



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

SUBJECT: CITY OF ASHEVILLE TRAVEL POLICY		Finance and Management Services Department
		EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/04/2014
POLICY NUMBER:	ADDENDUM NUMBER	
	REVISION:	
ISSUED BY: Finance and Management Services Department Barbara Whitehorn, Chief Financial Officer		CITY MANAGER APPROVAL  Gary W. Jackson, City Manager

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

<p>SUBJECT:</p> <p>CITY OF ASHEVILLE</p> <p>TRAVEL POLICY</p>		Finance and Management Services Department
		<p>EFFECTIVE DATE:</p> <p>03/10/2015 Updated Only</p>
<p>POLICY NUMBER:</p>	<p>ADDENDUM NUMBER</p> <p>REVISION:</p>	
<p>ISSUED BY: Finance and Management Services Department</p> <p>Barbara Whitehorn, Chief Financial Officer</p>		<p>CITY MANAGER APPROVAL</p> <p>Gary W. Jackson, City Manager</p>

The City of Asheville will pay reasonable expenses that are incurred in the course of authorized City travel. Authorized City travel expenses include expenses required for City business or to enhance the knowledge of the individual for the benefit of the City. The City has two objectives when paying travel-related expenses: 1) to provide employees sufficient funds to execute business on behalf of the City and 2) to safeguard City funds by paying only reasonable and necessary expenses. This administrative policy outlines what constitutes a reasonable and necessary expense.

Directors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that travel expenditures comply with this administrative policy and for the thorough review and approval of all documents necessary for the disbursement of City funds related to employee travel. The purpose of the required documentation is to provide sufficient evidence to anyone who reviews travel transactions that public funds were expended in compliance with this administrative policy. Directors have the discretion to implement more restrictive procedures and/or guidelines for their individual departments. Any additional guidelines at the department level should be communicated in writing to department staff.

Employees traveling on behalf of the City of Asheville are expected to utilize services and accommodations appropriate for the business to be conducted. Employees are expected to travel and conduct business in reasonable comfort, within reasonable commuting distance from the meeting/work area, and exercise good judgment in distinguishing between comfort and extravagance. In addition, employees are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the City of Asheville [Ethics Policy](#), Administrative Policy #54.

For purposes of this administrative policy, the term “Director” refers to the Department Director or their designee. Any such delegation must be communicated in writing to the Fiscal Services Manager. During

an extended absence, the Director must appoint a temporary signatory designee for travel authorization and notify the Fiscal Services Manager.

I. Approval Required for Travel on City Business.

- A. Travel Authorization Form:** Employees must obtain prior approval for travel from their Director by completing a Travel Authorization Form, which is found on the City's intranet under [Process Support/Accounting/Travel Authorization Form](#). In the event travel is conducted without prior approval, the employee will be held responsible for all expenses incurred. The Travel Authorization Form must be signed by both the requesting employee and the Director. Travel out of the country must be approved by the City Manager's Office. The form must include the purpose of the trip, the destination (city and state), the departure/returns dates, and the estimated expenditures. Once approved, the Travel Authorization Form must be submitted to the Finance Department, even if no travel advance is requested.
- B. Travel Advance Request:** An advance for estimated travel expenses may be requested on the Travel Authorization Form. Travel advances should be submitted no sooner than six (6) weeks prior but no later than two (2) weeks in advance of any travel. Following a trip, employees must account for their travel advance by completing and submitting a Travel Expense Report to Accounts Payable within twenty (20) working days of their return date. Failure to comply with this administrative policy may result in: (1) a warning for the first offense and (2) disciplinary action and denial of future travel advances for a second offense. Unused travel advance money must be reimbursed to the City and supporting documentation (receipts) attached to the Travel Expense Report. In the event that travel is canceled after the receipt of a travel advance, the funds should be returned to Accounts Payable promptly. If funds are not returned within five (5) business days of the date that travel is canceled, the employee's Director will be notified and other remedies may be sought.

Travel out of the country will be allowed a reasonable extension of time to submit documentation to allow for the correct exchange rate calculation on credit card purchases.

- C. Travel Expense Report:** A Travel Expense Report, which is found on the City's intranet under [Process Support/Accounting/Travel Expense Report](#), must be completed, approved, and submitted to Finance for **ALL** travel, even when a procurement card (P-Card) is used to pay for expenses and/or no reimbursement is due. The form must include the purpose of the trip, the destination (city and state), the departure/return dates, and the expenses incurred. All receipts and supporting documents must be attached to the Travel Expense Report. Receipts should be scanned and labeled appropriately or affixed in date order to an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper and attached to the

Travel Expense Report. After review and approval (signature required) by the Department Director, the report should be forwarded to Accounts Payable. When a City of Asheville P-Card is used, a copy of the Travel Expense Report must be attached to the copy of the P-Card statement and receipts retained by the employee or proxy for audit purposes. Each employee traveling will be responsible for submitting his/her own receipts and Travel Expense Report. All Travel Expense Reports must be submitted within the timeframe as referenced in Section IB.

