



ORDER

U.S. Department of
Transportation
Office of Secretary
of Transportation

DOT 1500.6E

11-07-2025

Subject: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL AND CONFERENCES
ORDER

1. **PURPOSE:** This Order, along with its supporting volumes, provides one clear source for all U.S. Department of Transportation (Department or DOT) travel policies and procedures. It covers Temporary Duty (TDY), Long-Term TDY, International Travel, Travel Card Management, and Conference Reporting and Policy for DOT. This travel and conferences order combines all previous DOT travel and conference orders and related policies into a single document for easy reference; sets out the official Department policy and guidance for all types of Federal travel at DOT; and details key roles and responsibilities for DOT employees involved in travel.

This Order and its supporting volumes identify and establish the departmental policy and guidance on all aspects of Federal travel and identify key roles and associated responsibilities for DOT personnel. The Order was developed in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapters 300-304, and is intended as a supplement to provide DOT-specific guidance where applicable.

2. **CANCELLATION:** This order cancels:
 - a. DOT M 1500.6D DOT Travel Order and Manual dated April 17, 2025
 - b. DOT 1501.00 Long-Term Temporary Duty Travel Policy dated September 08, 2021
 - c. DOT 2300.1 Travel Card Management Policy dated July 06, 2022
 - d. DOT 2300.9A Conference Policy dated August 10, 2023
 - e. DOT 1240.6 International Travel Approval Policy July 29, 2022
 - f. DOT 1240.5A Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings July 29, 2022
3. **APPLICABILITY:** This order applies to all DOT travelers and invitational travelers executing official government travel on behalf of the Department. This order applies to all DOT Operating Administrations (OA) including the Office of Inspector General (OIG) (unless inconsistent with OIG independence). Where the Federal Aviation Administration

Travel Policy (FAATP) differs from this Order, the FAATP shall govern Federal Aviation Administration employees. Where a collective bargaining agreement conflicts with this Order, such agreement is a valid exception to and supersedes this order for travelers covered by the agreements.

4. **BACKGROUND:** The General Services Administration's (GSA) FTR sets the standards and procedures that govern travel for Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at the government's expense. While the FTR covers most aspects of travel management, there are many areas in which individual agencies have discretion and flexibility in how these regulations are implemented. This Order also outlines the reporting and approval process for non-essential travel that is a requirement established under Executive Order 14222, "Implementing the President's 'Department of Government Efficiency's Cost Efficiency Initiative.'" The goal of this DOT Order is to facilitate and standardize a safe and cost-effective method for travelers to perform job-related travel in a manner that is financially advantageous to the government and convenient for the traveler.

5. **REFERENCES:**

- a. FTR, Title 41 CFR, Chapter 300 General, Chapters 301, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, Chapter 302 Relocation Allowances, Chapter 303 Payment of Expenses Connected with the Death of Certain Employees, and Chapter 304 Payment of Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source.
 - b. 5 U.S.C. § 5724(a), Travel and Transportation Reform Act (TTRA) of 1998, Public Law 105-264.
 - c. 31 U.S.C. § 3901(a), Prompt Payment Act of 1982, Public Law 97-177.
 - d. 5 U.S.C. § 6502(b)(2), The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010.
 - e. DOHR Departmental Policy Bulletin 650-1 In-Person Work Policy dated March 3, 2025.
 - f. DOT Order 1011.1B Procedures for Processing Reasonable Accommodation Requests from Job Applicants and DOT Employees with Disabilities dated January 14, 2021.
 - g. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123, Appendix B, A Risk Management Framework for Government Charge Card Programs.
 - h. 41 U.S.C. § 101, The Government Charge Card Abuse Prevention Act of 2012, Public Law 112-194.
 - i. General Records Schedules (GRS), National Archives: National Archives and Records Administration: General Records Schedule Transmittal 31, April 2020, Disposition Authority (DAA GRS 2013 0003 0001).
 - j. 5 U.S.C. § 7342, Receipt and disposition of foreign gifts and decorations.
6. **POLICY:** Except as provided in paragraph 3 (Applicability), Secretarial Offices and OAs must ensure compliance with the Department's Policy and Guidelines established in this Order. Each volume within this order addresses specific aspects of DOT travel policies and procedures. The volumes provide additional detail and information on specific topics. The DOT Travel and Conferences Order is organized into the following volumes:
 - a. Volume 1: Domestic Travel and Speaking Event Reporting and Approval Policy
 - b. Volume 2: TDY and Local Travel
 - c. Volume 3: Long-Term TDY Travel

- d. Volume 4: International Travel Approval Policy
- e. Volume 5: Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings
- f. Volume 6: Travel Card Management
- g. Volume 7: Conference Reporting and Policies

Where applicable, OAs may develop supplemental internal travel guidelines that more directly address specific business and traveler's needs. Except as provided in paragraph 3, supplemental guidance must not conflict with the policy outlined in this document. All OA-specific guidance must be compared against this Order for concurrence, and a copy of the document must be sent to DOTtravelteam@dot.gov for review prior to publication of the guidance. OIG may, consistent with its independence and in accordance with the law and the FTR, issue and maintain supplemental guidance that varies from this Order.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. The Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/Chief Financial Officer (CFO): Establishes and oversees all financial management activities for the Department, as outlined by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, to include policies, internal controls, and financial systems.
- b. Office of Financial Management (OFM) B30: Establishes and manages DOT-wide travel policy and internal controls, and delegates travel management duties to the designated OA travel management officials.
- c. OA CFO/Deputy CFOs (DCFO): Ensures compliance with this Order. Ensures OA travelers receive information on how the travel program operates and how the policies affect their travel decisions.
- d. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs (OST-X): Responsible for monitoring and coordinating departmental preparation for and participation in international meetings and conferences. Reviews annual international travel plans.
- e. Approving Official (AO): Determines whether travel is necessary and ensures that travelers use the most expeditious means of transportation practicable and commensurate with the nature of their duties and capabilities to meet the mission. Reviews and approves trip arrangements, travel expenses, and travel fund obligations. Contractors may not authorize travel or perform funds certification. They may only serve as an initial travel authorization and voucher reviewer.
- f. Traveler: Ensures the accuracy of their vouchers and all expenses they claim as well as adhering to the policies set forth in this Order and other DOT Orders, the FTR, DOT's memoranda on related topics, and other guidance applicable to their OAs.

FOR THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION:

Dan King
Acting Deputy Chief Financial Officer and
Director of Office Financial Management

Date

DOT Travel Order

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Volume 1: Domestic Travel and Speaking Event Reporting and Approval

Chapter 1: Domestic Travel and Speaking Event Reporting and Approval Policy

On February 26, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14222 titled “Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Cost Efficiency Initiative.” This E.O. requires agencies to monitor and report on certain travel activities.

In response to this E.O., the heads of each Operating Administration (OA) and components within the Office of the Secretary (OST Offices) must adhere to the guidelines set forth in this Volume for reporting for all non-essential travel, and approval of domestic travel for non-career employees. Note, DOT has defined Non-Essential Purpose Travel as all temporary duty domestic travel that is not Essential Purpose Travel. DOT has defined Essential Purpose Travel as outlined in [Annex A](#) of this Volume.

In addition, this Volume also provides guidance on reporting and approval of covered speaking events, regardless of whether these covered speaking events are local or performed while on travel.

Section 1: General Travel Guidelines

Heads of OAs and OST Offices are responsible and accountable for ensuring that all travel that takes place within their organization advances the mission of the Department, uses taxpayer funds appropriately, and furthers the purpose of the E.O. to ensure that Government spending is transparent, and Government employees are accountable to the American public. Please note that non-essential travel remains limited and must be supported by a robust justification under these guidelines. All travel must be properly identified and reported as “essential” or “non-essential” within the Department’s eTravel system, to allow for proper reporting as required by E.O. 14222.

All employees must seek travel approval within their OAs, and those OAs must conform to the spending levels set by the Office of the Chief of Staff.

All travel must comply with this Travel Order and supporting volumes or subsequent revisions to DOT Travel Orders. Travelers must continue to comply with all modal travel policies.

Note that [Volume 4: International Travel Approval](#) and [Volume 5: Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings](#) create additional requirements on international travel, including additional reporting requirements and separate rules for career and non-career employees. This policy does not address international travel, and travelers should continue to follow the processes outlined in these orders.

This Volume applies to all U.S. DOT travelers and invitational travelers, except in cases where it conflicts with the independence of the OIG to conduct audits and investigations.

Section 2: Approval Process for Non-Career Employee’s Domestic Travel (i.e., Essential and Non-Essential Purpose Travel and Covered Speaking Events)

2.1 Essential and Non-Essential Purpose Travel for Non-Career Employees

Heads of OAs and OST Offices or their designees must submit a request through the Non-Career Travel and Covered Speaking Event Approval Portal for all non-career travel and must receive approval from the Chief of Staff before booking travel. The request should be submitted at least 30 days in advance. Once travel is approved by the Chief of Staff, travel may be booked in the travel system and must include a justification. This justification will be reported publicly.

Section 3: Covered Speaking Events

In addition to travel, this volume sets an approval policy for certain types of speaking events, referred to “Covered Speaking Events.” Covered Speaking Events are events where DOT officials speak on policy matters or topics that could be reasonably expected to lead to press or other distribution, regardless of whether the event is open or closed to press. Most speaking events by non-career employees are covered speaking events, and most events by career employees are not. Technical or operational presentations, trainings, or similar activities are not Covered Speaking Events. Covered Speaking Events may take place on travel or locally and must be reported either way. This policy does not alter DOT policy for speaking events that are not Covered Speaking Events.

The purpose of this review is to ensure alignment with Administration priorities and to ensure all remarks are timed appropriately with the Secretary’s activities. Heads of OAs and OST Offices are ultimately responsible for proper reporting of speaking events within their organizations and determining whether a speaking event is a Covered Speaking Event. Attendees should take care when interacting with the press following speaking events. If members of the media approach the attendees with additional questions, please direct them to the Office of Public Affairs for an answer and do not provide further comment.

For speaking events that involve acceptance of waived attendance fees for non-speaking days at multi-day events, or the acceptance of meals or other tangible items of value from non-Federal sources, individual employees should seek guidance from the OST Ethics Office (for OST officials) or the appropriate OA Ethics Office (for OA officials) to ensure consistency with the Office of Government Ethics Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 CFR part 2635).

