

**CITY OF LAREDO
TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/13/03

APPROVED BY: _____
Larry Dovalina, City Manager

I. INTRODUCTION

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to anyone who incurs travel expenses paid by the City of Laredo. This policy supersedes all previously travel policies (Travel Policy, 1/3/95; and any Travel related memorandums prior to October 1,2003).

Travel charged to a grant related source should also follow the guidelines set forth by this policy unless the funding agency imposes greater restrictions.

Responsibility of Traveler

City of Laredo travelers are expected to spend funds prudently and plan appropriately so costs do not exceed budgets. Business travel expenses will be paid by the City when expenses are reasonable, appropriately documented, properly authorized, and within the guidelines of this policy. The traveler should neither gain nor lose personal funds as a result of travel.

Travelers may not authorize reimbursement of their own expenses. The Director or Supervisor should approve the reimbursement for all travel. The City Manager or Assistant City Manager will approve travel for the Department Directors. All expense reports will be submitted within 15 working days after travel. In addition, no future travel advances will be issued if travel reports are pending. All travel reports must be signed by the traveler.

Responsibility of Department Directors

Department Directors have the primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. The director must approve the travelers expense reports and ensure that the following criteria is met:

- The travel expense was incurred while conducting City business.
- Information contained on the expense report and in the attached documentation is accurate and in accordance with this policy.
- The expense line item has funding availability prior to travel. If funding is necessary, an initiation of an insufficient appropriation notice is necessary.

II. USE OF TRAVEL AGENCIES AND CREDIT CARDS

Travel Agencies

The traveler may use a travel agency from the approved vendor list (Appendix A) when making travel arrangements. In addition, the traveler is responsible for seeking the lowest available airline fares possible.

Use of Corporate Card

Authorization for the assignment of a credit card must be in writing to the City Manager.

The American Express Corporate Card should be used for business travel expenses including:

- * air travel
- * lodging
- * car rental
- * meals
- * misc. travel related expenses

The American Express Card is issued for City business purposes and may not be used for personal purposes.

If it is determined that un-authorized charges appear in the statement, the cardholder is responsible to reimburse the City for any charges incurred.

All charges using the card must be reported by an after travel report. (Exhibit B)

- If charges reflect more than the cardholders meal, the names of the individuals for which the expense was incurred and the name of the organization they represent should be documented. This will be reimbursed on a case by case basis.
- The expense report should include the nature of the visit or meeting with these individuals (if they are not City employees).
- No alcohol expenses will be reimbursed. The exception to this policy applies when the City is hosting a special event for third parties.

Upon termination of employment, all cardholders must:

- Promptly submit all pending travel reports;
- Call the 1-800 number listed on the back of the credit card to cancel the card;
- Return the card to the Finance Department

III. TRANSPORTATION – AIR TRAVEL

Airlines Reservations

Generally, the lowest priced domestic coach class airfare is available with a 14 day advanced purchase. Reservations should be made as soon as travel plans are finalized to receive advance purchase discounts. In addition, an overnight Saturday night stay often results in savings of more than fifty percent. However, these savings must be weighed against the additional cost of meals and lodging associated with a longer stay and the potential personal inconvenience to the traveler. If it is determined it is less costly to stay an additional day, based on the above criteria, the traveler may stay overnight.

Upgrades

The City will not reimburse any upgrades from “economy class” to a higher traveling class. Free upgrades or upgrades paid by the traveler must be clearly documented as such in the Travel Expense Report.

Airline Frequent Flyer Programs

Frequent flyer memberships should not influence travelers to select a flight that is not the lowest priced flight available.

Frequent flyer miles earned by any traveler during City business travel may be retained by the traveler for business or personal use.

Dues for membership in any airport/airline club are not reimbursable.

Travel on Charter Aircraft

The City of Laredo does not suggest flying on chartered aircraft. Should the need to use chartered aircraft arise, the City Manager’s Office must be contacted for approval in advance of travel.

Examples of airline usage:

When it is less costly to travel based on such factors as time, efficiency, and number of travelers on a charter aircraft vs. commercial airline.

Lost or Excess Baggage

The airlines are responsible for compensating the owners of lost baggage. The City will not reimburse travelers for personal items lost while traveling on business unless approved by the City Manager.

