



U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

## **GSA Order: Local Travel Policy**

OAS 5770.1B

Office of Administrative Services

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### **Purpose:**

This directive provides guidance on the reimbursement of transportation expenses incurred by GSA employees on official business within the local area of an employee's official worksite/duty station or appropriate alternative worksite.

### **Background:**

While The Federal Travel Regulation (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 41, Chapters 300 through 304) (FTR) regulates expense reimbursement for temporary duty travel away from the official station for GSA employees, it does not provide guidance for local travel expense reimbursement. This directive provides agency policy regarding local travel in absence of such policy in FTR.

### **Applicability:**

This directive applies to all GSA organizations, programs, and personnel, including all Services, Staff Offices, and Regions. This Order applies to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to the extent that the OIG determines it is consistent with the OIG's independence under the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008 and does not conflict with other OIG policies or the OIG mission.

### **Cancellation:**

This Order cancels and supersedes OAS 5770.1A, Local Travel Policy.

### **Summary of Changes:**

The following changes have been made to the Order:

a. The format and numbering of paragraphs has been updated, consistent with [OAS 1832.1C, Internal Directives Management](#).

b. All policy references and links have been verified and updated, if needed.



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# 1. Policy

Reimbursement for transportation expenses incurred by a GSA employee performing official duties near his/her official worksite/duty station will be limited to the difference between the actual allowable expenses incurred and the employee's round-trip regular commuting costs, even if that commute is not performed every day.

## 2. Definition of Local Travel

Local travel is travel necessary to conduct official GSA business and is performed by the most direct route within and adjacent to an employee's official worksite/duty station or appropriate alternative worksite. The proximity of travel to the employee's official worksite/duty station determines whether an expense is reimbursed as a local travel expense or as a temporary duty (TDY) travel expense incurred outside the employee's local travel area (see Paragraph 5 below) and as described in the FTR. Local travel does not include any official travel that is part of a TDY travel authorization, including travel to a common carrier terminal in the employee's local travel area in conjunction with TDY.

## 3. Commuting Expenses

Commuting expenses are costs incurred while traveling between an employee's residence and his/her official worksite/duty station. Commuting expenses are calculated on a daily basis and are based on the method of transportation used for that day's commute. For example, if an employee purchases a monthly bus pass, but chooses to drive on the day he or she conducts local travel, the employee may be reimbursed for driving expenses (e.g., mileage, parking, tolls) that exceed the normal commuting costs of driving from his or her residence to the official station. When computing the amount for reimbursement, expenses are considered individually, rather than in aggregate, so that all excess mileage, tolls, and parking fees are reimbursed even if certain expenses are less than normal commuting costs. The cost of the pro-rated "unused" bus pass is not a reimbursable expense.

## 4. Mass Transit Subsidies

The GSA Transit Subsidy Program offers qualifying employees a financial incentive to use mass transit and other options for commuting to and from work in an effort to reduce traffic congestion in metropolitan areas. (See [HRM 9500.1B, Transit Subsidy Program](#).) GSA employees who commute by public transportation, including subway, bus, train, or qualified vanpool, may receive "transit passes" or "fare media" through the

program. The subsidy is only intended to cover the costs of commuting to an employee's official worksite/duty station and return to home. It is not intended to pay for local travel to/from/between other places of official business, such as travel to an offsite meeting location.

## 5. Local Travel Area

The default local travel area for all GSA employees, including full-time telework employees, is the area within a fifty (50) mile radius of employees' official worksite/duty station. However, Regional Administrators may define their region's local travel area differently through use of a mileage radius, the corporate limits of the city or town, or the usual commuting area of the official worksite/duty station (area served by local transportation services such as buses, streetcars, subways and trains). No part of the area, however, can be more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his/her duties or from an invitational traveler's residence or regular place of business. Regional Administrators seeking to differently define their local travel area must receive approval for such supplemental policy by the Office of Travel and Charge Card Services.

## 6. Travel Authorization

A written or electronic travel authorization will not be issued for travel solely within an employee's local travel area. Employees must obtain verbal or email approval from the appropriate authorizing official prior to incurring local travel expenses.

