

PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

A traveler may use a privately owned vehicle, such as auto, government owned, or motorcycle when it is in the best interest of the State. The approving official shall be responsible for substantiating that use of a privately owned vehicle is in the State's best interest. Mileage rates are comprised of Tiers based on a determination of the most advantageous form of travel. The traveler shall receive a mileage reimbursement equal to the established rates published on the SAO's web site at: [See Mileage Reimbursement Rate Policy](#)

PROHIBITED MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

Employees are not entitled to mileage reimbursement for:

- Travel between their place of residence and their official headquarters, or
- Personal mileage incurred while on travel status.

USE OF AGENCY-OWNED VEHICLES

Agencies that maintain a fleet of vehicles should establish internal policies and procedures consistent with state fleet management policy for employees to request, utilize, and maintain the vehicles. Employees traveling in state-owned vehicles should purchase fuel using the state contracted fuel program credit card. If the vehicle should break down while traveling, the agency responsible for maintaining the vehicle will provide for repairs and roadside assistance to the driver.

RENTAL CARS

The Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS), through contracts with Enterprise Rent-a-Car, provides car rental services at substantial savings and convenience for state employees. For more information, please contact DOAS directly.

PARKING FEES AND TOLLS

Agencies may reimburse employees who incur parking and toll expenses while on official business for the agency. Employees that attend offsite meetings or training sessions may also be reimbursed for parking expenses. These expenses are reimbursable for travel in both state-owned and personal vehicles. Employees are expected to obtain receipts for these expenses if the amount is over the \$25 threshold. If it is not possible to obtain a receipt, then a written explanation should be included on the expense statement.

TRAVEL EXPENSES AND REQUIRED RECEIPTS/DOCUMENTATION

All requests for reimbursement of mileage, parking, and toll charges must be documented on the employee travel expense statement.

Employees should claim mileage based on the most direct route from the point of departure to the destination.

Personal/commuting mileage is then excluded to determine the actual state-use miles. Deviations from the most direct route (i.e., due to field visits, picking up passengers, etc.) should be explained on the travel expense statement.

Employees who share a state-owned or personal vehicle with another employee and do not claim reimbursement for mileage should indicate the name of the person they rode with and the dates of the trips on the travel expense statement.

MEALS & INCIDENTAL EXPENSE ALLOWANCE

Employees traveling overnight will be paid a per diem amount designed to cover the cost of meals (including taxes and tips), based on the number of meals per day for which the employee is eligible. Employees traveling overnight are generally eligible for per diem amounts designed to cover the cost of three (3) meals per day for all days on travel status *other than* the day of departure and the day of return.

Per Diem Rate: M&IE for Georgia is \$28.00 per full day, (\$6.00 for breakfast, \$7.00 for lunch, \$15.00 for dinner).

High Cost Per Diem Rate: M&IE for Georgia is \$36.00 per full day, (\$7.00 for breakfast, \$9.00 for lunch, \$20.00 for dinner).

Employees are considered traveling outside of Georgia when their official responsibilities must be performed at an out-of-state location. Employees who are working in Georgia but spending the night in lodging in another state are **not** traveling outside of Georgia.

Employees traveling outside of Georgia may receive meal per diem amounts up to the federal per diem rates (less the \$5 federal "incidentals" allowance; reimbursement of such incidental expenses are covered elsewhere in these travel regulations), at the discretion of the approving agency head or designee. The federal per diem rates (for locations within the continental United States) and breakdown by meal for federal per diem amounts may be found at the following address: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>

NON EMPLOYEE GROUP MEALS

Meals are provided for non-State employees under certain situations (See separate policy on [Non-Employee Group Meals](#)).

MEALS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH OVERNIGHT TRAVEL

Employees who are required to travel for their job and do not stay overnight may receive per diem for certain meals under the following situations:

Employees on State business who travel more than 30 miles from home or headquarters on a work assignment, and are away for more than thirteen (13) hours may receive per diem for the noon meal, even when there is no overnight lodging. In addition to the noon meal: (1) Employees who depart prior to 6:30 A.M are entitled to per diem for breakfast (2) Employees who return later than 7:30 P.M. are entitled to per diem for dinner

Employees acting as an official representative for their department may receive per diem for meals that are an integral part of a scheduled, official meeting. Per diem is only authorized, however, if the meeting is with persons outside the employee's department and if the meeting continues during the meal.

