

**DRAFT
TRAVEL EXPENSES**

ORIGINAL

I. PURPOSE

This guideline establishes the rules governing the eligibility for payment of expenses incurred by City employees, elected and appointed officials during travel directly related to official business. These rules provide for the payment of travel funds and for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

A. The authority for promulgation of rules defining the rates of allowable mileage, food and lodging and similar travel expenses rest with the **City Council based on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.**

B. The Finance Department ensures conformity to the procedures as prescribed in this guideline. Normal audit rules will be applied to establish conformance among city departments.

C. The Department Directors are responsible for the dissemination of these procedures to all employees; and for verification and submission of all Requisitions, Request for Travel Forms, Travel Expense Forms, and receipts and/or requests for reimbursement to Finance.

D. The individual employee traveling on official business is responsible for making sure he/she understands this policy and complies with it. Any unusual circumstances or exceptions must be clarified in advance and any deviations must be approved in writing in advance by the Finance Director.

E. NOTE: Reimburse or reimbursement as it appears anywhere in this procedure, references the fact that detailed documentation must be provided with the final Travel Expense Report.

III. POLICY

In order to afford employees, elected and appointed officials maximum flexibility in the accomplishment of their assigned tasks, the City of Jonesboro will pay travel expenses directly related to official business in accordance with amounts authorized herein. Travel expenses for official business may include the cost of out-of-town conferences involving professional associations, intensive training of the "short course" nature, and meetings with state and federal authorities on program-related topics. All travel expenses for employees shall be approved by their Department Director **within their approved travel budget.** Travel expenses for Department Directors shall be approved by the Mayor.

Travel by elected or appointed officials shall not require approval subject to prior budget approval.

IV. PROCEDURE

Department Directors must approve all requests for official travel on the Request for Travel Form (See Appendix B – Travel Forms) prior to the employee's departure. The Department Director will evaluate the impact of travel requests against factors including budget constraints, job-relatedness of traveler's activities, and other program considerations.

A. Allowable expenses for official City travel shall be computed according to the following rates:

1. Transportation:

a) An employee may choose to extend travel beyond the time required to conduct the business purpose of the travel. Time and expense incurred in excess of the business purpose are the responsibility of the traveler. These arrangements must be approved in advance, in writing, by the traveler's Department Director.

b) Airline ticket payment will be made for actual coach costs. The traveler has the option of using their own recourses (cash, credit card, etc.) to purchase reimbursable tickets, or the following procedure may be utilized for the City to purchase tickets. A Purchasing Requisition payable to Visa, Approved Request for Travel Form, Airline Itinerary, and Confirmation Locator Number (supplied by the airline for tickets placed on 24-hour hold) must be submitted to Finance **Department** as soon as possible after reservations are made. (See Appendix A: Obtaining Airline Tickets Policy.)

Transferring tickets is not allowed. FAA regulations state that tickets must be issued in the traveling employee's name.

c) **Mileage reimbursement for use of a private vehicle is allowable in the event a City-owned vehicle is not available.** Mileage shall be based on the current IRS per mile rate. Trip distances shall be computed (and printed) using Map Quest or similar software. However, personal vehicle mileage reimbursement shall not exceed the lowest coach airfare available at the time of the travel request (documentation must be provided); nor shall food and lodging expense be for more than one additional day of travel time to and/or from the destination city. Any exceptions to this must have prior approval in writing from the Finance Director.

Reimbursement for use of personal vehicles to travel to and from the airport will be one round trip if utilizing airport parking, or two round trips if not utilizing airport parking. Mileage is paid from City Hall or the travelers normal work location to the airport and back. If travel is mandated by the Department Director's written directive on a non-regularly scheduled workday, round trip mileage from the traveler's home of record is authorized.

d) Taxi fare and similar public transportation is reimbursable, for all necessary City business related trips.

e) Rental vehicles for official City travel require prior written approval from the appropriate Department Director. Written justification for renting vehicles as well as cost estimates for the rental of the vehicle and collision insurance, if you plan to purchase insurance, must accompany all requests for travel. Actual costs of mid-sized or smaller vehicles rented from recognized car rental agencies (Avis, Hertz, National, Budget, Dollar, etc.) are reimbursable. When more than four (4) employees are traveling to the same destination, reimbursement for actual costs of renting vans shall be allowed.

f) Fuel for City-owned vehicles is reimbursable. Use of City-owned vehicles outside City limits requires written justification from the traveler's Department Director.

2. Food

a) Meal receipts are required. Allowance for meal expenses will be paid on a daily, or part of a day, basis depending on the departure and return times.

b) Breakfast allowance is not provided for travel with an initial departure time later than 8:00 AM. Dinner allowance is not allowed for a final arrival time earlier than 6:00 PM.

c) The allowance for an entire day, including tips, is \$40.00. A per meal allowance shall be: breakfast - \$8.00; lunch - \$12.00; Dinner - \$20.00; for a total of \$40.00, including tips. In cases where a meal is provided by the attended function, unless the Department Director provides prior written approval, the allowance will not be paid for that meal.

d) Reimbursement of meals for other purposes for official city business (i.e., meetings for Copps, Drug Task Force) must state the name of guest(s), nature of business, and be approved by the Finance Director based on prior budget approval.

e) The City shall not reimburse the costs of alcoholic beverages.

