

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
TRAVEL POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES¹
Effective March 24, 2020

¹ Except as otherwise specified in this Policy, effective July 1, 2019, this policy does not cover vendors, contractors, and professional consultants.

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA TRAVEL POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

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COUNTY TRAVEL POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES – QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Introduction

This is a quick reference guide to travel policies and procedures contained in the County's Travel Policy for Employees. It is NOT meant to provide comprehensive information.

Guiding Principles

All expenses incurred while on County business should be reasonable and a prudent use of public funds. Travelers shall choose the most efficient, direct and economical travel options required by the occasion.

Travel Authorization

Any person traveling on County business and seeking reimbursement from the County, must obtain travel authorization prior to the travel. Formal written request for travel reimbursement is made on a Travel Authorization form. This form must be completed if one or more of the following are incurred: airfare, lodging, travel-related meals, car rental for overnight trip, or an advance.

Within 30 calendar days of return from a County trip, travelers must submit travel documents to their departments to allow a final accounting on a Trip Expense Voucher.

Travel Advance

Travel advances will be limited to 85% of the total estimated travel cost with a minimum amount of \$100.00. Employees with a P-card or who have an outstanding advance balance are not eligible for a travel advance.

Reimbursable Travel Costs

Transportation Costs

Air travel reservations are made through a County-approved travel agency. Contact your Departmental Travel Coordinator

for travel arrangement assistance.

A car rental is allowable if it is the least expensive ground transportation option. However, if a car rental is used, reimbursement will be the lower of actual cost or the County's contracted rate with the current car rental company. A written justification for such rental is required on the Travel Authorization form, and any reimbursement must be supported by an itemized car rental receipt.

Travelers who use a private auto for traveling on County business will be reimbursed for personal car mileage which exceeds the normal home-to-work mileage. When traveling to a destination with scheduled airline service, the mileage payment may not exceed the equivalent coach class airfare plus transportation to local airport and other transportation related costs at destination (such as ground transportation and hotel vehicle parking charges).

For any other ground transportation options, the most economical and appropriate form of available transportation that meets the traveler's needs should be selected.

Lodging Costs

The maximum reimbursement for lodging will be 165% of the federal per diem rate allowed for the location of the overnight stay. An exception is if the traveler stays in a lodging location where a conference, training, or meeting is held, then 300% of the per diem rate is allowed. The reimbursement rate includes room, resort fee, and transient occupancy tax.

A valid, itemized receipt must accompany the lodging reimbursement claim.

Meal Costs

Travel meals will be reimbursed at the federal per diem rate allowed for the location of the travel and receipts are not required. However, itemized receipts are required for members of the Board of Supervisors and appointed commissions and committees per State law.

Federal Per Diem Rate

For Travel within the Continental United States, use rate listed on <http://www.gsa.gov/>

* Use County Code (www.naco.org) search when the city is not listed and to identify if the city is in a high cost county
* If neither city nor county is listed, use CONUS standard lodging/meal rate

Travel Exceptions

Exceptions to specific provisions of the County's Travel Policy for Employees may be authorized by the Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer on a case-by-case basis, and only when there is adequate written justification and documentation and the travel is within the intent of this policy.

Allowable exceptions are confined to the following conditions:

* To serve the business interest of the County
* To avoid a severe hardship or inconvenience
* To observe an established or expected protocol at a specified event
* To respond to an emergency situation

Examples of when the Travel Exceptions Form are required prior to travel

* Attendance of more than policy-specified number of employees from the same budget unit to seminar/workshop.
* Lodging costs within four neighboring counties.

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Incidental and Other Reimbursable Expenses

Reasonable and necessary costs for other travel expenses will be reimbursed when supported by itemized receipts (if more than \$10) or other appropriate documentation.

Incidental expenses incurred for fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff will be reimbursed up to GSA limit (currently at \$5 per day).

Non-reimbursable Expenses include

- * Parking and traffic violations
- * Mileage for County vehicles
- * Mileage for commute to work
- * Mileage within Santa Clara County for Board of Supervisors and management persons who receive a vehicle allowance
- * Emergency repairs for non-County vehicles
- * Car rental insurance for travel in United States and Fuel Service Option
- * Tips exceeding County allowances

- * Refreshments, snacks, alcoholic beverages
- * Personal travel expenses
- * Medicinal remedies, health supplies, cosmetics
- * Personal entertainment, e.g. in-room movies
- * Childcare fees; kennel/boarding fees
- * Short term airport parking exceeding long term rate
- * Incidental expenses that are determined to be of a personal nature, extravagant, or might be considered to be unreasonable or unnecessary

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures:

This policy provides guidelines and establishes procedures for employees and others incurring authorized business travel expenses on the County's behalf.

Travel request circumstances not covered in this policy shall be treated as exceptions pursuant to the Travel Exceptions section of this policy with reimbursements subject to Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer approval.