Employees will be reimbursed for excess baggage charges in the following circumstances:

- when traveling with heavy or bulk materials or equipment necessary for business
- when traveling for more than seven (7) days

An explanation must be included with the Travel Expense Report explaining the nature of the excess baggage charge.

Cancellations/ Unused Airline Tickets

When a trip is canceled after a ticket has been issued, the traveler should inquire with the issuing agent about using the ticket for future travel or processing a refund. The ticket will become property of City of Laredo and will be used for City purposes only. Most unused airline tickets have a cash value and should not be discarded or destroyed. Many non-refundable tickets can be used for future travel (generally within one year) for a change fee. An explanation of circumstances should accompany the Travel Expense Report when requesting reimbursement for change fees.

Lost or Stolen Airline Tickets

The traveler should immediately report the loss of an airline ticket to the issuing travel agency. The traveler will need to complete a Lost Ticket Advice that will be filed with the airlines. A new ticket will be issued for the lost portion of the ticket at a cost of the original fare plus a lost ticket fee. If the original ticket is not used within 90 days, the airline will issue a credit to the traveler. Additional costs incurred due to a lost/stolen ticket will be the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed by the City.

Air Travel Reimbursement Requirements

The original passenger receipt (typically the last coupon of the airline ticket) is required for reimbursement. A boarding pass or travel agent itinerary/receipt are not valid for reimbursement. While it is preferred that travelers obtain a physical ticket (passenger receipt), the City will reimburse for electronic ticketing using the original e-ticket statement.

IV. TRANSPORTATION -AUTOMOBILE

RENTAL CAR

Rental Car Usage Guidelines

Travelers may rent a vehicle to their business destination when driving is more convenient and less expensive than an airline. Travelers must try to utilize a City vehicle whenever available prior to the rental. No mileage will be reimbursed on City vehicles.

Travelers may rent a vehicle **at their destination** when it is the most convenient or least expensive mode of transportation. Expensive rental rates and parking costs, in addition to the lack of available parking generally makes vehicle rental in large cities impractical. Alternative modes of transportation such as taxis and airport or hotel shuttles should be given first consideration.

All employees renting vehicles must comply with all rental agency requirements such as listing driver(s) on the rental agreement, age restrictions, location or state of operation, etc., as well as all state and local laws governing operation of a motor vehicle. Violations of any requirement of the law (driving under the influence, traffic violations, careless or reckless driving) are the employee's personal liability.

Class of Service - Rental Car

Travelers are required to use economy (sub-compact), compact, intermediate or standard cars. Travelers are responsible for daily rental costs in excess of the approved class as stated above. When traveling in large groups greater than 4, a van, full size vehicle, or Sports Utility Vehicle may be rented. When upgrade tickets are available, traveler may utilize them to obtain a higher class if, they are at no additional cost to the City.

Rental Car Providers

The City has negotiated an agreement with a particular rental car agency.

Authorized Rental Car Drivers

Drivers must be City employees, minimum of 18 years of age and have a valid Texas Drivers License of operation.

All individuals who intend to drive the rental vehicle must be listed on the rental agreement for insurance purposes.

Only City employees, who are renting vehicles for business purposes, are covered under the City's insurance plan. Spouses, friends and other non-employee listed drivers are covered only under insurance provided by the rental company or under the drivers personal insurance. Cost of insurance for these passengers is not a reimbursable expense. The use of City vehicles is encouraged when available.

Rental Car Pick-Up and Return

- At the time of the rental, the vehicle should be inspected with a rental car agent; any damage found should be noted on the contract before the vehicle is accepted.
- Every effort should be made to return the vehicle with the same amount of gas it was rented with, to avoid expensive refueling charges.

Rental Car Insurance

The City of Laredo self-insures for this type of financial risk after a \$5,000 deductible. Therefore, employees traveling on City business in the United States should accept the purchase of the following insurance types which is reimbursable by the City:

- Damage Waiver or Collision Damage (CD) - this type of insurance protects against damage caused to the vehicle.
- Personal Effect Coverage (PEC) – this type of insurance protects the passenger in the vehicle

When traveling abroad, travelers are discouraged from renting a vehicle. We suggest using a travel guide / agency for the safety and general welfare of the traveler(s).

