

## CLATSOP COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. A-22

**SUBJECT: Travel Policy**

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**Date: August 2022**

**Revised: February 2023**

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### **I. POLICY**

Employees are eligible for all necessary travel expenses that are directly related to the performance of their assigned duties and which are properly authorized.

### **II. ADMINISTRATION**

The Budget and Finance Manager or designee shall administer the Travel Policy, periodically review department travel records to monitor policy compliance, and provide training to departments on the implementation of the policy. Questions regarding the intent or application of the policy shall be directed to the Budget & Finance Manager or designee.

Department Directors or Managers shall be responsible for the implementation of the policy within their departments, for assuring employees comply with the policy, and for ensuring travel expenditures are appropriate and necessary for the conduct of County business.

The County Manager shall have final authority for administering, interpreting, and applying the terms of this policy.

In the event that this policy conflicts with any existing bargaining agreements, those agreements will supersede.

In the event that this policy conflicts with the Employee Handbook, this policy will supersede.

### **III. TRAVEL IN STATE**

At times it is necessary for employees to travel out of the County to represent Clatsop County at meetings, attend training sessions or conduct other County business. Often such travel requires that an employee remain away from their home and work site for more than one day. The following policies apply to such travel and should serve as a basic guide in planning transportation and lodging arrangements.

An employee shall seek the approval of the Department Head prior to undertaking any out-of-county travel for business or training purposes. Likewise, the Department Head prior to the employee's departure must approve any arrangements for transportation and/or lodging, including any necessary forms should an employee be requesting mileage reimbursement for use of personal vehicle (see below for further clarification). Further, the Department Head must approve any arrangements for family members to travel with the

employees at personal expense.

Use of County vehicle for County travel: To minimize transportation costs and maximize the efficiency of the use of County vehicles, when available a county vehicle should be used as transportation when attending meetings or training both inside and outside of Clatsop County. Departments that have a pool of vehicles that may be available are:

1. Assessment & Taxation
2. Public Health
3. Community Development
4. Juvenile Department

When using a county vehicle, it is necessary to return the vehicle in the condition or better than which it was found as well as with a full tank of gas. In addition, please report any maintenance/mechanical issues that arise during the time of use.

Rental Car Service: The County has a contract with a rental car company; in some instances, for day travel only, a rental car may be an economical option should one of the County vehicles be unavailable. Contact the County Manager's office for details on this Contract.

Use of Private Vehicle for County Travel: If a private vehicle is utilized to travel on official County business when a County vehicle is available, the reimbursement will be at the "Government-Furnished Automobile Is Available" rate published on [www.gsa.gov/mileage](http://www.gsa.gov/mileage) at the time of travel. On the rare occasion where no County vehicle is available, the employee is entitled to reimbursement at the GSA rate published at [www.gsa.gov/mileage](http://www.gsa.gov/mileage) at the time of travel. A mileage reimbursement request must be supported by a mileage log or a point-to-point mileage calculator such as [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com) or [www.googlemaps.com](http://www.googlemaps.com), or other similar websites detailing the miles driven and the business conducted. A Form for Use of Personal Vehicle on County Business must be completed **prior** to travel and should accompany the mileage log and mileage reimbursement request.

If necessary the Department Head has the authority to authorize employees on a case-by-case situation to drive their personal vehicles even though a county vehicle may be available, and still be authorized at the full GSA rate, understanding that a mileage log will be submitted.

Personal use of the private vehicle in conjunction with travel on County business shall not be reimbursable. The mileage reimbursement rate is based on the distance between the destination and the employee's place of employment or the employees' home, whichever is shortest.

In the event that an employee is required to travel on County business from their home and the distance is less than the distance they travel to their regular workstation, reimbursement will not be made.

Property damage or theft of the private vehicle, repairs, maintenance or operating costs, personal injury protection and uninsured motorist coverage are not available under the County insurance policy or reimbursable by the County and must be provided by the employee.

If an automobile accident occurs in a personal vehicle while on County business the owner of the vehicle will always be in a primary position to provide liability insurance for third party damages.

Damages to employee owned vehicles are not covered under County policy.

Under no circumstances will a driver be allowed to operate a personal vehicle on County business without valid insurance meeting Oregon's mandatory insurance limits under ORS 806.010 prior to travel. The form will be submitted with any mileage reimbursement requests.

Drivers who choose to use their own personal vehicles to conduct County business must complete the Form for Use of Personal Vehicle on County Business consenting that they currently have insurance that meets Oregon's mandatory insurance limit under ORS 806.010 prior to travel.

Accidents that occur on County business while operating a private vehicle must be reported in the same manner as accidents that occur while operating County vehicles.