Who This Policy Applies To:

The policies, guidelines and procedures contained herein apply to:

- All employees and officers of the County of Santa Clara whether appointed or elected;
- Members of boards, commissions, committees and task forces advisory to the Board of Supervisors;
- County volunteers;
- Non-employees traveling on County business that are not subject to separate County travel policies;
- Contracts under the direction of the Office of County Counsel, where the contracts specifies the Policy applies; and
- Payments to vendors that are identified as county charges in Government Code sections 29601 and 29602.

Agencies or departments may adopt more restrictive procedures, if desired.

Vendors, Contractors, and Professional Consultants

Except as otherwise specified in this Policy, effective July 1, 2019, this policy no longer covers vendors, contractors, and professional consultants. For matters concerning the compensation of vendors, contractors, and professional consultants regarding travel expenses please refer to the Administrative Policy entitled Travel Policy for Contractors. Contracts executed prior to July 1, 2019, which include terms authorizing reimbursement for vendor travel expenditures pursuant to this policy, shall continue to abide by the terms of the agreement and this policy. In such cases, the contract terms remain in force as written until such time as the contract expires or the terms are amended to conform to the Travel Policy for Contractors terms.

For the remainder of this document, County business travelers will be referred to as "travelers" or "employees," unless otherwise noted.

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Purpose

The County of Santa Clara Ordinance Code, Division A31, authorizes travel for business purposes, on the County's behalf. The ordinance allows advances and reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred by County employees and others for business travel and related expenses. The ordinance also states that specific policies, procedures and guidelines are provided in this Travel Policy for Employees. The County Ordinance on travel can be found in Appendix A.

Objectives

The objectives of the County of Santa Clara Travel Policy for Employees and procedures documents are as follows:

1. To support travel costs incurred on behalf of the County for the purpose of conducting County business;
2. To establish uniform criteria and approval authority for advances and reimbursement of travel expenses for County business travelers;
3. To provide County business travelers with a reasonable level of service and comfort at reasonable cost; and
4. To avoid the improper use of County funds for travel that does not benefit the County.

Guiding Principles

Travel on behalf of the County may be approved only when the purpose results in a benefit to the County.

All expenses incurred while traveling on County business should be a reasonable and prudent use of public funds. Travelers should choose the most efficient, direct and economical travel options required for the occasion and any individual who chooses a different route, without adequate justification, must assume any additional expense incurred. If for traveler's personal convenience, there is interruption or deviation from the direct route, the travel cost cannot exceed that which would have been incurred on uninterrupted travel.

Travel is authorized for the minimum number of persons necessary to carry out the business purpose of the travel, and only for those whose job tasks are directly related to the purpose of the travel.

Occasions for Travel

Examples include the following types of occasions when the County traveler is required to travel out of the County to:

1. Attend a convention, seminar, meeting, school, or training;
2. Make professional presentations as a County employee or official;
3. Interview persons; inspect programs, facilities or institutions; conduct surveys; exchange professional information;

4. Work at a project location sufficiently distant from the main or regular place of work to require overnight lodging;
5. Work long hours away from the main or regular place of work where daily travel is impractical;
6. Transport equipment to and from distant points for repair or maintenance;
7. Transport prisoners and/or clients; attend legal proceedings or hearings;
8. Participate in formal activities, including hosting of persons who, for protocol reasons, merit appropriate courtesies and hospitality.

Possible Conflict with Labor Agreements or Laws

These policies apply to all travelers on County business unless they are in conflict with specific provisions of existing labor agreements or with specific provisions of state or federal law. In such cases, the provisions of those agreements or laws shall prevail for the employees covered under those agreements or laws.

Prudent Judgment and Common Sense

While this manual tries to provide specific guidelines for most circumstances that might be encountered while traveling on County business, it cannot anticipate all possible circumstances. When such circumstances occur, travelers must use prudent fiscal judgment and common sense in the expenditure of public funds.

Itemized Receipts

The policy requires travelers to submit itemized receipts in certain situations (airfare, rental car, lodging, etc.) to receive reimbursement. If itemized receipts are not provided, then reimbursement for the applicable cost will not be allowed.

Personal Credit Card Use

Travelers may use their personal credit cards to pay for travel costs related to County business but must ensure costs comply with the provisions of this Policy (e.g., airfare costs comparable to that offered through the County's travel agency). Travelers should not use personal credit cards to pay travel costs for other employees. If this is done on an ongoing basis, the Controller-Treasurer Department reserves the right to deny reimbursement of such costs.

TRAVEL PLANNING AND ARRANGEMENTS

Consider All Costs

In choosing the most efficient, direct, and economical mode of transportation, the traveler shall take into account total costs including airfare cost, ground transportation availability and cost, alternate airport options, departure and travel times and their impact on work time, expediency, daily expenses, and similar measures of reasonable travel conditions.