Employees may be reimbursed for noon meals that are part of a required registration fee that is paid by the employee. Note: In this instance, a per diem is not authorized; the registration fee is the basis for reimbursement.

LODGING EXPENSE

Employees who travel more than 50 miles from their home office, residence, or headquarters may be reimbursed for lodging expenses associated with approved overnight travel.

Employees will be reimbursed for the actual lodging expenses, provided the expenses are reasonable.

LODGING ASSOCIATED WITH MEETING

Employees who stay at a hotel/motel that is holding a scheduled meeting or seminar may incur lodging expenses that exceed the rates generally considered reasonable. The higher cost may be justified in order to avoid excessive transportation costs between a lower cost hotel/motel and the location of the meeting.

TAXES ASSOCIATED WITH LODGING

State and local government officials and employees traveling within the state on official business are *exempt* from paying the *county or municipal excise tax* on lodging ("hotel/motel" or "occupancy" tax). Employees should attempt to resolve any problems with the billing prior to checkout.

Pocket Guide To Statewide Travel Regulations



State Accounting Office
of Georgia
Fiscal Leadership for Georgia

Travel regulations for the State of Georgia are established by the State Accounting Office (SAO) and The Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) in accordance with OCGA 50-19-7.

These regulations provide guidance for employees traveling on State business and outlines authorized expenses associated with employee travel. State agencies and organizations are required to comply with these policies whenever traveling on business status. Agencies' are not authorized to set more lenient policies than the Statewide Travel Regulations; however, agencies may establish policies that further restrict an employee's travel if the agency determines that stricter policies are necessary.

Agencies that deviate from the travel regulations, without written authorization, could be cited in the Single Audit Report issued by the Department of Audits and Accounts.

To review the entire travel regulation document, please visit SAO's website at sao.georgia.gov

Please email any travel related questions to SAO at SAO_Travel@sao.ga.gov.

TRAVEL DEFINITIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY means that employees are responsible for accounting for their travel expenses accurately. All staff will ensure travel is conducted in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

AGENCY means any department, board, commission, or other organizational unit of government that is subject to these Statewide Travel Regulations.

COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL EXCISE TAX means the local taxes charged by hotel/motels for lodging, also referred to as “hotel/motel” or “occupancy” tax. This tax is separate from the state sales tax.

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL EXPENSE STATEMENT means the accounting document used as the basis to reimburse a state employee for travel expenses incurred while on official business.

FEDERAL PER DIEM RATE means the maximum allowance for expenses of federal employees who are on travel status.

HIGH COST AREA means any area within Georgia within which meal expenses may be reimbursed at a higher amount than the limits that otherwise apply to travel within Georgia.

LODGING means a hotel, motel, inn, apartment, or similar entity that furnishes lodging to the public for pay

MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL EXPENSE means a necessary and reasonable expense incurred by a state employee while traveling on official business.

MOTOR POOL VEHICLES means the interagency motor pool that is operated on behalf of the DOAS’s Fleet Support Services through Enterprise Rent-a-Car.

NORMAL COMMUTING MILES means the miles traveled on a regular (usually daily) basis from an employee’s residence to the location most frequently associated with work performed outside of that residence (generally, headquarters).

OFFICIAL STATION means the physical work location an employee is permanently assigned.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL means when an employee travels from a point of origin within Georgia to a point of destination within another state and return.

PER DIEM ALLOWANCE refers to the maximum food allowance for which employees can be reimbursed per day.

POINT OF DEPARTURE means the beginning location used to calculate state-use miles traveled in a personal motor vehicle.

TRAVEL EXCEPTION means written authorization for travel reimbursement of expenses generally not allowable under the Statewide Travel Regulations.

AUTHORIZATION FOR TRAVEL

Employees who are required to travel for their job and are eligible for travel reimbursement should receive authorization from their department head or other designed official prior to performing the travel.

Agencies should establish a written policy designating persons/positions that may authorize and approve travel. Agencies may utilize blanket routine travel authorization for in-state travel. However, department heads or their designees should specifically authorize out-of-state travel prior to each trip. Signature of the approving official on the travel expense form constitutes authorization of employee travel. Each agency should provide its fiscal office with a list of all persons/positions authorized to approve travel expense statements. This information is necessary for fiscal office personnel to issue reimbursement travel payments.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION ON TRAVELEXPENSE STATEMENT

Employees requesting reimbursement for travel expenses are required to submit their claim to authorized personnel on the employee travel expense statement.