3.1 Covered Speaking Events

Heads of OAs and OST Offices or their designees must submit proposed covered speaking events to the Office of Public Affairs at least two weeks prior to the event and should not participate in any Covered Speaking Events without discussion and approval from the Chief of Staff’s Office.

When requesting to participate in an event, answer the following questions:

- Will this be open to press? If not, is the conversation still on the record?
- Will this be filmed? If so, will it be shared publicly?

Once a Covered Speaking Event is approved, heads of OAs and OST Offices are responsible for sharing draft talking points or speeches with the Office of Public Affairs. These drafts should be shared forty-eight (48) hours before the event at the latest.

Section 4: Contact for Inquiries

Questions about this policy should be directed to travelrequest@dot.gov.

Requests for review of speaking events should be directed to SpeakingEventRequest@dot.gov.

A link to the Non-Career Travel and Covered Speaking Event Approval Portal is available at <http://dotnet.dot.gov/app/DOTTravelRequest>.

Annex A: Essential Purpose Travel

Essential Purpose Travel includes all temporary duty domestic travel that falls into one of the following critical services categories:

The following categories of travel do not need to be reported or approved through this revised process:

- Emergency Response and Public Safety – Travel to respond to transportation-related emergencies such as accidents, natural disasters, or infrastructure failures, including digital failures and attacks;
- Inspections, Investigations, Audits, and Safety Assessments – Travel to conduct inspections of roads, bridges, airports, pipelines, commercial motor vehicles, commercial motor vehicle carriers, rail systems, or other assets or businesses regulated by DOT to ensure they meet safety standards and other licensing requirements. Includes travel to conduct audit and fraud investigations. Includes supporting operational and/or security requirements for aviation-related events or events designated as national security events. Includes internal investigations and safety assessments;
- Program/Project Management for Infrastructure, Air Service, and Certification Projects – Travel to conduct oversight of transportation infrastructure and air service projects, including the repair and construction of the Nation’s transportation assets and the National Airspace System. Includes surface and air vehicle certification projects. Includes travel to conduct oversight of grants and contracts, including those related to air services. Includes travel to conduct research testing;
- Continuity of Government Operations and Readiness – Travel to carry out the Department’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) when needed and activities such as National Security and MARAD Fleet readiness. Includes attending exercises and planning activities in support of the COOP;
- Litigation – Travel to conduct discovery, attend court or adjudicative proceedings, attend settlement negotiations or mediation, to accompany the Department of Justice as requested, or otherwise necessary for the defense or prosecution of a matter;
- Travel by employees and students at the United States Merchant Marine Academy; and
- Travel by employees of the Volpe Center when traveling on behalf of another DOT office or other customer.
- Standard Setting Organizations – Travel to domestic meetings of standard setting or standard developing organizations. This includes travel for working groups and task force meetings that meet periodically in person to support standard setting/developing organizations;
- Tribal Consultations – Travel to discuss participation in Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Programs;
- Training – Travel for providing or obtaining training, including delivering technical presentations, that advances the mission of the Department and/or aligns with the purpose of the E.O. Includes travel to conduct trainings of State and local officials responsible for safety enforcement, audits, and inspections; and
- Travel for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) or Temporary Change of Station (TCS).

Volume 2: Temporary Duty (TDY) and Local Travel

Chapter 1: DOT TDY and Local Travel Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This volume establishes the departmental policy and guidance on all aspects of Federal travel and identifies key roles and associated responsibilities for DOT personnel. The Policy was developed in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapters 300–304, and is intended as a supplement to provide DOT-specific guidance where applicable. The goal of this policy is to facilitate and standardize a safe and cost-effective method for travelers to perform job-related travel in a manner that is financially advantageous to the government and convenient for the traveler.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to all DOT travelers and invitational travelers executing official government travel on behalf of the Department. This policy applies to all DOT Operating Administrations (OA) and all Secretarial Offices, except for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the OIG (unless inconsistent with OIG independence). Where a collective bargaining agreement conflicts with this policy, such agreement is a valid exception to and supersedes this policy for travelers covered by the agreements.
3. **BACKGROUND:** The FTR promulgated by the General Services Administration (GSA) sets the standards and procedures that govern travel for Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at the government's expense. While the FTR covers most aspects of travel management, there are many areas in which individual agencies have discretion and flexibility in how these regulations are implemented. The goal of this policy is to facilitate and standardize a safe and cost-effective method for travelers to perform job-related travel in a manner that is financially advantageous to the government and convenient for the traveler.
4. **REFERENCES:**
 - a. FTR, 41 CFR chapter 301, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances.
 - b. 5 U.S.C. § 5724(a), Travel and Transportation Reform Act (TTRA) of 1998, Public Law 105-264.
 - c. 31 U.S.C. § 3901(a), Prompt Payment Act of 1982, Public Law 97-177.
 - d. GSA Federal Acquisition Service Smart Bulletin No. 025, Record Retention Requirements.
 - e. 5 U.S.C. § 6502(b)(2), Telework Enhancement Act of 2010.
 - f. 31 U.S.C. § 3321, Disbursing Authority in the Executive Branch.
 - g. 31 CFR Part 285, Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) of 1996, Public Law 104-134.
 - h. Treasury Financial Manual (TFM), Volume I, Part 4A, chapter 2000 (Section 2040.10).
 - i. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123, Appendix B, A Risk Management Framework for Government Charge Card Programs (2019).
 - j. DOT Order 1011.1B Procedures for Processing Reasonable Accommodation Requests from Job Applicants and DOT Employees with Disabilities dated January 14, 2021.
 - k. Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, Public Law 117-328.
5. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - a. **Actual Expense:** Payment of authorized actual expenses incurred, up to the limit prescribed by the GSA Administrator or agency, as appropriate. Entitlement to reimbursement is contingent upon entitlement to per diem and is subject to the same definitions and rules governing per diem.

- b. Approving Official (AO): An AO is the approving or authorizing official at the operational level responsible for the mission and the authority to obligate funds to support TDY travel for the mission. The AO authorizes only travel necessary to accomplish the mission of the Federal Government.
- c. Authorized Point of Travel: A residence, official duty station, or other location authorized by the traveler's AO as an acceptable point of origin or return for travel.
- d. -Contract City Pair Program (CPP): The CPP procures and manages discounted air passenger transportation services for Federal Government travelers. CPP offers government travelers extra features and flexibility when planning official government travel, in addition to maintaining deep program discounts.
- e. Coach Class: The class of accommodations that is normally offered by common carriers regardless of terminology used.
- f. Common Carrier: Private-sector supplier of air, rail, ship, or bus transportation, to the general public or a local transit system.
- g. Constructive Cost Comparison: When personal travel is being taken in conjunction with official government travel, or when the traveler chooses a method of transportation that was not approved as the most advantageous method by the AO, the constructive cost comparison documents the anticipated travel and transportation expenses a traveler would reasonably have incurred for round-trip travel versus the anticipated, actual expenses incurred.
- h. Continental United States (U.S.) (CONUS): Domestic travel within the continental U.S.; The 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia.
- i. Conventional Lodging: The most common types of lodging facilities, such as hotel/motel, boarding houses, or similar that are usually found in non-remote areas.
- j. Dual Lodging: Reimbursement for lodging at two different TDY locations during the same period.
- k. E-Gov Travel Service (ETS): ETS is the Federal Government-contracted, end-to-end system, its associated online self-service booking tool, and travel management center (TMC) that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process. The ETS covers all aspects of official government travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement, and travel management reporting.
- l. Emergency Travel: Emergency travel occurs when a traveler is in TDY status and becomes incapacitated by a serious or life-threatening illness or injury, a member of the traveler's immediate family dies or contracts a serious illness, or a disaster that directly impacts the traveler's home occurs or is expected to occur.
- m. Extra-Fare Train: A train that operates at an increased fare due to the extra performance of the train (i.e., faster speed or fewer stops or both).
- n. FedRooms: A GSA program that provides government travelers with discounted lodging rates within the maximum rate for each TDY location. The program provides certain benefits and flexibility for travelers who perform TDY travel.
- o. First Class: The highest class of accommodation offered by a common carrier in terms of cost and amenities.
- p. Foreign Air Carrier: An air carrier that is not a U.S. citizen as defined by 49 U.S.C. § 40102(a)(15) or do not hold a 41102 certificate.
- q. Fuel: The energy source needed to power a vehicle. Examples include, but are not limited to, petroleum, hydrogen, propane, and electricity.
- r. Furnished Meal: A meal provided to a traveler, either directly from the Federal Government or as a result of the Federal Government paying a registration fee or other cost that allows the traveler to attend a conference or other event.
- s. Government Aircraft: Any aircraft owned, leased, chartered, or rented and operated by an executive agency of the U.S. Government.

- t. Government-Owned Vehicle (GOV): A government-owned vehicle is a motor vehicle that is owned or leased by the government and is primarily used for official purposes. It can be assigned or dispatched to an agency from the GSA Interagency Fleet Management System or leased by the government for a period of 120 days or longer from a commercial source.
- u. Incapacitating Illness/Injury: An illness or injury that occurs suddenly and requires the traveler to interrupt or discontinue TDY travel, either temporarily or permanently.
- v. Innovative Mobility Technology Company (IMTC): An organization, including a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, sole proprietorship, or any other entity, that applies technology to expand and enhance available transportation choices, better manages demand for transportation services, or provides alternatives to driving alone.
- w. International Travel: Travel from or to a destination outside of the United States, U.S. territories, or its possessions.
- x. Interviewee: An individual who is being considered for employment by DOT. The individual may currently be a Federal Government employee.
- y. Invitational Traveler: An individual either not employed or employed (under 5 U.S.C. § 5703) intermittently in Federal Government service as a consultant or expert and paid on a daily, when-actually-employed basis. In addition, an individual serving without pay or at \$1 a year when acting in a capacity that is related to official activities of the Federal Government.
- z. Limited Open Authorization: An authorization permitting a traveler to travel without obtaining further authorization within the eTravel system under specific conditions, which may include limitations on the purpose(s) of travel, the geographic area(s) that may be visited, trip costs, and the period of time in which travel is authorized.
- aa. Local Travel: DOT defines local travel as travel for official government business within a 50-mile radius of the traveler's authorized telework location, official duty station, or office location for travelers who are not in a telework status.
- bb. Long-Term TDY Travel Assignment: A pre-authorized trip that meets all the following criteria:
 - i. Traveler is anticipated to be in TDY status for 30 consecutive calendar days or longer at one location or for training of 16 class days or more.
 - ii. TDY location is outside the primary residence and the official duty station.
 - iii. Travel is not considered a temporary change of station (TCS).
- cc. Lodging-Plus Per Diem: The method of computing per diem allowance for official government travel in which the per diem allowance for each travel day is established based on the actual amount the traveler pays for lodging expenses plus an allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE), the total of which does not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned.
- dd. Meals and Incidental Expense: A daily allowance provided to a traveler in TDY status to pay for the cost of reasonable meals and travel-related expenses. A traveler receives the full M&IE rate for the locality while in TDY status, except on travel days, when the rate is reduced to 75 percent of the locality rate.
- ee. Mileage Reimbursement Rate: A GSA-issued rate provided to a traveler when traveling by privately-owned vehicle (POV) for official government travel. The mileage reimbursement rate accounts for costs associated with fuel/EV charging, maintenance, depreciation, taxes, and insurance.
- ff. Miscellaneous Expense: An expense related to TDY travel that does not fall under the main cost categories of transportation, lodging, or M&IE reimbursement.
- gg. Non-Conventional Lodging: A type of lodging that may be necessary if there are no conventional lodging facilities in the area (e.g., in remote areas) or when conventional facilities are in short supply because of an influx of attendees at a special event (e.g., trade show, conference, or major sporting event). Such lodging includes college dormitories or

similar facilities, internet-based temporary rooms, or apartment rentals or rooms not offered commercially but made available to the public by area residents in their homes (41 CFR § 301-11.12(a)(4)).