## 7. GSA Travel Card

GSA travel cards will not be used to pay for local travel or other expenses unrelated to official TDY travel, except for situations of imminent danger to human life or Federal property (see Subparagraph 10.2 for more information on exceptions for protection of human life or Federal property) .

## 8. Fare Cards, Tickets and Other Passes

In areas where mass transit services are available (subways, buses, etc.), offices should obtain fare cards, tickets, and/or other types of passes in advance with a purchase card ([OAS 4200.1C, Management and Use of the GSA SmartPay® Purchase Card](#)), to eliminate the need for reimbursing these costs via a local travel voucher. Offices should establish procedures to prevent inappropriate use of these items.

## 9. Local Transportation Expenses

Based on cost and other factors (e.g., distance traveled, number of travelers, urgency), authorizing officials should authorize employees to utilize the method of travel most advantageous to the Government. If an employee uses a mode of transportation that was not authorized, reimbursement will be limited to the constructive amount of using the most advantageous method of travel (see examples in Appendix B).

### 9.1 Government-furnished Automobile

A Government-furnished automobile is presumed to be the most advantageous method of local transportation and must be used for local travel whenever available.

### 9.2 Mass Transit Services

Travel between places of business via bus, subway, ferry, streetcar, etc., may be reimbursed as a local transportation expense. Mass transit services should be utilized whenever possible, if a Government-furnished automobile is not available.

### 9.3 Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)

a. Local travel via POV will be reimbursed based on the actual distance traveled (as shown on the odometer), minus the employee's normal round-trip commuting distance/expenses, times the applicable mileage rate on <http://www.gsa.gov/mileage>. POVs include privately owned automobiles (POA), privately owned motorcycles, and privately owned airplanes. POVs should be determined to be the most advantageous method of transportation only after the authorizing official evaluates the use of a Government-furnished automobile, and local mass transit services. Reimbursement will be limited to the reduced rate when a Government-furnished automobile was available and advantageous to the Government, but a POA was used instead due to the personal choice of the employee.

b. Employees must provide an explanation in the comments section of local vouchers for mileage. That explanation must include the round-trip mileage between the employee's departure and official business locations. It must also include the round-trip mileage of the employee's commute when the employee is departing from their residence to the alternate worksite to ensure only the difference in mileage for the trip when compared to the commute is claimed.

### 9.4 Taxicabs, Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), and Innovative Mobility Technology Companies (IMTCs)

a. Taxicabs, TNCs, and IMTCs may be used and considered advantageous to the Government if no other mode of local transportation is available and the selected mode is necessary for urgent business. Taxicabs, TNCs, or IMTCs may also be authorized for local travel between an employee's office and residence if the employee depends on public transportation to perform official duties and he/she is directed to work outside of his/her regular hours and the local travel occurs during darkness or hours of infrequently scheduled public transportation. Reimbursement is limited to the fare for the usually traveled route plus tip.

b. Receipts are required for any single taxicab, TNC, or IMTC fare (including tip) that exceeds \$25.

c. A tip, not to exceed 20 percent, rounded to the next higher dollar is allowable when use of a taxicab, TNC, or IMTC is authorized.

d. Employees must explain all taxicab, TNC, or IMTC use in the comments section of the local travel voucher. That explanation must include the employee's departure time from the office and justification for use of the taxicab, TNC, or IMTC.

e. Employees are encouraged to join [GSA's Rideshare Program](#). When utilizing the program for local travel, the employee must not use the GSA travel card for local travel charges. (See Paragraph 7).

### **9.5 Tolls, Fares, etc.**

Parking, ferry fares, and tolls may be reimbursed as a transportation expense when their use is determined to be necessary and advantageous to the Government by the authorizing official.

## **10. Per Diem**

### **10.1 Prohibition**

No per diem or actual subsistence expense allowance (i.e., lodging or meals) will be paid for travel within an employee's local travel area.

