

CITY OF ALVIN TRAVEL POLICY



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By Resolution 15-R-28

City of Alvin Travel Policy

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1. Policy Statement

This Travel Policy has been formulated to protect the interest of the City of Alvin and ensure consistent treatment for all. This policy governs expense allowances for employees, City Council and city representatives who travel on official City business. For purposes of this policy, those traveling on official City business will be referred to as the “traveler”.

2. Scope

Travel includes, but may not be limited to, workshops, seminars, conferences, training and local government networking events. Travelers who travel on official City business and/or to promote the interest of the City are required to adhere to the regulations set forth in this policy. The City will not compensate travel expenses for any traveler whose travel does not promote the interest of the City of Alvin.

3. Authorization for Travel

- 3.1. The primary responsibility for authorizing employee travel and other business related expenses and for enforcement of this policy regarding employee travel rests with the Department Heads. The Department Head is also responsible for ensuring that all requests for and approval of activities requiring travel are official City business relating to the duties and responsibilities of the employee traveler making the request.
- 3.2. The City Manager is authorized to approve travel for Municipal Judges. The Mayor is authorized to approve travel for the City Manager, City Attorney, Council Members and members of the various commissions, boards and committees. The Mayor Pro-Tem is authorized to approve travel for the Mayor. The City Council approves out-of-state travel for Council Members and any non-employee traveling out-of-state on official City business.

4. Approval Guidelines

Travelers are expected to exercise good judgment regarding travel expenses and have proper regard for economy in conducting business away from the City of Alvin.

4.1. Travel Request and Expense Authorization (hereafter called “Travel Authorization”)

Advanced approval must be obtained prior to any travel which requires payment for registration, materials, meals and/or overnight stay. Before making a trip, the traveler must submit a Travel Authorization unless it's not practical under the circumstances. The Travel Authorization serves as authorization for an individual to take normal working time off to travel on City related business and authorizes any advances to be issued (i.e., hotel expense, meal per diem, mileage, etc.) The Travel Authorization shall be accompanied by pertinent conference brochures, agendas, or schedules of meetings and state the nature of the trip, destination and dates of the beginning and end of official leave and travel cost.

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4.2. Budgeted Travel

All travel expenditures for employees should be budgeted and approved in advance by the Department Head. Department Heads are not required to obtain the City Manager's approval if the travel expenses were approved during the budget process. Requests for out-of-state travel, for travelers other than Department Heads, or unbudgeted trips for any City employee must be approved by the City Manager.

4.3. Expenses Covered

The expense classifications in Section 5 of this policy are for information and guidance in determining which expenses are appropriate and reasonable when traveling on City business. The list is intended as a guide and is not necessarily all-inclusive. Discretion remains with the City Manager or her designee in approving travel expenses to provide for unusual circumstances.

4.4. Expenses Not Covered

Items specifically prohibited include the purchase of personal items, adult entertainment, alcoholic beverages, pay-for-view movies, health club charges, laundry or dry cleaning charges, etc.

5. Business Travel

Travel on official city business is considered either local business travel or extended business travel.

5.1 Local Business Travel

Local business travel is considered travel that is fifty (50) miles or less from City Hall to the destination site.

5.1.1 Registration fees are eligible expenses for local business travel.

5.1.2 Mileage reimbursement is an eligible expense for local business travel except for an employee receiving a car allowance. Mileage is calculated from City Hall to the destination site. For mileage reimbursement, the traveler must submit a check request and attach a Local Mileage Reimbursement form. This form is strictly used for local business mileage using the traveler's personal vehicle. This form is only for mileage reimbursement and no other expenses can be claimed on this form.

5.1.3 Local business meals are reimbursable with the approval of the Department Head. No advances will be given for local business meals. Only legitimate business meals may be reimbursed. The traveler must provide supporting documentation detailing the date, place, name of individuals attending and the subject matter discussed along with detailed itemized receipts in order to obtain reimbursement for local business meals. If it is determined that a

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reimbursed meal is not a legitimate business expense, this amount will be considered taxable earnings and added to the traveler's W-2.

5.2 Extended Business Travel

Extended business travel refers to travel that is more than fifty (50) miles from the traveler's work place or City Hall for council members and city representatives. Eligible expenses while traveling on extended business travel are registration, mileage reimbursement (private automobile only), meal per diem allowance, air travel, lodging, car rental and incidental travel expenses.

5.2.1 Registration fees for conferences, seminars and conventions are paid by the City, if deemed as City business. Registration prepaid by the City must include documentation (copy of completed registration form, dates of trip, costs, location, times, etc.). If the registration is not prepaid and the traveler receives the amount as part of his/her travel advance, a registration receipt must be included with supporting material upon submission of the post-travel expense report using the Travel Authorization form.