- hh. Office Location: An employee's assigned center or facility (i.e., as shown in box 22 of the traveler's SF-50).
- ii. Official Deviation/Directed Travel: An adjustment to a travel itinerary when a traveler in TDY receives directions to perform official government travel at another TDY location.
- jj. Official Duty Station: An area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs and completes official duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain (i.e., as shown in box 39 of the traveler's SF-50).
- kk. Official Government Travel: Travel undertaken on behalf of the government, paid for with government funds, and related to official business. An official government travel authorization is from an employee's official duty station or other authorized point of travel to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.
- ll. Other than Coach Class: Any class of accommodations above coach class.
- mm. Outside of the Continental United States (OCNUS/Foreign): Any area situated beyond both the CONUS and OCNUS/non-foreign areas.
- nn. Outside of the Continental United States (OCNUS/Non-Foreign): The States of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the territories and possessions of the U.S.
- oo. Per Diem: The per diem allowance (also referred to as subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. The per diem allowance covers all charges and services, including any service charges where applicable. Lodging taxes in the United States are excluded from the per diem allowance and are reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense. In foreign locations, lodging taxes are part of the per diem allowance and are not a miscellaneous expense.
- pp. Permanent Change of Station: The process that an employee completes to permanently relocate from one official duty station to another.
- qq. Premium Economy Class: A class of airline accommodations that are lower than both first and business class, but higher than coach class in terms of cost and amenities.
- rr. Primary Residence: The location a traveler regularly inhabits, also called a main residence. It may be a house, apartment, trailer, or other dwelling; it is where an individual, couple, or family household lives most of the time.
- ss. Privately-Owned Vehicle: A POV is a motor vehicle not owned by the government. It is any vehicle (e.g., automobile, motorcycle, aircraft, boat) owned or leased by the traveler.
- tt. Prudent Person Rule: A requirement that a traveler must exercise the same care when incurring official government travel expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling at personal expense.
- uu. Reasonable Accommodation: Any change to the work environment or to the way things are usually done that results in equal employment opportunity for a qualified individual with a disability or individuals covered under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. (See DOT Order 1011.1B).
- vv. Receipt: A document that typically shows the date and time a purchase was made, items bought, amount of purchase price and totals, the name and location of store/entity where the purchase was made, and method of payment.

- ww. Scheduled Flight Time: The flight time between the originating departure point and the ultimate arrival point, as scheduled by the airline, including scheduled non-overnight time spent at airports during plane changes. Scheduled non-overnight time does not include time spent at the originating or ultimate arrival points.
- xx. Special Conveyance: Commercially rented or hired vehicles other than a POV and other than those owned or under contract to an agency, (e.g., taxi, Transportation Network Company (TNC), IMTC, or commercial rental vehicle).
- yy. Split Pay: Process to split the travel voucher reimbursement between the travel card service provider and the traveler's personal bank account.
- zz. Taxi: A hired car that carries passengers to a destination for a fare based upon the distance traveled, time spent in the vehicle, other metric, or a flat rate to and from one point to another.
- aaa. Telework: A flexible work arrangement where an employee performs and completes official duties and responsibilities from an alternative worksite.
- bbb. Telework Location: A place other than the office location approved by a traveler's AO and reflected in their telework agreement. However, on a case-by-case basis a traveler's AO may approve an alternate telework location.
- ccc. Temporary Duty Travel (TDY) Assignment: Official government travel where the destination is located outside a 50-mile radius from the traveler's authorized point of travel.
- ddd. Transportation Network Company: A corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, or other entity that uses a digital network to connect riders to drivers affiliated with the entity in order for the driver to transport the rider using a vehicle owned, leased, or otherwise authorized for use by the driver to a point chosen by the rider (e.g., Lyft, Uber, or other ride share companies); and does not include a shared-expense carpool or vanpool arrangement that is not intended to generate profit for the driver.
- eee. Travel Advance: Prepayment issued through the eTravel system of certain estimated travel expenses to an invitational traveler.
- fff. Travel Arranger: An employee or contractor who creates travel reservations, authorizations, and vouchers on behalf of a DOT traveler or invitational traveler.
- ggg. Travel Authorization: Documented permission to travel on official business.
- hhh. Travel Voucher: A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of a traveler's expenses incurred in the performance of official government travel.
- iii. Travel Management Center (TMC): A commercial travel agency that provides a full range of travel reservations and ticketing services for common carriers, lodging accommodations, and rental vehicle services. The TMC functions as a component within ETS.
- jjj. Trip-by-Trip Authorizations: A travel authorization that allows a traveler to take one specific official TDY trip, which must include specific purpose, itinerary, and estimated cost.
- kkk. Usually Traveled Route: The most direct route between the traveler's authorized point of travel and the TDY location, as defined by maps or consistent with established common carrier schedule of services.

6. **RESPONSIBILITIES**: The following personnel are responsible for implementing this Policy:

- a. The Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/Chief Financial Officer (CFO): Establishes and oversees all financial management activities for the Department, as outlined by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, to include policies, internal controls, and financial systems.

- b. Office of Financial Management (OFM) B30: Establishes and manages DOT-wide travel policy and internal controls, and delegates travel management duties to the designated OA travel management officials.
 - c. OA CFO/Deputy CFOs (DCFO): Ensures compliance with this travel policy. Ensures OA travelers receive information on how the travel program operates and how the policies affect their travel decisions.
 - d. Approving Official (AO): Determines whether travel is necessary and ensures that travelers travel by the most expeditious means of transportation practicable and commensurate with the nature of their duties to meet the mission. Reviews and approves trip arrangements, travel expenses, and travel fund obligations. Contractors may not authorize travel or perform funds certification. They may only serve as an initial travel authorization and voucher reviewer.
 - e. Traveler: Ensures the accuracy of their vouchers and all expenses they claim as well as adhering to the policies set forth in this Order and other DOT Orders, the FTR, DOT's memoranda on related topics, and other guidance applicable to their OAs.
7. **POLICY**: Secretarial Offices and OAs must ensure compliance with the Department's Policy and Guidelines established in this policy and the Office of Financial Management's (OST B30) Travel Manual to support a well-managed travel program. Where applicable, OAs may develop supplemental internal travel guidelines that more directly address specific business needs. Supplemental guidance must not conflict with the policy outlined in Chapter 2. This volume sets forth the policy requirements and identifies DOT responsibilities related to Temporary Duty Travel and local travel.

Chapter 2: Temporary Duty and Local Travel Policy

Section 1: Distinguishing Between Types of Travel

1.1 Defining Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel

A TDY trip constitutes authorized official government travel where the destination is located outside a 50-mile radius from a traveler's authorized point of travel. When approving the authorized point of travel, the AO must take into account the cost-effectiveness of the traveler's nearest common carrier terminal. The following sections provide additional guidance on distinguishing between TDY, local, long-term, and relocation travel.

1.2 Distinguishing Between TDY and Local Travel

In contrast to TDY travel, local travel involves travel within a 50-mile radius of a traveler's authorized telework location or official duty station.

1.3 Distinguishing Between TDY and Long-Term Travel

TDY travel is considered long-term travel when the destination of a trip is outside a 50-mile radius from a traveler's authorized point of travel and they are required to remain at the destination for 30 consecutive calendar days or longer, or 16 consecutive calendar days or longer if the trip is for the purpose of training. For more information on long-term travel, please reference Volume 3 of this Order.

1.4 Distinguishing Between TDY and Relocation Travel

In contrast to TDY travel, when a traveler returns to their official duty station following a TDY trip, relocation travel involves a traveler who is authorized to move to a new official duty station and will not return to the current official duty station. A traveler who is relocating is not eligible for TDY allowances and should work with the appropriate OA Human Resources (HR) and permanent change of station (PCS) points of contact.

Section 2: Local Travel

2.1 Local Travel Approval

An eTravel system authorization is not required for local travel. The approving official should authorize local travel in writing (including electronic text message or e-mail), verbal approval, or via another method as deemed appropriate by the AO.

2.2 Calculating the 50-mile Radius for Local Travel

A traveler's work status (e.g., working from an authorized telework location, working from their official duty station, or alternate location) for a particular day determines the starting point for local travel, as detailed below.

Telework travelers:

- When a traveler is in telework status, the 50-miles radius is calculated from the address of their authorized telework location; and
- When a traveler is not in telework status, the 50-mile radius is calculated from the address of the office location as shown in box 22 of the traveler's SF-50.

2.3 Reimbursement for Local Travel

Local travel expenses can be incurred in a variety of work-related situations within the radius as outlined in Section 2.1, including but not limited to required attendance at meetings, conferences, other official functions, trainings, or periodic work assignments. Travelers who are in telework status, regardless of their telework location, are never eligible for travel reimbursement when traveling to their office location.

Reimbursable expenses for local travel may include, but are not limited to, expenses such as:

- Local mileage for POVs;
- Parking fees;
- Tolls;
- Fares, metro cards, and tokens for public transportation (i.e., subways, buses, and trains);
- Taxi, TNC, or IMTC transportation services; and
- Bicycle and scooter rentals.