3. Lodging

a) The City will reimburse charges for room rate, taxes, and phone calls made on behalf of the City, where it is reasonably expected that a prudent traveler could not return to their residence.

b) Lodging reimbursement in excess of **\$150.00 (plus tax) per night**, requires approval by the Finance Committee on the Travel Request Form prior to traveling, **with the exception of site specific rates.**

4. Tips

Non-food tips are allowed, up to a maximum of \$10.00 per trip.

5. Parking

Expenses incurred for parking are reimbursable. Any airport parking shall be reimbursed at the long-term parking rate.

6. Telephone Calls

Business long distance telephone calls are reimbursable, including a safe-arrival call per trip. (\$15.00 Maximum)

B. Submission of actual expenses shall be as follows:

1. The traveler must submit a completed copy of the Travel Expense Report (with receipts and/or request for reimbursements) to the Accounts Payable section of the Finance Department within 10 workdays of return. (See Appendix B- Travel Forms.)
 - a. After 10 days, all follow up will be addressed through the appropriate Department Director to the traveler. Any traveler with money due to the City shall submit these monies to the Treasury Management Division of Finance, then attach the Collector's receipt to the Travel Expense Form and forward to Accounts Payable.
 - b. If not resolved after an additional 10 days, the amount of money advanced will be deducted from the traveler's next paycheck.

2. **NOTE:** Reimburse or reimbursement as it appears anywhere in this procedure, references the fact that detailed documentation must be provided with the final Travel Expense Report. Receipts and/or request for reimbursements must document the expenses and explain the business purposes (who, what, when, where, & why) for the expense. Lodging expenses must be itemized by day, and show all misc. expenses. **Expenses will not be reimbursed without detailed, supporting receipts.**

Approved: _____

Travel Expenses

Appendix A – Obtaining Airline Ticket Policy

1. PURPOSE/RESPONSIBILITY

The City of Jonesboro no longer uses a dedicated travel agency to obtain Airline reservations/tickets for official travel. This responsibility now rests on the individual traveler and his/her department.

2. POLICY

Travelers shall obtain the best available airfare by reserving tickets as soon as possible by purchasing a nonrefundable, nontransferable ticket. Best prices are obtained by purchasing the tickets at least 14 days prior to travel. These tickets cannot be refunded, and any changes usually cost \$100 and must be made prior to scheduled departure date and time, or the ticket has no value. (Airline policies change frequently. Check with your airline to be sure of all policies in effect at the time of travel.)

3. PROCEDURE

- A. Use websites to determine the best time and cost of travel. (All major airlines and several specialty companies have sites for comparison.) Print the itineraries that fit your travel best, but print at least 2 (two) for comparison purposes.
- B. Complete the Request for Travel Form (See Appendix B) getting the proper authorizations (Department Director, and Mayor if required).
- C. Prepare a Payment Requisition to VISA so Accounts Payable can pay for the tickets when received.
- D. Call airline and make reservation and request a 24-hour hold. The airline will give you a confirmation/locator number that must be written on the Payment Requisition and printed literary.
- E. Deliver the completed Payment Requisition and all attachments to Accounts Payable as soon as possible so further processing can be completed before the 24-hour hold expires. (Make sure the Accounts Payable staff know the Requisition is for a Ticket on 24-hour hold. Staff will call the airline and use a City Credit Card to pay for the ticket.)
- F. The airlines will send a ticket/official itinerary either by mail or e-ticket. Accounts Payable will compare the ticket/e-ticket to the Requisition documents to verify correctness, and forward the ticket/e-ticket to the traveler before the travel date.
- G. The information Accounts Payable receives from the traveler and the airline will give adequate documentation to pay the credit card bill promptly to avoid interest charges.

4. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Accounts Payable must have the following documents before it can process any Request for Travel for Airfare:

- A. Purchase Requisition payable to Visa with traveler's name, a brief description of travel, accounting classification for travel expense, and airline confirmation/locator number.
- B. Approved Request for Travel Form (With all travel requirements filled in, and all needed approvals).
- C. Airline Itineraries with the one you are using highlighted, and the confirmation/locator number written out. (Print at least two itineraries for price comparison.)

Travel Expenses

Appendix B – Travel Forms

1. **PURPOSE/RESPONSIBILITY**

The Request for Travel (RT1) and Travel Expense Report (TER1) forms must be used for all travel by Jonesboro employees, elected and appointed officials traveling on official business. The responsibility for the correct submission of these forms rests with the individual traveler and the Department Director. The Department Director must sign both forms to complete the total travel package. These forms shall be available in the Finance Department.

2. **POLICY**

Travel expenses for the City of Jonesboro must be accounted for, both for individual and Department needs, as well as for continued public trust.

3. **PROCEDURE**

A. Request for Travel (RT1) - All official travel must be requested on this form. Only one Request for Travel Form (RT1) will be completed for each complete travel package. All required estimated costs must be recorded and all required approvals affixed before copies are made for each Purchase Requisition.

Copies needed:

- 1.) Original-with all signatures, keep in your files until you file the Complete Travel Package at trip end.
- 2.) Copy with Airfare Requisition.
- 3.) Copy with Rental Car Requisition (if paying Rental Car separately.)
- 4.) Copy with Lodging Requisition (if paying Lodging separately.)
- 5.) Copy with Registration Requisition (if paying Registration separately.)
- 6.) Copy for Personal Requisition (Gasoline, Personal Vehicle Mileage, Taxi, Food, Lodging, Registration, & Tips if not paying separately.)

B. Travel Expense Report (TER1) – All official travel must be finalized using this form. Only one Travel Expense Report need be processed for each complete travel package.