5.2.2 A traveler traveling on extended business in their private automobile may request mileage reimbursement. The standard business mileage rate as determined by the IRS Publication 463 (www.irs.gov) is used to calculate mileage reimbursement. MapQuest (www.mapquest.com) is used to determine mileage distance and the printed driving directions are required to be submitted with the Travel Authorization prior to travel. Mileage is calculated from City Hall to the destination site. In addition mileage reimbursement may be requested when one must travel from the hotel to an off-site conference/training location. When two or more people are traveling to the same destination, every effort should be made to utilize one vehicle. Reimbursement will be made for one vehicle only, unless prior approval by the Department Head is approved.

5.2.2.1 It is preferred that reimbursement for mileage does not exceed the lowest applicable round trip airfare (including incidental expenses such as cab fares or a rental car), however, it is subject to Department Head approval.

5.2.2.2 An employee receiving a car allowance will not be eligible for mileage reimbursement for travel within 100 miles one-way (200 miles round trip) of City Hall. The Convention Visitors Bureau Director is not eligible to receive mileage reimbursement.

5.2.2.3 Any supplemental mileage shall be paid upon return of the travel and submission of all required supporting documents approved by the Department Head.

5.2.2.4 Insurance coverage is the responsibility of the traveler, as the City will not be responsible for costs incurred due to an accident. Mayor, City Council, City Employees, EMS and Fire Department

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volunteers are covered for personal injury while traveling on official City business under workers' compensation.

- 5.2.3 Per IRS regulation, per diem rates are only allowed while an employee is traveling away from home on business. The City will use the current Meals & Incidental Expenses Rate (M&IE rate) according to the IRS guidelines at www.gsa.gov/perdiem. Incidental expenses such as tips are provided in the per diem allowance. The Travel Authorization shall include a copy of the appropriate expenses for the specific locale.
- 5.2.3.1 Meals that are included in registration costs (excluding continental breakfast and receptions) or provided at no cost to the traveler are not reimbursable.
- 5.2.3.2 Reimbursement for payment for an alternate meal is an exception if approved by the Department Head. The per diem allowance shall be requested and obtained prior to the event in order to pay for meals.
- 5.2.3.3 Per diems are allowed on a travel day, including a day preceding or following the conference/seminar. Partial day meal reimbursements will be based upon the appropriate per diem rate on days with partial meals provided by the conference/seminar. Per diem allowance shall be requested as part of the Travel Authorization for approval.
- 5.2.3.4 Receipts are not required when using the per diem allowance or the partial day reimbursement.
- 5.2.3.5 Per diems shall be approved by the Department Head.
- 5.2.4 Only "coach" flights will be authorized for air travel to conferences or meetings. Advance purchase, non-refundable tickets are considered standard air travel as well as luggage fees limited to 2 bags per traveler. In some instances, other classes of airfare may be requested but prior approval must be obtained by the Department Head, Assistant City Manager and City Manager. A receipt is required to be submitted as part of the Travel Authorization.
- 5.2.5 Overnight lodging is an eligible expense if the destination is at least fifty (50) miles (one-way) from the traveler's work place or City Hall for council members and city representatives.
- 5.2.5.1 Request for overnight lodging when the seminar/conference destination is within fifty (50) miles of the traveler's work place or City Hall may be allowed subject to the authorizations established in Section 3.
- 5.2.5.2 If attending a conference where a block of rooms is designated for attendees at a reduced rate, the City will pay or reimburse the

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traveler the reduced rate. If the block room rate is unavailable, then the City will pay the standard room rate at the same hotel or a comparable hotel.

- 5.2.5.3 If a traveler's family member or friend accompanies them on travel, the traveler is expected to pay the difference between the standard room rate and any upgraded rate.
- 5.2.5.4 As a general rule, the day preceding the day in which a conference or seminar begins is considered a travel day. Lodging expense is eligible for the night preceding the conference/seminar. However, if the conference does not begin until mid-day, lodging expense for the preceding night is not eligible. Also, if the return trip home can be made reasonably the same day the conference ends, reimbursement for an additional overnight stay will not be eligible.
- 5.2.5.5 An itemized hotel receipt is required for any overnight stay and it must indicate the room rate.
- 5.2.5.6 Tax exempt forms will be provided upon request from the Finance Department.
- 5.2.6 Car rental at the destination site will be reimbursed if the cost to the City is less than other modes of transportation, such as taxi, bus or shuttle. It is preferred that the traveler use the most economical car available. If shuttles are available to/from airport and conference site, a car rental will be deemed unnecessary. Any exceptions require Department Head approval. A car rental receipt is required to be submitted as part of the post Travel Authorization.
- 5.2.7 Receipts are required for reimbursement of additional expenses. Additional expenses that may be reimbursed include:
 - i. Public transportation (i.e., taxicab, bus, shuttle) between hotel and conference/seminar location, to/from airport and hotel, etc.;
 - ii. Toll fees;
 - iii. Parking for both private (including rental) and city vehicles;
 - iv. Internet access fees for business purposes; and
 - v. Gasoline purchased for private (including rental) and city automobiles.