Minimizing Time Spent Away

Travelers should schedule their trip so that they leave at the latest reasonable time and still arrive at their destination on time. They should also return promptly as soon as their business is finished, thereby minimizing both the time away from work and corresponding expenses.

Booking Reservations

Reservations should be made as early as possible to take advantage of available discounts.

Booking Methods

The County's travel agency should be used to purchase the air tickets to take advantage of the complimentary travel insurance coverage and facilitate the central billing and payment process. However, other options are allowed if they offer a comparable costs.

When making direct reservations, it is especially important to be sure that expenditures will be a "reasonable and prudent use of public funds." Usually pre-arranged accommodations (e.g., for a conference) provide very reasonable cost choices, and direct booking is easy and efficient, requiring no special justifications.

Cancellations

When travel arrangements must be cancelled, the traveler or the department travel coordinator, if any, is responsible for handling the cancellation and for documenting the cancellation number to avoid possible billing disputes later.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

Any person traveling on County business and seeking reimbursement from the County, must obtain travel authorization prior to the travel. This authorization should be obtained as early as possible and always prior to the date of travel. Agencies/departments should establish how employees obtain travel authorization.

Formal written request for travel reimbursement is made on a Travel Authorization form. The Travel Authorization form and travel payment request (per Trip Expense Voucher) must be completed if one or more of the following costs are incurred: airfare, lodging, travel-related meals, car rental for overnight trip, or an advance. If other travel related costs are incurred, such as mileage for personal vehicle, parking, registration, or toll fare, they can be reimbursed to the traveler per Direct Pay Code or employee reimbursement, and a Travel Authorization form and Trip Expense Voucher are not required.

The Travel Authorization number is assigned by the department for each trip at the time the Travel Authorization form is submitted; the number sequence is as follows: ###-###- TA#####. The first set of numbers represents the budget unit, the second set of numbers represents the cost center, and the third set is assigned by departments, beginning with “TA”. The original Travel Authorization form should always go to the Controller-Treasurer Department – Claims Unit with the first payment request, with copies attached to each payment request afterward. Controller-Treasurer will hold the original Travel Authorization form in an open file until the trip is completed.

Travel Authorization Form Approval

Approval of the Travel Authorization form for travel within the Continental United States (Lower 48 states) will be as follows:

PARTY SEEKING APPROVAL	APPROVER
Agency/Department staff or affiliated non-employees	Agency/Department head or designee
Agency/Department heads who report directly to the County Executive, Chief Operating Officer, or Deputy County Executive	County Executive, Chief Operating Officer, or Deputy County Executive
Department heads who report to an Agency head.	Agency head
Board Appointees (County Executive, Clerk of the Board, County Counsel, Director of Child Support Services, Public Defender, and Chief of Correction)	Approve their own, but must submit prior written notice to the Board President of all travel which is overnight or includes airfare
Any member of a County board, commission, or task force advisory to the Board	County funds used: Board of Supervisors in public session or No County funds used: traveler provides advance written notification to the Clerk of the Board. The Clerk of the Board will post notice of travel

	on subsequent board agenda
Elected Officials' staff	Elected Official
Board of Supervisors and Other Elected Officials	May approve their own and shall notify the Clerk of the Board of their planned business travel. The Clerk of the Board will post notice of business travel on the board agenda. Emergency or last-minute travel may be noticed after the fact.

For international business travel, and business travel to Hawaii, Alaska, or any US territory, the County Executive's or designee's approval for all travelers, other than Board members and their staff, is required in addition to the approvals shown above. The Board of Supervisors, acting as a Board, approves in public session all international business travel and business travel to Hawaii, Alaska, or any US territory for Board members and their staff for which reimbursement is requested by the County. Normally, this approval occurs in advance; however, if timing prevents advance approval, the travel may be pre-approved in writing by the associated Board member and be approved after the fact by the Board of Supervisors in public session. Reimbursement for travel costs will be provided only after Board approval is granted in public session. . For Board appointees, the President of the Board shall pre-approve as well. The Sheriff and District Attorney are allowed to approve all travel related to extraditions and trials in Hawaii and Alaska.

Final Approval

Notwithstanding other approvals received, the Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer has final approval as to the appropriateness and reasonableness of all reimbursement requests and whether reimbursements shall be made to the traveler.

Trip Expense Voucher

Within 30 calendar days of return from a County business trip or official function, travelers must submit their travel documents to their departments to be eligible for any reimbursement. Departments will complete and submit a final accounting of all travel expenses on a Trip Expense Voucher to the Controller-Treasurer Department for reimbursement within 90 calendar days of return from a County business trip or official function.