- D. Procurement Card for Travel Expenses:** Some employees may be issued City P-Cards with travel privileges. These cards can be used for travel and other expenses that are typically paid by the City. Personal expenses are not to be placed on a City P-Card **under any circumstances**. Misuse of a City's P-Card or violation of this administrative policy may result in card privileges being revoked and/or other disciplinary action being taken up to and including termination.

- II. Reimbursable Expenses.** The City will pay an employee's actual expenses as authorized within this administrative policy except for meals and incidental expenses (see IIA and IJJ). Itemized receipts from the vendor must be submitted except for meal receipts unless the meals were purchased on a City P-Card. While credit card/balance due receipts must also be submitted, such receipts on their own are unacceptable. Failure to submit itemized receipts will render those expenses non-reimbursable.

A. Meals, General Rules

1. Meals and incidental expenses will be paid on a per diem basis and based on rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) for the current fiscal year ([click here for rates](#)). If neither the city nor county is listed, the rate for meals and incidental expenses will be the standard CONUS (Contiguous U.S.) destination rate. The first and last day of travel, designated as travel days, will be paid at 75% the GSA per diem rate. Travel-related meals will be reimbursed if an overnight stay is required or if multiple trips are required during two or more consecutive days.
2. If a Department Director authorizes meal reimbursement for an employee for a day-trip related to training or other City business and the day-trip is for more than 12 hours and less than 24 hours, the employee will receive reimbursement at 75% the GSA per diem rate (travel day rate). If a Department Director authorizes a meal reimbursement for a day-trip that is less than 12 hours, the employee will receive reimbursement for specific meals during trip only. Because current IRS regulations identify day-trip meals as taxable to the employee, any meal reimbursement for a day-trip will be reported on the employee's W-2 form and subject to employment taxes in accordance with these regulations. That is, if travel does not require an overnight stay, meal expenses may be reimbursed with Department Director approval but must also be added to the employee's wages for tax purposes.

3. The City will not pay for meals for individuals who are not employed by the City of Asheville except with the written approval of the Director stating the business purpose of the meal. If an exception is granted, an itemized meal receipt with vendor or guest names must be attached to the Travel Expense Report. An exception to this is for City community meetings and work sessions, where food is provided to the general public. This exception must have the written approval of the Director.
4. The City will pay for meals at scheduled seminars, training sessions, and other meetings but will not reimburse for meals elsewhere if the meal cost was included in the conference fee. If meals are included in the conference fee, the per diem rate will be adjusted by the GSA amount for the covered meals. A conference itinerary/schedule must be included as supporting documentation. The City will not pay for social or recreational conference functions that are separate ticketed events not included in the base conference registration fee without prior approval of the Director (to be noted on Travel Authorization Form). Meal related tips are included in the per diem rate total.

B. Meals Paid with a Procurement Card:

1. Employees using their P-Card for travel-related meals should retain receipts and submit them as usual as part of the P-Card process. Use of a P-Card for meals should be indicated on the Travel Expense Report with copies of the receipts attached.
2. P-Card payment for meals should not exceed the per diem rate established by the GSA. Any cost in excess of the GSA established per diem rate must be reimbursed by the employee.
3. With prior written approval from the City Manager, an increase to the per diem rate may be granted on a case-by-case basis. In accordance with IRS regulations, any amount in excess of the maximum federal per diem rate for the travel destination will be reported on the employee's W-2 form and subject to employment taxes.

C. Meals Reimbursed or Paid with a Travel Advance:

1. Employees paying for meals out of pocket or with a travel advance DO NOT need to retain receipts. Meals will be reimbursed or travel advance provided at the GSA per diem rate.
2. With prior written approval from the City Manager, an increase to the per diem rate may be granted on a case-by-case basis. In accordance with IRS regulations, any amount in excess of the maximum federal per diem rate for the travel destination will be reported on the employee's W-2 form and subject to employment taxes.

- D. Entertainment:** The City of Asheville will not reimburse employees for entertainment unless it is necessary for the purpose of the trip. Written approval from the Director stating the business purpose must be attached to the Travel Expense Report.