#### **IV. RETURN TO WORKPLACE AFTER TRAVEL**

Upon Completion of business or training activities outside of the County, it is expected that an employee will return to their workplace as soon and as safely as practical.

If sufficient time remains for the employee to return to their place of work within the regular work period, the employee should return to the workplace immediately upon the conclusion of business or training activity. Should the employee choose not to return to work when sufficient time in the work period remains and the employee has received prior approval from their supervisor, they may use vacation/personal time for the remainder of the work period.

If return would extend outside of the regular work period, the employee should consider whether overnight lodging is advisable, based upon such factors as: 1) time of day; 2) weather conditions; 3) physical condition of the employee.

If an employee wishes to delay their return from a business or training activity for personal reasons, the employee shall seek approval from the Department Head prior to the onset of travel, and shall incur the personal costs associated with the extended travel including food and lodging.

#### **V. TRAVEL TIME DEFINITION**

Travel time is defined as the time required for travel to or from a County business or training activity, either as passenger or driver of a vehicle. Travel time includes the actual time required for travel including reasonable breaks for safety and personal hygiene but does not include time spent for meals or personal business. Employees will be compensated for travel time.

#### **VI. ACCEPTABLE USE FOR COUNTY VEHICLE**

While an employee is traveling for business or training activities in a County vehicle, the vehicle is available for use by the employee for incidental personal errands and activities

in and around the city of destination.

Approved personal activities include obtaining meals and services for other usual personal needs.

It is expected that personal use of a County vehicle will be confined to the immediate area of necessary travel.

## **VII. OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL**

Except in the event of an emergency, all out-of-state travel in which overnight accommodation is necessary and for which County reimbursement or payment will be sought, must be requested by the employee in advance in writing to the Department Head using the Employee Travel Authorization form. Approval shall be considered following review of this request.

The appointed Department Head shall base approval or denial of County funding for out-of-state travel upon an evaluation. Factors to consider are:

1. The reasonable necessity for making the trip;
2. Whether there are reasonable alternatives to making the trip (i.e. training that is closer to Clatsop County or training that is available 'on-line' or by 'video conferencing');
3. The availability of County funding to finance the trip;
4. The reasonableness of the costs submitted in the travel plan;
5. Whether ongoing County business will be jeopardized by the absence of the employee; and
6. Any other relevant factors.

## **VIII. MISCELLANEOUS TRAVEL PROVISIONS**

Whether an employee uses a County vehicle or is authorized to use a personal vehicle on official County business, bridge, road, and ferry tolls and other expenses such as parking and storage fees shall be reimbursed at cost, if itemized and accompanied by a receipt.

In all cases where reimbursement for mileage is authorized, it shall be limited to actual miles traveled for business purposes.

Claims for maintenance for repair of private automobiles will not be allowed.

Individual employees shall be responsible for responding to traffic and parking violations (which result in citations) incurred while in either a County vehicle or their personal vehicle while on County business. It will be the sole responsibility of the employee to pay any fines, assessments and defense costs, which result from the alleged violations. Individual employees shall report any moving violations to their Department Head immediately upon return to the workplace.

## **IX. PAYMENT FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES**

Whenever possible all allowable travel expenses should be paid with a County issued procurement card. In the event that a procurement card has not been issued for the employee's use, they may request reimbursement for travel expenses on an Expense Report Form found on the County employee webpage (Inside). If a card has not been issued and will be necessary on a regular basis, contact the Budget & Finance

Department.

If seeking reimbursement, all itemized receipts are to be detailed and attached to the Expense Report form and given to the Department Head for their approval within five (5) working days following any County travel.

**X. TRAVEL ADVANCE**

Whenever possible, County issued procurement cards should be utilized for all allowable travel expenses while on County business. Travel ‘advances’ shall be available only with the prior approval of the Department Head. Employees may request an advance to cover anticipated expenses of at least \$25. Such a request is made using a Travel Advance Request Form. This request must be made not more than three (3) weeks or less than one (1) week before departure. Travel advances will not be provided more than one (1) week in advance of departure.

**XI. MEAL REIMBURSEMENT**

Employees traveling outside of Clatsop County on official County business may claim reimbursement for meals that are not included in the conference or seminar by submitting an itemized meal receipt. If employees elect to eat meals as a substitute and other than those provided as part of a conference or seminar, they will be at the employees’ own expense. The County will pay for all meals that are part of a convention or meeting, even if they exceed the preceding recommended standard. An additional gratuity up to 20% is allowable. If employees choose to decline a meal provided as a part of a conference or seminar, they cannot apply for reimbursement for that meal. Travel costs supported by various state and federal grants normally require special accounting for allowable costs to be tracked at the department level.