Documentation Requirement

For each travel occasion, documentation must include a Travel Authorization form, a Trip Expense Voucher, and pertinent supporting documentation for the final accounting. This documentation should include the following:

- ✓ P-Card statement or P-Card activity report for any P-Card transaction;
- ✓ Invoice and trip itinerary from vendor or travel agent, if applicable;
- ✓ Documentation of the cost of airfare or use of a public carrier;

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- ✓ Car rental – original car rental receipt showing the dates and number of days, mileage driven, and type of vehicle rented (the credit card receipt alone is insufficient); copy of request justification for using rental car if it was not stated in the approved travel authorization; written explanation of any unusually high mileage;
- ✓ Event brochure or agenda for conference, training, special event, including supplemental pages (if any) that have meal and price information;
- ✓ Itemized hotel bill or statement, even if vendor was paid directly or on an estimated basis;
- ✓ Receipts for travel expenses greater than \$10;
- ✓ Documents showing destination and actual mileage driven for personal vehicle mileage claims;
- ✓ SAP Journal Entry Number of deposit that shows excess advance funds were returned to the County;
- ✓ A written explanation if reporting any travel cost which may appear to be unusually high, questionable, or when exceptions have been authorized;
- ✓ Approved Travel Exceptions Form(s), if applicable (see below for detail).

TRAVEL EXCEPTIONS

Occasionally there may be exceptions to these policies and guidelines that are reasonable and necessary. Such exceptions should be confined to the following conditions:

1. To serve the business interest of the County;
2. To avoid a severe hardship or inconvenience;
3. To observe an established or expected protocol at a specified event; or
4. To respond to an emergency situation.

The exceptions described below should be clearly explained and documented on a Travel Exceptions Form and should be submitted for approval at the earliest opportunity before travel occurs.

Examples of when the Travel Exceptions Form is required before travel

1. Attendance of more than policy-specified number of travelers from the same budget unit to seminar/workshop. No more than five travelers from the same budget unit (seven travelers from the two budget units that have over 2,000 employee counts – Social Service Agency (BU 501) and Valley Medical Center (BU 921)) should be allowed to attend the same seminar or workshop, unless individual attendance is required for certification purposes. Attending travelers can give a presentation or report to other employees after returning from the workshop or seminar. If there are specific reasons that the department head approves attendance of more than five (or seven for SSA or VMC), travelers from the same budget unit for a seminar or workshop which is not for certification purposes, the additional costs and the justification notes will be documented on the Travel Exceptions Form and the additional costs will be reported to the Finance and Government Operations Committee annually.
2. Lodging costs within Santa Clara, San Benito, Santa Cruz, or San Mateo counties.

The above situations require approval from the parties listed in the table below and concurrence from the Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer (or Chief Operating Officer for Finance Agency exceptions) prior to the travel.

Any other exceptions from these policies and guidelines should be explained on the Travel Authorization form or Trip Expense Voucher, and do not require completion of Travel Exception Form.

Approval of Exception

Requests for an exception to the County of Santa Clara Travel Policy for Employees must be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis at the supervisory and department levels by the following parties before submitting for final approval:

EXCEPTION APPROVAL FOR	EXCEPTION APPROVER
Board Members	President of the Board of Supervisors
Board President	Vice President of the Board of Supervisors
Agency/Department Employees, Affiliated Non-Employees	Agency/Department Head
Staff of Individual Board Officers	Board of Supervisor Member
County Executive Appointed Agency/Department Heads (regardless of appointed authority), Elected Officials other than Board Members; members of Boards/Commissions/Committees/Task Forces advisory to the Board of Supervisors	County Executive, Chief Operating Officer, or Deputy County Executive
Department Heads (not appointed by County Executive)	Agency Head
County Executive	Finance Agency Director

Under no circumstances may any County official or employee approve his/her own exception request.

All exceptions approved as reflected in the table above require a written concurrence from the Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer, in accordance with the established Exception Principles, stated above.

Travel exception requests for an employee or affiliated non-employee of the Finance Agency shall be submitted to the Chief Operating Officer for concurrence.

TRAVEL ADVANCES

Travel Advances Guidelines

Travel advances are allowed when the traveler does not have a P-Card. The Trip Expense Voucher is used for requesting advances (as well as for documenting the final travel expense report). Whenever a County traveler requires an advance of funds for travel expenses, a written, approved request for an advance will be submitted to the Controller-Treasurer Department Claims Unit on the Trip Expense Voucher, accompanied by a copy of the signed Travel Authorization. To ensure timely preparation of the advance payment, travelers should submit their requests to the Controller-Treasurer within 30 calendar days before the trip date.

Costs prepaid by the County, including airfare, registration, hotel, mileage (as airfare equivalent), and other authorized expenditures are considered part of the travel advance and it is the traveler's responsibility to settle them within the timeframe described in the section below on Settling Advances.

An advance shall not exceed the unpaid portion of estimated travel costs and will be limited to 85% of the total estimated travel cost. The minimum advance to employees is \$100. For the transport of prisoners out of state, the minimum advance amount may be under \$100, and is authorized whether or not the traveler is a P-Card holder. Full advancement is allowed for anticipated actual and necessary expenditures for mileage, transportation, lodging, and meals for employees and prisoners. (For reimbursements related to transport of prisoners, see also rules and regulations of the California State Board of Control.)