Rental Car Accidents

If a rental car accident occurs, traveler(s) should submit a written accident report as soon as possible to the rental car company, local authorities (as required), and the City of Laredo Risk Management Division. Employees are subject to a drug & alcohol test and must comply within specified time.

PERSONAL CAR

Personal Car Usage Guidelines

Employees may use their personal car for business purposes if it is to save time, transport equipment or reduce costs when a number of people are traveling to the same destination.

If a traveler chooses to use a personal car for travel to his/her destination, the cost must be less than or equal to coach class air travel.

The use of City vehicles is encouraged when available.

In addition, if more than one traveler is traveling to the same destination they are encouraged to share transportation whenever possible. It is encouraged for travelers to commute therefore only claiming one mileage reimbursement. Travelers may refer to the Internet for a mileage schedule at <http://www.window.state.tx.us> under "mileage guide".

Mileage will be reimbursed from point of origin to point of travel plus any work related area provided it is documented and calculated by the Standard Mileage Rate. The Standard Mileage Rate for business is based on the I.R.S annual bulletin.

Insurance for Personal Car Use

It is the responsibility of the owner of the vehicle being used for business purposes to carry adequate insurance coverage (state mandatory insurance requirement at minimum) for their protection and the protection of any passengers. When using a personal car for City business, an employee's personal car insurance carrier is the primary insurance carrier. The City's insurance will only cover up to the City's statutory limits in liability claims.

Reimbursement for Personal Car Usage

Travelers will be reimbursed for business usage of personal cars at the Federal government's prevailing rate per mile. A new rate is issued every January and notification by Accounts Payable will be sent to all departments (Appendix A). The automobile mileage allowance assumes coverage of all transportation and operating costs including gas, oil, towing charges, repairs, auto insurance and damages. Tolls and parking will be reimbursed in addition to the allowance.

Employees will not be reimbursed for any of the following, even if these costs were incurred during business travel:

- Car repairs
- Rental car costs during repair of personal car
- Tickets, fines, or traffic violations
- Damage to personal vehicle
- Theft of personal vehicle or vehicle content
- In the event that the employee insists on traveling using his/her vehicle, then the employee will be reimbursed based on the estimated cost of the purchase of a plane ticket to the place of travel or the actual miles whichever is less. However, the costs of hotels will not be reimbursable. Meals will be reimbursed based on a per diem basis as if the traveler utilized an airline service.

V. Transportation - Other

Ground Transportation

The most economical mode of transportation should be used to and from airline terminals. Many major hotels provide free transportation to and from airports, travelers should inquire for this type of service. Public transportation and shuttle services should be considered. Employees traveling to the same location should share ground transportation whenever possible.

Under special circumstances, employees and/or management may be granted the permission to travel in a larger vehicle i.e.; limousine in order to facilitate the travel of large groups and reduce cost. The City Manager or designee may grant approval of such transportation.

Ground Transportation Reimbursement Requirements

Receipts are requested for all ground transportation expenditures. Original receipts are required for reimbursement of taxi, shuttle, bus, or other ground transportation fares.

VI. LODGING

Lodging-Hotels

Reimbursement for lodging is primarily made on the basis of actual expenses incurred.

Travelers should use standard room accommodations at non-luxury hotels. Except when the conference is at that particular hotel. When making reservations for lodging costs, the traveler should inquire about educational or government discounts. Most Texas hotels honor the City's tax-exempt status and all travelers should make an effort in supplying this information to the hotel. (See Exhibit E).

Hotel Reservations

Hotels will reserve a room using the credit card number and usually provide the traveler with a confirmation number for record keeping purposes. The credit card will generally not be charged until the end of the traveler's stay where it will be the responsibility of the traveler to make payment arrangements prior to departure.

Funding for these charges can be submitted prior to travel by submitting a travel advance form with at least a two weeks advance notice to the Accounts Payable Division.

Hotel Cancellations

It is the traveler's responsibility to notify the hotel to cancel a room reservation. Travelers should remember that cancellation deadlines are based on local time of the destination hotel. Travelers should request and record the cancellation number in case of billing disputes. Except under extenuating circumstances, travelers will not be reimbursed for "no show" charges. A detailed explanation should accompany the reimbursement request.