Travelers must submit local travel vouchers using the eTravel system. A traveler is entitled to reimbursement of authorized local travel expenses when the local travel originates from their designated work location for the day. However, if for convenience, a traveler elects to originate local travel from an unauthorized point of travel, DOT limits their reimbursement to the cost that exceeds their normal commute. For example, if a traveler needs to perform local travel and is in non-telework status and starts the trip from their normal telework location, their reimbursement would be limited to local travel expenses from the office location to the site of the official business, not from their normal telework location to the site of the official business.

2.3.1 Per Diem and Rental Vehicle Expenses for Local Travel

Typically, DOT travelers performing local travel are not eligible to receive reimbursement for per diem expenses (lodging and M&IE) or rental vehicle expenses. However, DOT makes exceptions for extenuating circumstances such as threats to human life, while travelers are performing mission-critical duties, or related to approved reasonable accommodations.

DOT OA CFOs or OA DCFOs must approve in writing any per diem or rental vehicle expenses for local travel within a 50-mile radius of a traveler's authorized telework location, official duty station or office location for travelers who are not in a telework status. This authority may not be redelegated to other OA officials.

2.3.2 Documentation Required for Local Travel Reimbursement

Travelers are required to electronically attach receipts to local travel vouchers for the following items:

- Taxi, TNC, and IMTC transportation services;
- Parking fees; and
- Individual local travel expenses over \$75.

If it is impracticable to provide documentation as required by this section, the failure to do so must be fully explained on the travel voucher. Mere inconvenience in the matter of providing documentation will not be considered. In certain rare instances, a copy of the travel card transaction may be accepted in lieu of a receipt.

Section 3: TDY Travel

3.1 TDY Travel Authorization

Before authorizing TDY travel, an AO must first determine if travel is necessary to achieve the proposed trip's official purpose. DOT requires the AO to consider less expensive alternatives to travel, such as local or technology-based alternatives (e.g., virtual options or teleconferencing). If travel is deemed necessary, the AO must ensure that the traveler follows the prudent person rule and completes the trip using the most direct route. In addition, the AO must take into account the cost-effectiveness of the traveler's nearest common carrier terminal when determining the authorized point of travel. Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable under this rule. Travelers will be responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience. AOs may determine when travelers book an excessively expensive route for personal preference (e.g., traveling through a significantly more expensive airport or by taxicab instead of public transportation). Excess cost or additional expenses does not include those needed to accommodate an approved reasonable accommodation.

If a traveler chooses to deviate from the approved route because of personal preference (non-authorized point of travel), any additional costs incurred from these actions are not reimbursable. See Section 3.3.6 for additional information about constructive cost comparisons.

Travel approval must be obtained prior to incurring any official government travel-related expenses. Approval should be completed using the eTravel system prior to the trip start date. If it is not possible to obtain approval through the eTravel system prior to travel (e.g., last minute, mission-critical travel request such as responding to a natural disaster event), other allowable approval methods include but are not limited to the following:

- In writing (electronic format text message or e-mail, etc.);
- Verbal approval; and
- Limited Open Authorizations (LOAs). (See Section 3.1.1 Limited Open Authorization for additional details around when an LOA can be used.)

DOT does not reimburse travelers for costs associated with unauthorized travel.

Regardless of how the travel approval is obtained, electronic travel authorizations must be completed within the eTravel system prior to reimbursement of official government travel-related expenses, except for day trips where no expenses are being claimed. In situations when travel authorizations cannot be completed in advance of travel, this must be completed within five business days of returning from travel. Examples include, but are not limited to, when it causes an unreasonable burden on the trip mission accomplishment and emergency response travel.

However, DOT requires that the appropriate AO provide written or electronic authorization in advance of travel for the following items:

- Use of other than coach class service on common carrier transportation;
- Use of a foreign air carrier or foreign ship;
- Use of reduced fares for group or charter arrangements;
- Use of cash to pay for common carrier transportation;
- Use of extra-fare train service;
- Use of a government aircraft;
- Use of non-conventional lodging (see Section 3.6.2.4 for more information);

- Payment of a reduced per diem rate;
- Acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses; and
- Travel expenses related to attendance at a conference.

3.1.1 Limited Open Authorizations (LOAs)

DOT permits travelers to use LOAs to accommodate a frequent travel situation. LOAs allow travelers to travel on official business, under certain specific conditions, without obtaining pre-approval for individual trips within the eTravel system. Travelers may use LOAs for frequent TDY day trips across a set period, as determined by the AO, when no official government travel-related expenses are being reimbursed.

3.1.2 Emergency Travel Situations while on TDY

The following circumstances are considered emergency travel situations while on TDY:

- A traveler is incapacitated by illness or injury, not resulting from a traveler's misconduct;
- Death or serious illness of a member of a traveler's immediate family member; or
- Catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster (fire, flood, etc.), which directly affects a traveler's home.

Immediate Family is defined in FTR 300-3.1. Approving officials may expand this definition on a case-by-case basis.

The following expenses are reimbursable in emergency travel situations while on TDY:

- Per diem at the location where the traveler incurred or was treated for incapacitating illness or injury for a reasonable period of time, normally not to exceed 14 calendar days (AOs may approve a longer period if justified);
- Round-trip travel and lodging expenses for a spouse, significant other, or family member to visit a traveler who is incapacitated by illness or injury while on TDY travel and cannot return to their official duty station;
- Transportation and per diem expense for travel to an alternate location to receive medical treatment in excess (if any) of actual costs of travel from the point of interruption to the alternate location and return to the TDY assignment, over the constructive costs of round-trip travel between the official station and the alternate location; and
- Transportation costs of a medically necessary attendant.

Note: A traveler is not entitled to receive per diem entitlements at a medical facility within a 50-mile radius of their official duty station or when interrupting TDY travel for non-emergency travel situations.

3.1.3 Pre-Trip Expenses

In limited circumstances, and with AO approval, travelers are allowed to submit pre-trip vouchers within the eTravel system when official government travel-related expenses are incurred prior to the beginning of a trip. Eligible pre-trip expenses may include, but are not limited to:

- Airfare or rail when booking services in advance of a trip lead to cost savings to the government; and
- Hotel reservation requires a deposit or payment in advance of the trip.

See Section 3.7.1 for more information on receipt requirements for pre-trip vouchers.

If a traveler needs to cancel or change a trip after they have made reservations and incurred pre-trip costs, they should do so as soon as reasonably possible and notify all applicable parties (e.g., AO, TMC, vendor). In this situation, if a traveler receives a refund from a vendor after vouchering for the expense, the traveler must send the refund to DOT. Failure to change or cancel reservations as outlined in the appropriate cancellation policy may subject the traveler to liability for any resulting losses.

3.1.4 Personal Leave Interruptions

In some situations, DOT may require travelers to interrupt, cancel, or reschedule planned personal leave for official duty. If this occurs and the traveler cannot secure a full refund for the expenses associated with their personal itinerary, DOT will reimburse travelers for the difference in costs.

3.2 Types of TDY Travel

3.2.1 CONUS and OCONUS Travel

TDY travel may occur within the continental United States (CONUS) or outside the continental United States (OCONUS). The guidance included in this document is applicable to CONUS and OCONUS/Non-Foreign travel, unless explicitly stated that it applies to OCONUS.

3.2.1.1 OCONUS Foreign Travel

The Department's International Travel Approval Policy (see Volume 4) sets forth guidance for the planning of and approval of procedures and policies surrounding travelers traveling internationally. The Department's Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings (see Volume 5) sets forth an updated Departmental policy for the coordination of international policy activities and meetings. The policy details that OAs must coordinate significant international activities through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs (OST-X). OAs must also seek policy clearance from OST-X and legal clearance/guidance from the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) prior to entering into negotiations with the intent of concluding a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) or similar arrangement.

3.2.2 Invitational Travel

In regard to TDY travel allowances, invitational travelers are treated the same as DOT travelers.

3.2.2.1 Travel Advances

Travel advances may be issued for invitational travelers when the OA demonstrates that the travel advance is necessary, as these travelers may refuse to travel without an advance. Travel advances may not be issued to DOT travelers. DOT travelers must incur travel-related expenses on their travel cards.

Note: Cash withdrawals through the travel card program are not considered to be a travel advance. The DOT Travel Card Management Policy (see Volume 6) sets forth guidance regarding proper use of cash withdrawals for DOT travelers.

3.2.3 Pre-Employment Interviewee Travel for non-DOT Travelers

Pre-employment interviewee travel may be necessary to recruit highly qualified candidates. This determination is made by the vacancy's selecting officials, who must coordinate with the supervisory staff accountable for the funds for pre-employment interviewee expenses. The eTravel system must be used to obtain approval for pre-employment interviewee travel. If travel is approved, DOT will reimburse candidates for all expenses afforded to DOT travelers, excluding any communication services not directly related to arranging travel for the upcoming interview. Booking a space to transact an official pre-employment interview is not allowed. OAs must charge all pre-employment interviewee common carrier transportation costs to specified centrally billed accounts.

3.2.4 Day Trips

When travelers travel and return on the same day, the day trip is considered TDY if the destination where official business is being performed is located outside a 50-mile radius from a traveler's authorized point of travel. If the destination is within a 50-mile radius, refer to the Section 2: Local Travel.

When no official government travel-related expenses are being reimbursed, travel approval must be obtained and documented prior to the trip start date. The preferred approval method is within the eTravel system. However, the following permissible approval methods include, but are not limited to, in writing (text message or e-mail, etc.), verbal approval, and LOAs.

When official government travel-related expenses are being reimbursed, regardless of how the travel approval is obtained, electronic travel authorizations must be completed within the eTravel system travel prior to reimbursement of official government travel-related expenses. This does not apply to instances where LOAs are being used. In situations when eTravel authorizations cannot be completed in advance of travel, this should be done as soon as reasonably possible. Examples include, but are not limited to, when it causes an unreasonable burden on the trip mission accomplishment and emergency response travel.

3.2.5 Relocation Travel

A traveler who is relocating to a new duty station is not eligible for TDY travel reimbursement. Refer to the Department's Long-Term Temporary Duty Travel Policy (Volume 3), FTR Chapter 302 and your HR office for additional guidance.

