

**ARS □ ERS □ NASS □ NIFA**

*Policy and Procedure*

**Title:** Local Travel Policy

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**Originating Office:** Financial Management Division, Travel  
and Relocation Services Branch, AFM/ARS

**This Replaces:** REE Policy and Procedure 344.0, dated 6/8/2011

**Distribution:** REE-wide

The document establishes policies and procedures on the reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official duties in and around an employee's official duty station.

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# 1. Authority

The authority for this Policy & Procedure (P&P) is Department Manual (DM) 2300-001, Agriculture Travel Regulation, Section 9., Policy and Procedures, j. Local Travel. DM 2300-001 states: “Travelers may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in the performance of official duties in and around their duty station. When the expense appears reasonable and necessary to conduct business, the traveler should be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses. Local travel expenses must be claimed within the fiscal year the expenses were incurred. However, a traveler may not be reimbursed for their normal commuting expenses, except under the Commuter Transit Subsidy Benefits Program.”

# 2. Local Travel Defined

DM 2300-001 defines local travel as “Any travel lasting less than twelve hours, within 35 miles of the duty station, or within 35 miles of the employee’s residence.” Local travel expense does not include per diem. Per diem (both lodging and meals and incidental expense) is only authorized when travel is for more than 12 hours, and the travel is to locations outside the 35 miles of the duty station or outside 35 miles from the employee’s residence.

# 3. REE Local Travel Policy

While employees are responsible for their normal and routine commuting expense to and from their residence and official duty station, it is Research, Education, and Economics (REE) policy that employees should not have to pay, out of pocket, over and above normal commuting expense when ordered to perform work away from the official duty station but within the local commuting area. Employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in performing official duties in and around their official duty station.

Local travel expenses may be incurred in a variety of work-related situations including, but not limited to, required attendance at meetings, conferences or other official functions, training, periodic work assignments at alternate duty locations in or around the official duty station, etc. The authority to reimburse employees for local travel expenses is delegated to each REE agency. Approval of individual local travel claims is generally the responsibility of the employee's fundholder, supervisor, or other designated travel approving official.

# 4. Allowable Local Travel Expenses

Local travel expenses may include such items:

- The cost of subway, bus, train, taxi, or other public transportation.
- The cost of using a privately-owned vehicle (POV) calculated based on the GSA mileage reimbursement rate (gasoline is included as a component of the mileage reimbursement rate and is not separately reimbursed).

- When authorized to use a Government-owned vehicle (GOV), reimbursable local travel expenses may include the cost of any necessary gasoline paid by the employee IF a fleet card is not available or accepted.
- Whether using a POV or GOV, the cost of parking and tolls are reimbursable.

## 5. Determining Reimbursement for Local Travel Expenses

Generally, if the expense appears reasonable and necessary to conduct business, the employee should be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses above and beyond the normal commuting costs. Reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred is at the discretion of the agency and the employee's supervisor or travel approving official.

It is important to note that, under a Comptroller General ruling, a **Federal Agency, cannot reimburse (or give the appearance that they are reimbursing) employees for local travel costs incurred solely from the employee's residence to their official duty station** unless the employee is participating in the Public Transportation Benefit Program sponsored by the Federal Government. The authority under this program is unique and should not be interpreted as a basis for reimbursing employees for home to work travel costs.

There are many different commuting options for employees; for that reason, REE does not have a single, established formula for determining which local travel costs will or will not be paid. Employees must provide justification for expenses incurred over and above normal commuting expenses to receive reimbursement. Transit subsidy costs are included as a normal daily commuting cost of the employee when determining additional out of pocket expense.