- E. Alcoholic Beverages:** Under no circumstances will the cost of alcoholic beverages be reimbursed nor should they be charged on a City P-Card. Employees are expected to pay for any alcoholic beverages separate from any eligible meal when using a P-Card, in accordance with purchasing and P-Card policy and procedures.
- F. Transportation:**
1. Commercial Airlines: The City of Asheville will pay for coach roundtrip airfare. Employees are expected to take advantage of discounts whenever possible; however, employees are not required to fly at unusual times in order to qualify for discounts. Employees may retain frequent flyer miles and similar travel awards; however, employee shall not pay a higher price for the fare in order to obtain frequent flyer miles.
 - i. Baggage Fees: The City of Asheville will pay for the cost of one checked bag per employee traveling. Additional baggage fees will be covered only with written permission of the employee's Director.
 - ii. Upgrades: Other updates such as seat selections, travel insurance, and internet on planes may be approved at the discretion of the Director.
 2. First-Class Airfare: The City will pay only coach class fares, but employees may choose to travel first-class at their own expense.
 3. Vehicle Use: The objective of this administrative policy is to insure the lowest reasonable cost for travel. However, it is not intended to create hardships for employees. Therefore, each department may consider employees' convenience in providing flexibility to those who travel by vehicle.
 - i. City Vehicles: Motor pool vehicles or those vehicles assigned to departments should be used when available. A City Fuel Card should be used for all direct expenses associated with the use of a City vehicle, such as gasoline and oil. Please see [Fuel Card Policy](#) for additional details.
 - ii. Rental Vehicles: When renting vehicles, the employee should purchase the blanket insurance coverage offered by the City's preferred vendor (consult with Purchasing Department regarding vendor to use). The appropriate size of the rental vehicles should depend on such factors as the number of passengers and the amount of luggage or equipment being carried.
 - iii. When using either a City Vehicle or Rental Vehicle, employee should obtain a City Fuel Card from Accounts Payable. Please see [Fuel Card Policy](#) for additional details.
 - iv. Car Services/Taxis/Public Transportation: The City of Asheville will reimburse employee's reasonable car fare plus gratuity for required transportation. No more than a 20% tip will be reimbursed. Receipts must be retained and attached to the Travel Expense Report.
 - v. Personal Vehicles: Employees may use their personal vehicle for City travel. Supporting documentation (i.e. Google maps directions) must be attached

to the Travel Expense Report. The City of Asheville will pay the Internal Revenue Service mileage rate in effect at the time of travel. For all mileage reimbursement, the employee's office is to be used as the starting point. When an employee is using his/her personal car on a trip and the destination is more than 300 miles from the employee's office (one-way), the City will not reimburse the employee for expenses such as lodging, meals and incidental, while in transit, which exceed the cost of a 21-day advance round-trip coach airfare. Any travel time that is greater than the time required to travel by scheduled airlines will be considered vacation time. Normal travel time will not exceed one day.

1. Those employees that receive a car allowance will not be paid mileage reimbursement for travel that is within 50 miles (one way) of their office.
2. Personal car travel reimbursement is limited to the lesser of either the cost of making the trip by 21-day advance coach airfare or mileage reimbursement. Appendix A is provided to help calculate the least expensive travel method, which is the amount that will be reimbursed.
3. The City will pay for additional work-related mileage at the destination. A mileage log or other documentation (i.e. Google map) must be attached to the Travel Expense Report.
4. When travel is by airfare, the City will pay for airport parking expenses. For airport parking, supporting documentation must be attached to the Travel Expense Report and can be obtained from the airport's website. Mileage reimbursement to the airport will be calculated from the employee's office (workday destination).
5. If an employee is driving a personal vehicle outside of the City and has car failure, the City will pay the expense of towing the vehicle to the nearest garage, over and above the employee's personal towing insurance coverage. The employee must pay for all repairs. The towing and insurance documentation, reflecting the amount covered, must be attached to the Travel Expense Report.

G. Accommodations: The City of Asheville will pay actual expense for hotel, motels or other lodging to include parking. Employees must request the reduced government rate or conference rate, if available, when making reservations. Most hotels will not accept claims to a government rate after check-in. City employees are not exempt from hotel taxes and will be reimbursed for such taxes.

1. The City will pay no more than the cost of a single occupancy room. If an employee shares a room with someone who is not an employee of the City or who is not traveling on City business and the room cost is higher than the single room rate, the employee is responsible for paying the difference in cost.

2. Meals ordered through room service will be subject to the GSA per diem rate as referenced above in Section IIC.

H. Telephone:

1. Employees should avoid using hotel provided phones whenever possible.
2. It is recommended that employees who do not have access to a cell phone purchase a pre-paid calling card.
3. Employees who possess City of Asheville cell phones should use that phone, subject to the rules outlined in the Cell Phone Policy.

I. Internet: Internet connection fees will be reimbursed at the discretion of the Department Director.

J. Incidental Expenses: The City of Asheville will not pay for dry cleaning, shoe shining, haircuts, manicures/pedicures, magazines and books, tickets to the theater, sports events or other such expenses. Incidental expenses covered as part of the GSA per diem rate for meals and incidental expenses include: fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and restaurant servers.

K. Travel on behalf of Other Agencies: With the approval of the Department Director, employees may be granted travel time on behalf of other organizations. In unusual circumstances, the City Manager or Assistant City Manager is authorized to approve an advance of City funds for travel expenses incurred on such trips. The same guidelines outlined in this Policy apply.

L. Travel Outside Normal Workday: Compensation for travel required outside an employee's normal working hours (i.e. Saturday, Sunday, evening), will be calculated according to the department requirements and consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and accompanying regulations.

III. Other Authorizations/Approvals. Authorization for Travel and Expense Report approval for Directors and Assistant City Managers will be the next level of supervision as appropriate.