3.2.6 Mission-Critical Emergency Response

Travel approval must be obtained prior to incurring any official government travel-related expenses. Approval should be completed using the eTravel system prior to the trip start date. If it is not possible to obtain approval through the eTravel system prior to travel due to a last-minute travel request, other allowable approval methods include, but are not limited to, text message, e-mail, or verbal approval. See Section 3.1 TDY Travel Authorization for additional information.

3.2.7 Threatened Law Enforcement/Investigative Travelers

If an employee or their family is in danger and requires temporary housing at or away from the official duty station, an AO may authorize lodging, per diem, and transportation expenses. See FTR 301-31.1, 301-31.3 for additional information on travel for threatened Federal travelers and their

families.

3.3 Methods of Transportation

While traveling to and from the TDY location, travelers and AOs must select the methods of transportation most advantageous to the government taking total cost (including per diem, over time, lost work time, and actual transportation costs) as listed below. AOs should consider total cost (including costs such as per diem expenses, parking, baggage fees, etc.) when making these determinations.

- The following are presumed to be the most advantageous methods of transportation by order of precedence:
- Common carrier transportation (e.g., aircraft, train, bus, ship, or local transit system): Travel by common carrier is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation and must be used when reasonably available;
- Government Owned Vehicle (GOV): When the AO determines that travel must be performed by automobile, a government-furnished automobile is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation;
- Commercial rental vehicle: If no government-furnished automobile is available, but the AO has determined that travel must be performed by automobile, then a rental vehicle should be authorized; and
- Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV): POVs should be determined to be the most advantageous method of transportation only after the AO evaluates the use of a common carrier, a government-furnished automobile, and a rental vehicle.

Note: The FTR does not authorize OAs to require that travelers use their POV for TDY travel, even if the costs would be lower for the government. Special conveyances, except for commercial rental vehicles, should mainly be utilized while travelers are at their TDY location or for local travel. When evaluating the methods of transportation, the travelers and OAs must consider approved reasonable accommodations of DOT travelers.

3.3.1 Common Carrier Transportation

3.3.1.1 Air Travel

DOT requires travelers to adhere to the following guidelines when selecting an airline as the authorized method of travel.

3.3.1.1.1 Use of Coach Fares

Travelers must use GSA City Pair Program (CPP) fares (_CA when available or YCA) for air travel unless a CPP fare does not exist or when otherwise authorized. When a contract CPP carrier offers a lower cost capacity-controlled coach class contract fare (_CA) and an unrestricted coach class contract fare (YCA), you must select the lower cost capacity-controlled fare when it is available. Selecting a non-contract fare that costs more than the contract (YCA) fare will require one of the following justifications:

- A CPP fare is not available in a time to accomplish the purpose of the traveler's travel, or the use of the contract carrier flight would require incurring overnight lodging costs that would increase the total cost of the trip;
 - For example, DOT permits travelers to reserve a more expensive non-Contract City Pair flight if the Contract City Pair flight does not arrive in time for a meeting or other official government travel obligation.

- The traveler's AO determines that the use of rail service is more advantageous to the government; and
- A CCP CPPCPP fare is not available when it is not consistent with the traveler's approved reasonable accommodation(s).

In addition, when using a restricted fare, the traveler must receive approval from their AO agreeing to reimburse costs, fees, and penalties associated with work-related changes and cancellations or necessitated by circumstances of an emergency nature affecting the traveler. Travelers are liable for any additional costs or penalties resulting from the use of a non-contract fare, without prior authorization or exemption, when a contract fare is available.

When a non-contract fare is selected that costs less than the contract (YCA) fare, DOT does not require travelers to provide a justification documenting that the fare selected is less expensive than the YCA fare. However, if a restricted fare is selected, the approval requirement outlined above will apply.

The GSA CPP offers four different contract fares:

- 1) Capacity-Controlled Fare (_CA): The _CA code is used to identify capacity-controlled coach class contract fares for Government contract carriers. _CA fares are lower in cost than the YCA Fare, with the same conditions except that _CA fares do not offer last seat (inventory) availability. They are fully refundable and exchangeable, no administrative fees or penalties are applied for rebooking, re-ticketing, or cancellation. The first letter of the three-character fare basis code will vary by airline, e.g., QCA, LCA, etc. Early booking increases the likelihood of reserving a _CA fare. _CA fares are subject to auto-cancellation of all un-ticketed reservations 48 hours prior to departure time and date.
- 2) Unrestricted Coach Class Fare (YCA): The YCA code is used to designate unrestricted coach class contract fares for Government contract carriers. "CA" means "contract award." YCA fares are higher in cost than _CA fares and offer last seat (inventory) availability (unless a flight is already sold out). They are fully refundable and exchangeable, no administrative fees or penalties are applied for rebooking, re-ticketing, or cancellation. YCA fares are subject to auto-cancellation of all un-ticketed reservations 48 hours prior to departure time and date.
- 3) Contract Business Fare (_CB): The _CB code is used to identify capacity-controlled Government contract business class fares. The first letter of the three-character fare basis code will vary by airline. They are fully refundable and exchangeable, no administrative fees or penalties are applied for rebooking, re-ticketing, or cancellation. Domestic and international _CB fares may be subject to auto-cancellation of all un-ticketed reservations seven calendar days prior to departure time and date and applies only to reservations booked eight calendar days or more before departure. Reservations made seven calendar days or less prior to departure time may be exempt and may require ticketing six hours before departure at the carrier's discretion.
- 4) Contract Premium Economy Fare (_CP): The _CP code is used to identify capacity-controlled Government contract premium economy class fares. The first letter of the three-character fare basis code will vary by airline. They are fully refundable and exchangeable, no administrative fees or penalties are applied for rebooking, re-ticketing, or cancellation. International _CP fares may be subject to auto-cancellation of all un-ticketed reservations seven calendar days prior to departure time and date and applies only to reservations booked eight calendar days or more before departure. Reservations made seven calendar days or less prior to departure time may be exempt and may require ticketing six hours before departure at the carrier's discretion.

Note: GSA CPP fares may only be used for official DOT travel.

3.3.1.1.2 Use of U.S. Flag Carriers

The Fly America Act requires that all government-funded air travel be by a “U.S. flag” carrier service. This requirement applies to:

- Travelers and their dependents;
- Consultants, contractors, and grantees; and
- Other travelers whose travel is paid for by DOT.

Exceptions to Fly America Act requirements can be found at 49 U.S.C. § 40118. Cost or convenience are never exceptions to the Fly America Act requirements. Fly America Act waiver requests must be routed for review to the OA travel office and must obtain approval from the OA’s Office of the Chief Counsel. Failure to obtain approval prior to travel precludes travelers from claiming reimbursement for all fares associated with foreign air carrier service.

3.3.1.1.3 Use of Premium Class Accommodations

Travelers should use the least expensive class of travel that meets the needs of the OA’s mission, unless the OA CFO approves premium economy, business, or first-class accommodations as specified below and in FTR 301-10.103.

- 1) The traveler may be authorized for the use of premium economy class accommodations when:
 - a) Required to accommodate a medical disability or other special need:
 - i) A medical disability must be certified annually in a written statement by a competent medical authority. However, if the disability is a lifelong condition, then a one-time certification statement is required. Certification statements must include at a minimum:
 - (1) A written statement by a competent medical authority stating that special accommodation is necessary;
 - (2) An approximate duration of the special accommodation; and
 - (3) A recommendation as to the suitable class of transportation accommodations based on the medical disability.
 - (a) A special need must be certified annually in writing according to DOT’s procedures. However, if the special need is a lifelong condition, then a one-time certification statement is required; and
 - (b) If a traveler is authorized under FTR 301-13.3(a) to have an attendant accompany them, DOT may also authorize the attendant to use premium economy class accommodations if the traveler requires the attendant’s services en route.
 - b) Required pursuant to an approved reasonable accommodation;
 - c) Exceptional security circumstances, as determined by DOT, require premium economy class accommodations;
 - d) Coach class accommodations on an authorized foreign carrier do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards;
 - e) Regularly scheduled service between origin and destination points, including connecting points, provide only other than coach class accommodations and the traveler certifies such on their voucher;
 - f) Common carrier costs are paid in full through agency acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source in accordance with chapter 304 of title 41 CFR;
 - g) The origin or destination is OCONUS and the traveler’s scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of eight hours;

- h) The use results in an overall cost savings to the government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time while awaiting coach class accommodations;
 - i) No space is available in coach class accommodations that allows the traveler to arrive in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed; or
 - j) Required because of the OAs mission, consistent with DOT's internal procedures pursuant to FTR 301-70.102(i).
- 2) The traveler may be authorized for the use of business class accommodations under paragraphs (a)(1) through (5) and (7) through (9) of FTR 301-10.103, or when:
- a) The origin or destination is OCONUS;
 - b) The scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is more than 14 hours;
 - c) There is a requirement to report to duty the following day or sooner; and
 - d) It has been determined that business class accommodations are more advantageous than authorizing a rest period en route or at your destination pursuant to FTR 301-11.20.
- 3) DOT may authorize or approve first class accommodations under paragraph (a)(1), (2), or (9) of FTR 301-10.103, or when no coach class, premium economy class, or business class accommodations are reasonably available. "Reasonably available" means available on a common carrier that is scheduled to leave within 24 hours of your proposed departure time or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of your proposed arrival time.

DOT travelers may upgrade to other than coach class accommodations at their personal expense, including through redemption of frequent flyer benefits per FTR 301-53.3.

Coach class preferred seating upgrades allow travelers to obtain a more desirable seat choice within the coach class cabin at a higher cost. These upgraded seats are not considered a new or higher class of accommodation since the seating is still in the coach cabin and are generally considered a personal expense. However, the AO may determine the use is required due to a medical reason, authorized reasonable accommodation, mission accomplishment, or other special need unless otherwise specified by the OA.

3.3.1.2 Rail

DOT requires the use of coach class or equivalent accommodations for all official DOT rail travel. OA CFO approval is required for all other than coach class rail accommodations. See Section 3.3.1.1.3 for specific scenarios that may be approved for other than coach class.

Note: Travelers may select to upgrade to first class or business class at their personal expense or by using rewards/loyalty points.

3.3.1.3 Ships

DOT requires the use of lowest first class or equivalent accommodations for all official DOT ship travel, unless pre-approved for first class accommodations by the OA CFO and in line with OA policy. See Section 3.3.1.1.3 for specific scenarios that may be approved for other than coach class. Travelers may select to upgrade to first class at personal expense.