Hotel Personal Expenses

Most personal expenses incurred while traveling will not be reimbursed (refer to section entitled Other Travel Expenses). These are included but are not limited to (unless paid by traveler):

- in-room movies, video rentals · child care, cribs
- in-room alcoholic beverages and food · recreational activities, health club

Bottled water is allowable.

Lodging in a Private Residence

Travelers who stay in a private residence with friends or relatives while traveling on business will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred to extend appreciation for their hospitality. Guidelines for appropriate spending levels will be updated each January and can be found in Appendix A.

Lodging Reimbursement Requirements

The original detailed hotel bill (folio) is required for reimbursement of lodging expenses. Personal expenses should be labeled on the hotel bill and not be claimed on the Travel Expense Report. Hotel costs should be broken down by day and category (room, meals, misc.) when claimed on the Travel Expense Report.

If the hotel bill indicates the number of guests as more than one and the expenses are not split accordingly, the business purpose of the guest will need to be explained or the cost differential (i.e.: single vs. double room) should be adjusted.

Small hotel/motel and bed & breakfast lodging often do not provide an itemized bill. The receipt from the establishment and record of payment will be accepted for reimbursement.

VII. OTHER TRAVEL EXPENSES

Conference Registration

Conference registration fees should be included in the expense reports along with the itinerary of the conference. The registration fee can be paid directly using a Travel Advance Request Form (See Exhibit A) payable to the vendor and a copy of the registration information and application. If the traveler paid the vendor by credit card or check, reimbursement may be processed using an After Travel Form, a copy of the registration information and record of payment (copy of credit card statement or copy of the front and back of the canceled check).

Registration for attendance at a local conference, where no additional travel expenses will be incurred, should be processed using a Request For Check (See Exhibit C) payable to the vendor and the original invoice/registration form. Notation should be made on the Request For Check stating "No additional travel expenses to be incurred".

The cost of excursion/entertainment offered at an additional fee as part of a conference is considered a personal expense and is not reimbursable. Only those activities / events that are related directly to the conference subject are reimbursable to the traveler.

Telephone

Reasonable actual expenditures including those necessary to make travel arrangements, communicate and to call home not more than twice per day with moderation will be reimbursed. Business related calls are common while traveling; the usage of the City's Cellular phone should be encouraged instead of the hotel telephone.

Miscellaneous Reimbursable Expenses

Travelers will be reimbursed for the following miscellaneous expenses incurred while on City business travel:

- Baggage handling/storage
- Business office expenses (fax, printing services, etc.)
- Business phone calls
- Currency conversion fees
- Gasoline for rental cars or city vehicles when traveling out of town
- Laundry (if duration of the trip exceeds 5 days)
- Overnight delivery/postage that is work related
- Parking and tolls
- Brief phone call home (in moderation)
- Tips (whenever applicable on "actual basis")
- Visa/passport permit/consulate fees

Non-Reimbursable Expenses

Travelers will not be reimbursed for the following miscellaneous expenses:

. No alcohol will be allowed for reimbursement.

- Alcoholic beverages except under special circumstances as defined
- Airline club membership dues
- Auto repairs
- Barbers and hairdressers
- Child care services
- Clothing or toiletry items
- Frequent flyer tickets
- Hotel safety deposit box (safe)
- Loss or theft of cash advance money or airline tickets
- Loss or theft of personal funds or property
- Lost baggage
- Luggage or briefcases
- Movies and video games
- "No-show" charges for airfare, hotel or car service (due to traveler negligence)
- Over-the-counter medication/prescription
- Parking ticket or traffic violations
- Personal automobile routine maintenance/tune-ups
- Personal entertainment, including sporting events
- Pet care
- Reading materials including magazines, newspapers and books
- Souvenirs or personal gifts
- Spouse/dependent travel
- Vacation - expenses related to personal days before, during or after a business trip

VIII. MEALS

Meals and Gratuities – Using Per Diem Method

Travelers will use the Federal government's prevailing rate on meals. A new rate is issued each October and notification by Accounts Payable will be sent to all departments (Appendix A).