When a County employee is required to travel outside Clatsop County on County business the employee shall receive reimbursement as follows:

<u>Without a Receipt</u>		<u>With a receipt or amount allowed using a County procurement card</u>
Breakfast	\$ 8.00	actual cost up to \$14.00
Lunch	\$ 9.00	actual cost up to \$16.00
Dinner	\$18.00	actual cost up to \$29.00

\*Up to an additional 20% gratuity is allowable.

Employees may select to receive a per diem travel advance amount in place of meal reimbursement.

A per diem amount of \$71.00 per day and \$53.00 for the first and last day of travel will be paid for meals inclusive of tips. The separate amounts for breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided should you need to claim a single meal or deduct one.

Breakfast	\$16.80	(*includes 20% gratuity)
Lunch	\$19.20	(*includes 20% gratuity)
Dinner	\$34.80	(*includes 20% gratuity)

Employees will need to submit a Travel Advance Request Form. Employees will not receive both meal reimbursement and a per diem amount.

To claim a travel meal, a person must be traveling outside the County on approved County business. If traveling out of town for less than a twenty-four (24) hour period to claim reimbursement for breakfast, personnel must have been traveling on County business for at least two (2) hours before the beginning of their regularly scheduled work time. For dinner, the employee must have been traveling on County business for at least two (2) hours beyond the end of their regularly scheduled work time. For other than in-County travel, lunch is assumed to be a County business reimbursable or allowable expense.

## **XII. LODGING REIMBURSEMENT**

Lodging is allowable on trips requiring overnight stays at a single rate unless the room is shared by another County employee and one employee pays the bill and requests reimbursement.

If rooms are not available at the meeting/training site, then a moderately priced room near the meeting/training site may be authorized. Reimbursement will be based on the cost of single room if available.

Employees should also make a good faith effort to research lodging prices within close proximity to the training or conference destination with economy as a goal in this expenditure.

Employees should always request government lodging rates for County business. The website for the Government Services Administration at [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) will be the guideline for per diem lodging allowance for US cities.

## **XIII. TRAVEL AWARDS/ FREQUENT FLYER MILES**

Examples of travel awards are coupons, discounts, credit card rebates, frequent flyer miles, and tickets and vouchers for being bumped from an airline flight.

Travel awards including frequent flyer miles, compensation for being displaced and related items accrued or earned by officials and employees on official County business are considered to be part of the salary and benefits to which such officials and employees are entitled as compensation. Employees shall make decisions regarding travel arrangements and expenses in the best interest of the County rather than to maximize accrual of this benefit.

Abuse of this benefit, including but not limited to influencing travel arrangements so as to maximize accrual of awards to the detriment of the County or public is prohibited and is cause for discipline. County officials and employees shall be responsible for ensuring that this compensation is reported as income for tax purposes to the extent required by law.

Employees should be aware of provisions of the Oregon Public Employee Ethics Statutes (ORS 244.040). This statute prohibits a public employee from using or attempting to use their official position to receive a financial gain or avoid a financial detriment that would not be available but for the person's employment by a public agency.

#### **XIV. COMBINING PERSONAL TRAVEL/ COUNTY BUSINESS**

When an employee combines official County travel with holiday, weekend, vacation or other personal travel, reimbursements and payments will be made only for those costs necessary for the County's business portion of the trip. Additional costs for family should be deducted from the reimbursement request, should include itemized receipts for hotel and meals, and should never be charged to a County procurement card. Transportation costs chargeable to the County must be for the most direct route for the purpose of County business.

Reimbursement and payment for meals and lodging will be allowable only for the period of time the employee is on actual travel status for County business. No costs will be reimbursable for vacation/personal days.

State law prohibits public employees from using government rates, discounts, or contract services for personal expenses; personal services must be obtained at the rates generally available to non-public employees.

#### **XV. UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES**

The County does not reimburse for fines and parking tickets, towing or impounding fees, traffic violations, alcoholic beverages, personal entertainment, tobacco, or extravagant costs of any kind.

In the event that an employee's family accompanies the employee on County business the County will not pay any additional expenses so incurred.

#### **XVI. EFFECT OF CHANGES OF LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS POLICY**

This policy, and the procedures adopted to implement this policy, is intended to be in compliance with any and all applicable laws at the time of the adoption of this policy. If applicable laws change, and this policy has not been amended to reflect the impact of such changes, the County shall amend its procedures and the application of this policy to reflect the current state of the law, even if an amendment to this policy reflecting those changes has not been formally adopted by the County.

#### **XVII. COMPLIANCE**

Failure to comply with any provisions of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including termination.