3.3.1.4 Local Transit Systems

DOT regards the use of local travel systems (e.g., buses, subways, streetcars, light rail) to be a reimbursable expense for TDY travel in the following scenarios:

- From the traveler's residence or other authorized point of departure (e.g., use of light rail to

travel from residence to airport);

- To the traveler's residence or other authorized point of return from TDY (e.g., use of subway to travel from airport to residence);
- From the transit system station at the TDY location to the traveler's place of lodging or place of official business;
- Between the traveler's place of lodging and official business;
- Between places of official business; and
- To obtain meals at the nearest available location when reasonable at the discretion of the AO.

3.3.1.5 Common Carrier Compensation during TDY Travel

Occasionally, common carriers may compensate travelers directly for incidental expenses (e.g., DOT equipment damaged by an airline) or inconvenience (e.g., being "bumped" from a flight due to overbooking). In such situations, the traveler may not keep any compensation from the airline. In the case that a mobility essential, such as a wheelchair, is lost by the carrier, the traveler should file a claim with the carrier first. If the carrier denies or partially compensates, the traveler can then file a claim under 31 U.S.C. § 3721. Monetary and non-monetary compensation must be directed to the appropriate DOT OA.

Travelers who voluntarily vacate confirmed reserved seats during official government travel, when an air carrier requests volunteers, may personally keep any compensation from the airline if the following applies to the scenario (FTR § 301-10.122 and § 301-10.123.):

- Voluntarily vacating the seat does not interfere with the performance of the traveler's official duties or accomplishment of the OAs mission;
- Additional travel expenses incurred because of vacating seats are covered by the traveler and not reimbursed by DOT; and
- The traveler is charged annual leave for any delays during duty hours that result from voluntarily vacated seats. The traveler is responsible for documenting this on their timecards appropriately.

3.3.2 Government Owned Vehicle (GOV) Travel

While on official government travel, a traveler must use GOVs for travel only if authorized and in the following scenarios:

- Between places of business and official duty stations or TDY locations;
- Between places of lodging (excluding personal residences) and TDY locations; and
- Between TDY locations and the nearest available location at which to obtain meals, when the nature and location of the work at traveler's TDY locations are such that meals cannot be obtained.

An employee's AO must determine if the use of GOVs is the most advantageous method of transportation to DOT. When GOVs are determined to be most advantageous to a DOT traveler, and are available, and local transit systems do not serve as an efficient or effective method of alternate transportation, the traveler must first consider the use of GOVs over the use of POVs or special conveyances.

3.3.3 Commercial Rental Vehicle Travel

If a traveler is authorized to use a commercially rented vehicle, they must use the least expensive compact car available, unless an exception for a more expensive vehicle is approved. AOs should approve these exceptions on a limited basis and must confirm that the reason for the exception is

indicated on the travel authorization. Use of other than a compact car may be authorized if any of the following apply:

- When it is necessary to accommodate a medical disability, an approved reasonable accommodation, or other special need. See Section 3.6.5 for more information;
- When required because of the OAs mission, consistent with the OA's internal procedures pursuant to FTR 30 -70.102(i);
- When the cost of another car type is less than or equal to the cost of the least expensive compact car;
- When additional room is required to accommodate multiple travelers authorized to travel together in the same rental vehicle;
- When travelers must carry a large amount of government material incident to their official business and a compact rental vehicle does not contain sufficient space; or
- When necessary for safety reasons, such as during severe weather or having to travel on rough or difficult terrain.

3.3.4 Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV) Travel

DOT authorizes the use of POVs when it serves as the most advantageous method to DOT (in terms of cost, success of the mission, etc.) in accordance with Section 3.3.1 or to accommodate travelers' medical needs or approved reasonable accommodations (see Section 3.6.5 for more information).

DOT regards the use of POV to be a reimbursable expense for TDY travel in the following scenarios:

- From the traveler's residence or other authorized point of departure (e.g., use of POV to travel from residence to airport);
- To the traveler's residence or other authorized point of return from TDY (e.g., use of POV to travel from airport to residence);
- Between the traveler's place of lodging and official business;
- Between places of official business; or
- To obtain meals at the nearest available location when reasonable at the discretion of the AO.

3.3.5 Special Conveyance Travel

DOT permits the use of the following special conveyances, when properly approved by a designated AO:

- Taxicabs;
- Commercial rental vehicles;
- TNC or IMTC services; and
- Any other special conveyance determined to be advantageous (in terms of cost, success of mission, etc.) to DOT.

3.3.6 Constructive Cost Comparisons

Regardless of the method of transportation an AO deems to be most advantageous and expeditious to the government, DOT travelers may choose to use another method of transportation while traveling to and from a TDY location. If a traveler does not select the most advantageous method of transportation, a cost comparison must be completed to determine "constructive cost" of travel. This cost comparison must incorporate all costs associated with travel and compare them with all

costs associated with the most advantageous, AO-approved means of travel. The calculation will necessarily involve assumptions. Examples of related expenses that could be considered constructive costs include, but are not limited to, taxi and TNC fares, baggage fees, rental vehicle costs, tolls, ferry fees, lost work time, and parking charges.

If the constructive cost of the AO-approved method of transportation is less than the traveler-selected method of transportation, the traveler will be reimbursed the lesser amount. If the constructive cost shows the traveler-selected cost is less than the AO-approved method, they will be reimbursed that amount.

3.3.7 Rest Periods during TDY Travel

When travelers are traveling long distances, or in transit for long periods of time, they are entitled to take rest periods in certain circumstances, as detailed below.

3.3.7.1 Rest Periods for Air Travel

DOT allows a traveler to take a rest period of up to 24 hours in duration at either an intermediate point or at a traveler's destination when:

- Either the origin or destination is OCONUS;
- The scheduled flight time, including stopovers, exceeds 14 hours (see Section 3.3.7.2 for the business class lounge pass exception);
- Travel is by a direct or usually traveled route;
- Travel is by coach class or premium economy class; Needed as part of an approved reasonable accommodation.

When a rest stop is authorized, the applicable per diem rate is the rate for the rest stop location. DOT authorizes rest periods exceeding 24 hours when no scheduled transportation service departs within 24 hours of the traveler's arrival at an intermediate point. To qualify for a rest period exceeding 24 hours, the traveler must be scheduled to board the first available scheduled departure. The AO determines a reasonable additional length of time for any rest period exceeding 24 hours.

3.3.7.2 Business Class Lounge Pass in Lieu of a Rest Period

Unless specifically disallowed elsewhere in the regulations, any scheduled flights in excess of 14 hours on a usually traveled route, including scheduled stopovers when traveling by less than premium class accommodations, may be interrupted for a rest period of up to 24 hours. However, a traveler may alternatively be reimbursed for the cost of a day pass to a business class lounge for the intermediate point on the authorized itinerary. If this option is selected the traveler is no longer authorized an overnight rest stop and is expected to continue travel on the next available flight to the traveler's destination.

Travelers are responsible for requesting the approved overnight rest stop or the business class lounge day pass from the AO prior to travel. The point of interruption for a rest stop should be at any normally scheduled transit point or stop along the direct route between the authorized origin and destination. The traveler may choose to take an authorized rest stop at the destination, provided that the destination is not the traveler's permanent duty station.

Note: Rest stops or day passes to a business class lounge are not authorized when indirect travel is performed. In addition, rest stops, or day passes to a business class lounge are not authorized for travelers using premium class accommodations except when certified as necessary by a competent

medical authority. Travelers authorized to travel in premium class accommodations may use a business class lounge if the service is offered free of charge by the airline, but they are not authorized reimbursement separately for the cost of a day pass to the lounge.

3.3.7.3 Time Zone Considerations for Rest Periods

DOT requires travelers flying on a direct route, without interruption except for flight connections, with a difference of five or more time zones between authorized points of travel, to arrange departure that allows for arrival at the destination a minimum of 24 hours before commencing duty whenever possible. This also applies for the following scenarios, provided there is a difference of five or more time zones between the rest stop and the destination point:

- When the flight is of such duration that it includes an authorized rest stop; or
- When the flight is of such duration that the travel is authorized premium economy seating.

In the scenarios above, excused absence without charge to leave is to be granted for any part of the 24-hour adjustment period following arrival at the duty point that happens to fall within working hours. Travelers are entitled to per diem during the adjustment period.

3.3.7.4 Rest Periods for Travel while Driving

Travelers traveling via POV or GOV must take the appropriate steps to reduce fatigue-related driving and should consider factors such as physical condition, weather, length of trip, and road conditions to determine reasonable travel times within this policy's limits. Travelers must adhere to the following to reduce fatigue-related driving:

- No traveler may exceed 10 hours of driving time behind the wheel while on official government travel;
- Travelers embarking on travel after working a partial shift or attending training are limited to a maximum total work/driving period of 12 hours;
- Travelers traveling by common carrier (e.g., air, rail, bus) may only drive a combined 12-hour working/driving limit once they reach their destination. This 12-hour limit may be exceeded for the traveler to drive to local area accommodations (close to the airport) or if returning from TDY to their residence; and
- Vehicles with multiple drivers may drive up to a combined total of 12 hours with no person exceeding 10 hours behind the wheel.

Exceptions to the scenarios above may be made in rare circumstances to accomplish immediate and critical operational objectives or address special needs such as emergency incidents.

3.4 Combining Official with Personal Travel

The primary purpose of travel should be for official government travel-related reasons. Official events and travel should never be built around personal events. When combining official and personal travel, the traveler must designate which portions of the outbound and inbound trip are official government travel. For the official government travel segments, City Pair contract fares should be booked and purchased with the traveler's government travel card through the eTravel system or by calling the designated TMC. The personal airfare portion of the trip must be booked with the airline directly and secured on a personal method of payment.

DOT limits travel reimbursement to the official government travel-related costs for a TDY assignment by the most direct or uninterrupted route. If the designated official portion of the trip is not the authorized point of travel, the reimbursement will be limited to the cost of government fares

had no personal deviation been made. Travelers are responsible for any additional expenses incurred because of travel associated with personal reasons.

In addition, if a traveler, for example, delays the return trip due to personal reasons, any extra expenses due to a delay are the traveler's responsibility, including flight cancellations due to dangerous weather or any other unforeseen events. See Section 3.3.6 for additional information about how to complete a constructive cost comparison.

3.5 Arranging Travel Services

DOT employees must use the designated eTravel system and its associated online self-service booking tool and TMC when arranging travel services unless the mission requirement makes it impracticable to do so.