Settling Advances

Advances are settled through the filing of a final expense report on the Trip Expense Voucher. Travelers are required to submit travel documents to their department within 30 calendar days after returning from their trips as required by IRS guidelines for advances. When the advance has exceeded expenses, documentation should also include the SAP journal entry number for deposit (showing funds were returned to County). If the Trip Expense Voucher report and documentation are not received by the Controller-Treasurer Department within 90 days of return, the settlement will be considered delinquent.

Failure to settle advances in the allowed timeframe following a trip will result in notification to the traveler and Department Travel Coordinator from the Controller-Treasurer Department that settlement is due. If there is no response, after two notices each approximately 15 days apart (total 120 days from the date of return), the County is authorized to deduct the entire amount of the advance from the employee's wages or, if a non-employee, from any other payment that may be due. The Travel Authorization form includes an authorization statement to this effect so that travelers are aware of and agree to this provision when they request an advance. Unsettled advances must be resolved before a traveler is eligible for travel advances in the future.

TRANSPORTATION

General Guidelines

When planning the transportation portion of a trip, consider all aspects of cost to the County – e.g., daily expenses, overtime, lost work time – as well as actual transportation costs. In general, a common carrier (e.g., plane, bus, train) is the preferred mode of transportation. However, use of a personal or County vehicle – especially if two or more employees or officials are traveling together – may be less expensive for travel within the State. The increased time for automobile transportation and the potential for lost work time, overtime, or increased lodging costs should be considered in determining the best mode of transportation.

Transportation by Air

Air travel reservations should be made through the County-approved travel agency using the County's Business Travel Account. Air travel through other sources is allowed, but the department must demonstrate that the cost of these other services is comparable to the cost offered by the County's travel agency.

Air Travel Rules

For air travel, the most direct route is advised with minimal number of stops.

The traveler will bear the additional cost of changing flight plans due to personal reasons, for the convenience of the traveler, or for staying extra days for personal reasons.

Reasonable and actual add-on airline fees, such as checked baggage fees, may be allowed and require a receipt if more than \$10 in cost.

Travelers will be authorized to pay excess baggage charges when traveling with heavy or bulk material or equipment for business purposes. Documentation must be included in the final Trip Expense Voucher explaining the nature of the excess baggage charge.

Unless authorized as an exception, all air travel must be Coach Class. Such exception must be explained on the Travel Authorization form or Trip Expense Voucher. In the event Coach Class is not available, Business/First Class may be used if it represents the most efficient, direct and economical mode of transportation available.

Transportation by Car

General Guidelines - Driver's Permit/License

County employees who drive any car on County business, whether a personal vehicle, a rented car, or a County car, must possess a valid County Driver's Permit and California Driver's License. Please refer to Comprehensive Vehicle Policy, section "Driver Selection, Training, Driver Responsibility Statement" and section "County Driver Requirements" (Board of Supervisors Policy Manual section 3.52).

Transportation – Car Rental

Car Rental Guidelines

Upon arrival at the destination, travelers may rent a car when it is less expensive than other transportation modes such as taxis, airport limousines, and hotel airport shuttles, or when a rental car is needed for other reasons, e.g., ongoing work requirements or inadequate/unavailable ground transportation. A written justification is required on the Travel Authorization form. In the event that an unanticipated rental car is required or if any unusual high mileage usage results in higher rental car fees, then a written explanation on the Trip Expense Voucher is required.

Car rental reservations should be arranged through the County's approved travel agency, who will book with the County's designated rental car company or other vehicle option. If car rental is done outside the County's approved travel agency, reimbursement will be the lower of actual cost or the County's contracted rate with the current car rental company.

When renting a car, travelers should use mid-size or smaller models. Larger vehicles are allowed if there is no additional cost to the County, or if special circumstances exist, such as medical needs, disabilities, multiple travelers who will occupy the vehicle, extra business related luggage, etc.

Travelers should decline the optional vehicle insurance offered by rental companies. Employee operation of a rental car for County business is covered by the County's insurance program if traveling within the United States. For foreign travel, optional insurance is recommended. For employees, a spouse or traveling partner who does not have a County driver's permit cannot be added to the rental car policy as a driver since the rental car is covered by the County's insurance program. Insurance covering any personal side trips or additional driver is the responsibility of the employee. Rental companies may require some proof of vehicle insurance, and for this the employee should carry the County's Certificate of Coverage (the traveler's own personal coverage may also be accepted by the rental company). A certificate copy can be found in Appendix B. If traveler chooses to purchase optional vehicle insurance, payment is the responsibility of the traveler and will not be reimbursed by the County.

Reimbursement claims must include the original car rental receipt showing the date(s), number of days and type of vehicle rented and mileage. A credit card receipt alone is not sufficient supporting documentation.