Meals reimbursed using the per diem allowance method already include the tip amount. All other tips should be reported as "Miscellaneous" on the Travel Expense Report and should be accompanied by a brief description, i.e., porter, bellhop, etc.

Alcohol expenses will not be reimbursed. The exception to this policy applies when the City is hosting a special event for third parties. For example: Convention and Visitors Bureau Receptions, Hosting of Dignitaries from other countries, and others.

If a breakfast, a lunch, or a dinner is included on the registration fee or if a **meal** is provided by the event that the employee is attending, the City will not provide a per diem for the quarter(s). Any exception would have to be approved by the City Manager. Amended: 11/07/03

The per-diem method is reimbursed by quarters in the following matter:

12:01 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.
6:01 a.m. to 12:00 noon
12:01 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
6:01 p.m. to 12:00 midnight

Meals and Gratuities-Non Per Diem (Actual Basis)

Prior approval by the City Manager or designee must be obtained if a City employee will be reimbursed on an actual basis. The only exception to this policy is International Travel. Actual itemized receipts will be attached to the expense report:

- If the receipt includes more than the travelers meal, the names of the individuals for which the expense was incurred and the name of the organization they represent should be documented.
- The expense report should include the nature of the visit or meeting with these individuals (if they are not City employees).
- No alcohol expenses will be reimbursed. The exception to this policy applies when the City is hosting a special event for third parties. For example: Convention and Visitors Bureau Receptions, Hosting of Dignitaries from other countries, and others.

(Travelers will be reimbursed for reasonable gratuities. The amount of the tip should be no more than 15% of charges reflected on for that particular service. Gratuities for meals should be included as part of the cost of the meal and should be itemized separately.

Tax Exemption

Sales tax exemption for Texas and some other states may apply to City travel (Exhibit D).

IX. SPECIAL TRAVEL

Employment Interview Travel Expense

Travel costs associated with bringing applicants for certain positions to the City for interviews may be reimbursed subject to City Manager approval. The Department will handle all costs, travel arrangements, and/or reimbursements associated with these expenses. All expenses associated with interviews will be charged to the department requesting the interview.

Moving Expenses

Depending on the circumstance, the City may pay part of the reasonable moving costs for newly recruited personnel, which has been identified as a "Critical Skilled Employee", as authorized by the City Manager on a case to case basis.

Group Travel

The City strongly discourages travel by key personnel in groups of more than three on the same plane or on extended automobile trips for which accidental injury to the group would seriously impair the operation of the City. This restriction should be enforced by management according to the circumstances of the travel and the level of responsibility of the travelers. For those in key positions, this restriction should be self-imposed.

In cases where individuals travel together and wish to share rooms, it is important that this information be clearly documented when submitting for reimbursement. In addition, it will expedite the reimbursement process if the travel reports for individuals sharing expenses are submitted at the same time.

X. PROCESSING OF TRAVEL

Travel Advances

Travel advances are only available to full time employees. Under special circumstances, the department director may make exceptions to this policy.

A travel advance may be processed to cover the cost of incidental expenses such as shuttles, taxis, bridge fees, gasoline and parking fees (See Exhibit A in the "Other" Category). The traveler should complete a Travel Advance Request Form, payable to him/herself (See Exhibit A) with approval of the department director.

Travel Advance Settlement

After Travel Expense Report must be filed within 15 working days of the trip, it is imperative to include any advanced funding provided by the City while documenting the cash advance amount.

Request for any payment, travel advance or reimbursement will not be processed for any traveler with an outstanding advance for a previous trip that is two weeks beyond the established trip return date. In addition, allow a two-week advance notice to Accounts Payable when requesting a funding advance when traveling.

Should no prior notice be given to an employee scheduled for travel, Accounts Payable may make exceptions to the above advance notice in order to not cause the traveler any financial hardship. (Timely travel arrangements are always encouraged).

Travel Expense Report

To obtain reimbursement for business related travel expenses the traveler must complete an After Travel Expense Report. A sample of the form is located in the Appendices Section (Exhibit A & B) or original forms may be obtained from the Accounts Payable Division. Any form replicated by personal computer must include all

the information on the original form, fit on one page, and be formatted as much like the original as possible.

