travel voucher. Student expenses must be separated from the employee's expenses.

**For example**, if a meal is purchased for the employee and the students, the employee should note which meal was for the employee. Hotel receipts should list who stayed in each room on the receipt denoting Student or Employee.

Student's groups who need travel arrangements for airline tickets and hotel accommodations can be charged to the university's CBA. The Student Services department must complete the Request for Student Travel Arrangements form on the travel section of university's website. The form must be completed and submitted to the travel specialist at least 30-days prior to departure.

Since auto rental companies require the name of the renter's driver's license and credit to match, automobile rental is not eligible to be charged on the CBA. AVIS and Enterprise rentals are eligible for direct billing and can be requested thru the university's travel specialist. If the rental car will be reserved by an employee, they must use their individual travel card or their personal credit card to reserve their rental.

A cash advance for meals can be requested for students only. The Student Meal Cash Advance Request form must be completed and attached to a Request for Expenditure form and submitted to the Accounts Payable department at least two weeks prior to the check date (the date the check is needed). Employees traveling with student groups must pay for their meals and request reimbursement on their travel voucher.

The current daily rate for students is \$36.00 for meals unless the destination is listed in the Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates guide published by the US General Services

Administration. The \$36.00 per day rate for meals means you need to either keep your original receipts or keep a log of expenses and claim only what you spend on meals, up to the \$36.00 maximum. For example, if you spend \$25.75 for one day, then you are expected to reimburse the university the difference of your meals and the amount advanced; \$10.25 in this example.

For travel outside the State of Texas, meal and lodging maximum rates are based on the Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates guide published by the US General Services Administration. The rate schedule is applicable only to out-of-state locations within the contiguous United States. Travel to Alaska, Hawaii, a U.S. possession or a foreign country are reimbursed for actual expenses.

If the daily rate for your meals is higher than standard \$36.00 per day rate, you must attach the documentation from the Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rate Guide to substantiate the additional expense. Any expense requested above the standard or per diem rate, if applicable, will not be advanced.

It is strongly encouraged that lodging is paid with the university's CBA; however, if hotel accommodations must be paid by check because the hotel will not permit lodging to be paid by the university's CBA, the Accounts Payable Department must have the Student Services Travel Worksheet (Clubs/Students) form authorizing the student travel attached to a Request for Expenditure form submitted at least two weeks prior to the check date (the date the check is needed).

**Additional Information and useful links:**

Additional travel-related information is available in "Textravel", a web resource developed by the State of Texas ( <https://fmx.cpa.state.tx.us/fmx/travel/textravel/index.php> ). State travel contracts are modified periodically throughout the year; therefore, you are encouraged to bookmark the website and refer to it when making business travel arrangements.

Current Travel Reimbursement Rates:

<https://fmx.cpa.state.tx.us/fm/travel/travelrates.php>

Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates:

<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>

Mapquest:

<http://www.mapquest.com/>

State Travel Management Program (STMP):

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/>

Washington D.C. Travel Notification

<http://www.osfr.state.tx.us/travelform.asp>

Texas A&M University-Texarkana travel forms.

<http://www.tamut.edu/travel/index.htm>

Please note: Every effort is made to keep all website links in this guideline as current as possible; however, it is not uncommon for links to be updated and the user may be directed to an unexpected site. If you have opened links when using these travel guidelines and notice that the link is no longer valid, please contact the travel specialist at (903) 223-3112 so we can update our links in this document and keep them as current as possible.