Transportation – Personal Car

Personal Car Guidelines

Please refer to Comprehensive Vehicle Policy – Business Use of Private Vehicles (*See Board of Supervisors Policy Manual section 3.52*).

Travelers, if pre-approved, may use their personal car while traveling for business purposes when one or more of the following applies:

1. Public transportation is limited or unavailable;
2. It is more flexible and timely than taking public transportation;
3. Expense is equal to or less than alternate transportation;
4. Traveler is willing to accept reimbursement equal to the lowest price of reasonable transport; or
5. For extended stays a department may authorize the use of an employee's car with reimbursement for mileage to/from the destination work site and other work-related uses.

Allowable Mileage Reimbursement for County Business Travel

Mileage reimbursement will be based on actual miles traveled. However, mileage between employee's home and the work location is considered to be normal commute and will not be reimbursed. Employee may only claim reimbursement for the added mileage which exceeds the normal home-to-work mileage.

For workers not eligible for overtime compensation, compensatory time off, or other remuneration, actual miles traveled includes:

1. The mileage to and from home and the work location if the presence of the employee is required on a scheduled day off.
2. The daily commute mileage resulting in more than one daily trip to and from home and the work location when the presence of the employee is required before or after regular work hours.

Examples of appropriate use of personal car mileage include:

1. To and from the scheduled carrier service.
2. To and from destinations that do not have scheduled air service.
3. If scheduled air service is available but the traveler still prefers to use his/her personal car, mileage reimbursement will be based on "equivalent airfare," described below. County paid additional travel time should also be factored into the cost decision.
4. For non-commuter transportation inside Santa Clara County. Pursuant to the Salary Ordinance relating to the compensation of persons in management positions of the County of Santa Clara unrepresented by recognized employee organizations, members of the Board of Supervisors and persons in designated management positions shall be paid a flat rate vehicle allowance per month. Board of Supervisors and designated management employees receiving the vehicle allowance shall not be eligible to claim mileage reimbursement for any miles traveled within Santa Clara County.

Mileage/Reimbursement Rate

Travelers will be reimbursed for personal car mileage expenses for County business purposes, not to exceed established federal rates. Personal car mileage reimbursement covers the operating cost of the vehicle, such as cost of gas, oil, wear and tear, and needed servicing during the trip. To claim travel mileage reimbursement, travelers

should use the Trip Expense Voucher. For non-travel related mileage reimbursement, travelers should use the Employee Mileage form. Current mileage rates can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

The County P-Card is not to be used for personal car mileage expenses, since the traveler assumes responsibility for personal vehicle expenses and will be compensated through mileage reimbursement. Also, the County gas credit card is allowed only for County vehicles and shall not be used for personal vehicle expense.

Airfare Equivalent (AFE) Reimbursements

If travelers prefer to use their personal vehicle when air service is available, the reimbursement for mileage will be the lower of: (1) coach class airfare plus other transportation related expenses, such as long-term parking at local airport, rental car, and ground transportation, or (2) the mileage reimbursement amount (miles driven multiplied by mileage rate).

Transportation – County Car

Please refer to Comprehensive Vehicle Policy (Board of Supervisors Policy Manual section 3.52). Travelers who need to check out a County car must obtain a Travel Authorization number prior to requesting the County pool vehicle.

Transportation – Other Ground Transport

Non-Air Travel

Public carrier services, e.g., bus and train, are authorized means of travel, not to exceed the coach airfare or allowable mileage, whichever is lower.

Ground Transportation at the Travel Destination

Ground transportation may also be required for moving to and from airports, bus or rail terminals, as well as between work, training or conferencing sites. Various types of transportation may be available for this, e.g., hotel and airport shuttle services, light rail, subway or bus. The most economical and appropriate form meeting the traveler's needs should be used.

Taxi Service or Transportation Networking Company

Taxis or Transportation Networking Companies (TNC), such as Uber or Lyft, may be used when time is of the essence or public transit or other common carriers are not reasonably available.

When taxi or TNC service is used, receipts are required if the cost plus tip is over \$10. When asked for a receipt, taxi drivers will often hand a blank receipt to the customer. Travelers should ask the driver to fill out the receipt which should include the cab number, cost, including tip (if applicable), and the driver's signature.

LODGING

Lodging Guidelines

Lodging is allowed if the traveler is required to stay overnight to attend training, meeting, or other business purposes. The lowest cost option should be selected with consideration given to convenience and safety of the travelers.

Lodging Reimbursement Rate

The maximum reimbursement (includes room, resort fee, and transient occupancy tax) for lodging will be 165% of the per diem rate allowed for location of overnight stay. Any amount paid in excess of this will be paid by the traveler. The only exception to the 165% reimbursement rate will be if the traveler stays at a lodging location where the conference, training, or meeting is held. In such cases, 300% of the per diem rate will be allowed. (The 300% includes room, resort fee, and transient occupancy tax.) If the lodging location is fully booked, overflow or other lodging option are allowable up to the 300% limit. In all cases, an itemized lodging/hotel receipt will be required to obtain reimbursement.