Employees who fail to utilize the eTravel system for the arrangement of travel services are liable for any additional costs (which include, but are not limited to, higher airfare, rental vehicle charges, service fees, cancellation penalties, etc.) to be determined by the employees' AO.

3.6 Reimbursable Expenses

DOT reimburses transportation, per diem, actual, and miscellaneous expenses when the AO determines the expense is required for TDY travel. This section outlines which expense types fall under each category and when DOT reimburses each expense type. This section also explains how DOT reimburses travel expenses for travelers with special needs, travelers who are injured or incapacitated during travel, travelers who face emergencies while on TDY travel, and travelers who book non-refundable fares.

3.6.1 Transportation Expenses

DOT reimburses travelers for necessary transportation expenses to travel to and from TDY locations and while on TDYTDY travel. These expenses may include, but are not limited to, common carriers (e.g., airlines, trains, ships, and public transport systems), GOVs, POVs or special conveyances (e.g., taxicabs, TNC, IMTC, shuttle services, and rental vehicles), and various miscellaneous expenses.

3.6.1.1 Common Carrier Transportation Expenses

DOT reimburses travelers for common carrier transportation when authorized by AOs as direct, expeditious routes for completing official government travel. See Section 3.3.1 for additional information about arranging common carrier transportation for TDY travel.

DOT generally reimburses the standard, economy fares for airline, train, ships, and public transit system travel. See Section 3.3.1.1.3 on Use of Premium Class Accommodations for more information on when DOT reimburses travelers for common carrier transportation expenses above the standard economy fare.

A justification is required for the reimbursement of coach airfares higher than the YCA fare. Justifications include but are not limited to:

- Exceptional security circumstances, as determined by the AO, require more expensive airfare;
- Regularly scheduled service between origin and destination points, including connecting

- points, provides only airfare above the YCA fare;
- Common carrier costs are paid in full through acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source;
- The use results in an overall cost savings to the government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time while awaiting the YCA fare flight;
- The YCA fare flight does not allow the traveler to arrive in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed; or
- No YCA fare is available that is consistent with the traveler's approved reasonable accommodation.

3.6.1.2 Special Conveyance Transportation Expenses

DOT generally reimburses special conveyance expenses for the standard economy fare. DOT may approve a more expensive fare when the traveler demonstrates the above-usual fare is necessary and cost-effective when needed to accomplish the mission (e.g., to fit a larger group of DOT travelers or to accommodate a traveler with special needs). See Section 3.6.5 for more information on reimbursable expenses for travel for travelers with special needs.

3.6.1.2.1 Taxicabs, TNC, and IMTC

DOT may reimburse a traveler for taxicabs, TNC, and IMTC usage during TDY travel when travel occurs between:

- A common carrier terminal and a personal residence, business location/TDY location, lodging location, or shuttle terminal (when courtesy transportation is not available, and the designated AO authorizes the expense);
- Hotels or other places of lodging such as motels or government quarters and TDY locations;
- TDY locations and the nearest available location to obtain meals when the traveler's TDY location prevents the traveler from obtaining such meals; and
- Hotels or other places of lodging such as motels or government quarters and the nearest available location to obtain meals, when the location and circumstances associated with it prevent the traveler from obtaining a meal within walking distance or at the place of lodging as determined by the AO.

Travelers must choose courtesy transportation provided by hotels when available, as their first source of transportation between places of lodging and common carrier terminals (e.g., airports and train stations).

DOT reimburses gratuity payments for taxis, TNCs, and courtesy transportation (hotel and airport shuttles). The suggested gratuity is 15 to 20 percent of the total amount (including all applicable tolls and fees required for the trip). The determination of a reasonable gratuity amount for courtesy transportation and the approval of gratuity payments greater than the suggested percentage amounts are at the discretion of the AO.

3.6.1.2.2 Commercial Rental Vehicle Expenses

DOT reimburses travelers the following rental vehicle-related expenses:

- Fuel/EV charging expenses required to operate the rental vehicle. Examples include, but are not limited to, electricity obtained at an EV charging station and petroleum obtained at a gas station;
 - Note: DOT does not reimburse for fuel/EV charging surcharges incurred from

failing to return the rental vehicle with the required fuel/EV charge amount (per the rental agreement). However, DOT may reimburse travelers for vendor refueling/EV charging surcharges in rare situations at the discretion of the AO. This includes, but is not limited to, cases when travelers cannot refuel/charge the EV completely prior to returning a rental vehicle because of safety issues, or situations where the location of closest fueling/EV charging station is excessively far from where the traveler must return the vehicle.

- Parking
 - Whenever available, self-parking should be selected over valet options.
- Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) or theft insurance for OCONUS travel only. Note, the government is a self-insurer; therefore, DOT does not reimburse this coverage for CONUS travel.
- Rental vehicle add-ons such as GPS devices, automated toll payment systems, and roadside assistance are reimbursable under the following circumstances:
 - GPS can be rented only in the following cases:
 - When necessary to accomplishing trip mission;
 - When renting a vehicle in a foreign country; or
 - When official government travel involves access to extremely remote locations that are not close to population centers, and where clearly marked road signs may not be present.Note: Other vehicle add-ons may be approved by the AO on a case-by-case basis if they are necessary to accomplish the mission.
 - Automated Toll Payment Systems:
 - Travelers should avoid renting or using an automated toll payment system (e.g., EZ Pass, FasTrak, ExpressToll, TollTag) any time the device is optional. Tolls should be paid using the government charge card and claimed on the travel voucher. The cost of renting an automated toll payment device is generally not an allowable expense. If a road does not include a cash/ charge card toll option, the traveler should use another route, when possible. If an alternate route is not practical, the AO may authorize the cost of renting an automated toll payment device on a case-by-case basis.
 - Roadside Assistance:
 - Roadside assistance is included under the U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement. Travelers must not authorize rental vehicle companies to include charges associated with other roadside assistance options on their rental vehicle agreements. However, if roadside assistance service is needed that is not covered under the agreement (e.g., assistance to change a flat tire when the rental vehicle has a spare tire), reimbursement may be authorized by the AO on a case-by-case basis.

3.6.1.3 Government Owned Vehicle (GOV) Expenses

A traveler whose AO authorize travel by GOV as the most advantageous method of travel, or a traveler who uses a GOV between a residence, official duty station, or other point of travel authorized by their AO and a common carrier terminal or at the TDY location (see Section 3.3.4), may receive parking (if applicable, self-parking over valet option must be utilized when available), and tolls reimbursement when necessary to accomplish the mission.

When an AO authorizes a traveler to use a GOV, but they choose to take their POV instead, the reimbursement will be limited to the current GOV mileage rates.

When traveling to or from the terminal, the reimbursement is limited to the lesser cost of airport economy (long-term) parking, or a taxicab or TNC fare.

DOT does not reimburse GOV travel costs that are not approved in advance by a designated AO. Unauthorized use of a GOV is considered misuse of government property. Offenders are subject to administrative or criminal liability.

3.6.1.4 Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV) Expenses

A traveler whose AO authorize travel by POV as the most advantageous method of travel, or a traveler who uses a POV between a residence, official duty station, or other point of travel authorized by their AO and a common carrier terminal or at the TDY location (see Section 3.3.4), may receive mileage, parking (if applicable, self-parking over valet option must be utilized when available), and tolls reimbursement when necessary to accomplish the mission.

The traveler must submit claims for mileage reimbursement following travel. When traveling to or from the terminal, the reimbursement is limited to the lesser cost of POV mileage and airport economy (long-term) parking or a taxicab or TNC fare.

DOT may not prohibit a traveler from using a POV on official government travel. However, if a traveler chooses to use a POV instead of the most advantageous method of transportation, they must:

- Limit reimbursement to the constructive cost of the authorized method of transportation, which is the sum of travel and transportation expenses the traveler would reasonably have incurred had the traveler traveled by the method of transportation deemed to be most advantageous to the government (see Section 3.3.6 for more information on constructive cost comparisons); and
- Take leave for any duty hours that are missed as a result of travel by POV.

DOT does *not* reimburse the following expenses when they are related to a traveler's use of a POV:

- Charges for repairs;
- Depreciation;
- Replacements;
- Grease or oil;
- Antifreeze;
- Towage and similar speculative expenses;
- Fuel/EV Charging;
- Insurance; or
- State and Federal taxes.

Note: Travelers are eligible to claim mileage for travel by POV without regard to the vehicle ownership or the person driving the vehicle.

3.6.2 Per Diem Expenses

DOT provides travelers on TDY travel with per diem allowances for lodging and meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) based on the per diem rate for the TDY location. DOT adheres to maximum per diem allowances by location, as provided on the GSA website. Reimbursement of per diem expenses are allowed when:

- Official government travel is performed outside a 50-mile radius from the traveler's authorized point of departure;

- Per diem expenses are incurred while performing official government travel; and
- A traveler is in a travel status more than 12 hours.

3.6.2.1 Per Diem Reimbursement Periods

A traveler is eligible for per diem reimbursement beginning on the date they depart their personal residence, official duty station, or any other points of travel the AO previously authorized. A traveler's reimbursement periods end on their return date from the TDY location.

Travelers must record their dates to and from official duty stations, TDY locations, and any other authorized point(s) of travel. Likewise, travelers must record any travel stopovers or authorized rest periods. See Section 3.3.7 for additional information on authorized rest periods.

A traveler who crosses the International Date Line must calculate their actual elapsed travel time, instead of calendar days, to determine proper per diem reimbursements.

3.6.2.2 Per Diem Reimbursement on Non-Workdays

DOT may reimburse travelers for non-workday per diem expenses (per diem allowance or actual expense reimbursement) when:

- The mission requires a non-workday stay at the TDY location;
- Travelers work at the same TDY location before and after a non-workday, and the cost of traveling home to the traveler's official duty station and back to the TDY location exceeds the total non-workday per diem reimbursement from staying at the TDY location; or
- Travelers work at different TDY locations directly before and after a non-workday, and the cost of returning home to the traveler's official duty station and traveling to the next TDY location exceeds the cost of traveling directly to the next TDY location and receiving per diem for the elapsed non-workday(s) between the first TDY location and the next.

AOs decide what factors are substantial enough to justify reimbursing both per diem and round-trip travel to and from a traveler's official duty station and reimbursement for non-workday per diem expenses when the traveler elects to take leave immediately (e.g., Friday or Monday) preceding or following non-workday(s).