### **10.2 Exception for Protection of Human Life or Federal Property**

The Administrator of General Services or his/her designee may authorize reimbursement of actual subsistence/per diem expenses for an employee who must remain at his/her official worksite/duty station or appropriate alternative worksite due to imminent danger to human life or Federal property, and as a result, incurs lodging and/or meal expenses. The Administrator or his/her designee must authorize in writing

the need to incur actual subsistence/per diem expenses and the employee must then upload this authorization into ETS and request reimbursement. The reimbursement will be processed on a local voucher as a miscellaneous expense. As situations permit, contact the Office of the General Counsel in writing for additional guidance before incurring any expense that may be covered by this exception.

## 11. Claiming Reimbursement

a. Approving officials must review claims for accuracy before approval. Relevant factors include mode of transportation utilized, distance traveled, and the amount that exceeds the employee's commuting costs. The approving official must ensure that the mode of transportation used was more advantageous to the Government than other available modes of transportation.

b. Claims must be filed on an ETS local voucher. Local travel claims should be filed monthly or when the amount for reimbursement exceeds \$25. However, claims may be filed sooner.

c. When travel involves two or more GSA employees on official business, one employee should pay and claim the entire expense (e.g., taxicab fare, toll, etc.).

d. All taxicab, TNC, or IMTC fare receipts exceeding \$25 and any other local travel expense receipt exceeding \$75 must be attached to the ETS local voucher.

f. Employees must provide a justification in the comments section of any voucher which includes the round trip mileage of both the employee's actual local travel and commute as prescribed in Subparagraph 9.3.b. Employees must also provide a justification as prescribed in Subparagraph 9.4.d in the comments section of any voucher for all taxicab, TNC, or IMTC use which explains why the method of transportation was used instead of another mode that is generally considered more advantageous to the Government.

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

**Appropriate Alternative Worksite** – A worksite other than the agency worksite, typically the employee’s residence, that supports work and provides appropriate information technology (IT) connectivity and security precautions in support of the work.

**Approving Official** – The official delegated authority to sign the electronic voucher using the ETS or sign the SF 1038, Advance of Funds, Application and Account, and the OF 1012, Travel Voucher. This is generally the employee’s direct supervisor.

**Authorizing Official** – The official delegated the authority to authorize travel for official business/sign the travel authorization. This is generally the employee’s direct supervisor.

**E-Gov Travel Service (ETS)** – The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service Web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement, and travel management reporting. The ETS provides the services of a Federal travel management program as specified in FTR §301-73.1(a), (b) and (e).

**Innovative Mobility Technology Company (IMTC)** – An organization, including a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, sole proprietorship, or any other entity that applies technology to expand and enhance available transportation choices, better manages demand for transportation services, or provides alternatives to driving alone.

**Official Worksite/Duty Station** – The location where the employee regularly performs their official work duties. See the definition of “Official Worksite/Duty Station” in [ADM 6040.1A, GSA Telework Policy](#).

**Official Travel** – Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee’s official station or other authorized point of departure to a TDY location and return from a TDY location, between multiple TDY locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.

**Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)** – Any vehicle such as an automobile, motorcycle, aircraft, or boat operated by an individual that is not owned or leased by a Government agency, and is not commercially leased or rented by an employee under a Government rental agreement for use in connection with official Government business.

**Transportation Network Company (TNC)** – A transportation service provider that connects paying passengers with drivers who provide the transportation on their own non-commercial vehicles via website and mobile apps.

**Temporary Duty (TDY) Location** – A place away from an employee's official station where the employee is authorized to travel.

## Appendix B. Local Travel Scenarios

This appendix applies GSA's local travel policy to real-life scenarios. Each scenario explains and calculates an employee's local travel and commuting expenses, and if applicable, the reimbursement amount. All mileage rates used below are examples only. Current mileage reimbursement rates are posted at [www.gsa.gov/mileage](http://www.gsa.gov/mileage). The scenarios also explain how different facts would affect reimbursement calculations.

### Scenario 1

Sarah commutes 15 miles (one-way) to her official worksite and incurs a \$20 daily parking fee. On the day of local travel she reports to her official worksite in her privately owned automobile (POA) and incurs a \$10 short-term parking fee before driving 10 miles to an off-site meeting where she incurs another \$10 parking fee. After the meeting, she drives 25 miles to her home. Assuming a rate of 57.5 cents/mile when a POA is most advantageous, what is her reimbursable local travel expense?