Neighbor Counties

Lodging in Santa Clara, San Benito, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties is generally not a cost authorized for reimbursement. Travelers are expected to commute between the travel destination and work location or home each day. In unusual situations, such as attendance at meetings which occur early in the morning or late in the evening, reimbursement of such lodging costs must be justified and approved on the Travel Exceptions Form. The increased costs must be approved by the Finance Agency Director or Controller-Treasurer and will be included in the annual reports to the Finance and Government Operations Committee.

Lodging within Santa Clara County is allowed for witnesses, clients, and those vendors, contractors, and professional consultants to which this Policy specifically applies, who reside outside the County and must stay overnight on County related business or if required by law or court order or special circumstances.

Miscellaneous Lodging Rules

Always check special rates, e.g., government rate, conference or last minute specials, which would reduce County cost. If in California, inquire about exemptions from the local Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). By local ordinance, some California cities and counties exempt individuals from TOT if they are traveling on government business. If there is an exemption, you can save up to 12% on lodging costs depending on the local TOT rate. Almost all lodging operators will require an official, written claim for exemption on exemption forms issued by the city or county that is visited.

Honor refrigerator items, additional fee bottled water and late checkout charges will not be reimbursed unless a business reason is provided and attached to the final Trip Expense Voucher.

MEALS

Note: This section covers travel related meal expenses. Business meals are covered in a separate policy, Business Meal Policy (Non-Travel).

Travel Meals

Travel-related meal expenses include meals consumed while traveling for business purposes on the County's behalf, as well as while attending training, education or conferences that require travel and the completion of a Trip Expense Voucher. Where a Trip Expense Voucher is not required, the County's Business Meal Policy (Non-Travel) shall be followed. Travelers will be reimbursed for meal expenses, including tax and tips (tipping allowances can be found in Appendix C), not to exceed established per diem rates.

Meal Reimbursement Rates

For any meal that the traveler is entitled to, the traveler will be reimbursed at the per diem rate for the area and receipts are not required. Payments in excess of the per diem rate are not allowed. However, the followings are exceptions to the no receipt rule:

- ✓ Meals for members of the Board of Supervisors and appointed commissions and committees per Government Code section 53232.3 (c), and
- ✓ Meals purchased with a P-Card.

For both exceptions, receipts are required and reimbursement will be capped at the allowable per diem rate. Tipping allowances can be found in Appendix C.

Please check GSA's website for current federal per diem rates for specific travel destination city or region, using "lodging per diem" for reference. Same as lodging per diem, a standard meal per diem rate for travel within the continental U.S. applies to any location not otherwise specified.

Meals Provided as a Part of the Program

Travelers are generally expected to take advantage of meals which are considered part of a conference, special event or program, and for which the cost is covered by payment for the event itself.

When a meal is provided as part of the cost of an event, travelers will not be additionally reimbursed for the same meal unless it is not a substantial meal or if other business reasons can be explained. For example, a continental breakfast may not be substantial enough for travelers with special dietary needs. In such cases reimbursement will be provided up to per diem rates, but an explanation must be provided on the Trip Expense Voucher.

In addition, in cases where there is a legitimate reason to make alternate plans from the provided meal, the traveler may submit written justification for reimbursement of the cost of a separate meal and attach to the Trip Expense Voucher.

Alcoholic Beverages

Expenditures for alcoholic beverages including related tax and tip **will not be reimbursed.**

Meals at Protocol Events

There are times when traveling on County business, when meals are served in conjunction with authorized protocol events where the County traveler is representing the County and/or has hosting responsibilities. Protocol events are official events held during conferences, meetings, or trainings in which the attendance by the traveler will enhance the County's stature, benefit the County through increased business contacts, or increase the traveler's work related knowledge. In cases when the cost of the meal surpasses the per diem rate, but there is no choice in cost paid, the traveler may be reimbursed actual cost. Such cases require an itemized receipt and written justification. Protocol events that clearly indicate that alcohol will be part of the event will not be reimbursed by the County.

Same Day Travel

For Same-Day Travel to a destination outside Santa Clara County with no overnight stay, meal reimbursement is allowed if the work plus travel causes an "extended work day." An "extended work day" is when the actual work plus travel causes the normal workday to be extended by two or more hours at either end.

Example:

Assuming an 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. workday, if work and travel time extend the day past 7:00 p.m., then a travel meal (dinner) would be allowed. For this example, if the traveler left his home at 6:00 a.m., breakfast would also be allowed.