The amount of reimbursement is determined on a case-by-case basis with consultation with the supervisor. The supervisor makes the final determination on local travel reimbursement consistent with the policy established in Section 3 of this Bulletin. The following are examples that are not intended to be inclusive of all situations, but will provide guidance on when to authorize local travel reimbursement:

Example A: An employee is in a van pool and pays a flat monthly rate of \$100 to maintain a slot in the van pool. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative office one day. The employee cannot take the van pool to the alternative location and must drive a POV. Because the \$100 paid for the van pool is a flat monthly rate and not prorated daily or refundable for days the employee does not use the van pool, the cost of using a POV to perform work away from the official duty stations is over and above the cost of the normal commute. The employee should be reimbursed mileage, plus any tolls and/or parking incurred.

Example B: An employee uses her own car to drive to work each day, and parking is provided at her office at no cost. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative site for one day. Normally, employee drives 30 miles round-trip to her office, but it is a 40 mile round-trip from her residence to the alternative work site. The employee must also pay a parking fee of \$10.00 at

the alternative location. The employee should be reimbursed the additional 10 miles of mileage and the parking fee, because the mileage and parking are over and above the normal commuting costs.

Example C: An employee takes public transportation to work each day at a cost of \$3.25 each way. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative location, accessible by public transportation, but at a cost of \$2.85 each way. The employee receives no reimbursement, because the cost of commuting to the alternative location is not an additional cost to the employee.

Example D: An employee takes public transit to work each day, for which they receive a transit subsidy. The transit subsidy covers the \$4.50 cost of round-trip daily subway fare. In addition, the employee pays \$1.75 to park at the subway lot, and drives 10 miles round-trip to the subway lot, for an additional cost of \$5.10 (10 miles times .51 mileage reimbursement rate, current rate as of the publication date of this document). Total daily commuting cost is \$11.35. The employee is ordered to perform work at a location that is 20 miles (40 miles round-trip) from the employee's residence for a total cost of \$20.40 (40 miles times .51 mileage reimbursement rate, current rate on the publication date of this document). The employee's additional out of pocket expense is \$9.05 (\$20.40 minus normal cost of \$11.35), which may be reimbursed as local travel. Please note that the transit subsidy IS included as a normal commuting cost in this calculation.

*Note: Actual calculations must reflect the current General Services Administration mileage reimbursement rate established for travel using a POV.*

## **6. Approving Local Travel Expenses.**

Supervisors and other travel approving officials will ensure that employees are promptly reimbursed for reasonable and necessary, out-of-pocket expenses incurred for official local travel in or around the official duty station. **Approving reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred must be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with policies in this P&P.** In making this determination, approving officials should take care not to reimburse or give the appearance that they are reimbursing employees for routine residence to official duty station commuting costs. It is the responsibility of the employee seeking reimbursement to clearly illustrate and justify that local travel costs incurred were out of pocket and not part of their normal commuting expense.

*As REE policy, reimbursement for local travel expenses will be supported by adequate receipts unless obtaining a receipt for local travel is impractical, such as for metered parking or mileage reimbursement.*

REE agencies in the Washington, D.C. area provide regular shuttle service between various REE offices and the main Department of Agriculture office on Independence Avenue, S.W. Supervisors may elect to have employees assigned to alternative offices in the Washington, D.C. area report to their official duty station and use shuttle service in lieu of authorizing and reimbursing local travel. When ordering employees to use shuttle service, supervisors should consider the time traveling on the shuttle as part of the employee's regular tour of duty hours.

## 7. Procedures for Reimbursing Local Travel

Local travel may be reimbursed as follows:

- Invitational Travelers (non-REE employees)
  - A Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business (SF-1164), processed through the Financial Management Modernization Initiative System (known as FMMI); or
  - A method/system of local travel reimbursement established by REE or the Department.
  
- REE Employees
  - A Dollar Transaction expense in the WebTA system (Attachment A). Reimbursements made through the WebTA system should be supported by a request for reimbursement with an itemized list of expenses including date incurred, type, amount (Attachment B), and receipts for any single expense greater than \$35. Request may be submitted to the approving official via email or hardcopy; or
  - A method/system of local travel reimbursement established by REE or the Department.