Requests for reimbursement should include the following information:

- Itemized expenses for authorized meals, lodging, mileage, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses. The types of expenses which are authorized and the allowable limits are discussed in subsequent sections;
- Explanation of any expenses which exceed the established limits and of any unusual expenses;
- Explanation of the purpose for the trip; and
- Description of the type(s) of transportation used.

PAYMENT METHODS

Within Georgia, payment for meals, lodging, and transportation should be made on the State of Georgia Travel Card. Employees that do not have the travel card should pay the travel expenses, and submit reimbursement upon return of the trip. In some cases, lodging may be direct billed to the State. Additionally, airfare may be purchased using state issued travel card, personal credit card, or through invoicing by a travel agent.

Method of payment is important because of ordinances which exempt State purchases from local sales taxes within Georgia.

RESPONSIBILITY OF AGENCY

The State of Georgia encourages employees to enroll in direct deposit to reduce the overall processing of an expense statement.

Employees are expected to be conservative in their spending while managers are expected to be diligent in their review.

TRAVEL ADVANCES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

The purpose of travel advances is to minimize the financial burden on employees while traveling on behalf of the State. Each agency is authorized to set specific policies and procedures regarding travel advances, provided the policies do not conflict with any other travel regulations.

Each employee receiving a cash advance shall sign and date the travel advance authorization form acknowledging receipt of funds. All employees are fully responsible for funds advanced to them and shall account for the funds in accordance with the Statewide Travel Regulations. Employees are liable for any advanced funds that are lost or stolen. A traveler shall not receive an additional travel advance until the previous trip has been reconciled and closed out.

TRAVEL BY COMMERCIAL OR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Employees should utilize commercial air transportation when it is more cost effective and efficient to travel by air than by vehicle. Employees who choose to travel by personal vehicle when air travel is more cost effective should only be reimbursed for the cost of the lowest available airfare to the specified destination. In some instances, a higher airfare may be appropriate to accommodate for multiple stops and extended travel time.

Under such circumstances, state agencies may reimburse employees for expenses incurred for air travel, provided these expenses were approved prior to the date of travel. Additionally, State agencies may reimburse employees for reasonable expenses associated with selecting seats or checking bags. These expenses should be included in the total cost of the airline ticket.

INTERRUPTION OR DEVIATION OF TRAVEL FOR TRAVELER CONVENIENCE

Any interruption or deviation from the most direct and efficient means of travel for traveler convenience requires prior approval at the agency level by the appropriate supervisor or designee. Any additional time or expense resulting from an interruption or deviation for traveler convenience shall be borne solely by the traveler.

Occasions may arise when airlines overbook, change, delay or cancel flights, thereby imposing travel inconveniences on their passengers. State employees are authorized to accept such indemnification if the travel inconvenience was imposed by the airline and there is no additional cost to the State.

UNUSED TRANSPORTATION AND ACCOMMODATIONS

When travelers’ plans change, travelers shall release air, car, and hotel reservations within the time limits specified by carriers and hotels. The State shall not reimburse travelers for charges incurred as a result of failure to release accommodations.

EXCESS BAGGAGE/AIRLINE CHARGES

The State will only pay for excess personal and State baggage necessary to carry out official State business. Such baggage shall be transported by the most economical method.

These fees, if reasonable, are part of the cost of travel. Employees may, therefore, be reimbursed for such costs, regardless of whether or not the airfare tickets were purchased through the State airfare contract.

AIRPORT SHUTTLE, COURTESY VAN, AND TAXI SERVICE

Employees officially on travel status may be reimbursed for necessary costs of transportation by bus, taxi, or airport vans for the following situations:

- Between the individual’s departure point and the common carrier’s departure point;
- Between the common carrier’s arrival point and the individual’s lodging or meeting place; and
- Between the lodging and meeting places if at different locations.

REQUIRED TRANSPORTATION DOCUMENTATION

All travel by rented or public transportation must be reported on the employee travel expense statement. Employees requesting reimbursement must submit receipts for travel by commercial air carrier or railroad and for the cost of rented vehicles, including the cost of gasoline purchased when the amount is over \$25.00. Although receipts are not needed for expenses under \$25.00, employees must include a point-to-point explanation for each item reimbursed. All transportation expenses should be itemized on the employee travel expense statement.