Any Travel Expense Report with a discrepancy will be returned to the individual authorizing the travel (via interoffice mail) identifying the traveler and an explanation of what is required to correct the report. The Finance Department will try to resolve minor discrepancies via phone or e-mail or adjust small dollar unallowable expenses to expedite reimbursement.

Approval/Authorization Process

The traveler must sign and date the After Travel Expense Report (Exhibit B). Signing, signature stamping, or initialing another person's name is not allowed.

The authorized signer should not be the traveler. The authorized signer should be the traveler's department director or supervisor.

For Department Directors, the City Manager or Assistant City Manager must approve all travel forms.

IRS Requirements

In order for travel advances and reimbursement of travel expenses not to be considered taxable income to the traveler, The City's travel policies must meet the IRS definition of an "accountable plan" with the following three requirements:

- Advances and reimbursements must be made for business expenses only and must be reasonably related to the expenses the employer is expected to incur.
- Travelers must provide a statement substantiating the amount, time, use and business purpose of expenses within a reasonable time after the expenses are incurred. Original receipts must be attached to the statement.
- Employees must return any advance amount in excess of substantiated expenses within the fifteen (15) working days after the completion of the trip.

Substantiation must include:

The amount of each separate expenditure with original receipts for expenses.

- The date of departure and return home for each trip away from home, and the number of days away from home spent on business.
- The destination or location (name of the city or town) of travel.
- The business reason for the travel or the nature of the business benefit derived as a result of the travel or expenditure. Note: The IRS uses the business purpose to determine if reimbursement of the trip is taxable income to the traveler.

Most of the IRS requirements are met by proper completion of the Travel Expense Report.

City of Laredo Documentation Requirements

Along with a clear statement of the business purpose and dates of the trip, the primary documentation requirement relates to receipts. Appropriate receipts include:

Business Purpose:		Written explanation or conference agenda/itinerary
Transportation:	Air	Original passenger receipt or original e-ticket receipt/statement
Vehicles:	Rental Car	Original rental agreement receipt
	Ground	Original bus, shuttle, or taxi receipt
Lodging	Hotel	Original bill/receipt (detailing all expenses)
Meals		Original credit card or cash register receipt

Conference Fees:	Receipt from conference sponsor or copy of registration
Other	Original receipt or invoice

Helpful Hints:

Hotel expenses must be broken down by day into the categories presented on the Travel Expense Report (room, meals, miscellaneous).

Travel Expense Reports may not be submitted in pencil or red ink.

The travel advance form should match the after travel form number.

Travel authorization forms must be checked for completion to avoid delays in processing and return of reports to department.

Recheck all math. Many simple mathematical errors may impact the timeliness of reimbursement.

All receipts must be taped to an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper rather than stapled in a stack or placed in an envelope, to avoid misplacing them and to make processing faster and easier.

Missing Receipts

An employee incurring travel expenses who loses a required original receipt should seek a duplicate from the billing agency. The duplicate receipt along with a Missing Receipt Affidavit or a statement signed by the traveler indicating the original receipt is unavailable and that reimbursement of the expense has not been or will not be paid from any other source is required for reimbursement. Note: Duplicates for a missing airline passenger receipt are always obtainable. All agencies are required by the Airline Reporting Commission to keep copies of every ticket they issue.

Exceptions to Policy

Exceptions to the policy as stated in this document require special approval. A memorandum or related document explaining the request for exception must be approved by the City Manager and submitted with the Travel Expense Report before any reimbursement is paid.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Annual Spending Guidelines
Effective January, 2003

Travel Mileage Rate *	\$.36	Per mile (includes all operating costs - gas, oil, towing, repairs and insurance)
Enterprise Rent-A-Car	\$ 24.99	Economy (Metro, Aspire)
Car Rental Rates * (Per Day)	\$26.99	Compact (Escort, Neon, Focus)
	\$28.99	Intermediate (Prism, Corolla)
	\$30.99	Standard (Grand Am, Alero, Malibu)
	\$32.99	Full Size (Impala, Lumina, Century)
	\$49.99	Truck ½ Ton
Meals – Per Diem*		Refer to Domestic Per Diem Rate Schedule which is updated annually (Exhibit F)
Hotel		Actual Expenses
Residential Lodging	\$25	Per Day

***Subject to change annually**

Amended: 11/07/03