Additionally, for travel outside of the 35 mile radius, any miscellaneous expenses such as mileage, tolls, parking, etc., where there is no per diem (lodging and/or meals) entitlement associated with the travel, may be reimbursed through WebTA (REE Employees) or an SF-1164 (Invitational Travelers), as appropriate. TDY travel with a per diem entitlement must be authorized and vouchered through GovTrip.

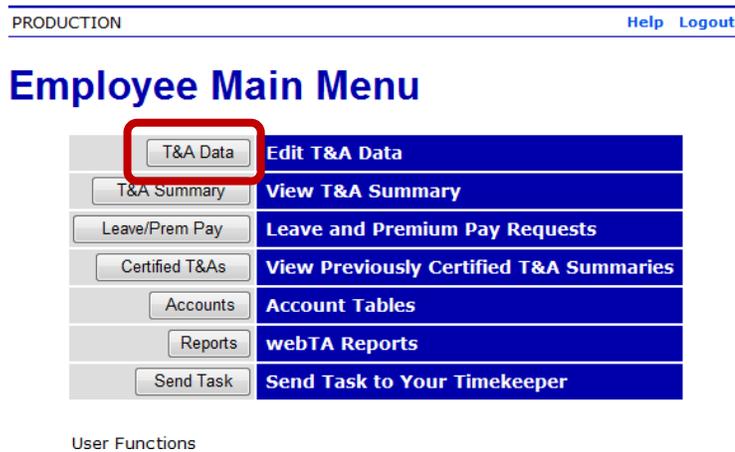
Any questions pertaining to this P&P may be directed to the Chief, Travel and Relocation Services Branch, Financial Management Division, Administrative and Financial Management.

/s/

ROBERT H. MAGILL  
Acting Director  
Financial Management Division

## Instructions for Claiming Local Travel Reimbursement through the WebTA System

1. Login to the WebTA system using your eAuth user id and password or LincPass.
2. Select **T&A Data** button from the Employee Main Menu.



3. On the T&A Data page scroll down to the **Dollar Transactions** section at the bottom of the page.

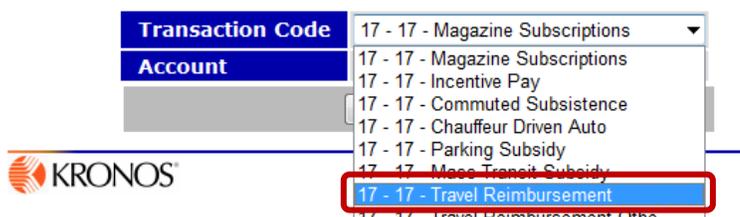


- If claiming local travel expenses for the first time select the **New** button



- On the New Dollar Transaction Activity page, select "**17 - 17 -Travel Reimbursement**" from the Transaction Code drop down

## New Dollar Transaction Activity



- Select **Save**

## New Dollar Transaction Activity

<b>Transaction Code</b>	17 - 17 - Travel Reimbursement
<b>Account</b>	(NFC Stored Account)
<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<input type="button" value="Cancel"/>

4. Enter the total amount being claimed for local travel in the in the **Dollar Amount** field under the Dollar Transactions section and a brief description of the expense in the **Remarks** field.

Dollar Transactions			Remarks: Parking & Metro Fare in DC 12/02/2011
Transaction	Account Description	Dollar Amt	
17 - Travel Reimbursement	(NFC Stored Account)	15.00	
		<b>Total</b>	

5. Process the rest of the T&A as usual i.e. **Update**, **Save/Return**, or **Validate** as required.

**Sample Itemization for Local Travel Reimbursement**

Date Incurred	Amount Claimed	Expense Description
<b>11/30/2011</b>	\$5.50	Metro Fare to DC - meeting with OCFO
<b>11/30/2011</b>	\$3.95	Parking fee-Metro New Carrollton
<b>11/30/2011</b>	\$4.35	Metro Fare from DC