6. Payment

6.1 Travel Advances

- 6.1.1 The preferred method of payment for travel expenses is the Travel Advance; wherein the traveler is given a check for appropriate travel expenses prior to the date of travel.
- 6.1.2 Travel advances are intended to cover the cost of meals, mileage, parking, and similar out of pocket expenses.

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6.1.3 Travel Advance requests shall be submitted at least two weeks prior to travel.

6.2 Purchasing cards

6.2.1 The default method of payment for travel expenses is the use of a purchasing card (referred to as a "P card"). The use of the purchasing card is allowed for incidentals if the expenses were not accounted for during the planning of the travel. Upon return, the traveler must attach all receipts to the reconciliation document for all reimbursable travel expenses.

6.2.2 A "P card" should purchase airfare, lodging and registration fees prior to travel and miscellaneous travel expenses such as parking and taxi expenses.

6.3 Post Travel Process. Each traveler is responsible for reconciling their travel expenses which are subject to audit by the Finance Department.

6.3.1 Post-travel expenses will be submitted on the Travel Authorization previously submitted by the traveler prior to their travel. The traveler is required to submit all travel expense documents other than travel advance items no later than ten (10) days upon their return from local or extended business travel. The traveler must have all the proper documentation and receipts attached to the Travel Authorization to avoid a delay in reimbursement or closure of the travel advance. Payment for reimbursements will not be processed without submission of the required documentation.

6.3.2 The Travel Authorization for expense reconciliation is reviewed and verified by the Department Head, then forwarded to Finance Department for final approval.

6.3.3 Additional travel advances for that traveler will not be considered until all outstanding advances, receipts and/or monies for that traveler are submitted to the Finance Department.

6.3.4 In reference to IRS Publication 463, expenses that exceed the limits set forth in this travel policy are considered as not adequately accounted for and must be treated as income on the traveler's W-2.

6.3.5 The Travel Authorization must reflect only those expenses incurred by the qualified traveler. Falsification of travel expenses shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

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7 Forms

The following forms are available on the T-Drive:

- Travel Request and Expense Authorization
- Local Mileage Reimbursement
- Local Business Meal Reimbursement

Also Available:

- IRS Meals and Incidental Expenses Breakdown for Per Diem Rates – www.gsa.gov/perdiem
- IRS Publication 463: Travel Entertainment, Gift and car Expenses

8 Frequently Asked Questions

If traveling for 1/2 day or all day on local business travel, does the employee get a per diem for lunch?

No, lunch for local business travel is only allowed if attending an official business function for at least eight (8) hours.

Example: If you attend an eight hour seminar in Pearland, a lunch per diem will be a provided expense if lunch is not provided.

When traveling on extended business travel, is the day before the start of a seminar or conference considered a travel day? Would I be allowed dinner per diem for the travel day?

Depending on the travel time and the start time of the conference, the travel day preceding a conference or seminar may include full day or partial day per diems.

If I attend a seminar where lunch is included with registration but I opt to eat lunch elsewhere, will my meal be reimbursed if submitted with a receipt?

No. If your meal is included with the registration, any meal expense incurred by the employee traveling will not be reimbursable, unless Department Head approval is obtained in advance.

Is an itemized hotel bill needed or is just a receipt acceptable?

An itemized hotel bill is required. A hotel receipt reflecting the advance payment is not acceptable.

Does the City pay for tips to the baggage handlers and waiters?

Yes, however, this amount is included in the per diem rate and cannot be listed separately on the travel expense report.

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Is an employee allowed mileage reimbursement if he/she travels in a city vehicle or a rental car?

No, however, gasoline/fuel is allowed (receipt required) if the employee is using a city vehicle or rental car.

Will the City pay for flight insurance?

No, flight insurance is not a reimbursable expense.

Does the City pay for taxi tips?

Yes, taxi tips are reimbursable with a receipt.