

Fort Bend County Travel Policy

Approved in Commissioners' Court on November 3, 2009

Effective November 4, 2009

Revised September 7, 2010

The Commissioners' Court allocates funds annually for the payment of travel expenditures for county employees and officials within the individual departmental budgets. Travel expenditures paid from these budgets must serve a public purpose for Fort Bend County. These expenditures may be paid directly to the vendor or provided as a reimbursement to the employee/official upon completion of their travel. Advance payments to vendors may be accommodated by issuance of a check or use of a County procurement card. Eligible expenditure categories under this policy include: Lodging, meals, transportation, registration fees, and other fees (with justification). Each category is further defined below.

CONTRACT RATES:

Fort Bend County is a 'Cooperative Purchasing Participating Entity' with the State of Texas. This program is also known as TPASS (Texas Procurement and Support Services) State Travel Management Program (STMP). This gives County employees and officials access to the contract rates negotiated by the State for hotels and rental cars. Procurement procedures for these contract services are explained within the categories below.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL:

Authorization: The traveler must obtain Commissioners' Court approval for out-of-state travel before departure. The duration must include travel days along with the event scheduled days. To prevent delays in processing travel reimbursement, ensure that the travel duration is accurately defined when submitting the agenda request.

Documentation: The traveler must provide an excerpt from the Commissioners' Court minutes (<http://www.co.fort-bend.tx.us/getSitePage.asp?sitePage=7269>) with the travel reimbursement form.

LODGING:

Hotel:

Texas: Hotel reimbursements are limited to contract hotel rates near the event site. Participating contract hotels are listed at http://portal.cpa.state.tx.us/hotel/hotel_directory/index.cfm. When making a reservation the traveler must ask for the State of Texas Contract rate and be prepared to provide the County's agency #: C0790. Contract hotels must be used unless a non-contract hotel provides a lower total cost or no contract hotel is available. If the organizer of a conference/seminar has negotiated discount rates with a hotel(s), the traveler may choose these lodging services without penalty. The traveler will be responsible for the excess charge over the contract hotel rates near the event site if they choose not to stay at a contract hotel or a conference

sponsored discounted hotel. The traveler may choose any hotel that is less than the contract hotel rates near the event site to save additional county funds. If no contract hotels are listed for the destination city, the traveler is required to choose lodging services near the event site that meet their needs at an economical rate.

Out-of-State: The traveler is required to choose lodging services near the event site that meet their needs at an economical rate.

Travel Days: If the traveler must leave before 7:00AM to arrive at the start of the event and/or return to the County after 6:00PM after the event concludes, an additional night's lodging is allowable before and/or after the event.

Additional fees: Fees for additional services (internet, telephone, valet, parking...) require justification to be allowable.

Gratuities: Gratuities are not reimbursable for any lodging services.

Overpayments by County: Any lodging overpayment by the County must be reimbursed by the hotel before processing a reimbursement to the traveler for any of the categories addressed in this policy. Prepaid lodging services should be accurately calculated or underestimated by excluding the taxes to prevent delays in processing travel reimbursements.

Procurement Card: The traveler may use the procurement card to make lodging reservations. Contact Purchasing to arrange or use the procurement card assigned to the department or traveler.

Documentation: The original itemized hotel statement must be submitted with the travel reimbursement claim showing a zero balance ~~due if paid by the traveler~~. A copy of the itemized hotel statement must be submitted with the travel reimbursement claim if the traveler used a County procurement card to purchase lodging services or prepaid by County check. Event agenda/documentation or a letter from the traveler describing the event/meeting is required. If utilizing conference negotiated hotel rates, documentation of rates is required.

MEALS:

Texas: Meals including gratuities will be reimbursed to the traveler at a flat rate of \$36/day. If a traveler departs after 2:00PM or returns by 12:00PM the reimbursement rate will be \$18/day for that day.

Out-of-state: Meals including gratuities will be reimbursed to the traveler at a flat rate of \$48/day. If a traveler departs after 2:00PM or returns by 12:00PM the reimbursement rate will be \$24/day for that day.

Day trips: Meals will not be reimbursed for trips that do not require an overnight stay.

Procurement Card: No meal purchases are allowed on any County procurement card.

Documentation: No meal receipts are required for reimbursement. Event agenda/documentation or a letter from the traveler describing the event/meeting is required.