Moreover, for Same-Day travel with a destination outside of Santa Clara County, reimbursement will also be allowed if the time away for travel exceeds five hours during the normal work day. Per IRS guidelines, these reimbursements are treated as taxable income and are added to the employees' income as reported on W-2 forms. Travel meals are not the same as overtime meals. Both cannot be claimed simultaneously for the same meal.

County of Santa Clara Travel Policy for Employees
 Effective March 24, 2020

Per Diem Rate Sources

Lodging and meal rate per diem amounts can be located per the table below:

For Travel to:	Lodging and Meal Rates Are Established by:	Rate Tables Can Be Found at:
Within the continental US	US General Services Administration (GSA)	<p>http://www.gsa.gov/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes 48 Continental States and District of Columbia high cost locations • Use <u>county code</u> (www.naco.org, click “Data & Demographics under “About Counties”) search when the city is not listed and to identify if the city is in a high cost county • If neither city nor county is listed, use CONUS standard lodging/meal rate
Non-contiguous US or US possessions	US Department of Defense (DOD)	<p>http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes Alaska, Hawaii and other U.S. territories • Use other category if location is not listed • Meal breakdown is 25% for breakfast, 30% for lunch and 45% for dinner of total daily meal • County will only pay actual incidental expenses up to GSA limit
Foreign destinations	US Department of State	<p>http://aoprals.state.gov/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed in US dollars • Use other category if location is not listed • Multiply “M&IE Rate” by 90% for meals per diem • Meal breakdown is 25% for breakfast, 30% for lunch and 45% for dinner of total daily meal rate • County will only pay actual incidental expenses up to GSA limit

INCIDENTAL AND OTHER ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

General Guidelines

Reasonable and necessary costs for other travel expenses will be reimbursed when supported by itemized receipts (only required if item is more than \$10) or other appropriate documentation. Such expenses may include the following:

1. Registration fees.
2. Bridge, road or ferry tolls, etc.
3. Fuel for rental cars.
4. Parking (airport parking – when the expense for short-term parking is expected to exceed the one-day rate of long-term parking fee, traveler should use long-term parking. County will reimburse traveler up to the daily long-term rate).
5. Costs directly linked to the program or subject matter of a business meeting/function. Traveler must note purpose of expense on the claim. Examples of such costs include the following:
 - ✓ County business calls
 - ✓ Internet service
 - ✓ Copying
 - ✓ Postage
 - ✓ Printed materials, tapes, training material that may be available for sale at the meeting (if claimed as a travel expense; departments may elect to purchase through other [non-travel] payment processes.)
 - ✓ Other business related travel expenses determined to be reasonable and necessary by the approver and the Controller-Treasurer
6. **Incidental expenses up to the GSA per diem limit** (currently at \$5 per day): Chapter 300, Part 300-3, Section 300-3.1 in the Federal Travel Regulation, under Per Diem Allowance, describes Incidental Expenses as: “Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships.” The County will reimburse travelers for a reasonable amount of incidental expenses where these are usual and customary. This does not include tips for meals as they are included in the daily per diem meal allowance. (Tipping allowances can be found in Appendix C.)
7. Laundry and dry cleaning - Charges may be included when traveling in excess of five consecutive days on County business, or in emergency circumstances (include description and justification of emergency on the Travel Exceptions Form with claim request).
8. Currency conversion fee.

NON-REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

The following incidental and personal expenses are generally **not** allowable for reimbursement:

1. Traffic and parking violations, also refer to Comprehensive Vehicle Policy for vehicle user responsibilities (*See Board of Supervisors Policy Manual section 3.52*).
2. Mileage for County vehicles.
3. Mileage traveled within the County for Board of Supervisors and designated employees receiving a vehicle allowance.
4. Mileage for commute to work.
5. Emergency repairs on non-County vehicles.
6. Car rental insurance for travel in United States and Fuel Service Option (FSO) / Fuel Purchase Option (FPO).
7. Alcoholic beverages.
8. Refreshments and snacks.
9. Medicinal remedies, health supplies, cosmetics.
10. Personal entertainment, e.g., in-room movies, saunas, fees for exercise room, sports events, personal reading material, personal grooming, optional tours, souvenirs.
11. Airline club membership fees, airline priority boarding fees, and credit card fees.
12. Childcare fees.
13. Kennel/boarding fees (except for County owned animals).
14. Tips that exceed County allowances (20% for meals and taxi or Transportation Networking Company drivers).
15. Expenses related to vacation or personal time while on business trip.
16. Personal travel expenses that cause additional cost to the County.
17. Personal losses incurred while on County business.
18. Expenses related to a traveler's family member or friend accompanying the traveler on business trips.
19. Political or charitable contributions or events.
20. Short term airport parking exceeding long term rate.
21. Other incidental expenses that are determined to be of a personal nature, extravagant, or might be considered to be unreasonable or unnecessary.
22. Traveler may not claim mileage driven by another person. However, if the driver is a County employee in possession of a valid County driving permit, the driver may claim mileage for themselves.