Expense Description	Trip Expenses	Commuting Expenses	Reimbursable Expenses
Mileage	50 miles	30 miles	20 miles
Parking	\$20	\$20	\$0

**Reimbursement:** 20 miles x 57.5 cents/mile = **\$11.50**

**Explanation 1:** Sarah would be reimbursed for the 20 additional miles. The \$10 parking fee incurred at the meeting, however, is not reimbursable because it does not exceed her normal parking expenses usually incurred as part of her commute. If she had been required to return to her official worksite, and as a result, incurred additional mileage and parking expenses before going home, the additional mileage would be reimbursed. The additional parking would also be reimbursed, if it exceeded her normal \$20 parking expenses.

### Scenario 2

Same as Scenario 1, but Sarah chooses to use her POA when a Government-furnished automobile is available and most advantageous to the Government. She returns to the office to do work, incurs another \$10 parking fee, and then goes home for the day. Assuming a rate of 57.5 cents/mile when a POA is most advantageous, and a rate of 17 cents/mile when a Government-furnished automobile is most advantageous but a POA is used instead. What is her reimbursable local travel expense?

Expense Description	Trip Expenses	Commuting Expenses	Reimbursable Expenses
Mileage	50 miles	30 miles	20 miles
Parking	\$30	\$20	\$10

**Reimbursement:**  $\$3.40$  (20 miles x 17 cents/mile) +  $\$10$  =  **$\$13.40$**

**Explanation 2:** Like Explanation 1, Sarah would be reimbursed the additional 20 miles, but since she failed to use an available and advantageous Government-furnished automobile, her reimbursement would be limited to the reduced rate. Unlike Explanation 1, Sarah would be reimbursed for the additional parking since her \$30 parking expenses exceed her normal \$20 parking expenses.

### Scenario 3

Typically, Ken commutes 75 miles round-trip to his worksite/duty station via vanpool. The vanpool costs \$175 per month (\$125 paid with his transit subsidy and \$50 paid out of pocket). Ken is directed to attend a meeting near his worksite/duty station. Ken drives to the meeting and incurs a \$10 parking fee. After the meeting he stops by the office to do some work and incurs another \$10 parking fee. Ken then returns home at the end of the day, driving a total of 100 miles. What is his reimbursable local travel expense?

Expense Description	Trip Expenses	Commuting Expenses	Reimbursable Expenses
Mileage	100 miles	75 miles	25 miles
Parking	\$20	\$10	\$10

**Reimbursement:**  $\$14.38$  (25 miles x 57.5 cents/mile) +  $\$10$  =  **$\$24.38$**

**Explanation 3:** When an employee uses a mode of transportation for commuting that is different from what he/she normally uses, all commuting expenses associated with that normal mode (in this case, Ken's vanpool) are non-reimbursable expenses. In this scenario, since Ken chose to drive, rather than use the vanpool, his reimbursement is based on his expenses associated with driving. Thus, the additional mileage and parking incurred at the meeting site are reimbursable. The round-trip mileage between Ken's home and worksite/duty station and the \$10 parking fee at the worksite, however,

are non-reimbursable commuting expenses. In addition, Ken is not reimbursed for the pro-rated “unused” vanpool cost.

#### Scenario 4

Julie is a full-time telework employee. She is required to attend a meeting 45 miles round-trip from her home. Julie drives her POA, which is most advantageous to the Government in this case, to and from the meeting location. Julie incurs two \$5 tolls on her E-Z Pass® and a \$10 parking fee at the meeting location. What is Julie’s reimbursable local travel expense?

Expense Description	Trip Expenses	Commuting Expenses	Reimbursable Expenses
Mileage	45 miles	0 miles	45 miles
Tolls	\$10	\$0	\$10
Parking	\$0	\$0	\$0

**Reimbursement:**  $\$24.98$  (45 miles x 57.5 cents/mile) + \$10 + \$10 = **\$45.86**

**Explanation 4:** As a full-time telework employee, Julie’s official worksite is her home. Since Julie was required to leave her home to perform her official duties at the meeting, the costs incurred traveling to the meeting, as well as the parking fee are reimbursable.