TRANSPORTATION:

Personal Vehicle: Use of personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the current rate/mile set by Commissioners' Court ~~(\$0.55/mile as of 1/1/2009)~~. Mileage should be

calculated using the County office location of the traveler and the event location. Mileage may not be calculated using the traveler's home. ~~If actual mileage exceeds the estimate provided by the State Mileage Guide (<http://cepa.epa.state.tx.us/mileage/Mileage.jsp>) by 20%, the traveler must provide a letter explaining the purpose of the excess mileage or limit the reimbursement request to the State Mileage Guide estimate.~~ Mileage should be calculated using an employee's vehicle odometer reading or by a readily available online mapping service for travel out of Fort Bend County. If using the mileage of an online mapping service, state which mapping service was used or provide a printout of your route detailing the mileage. For local travel, odometer readings or mapping service details are not required. Departments should develop a mileage guide for employees for local travel points, if a department does not have a mileage guide, the Auditor's Office will determine if the mileage listed is reasonable.

County Vehicle: Fuel purchases when using a County vehicle must be made with the County fuel card. Original receipts must be provided with reimbursement request.

Airfare: Airfare is reimbursable at the lowest available rate based on 14 day advance purchase of a discounted coach/economy full-service seat. The payment confirmation and itinerary must be presented with the travel reimbursement form.

Trip insurance is not an allowable expense.

Rental Car: Rental cars are limited to the negotiated TPASS rates listed at:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-rental-car-contract/vendor-comparison/>. The contact information for Avis is listed here:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-rental-car-contract/Avis/>. The contact information for Enterprise is listed here:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/stmp/stmp-rental-car-contract/Enterprise/>. You will need to make your reservations at least 14 days in advance and provide the County's agency #: C0790. The instructions for reserving with each agency are explained at the individual web sites above. The traveler will not be reimbursed for any amount over the negotiated contract rates if a non-contract company is used at a higher rate. The traveler may use a non-contract vendor at a rate lower than the contract rates with no penalty. The original contract/receipt must be presented with the travel reimbursement form or a copy if a County procurement card is used. Optional rental car fees are not reimbursable such as GPS, prepaid fuel, premium radio, child safety seats and additional insurance.

Other Transportation: Other forms of transit (bus, taxi, train) are reimbursable with an original receipt.

Additional fees: Fees for additional services (tolls, parking...) require justification to be allowable. Optional rental car fees are not reimbursable (GPS, prepaid fuel, premium radio, additional insurance, child safety seats...). Original receipts or documentation are required for allowable fees.

Gratuities: Gratuities are not reimbursable for any transportation services.

Procurement Card: The traveler may use a County procurement card to make transportation reservations for air travel and rental car services. Contact

Purchasing to arrange or use the procurement card assigned to the department or traveler.

Documentation: Original receipts are required for all transportation reimbursements paid by the traveler. Transportation services obtained with a County procurement card require a copy of the receipt. Additional requirements are noted within each category above. Event agenda/documentation or a letter from the traveler describing the event/meeting is required.

REGISTRATION:

Registration fees: Registration fees are reimbursable for events that serve a Fort Bend County purpose.

Procurement Card: The traveler may use a County procurement card to register for an event. Contact Purchasing to arrange or use the procurement card assigned to the department or traveler.

Documentation: An original receipt must be obtained upon registration and submitted with the reimbursement request if paid by the traveler. A copy of the receipt must be provided if registration is paid on a County procurement card. Event agenda/documentation or a letter from the traveler describing the event/meeting is required.

GRANTS:

Travel expenditures from Federal and State grants must also conform to the granting agency's funding requirements.

PACKAGE AND GROUP TRAVEL RATES:

The traveler may obtain a package travel rate for airfare, hotel, and/or rental car services for a combined rate of less than the individual rates pursuant to the category requirements above without penalty. The traveler may also participate in group lodging or rental car services for a combined rate of less than the individual per person rates pursuant to the category requirements without penalty.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM:

The traveler must use the current travel reimbursement form (http://cww.co.fort-bend.tx.us/departments/auditor/auditor_forms.htm) for all travel related services addressed in this policy. No other expenditures may be submitted for reimbursement on the travel reimbursement form. After completing all required information, the travel form must be signed/dated by the traveler and the department head/elected official.