3.6.2.3 Per Diem Reimbursement for Day Trips

A traveler on a day trip whose official government travel period equates to 12 hours or fewer is ineligible for a per diem allowance.

3.6.2.4 Lodging

Travelers who perform authorized TDY travel at DOT's expense are eligible for lodging expense reimbursement at hotels, motels, and government quarters at their TDY destination according to the GSA's published per diem lodging reimbursement rates. Travelers arriving at TDY lodging locations after 12:00 a.m. may claim lodging expenses for the preceding calendar day. DOT determines travelers' lodging reimbursements by lodging type and any special circumstances at their TDY destination:

- Conventional lodging (e.g., hotel, motel, and boarding house): DOT reimburses travelers for actual lodging expenses incurred, not to exceed the TDY location's prescribed per diem rate. Travelers should always stay at a "fire safe" facility. This is a facility that meets the

fire safety requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990. Please see Section 3.6.3 for more information on actual expenses;

- When selecting a commercial lodging facility, travelers should first consider government lodging agreement programs such as FedRooms®. The advantages include:
 - Lodging rates set at or below per diem rates;
 - No add-on fees, resort fees, or early check-out fees;
 - Room cancellation deadlines as late as 4:00 p.m. on the day of arrival;
 - Most hotels offer last standard room availability rates; and
 - Free breakfast, free Wi-Fi, free parking, and free shuttle services.
- Government quarters: DOT reimburses travelers any fee or service charge for using government quarters;
- Lodging with friend(s) or relative(s): DOT reimburses travelers for additional costs that a friend or relative incurs in accommodating them. DOT only reimburses the expenses if the traveler can substantiate the costs, and the AO determines such costs to be reasonable. DOT does not reimburse travelers for the cost of comparable conventional lodging in the area;
- Non-conventional lodging: DOT reimburses travelers for the costs of other types of lodging when conventional lodging facilities do not exist in the area (e.g., in remote areas) or when conventional facilities have limited supply due to an influx of attendees at a special event (e.g., entertainment or sporting event). This lodging type may include home rental services or (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) college dormitories or similar facilities. DOT may reimburse fees for additional services when the AO determines the fees are necessary for the use of non-conventional lodging;
- Recreational vehicle (trailer/camper): DOT may reimburse travelers for expenses associated with recreational vehicles that may be considered lodging costs (i.e., parking fees, fees for connection, use, and disconnection of utilities, electricity, gas, water and sewage, bath, or shower fees, and dumping fees); or
- Dual lodging: Expenses at two different TDY locations during the same period are reimbursable when these are incurred due to unexpected circumstances beyond the traveler's control or are necessary to accomplish the mission.

DOT *does not* reimburse travelers for the following lodging expenses:

- Personally owned residences: Any lodging expenses that travelers incur from staying at their personally owned residences, or for any real estate expenses associated with the purchase or sale of a personal residence at the TDY location, except in conjunction with authorized relocation travel; and
- Personally owned recreational vehicles: Any expenses associated with the purchase, sale, or payment of a personally owned recreational vehicle or camper at the TDY location.

Note that if travelers share lodging, DOT reimburses lodging expenses as follows:

- When government travelers on official government travel share lodging, reimbursement is limited to one-half of the double occupancy rate; and
- If the person sharing the room is not a government traveler, the reimbursement is limited to the single occupancy rate.

3.6.2.4.1 Lodging Taxes

Travelers traveling within CONUS and OCONUS non-foreign locations must pay all lodging taxes, unless exempted by the State or local jurisdiction. See Section 3.6.4.5 for additional information on claiming lodging taxes as miscellaneous expense reimbursement when traveling within the CONUS.

Lodging taxes for OCONUS foreign travel are included foreign lodging rates. Travelers are prohibited from claiming reimbursement for OCONUS foreign lodging taxes separately.

3.6.2.4.2 Prepaid Lodging Reimbursement

DOT travelers must make reasonable efforts to secure lodging reservations through the eTravel system. In rare instances where travelers cannot obtain lodging reservations within the eTravel system, and reservations are made directly with the hotel or other lodging source that requires a lodging deposit, DOT may reimburse lodging deposits prior to travel.

When a traveler must cancel, curtail, or interrupt authorized travel for official purposes or other reasons beyond their control, such as personal emergencies, DOT will reimburse the traveler for non-refundable prepaid lodging expenditures (e.g., forfeited rental deposits, first night prepaid hotel stays, etc.). However, a traveler claiming reimbursement of prepaid lodging expenditures must make reasonable efforts to obtain refunds and minimize losses to DOT prior to submitting their travel vouchers. Such reasonable efforts may include calling vendors and attempting to obtain a refund or cancelling reservations as soon as the traveler knows they will not be able to travel.

Travelers who claim and receive non-refundable lodging deposit reimbursements prior to travel, and then fail to travel according to their associated authorized itineraries due to personal matters, must repay DOT the reimbursed deposits.

3.6.2.5 Meals + Incidental Expenses (M&IE)

Supervisors should schedule travel so that, to the maximum extent possible, the traveler can perform official government travel during their normal duty hours. Travelers may schedule travel one day early or stay overnight upon completion of TDY travel to avoid traveling during non-duty hours. In addition, travelers may arrive at the TDY location earlier or stay later if by doing so additional expenses would not be incurred by the agency. For example, if the work or TDY assignment begins Monday morning, the traveler may schedule their departure date on the previous Friday, but they would not be authorized any travel reimbursement until the day before (Sunday) the assignment begins.

When approving travel days, supervisors will ensure that trips are initiated and completed within an appropriate period/depending upon the variables of destination, method of travel, scheduling, length of trip, travel time, purpose, and other similar factors.

DOT provides M&IE reimbursements as outlined below:		Your allowance is
When travel is		
More than 12 but less than 24 hours.		75 % of the applicable M&IE rate for each calendar day you are in a travel status.
24 hours or more, on	The day of departure.	75% of applicable M&IE rate.
	Full day(s) of travel.	100% of applicable M&IE rate.
	The last day of travel.	75% of applicable M&IE rate.

DOT provides M&IE reimbursements as outlined below:

For days of travel which		Your applicable M&IE rate is
Require lodging		M&IE rate associated with TDY location or stopover point.
Do not require lodging	Travel is more than 12 hours but less than 24 hours.	M&IE rate associated with TDY location (or highest M&IE rate if itinerary includes multiple locations).
	Travel is 24 hours or more, and you are traveling to a new TDY site or stopover point at midnight.	M&IE rate associated with new TDY location or stopover point.
	Travel is 24 hours or more, and you are returning to your official station.	M&IE associated with previous day of travel.

3.6.2.5.1 Complimentary or Furnished Meals

DOT does not reduce travelers per diem reimbursement expense rates when they receive complimentary meals from common carriers or hotels.

Travelers who receive government-furnished meals, or receive meals as part of a registration fee, must deduct the reimbursement rate (as prescribed by GSA for the specified TDY location) for the furnished meal(s) (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) from the overall M&IE reimbursement rate for those days.

3.6.3 Actual Expenses

A traveler must obtain advance authorization to claim actual expense reimbursement from their designated AO. A traveler who claims actual expense reimbursement without prior AO authorization must submit written justification(s) with their associated travel vouchers. AOs determine if a traveler's claims for actual expense reimbursement are justified and appropriate.

DOT may reimburse "actual expenses," limited to an amount not to exceed 300 percent of the prescribed maximum per diem rate per TDY location in the following instances when:

- Travelers must procure lodging or meals at a prearranged location where they are attending a scheduled meeting, conference, or training session;
- Authorized travel expenses have escalated due to simultaneously occurring unique events (sporting events, conventions, natural disasters, etc.) and the combined cost of nearby lodging, meals, and round-trip commuting to/from nearby lodging and meals exceeds the prescribed per diem reimbursement rate for TDY location;
- The TDY location is subject to a Presidentially Declared Disaster and the Quality Assurance has issued an open (blanket) actual expense authorization (see FTR 301 - 70.201); or
- The mission requirements necessitate actual expenses as determined by the AO.

Travelers must itemize all actual expenses (including each meal separately) for reimbursement. Travelers must average expenses that do not accrue daily (e.g., laundry, dry cleaning, etc.) over the number of days the AO has approved for actual expenses.

Note: Travelers may receive both per diem allowances and actual expense reimbursements on different days of the same trip.

3.6.4 Miscellaneous Expenses

DOT reimburses various necessary miscellaneous expenses at the discretion of the traveler's AO.

3.6.4.1 Cash Withdrawal Fees

DOT reimburses ATM cash withdrawal fees and financial institution service charges for travelers using government travel charge cards. DOT Travel Card Management Policy (see Volume 6) sets forth guidance regarding proper use of cash withdrawals.

3.6.4.2 Checked Bag Fees

DOT reimburses travelers for the following checked bag fee expenses:

- Expenses associated with checking the first piece of luggage on both domestic and international flights, if checking the first piece of luggage is not included in the flight fare; or
- Expenses associated with the storage of one piece of luggage (e.g., hotel, valet) prior to/following checking in or out of lodging if conducting official business during the storage period.

AOs may authorize reimbursement for expenses associated with checking additional pieces of luggage or luggage exceeding air carriers' size or weight restrictions when needed to accomplish the mission.

3.6.4.3 Communication

Travelers who have a government issued cellular telephone are not eligible for communication related expense reimbursements unless they travel to an area where cellular service is limited or unavailable.

If a traveler is required to incur out-of-pocket communication costs because of mission-related activities or additional costs in foreign countries, the AO must approve this on a case-by-case basis.

These costs may include, but are not limited to, the mandatory use of a country's telephone carrier system and additional tariffs.

3.6.4.4 Laundry

DOT may reimburse travelers traveling within CONUS for laundry and pressing expenses they incur at the TDY location if the travel authorization includes overnight lodging equal to or exceeding four consecutive nights.

DOT does not reimburse laundry and clothing pressing expenses for OCONUS travel as it is already included within the established per diem rates.

3.6.4.5 Travel Insurance

In accordance with FTR 301-10.451 and 301-10.452, DOT will not reimburse driving-related insurance for CONUS travel areas. Per the U.S. Rental Car Agreement, DOT reimburses additional OCONUS rental vehicle insurance as a miscellaneous expense when required by law at the traveler's destination. DOT also reimburses supplemental medical insurance at the discretion of the AO when a traveler demonstrates it is necessary for their trip to an OCONUS foreign destination.

3.6.4.5.1 Travel Membership Programs and Subscriptions

DOT will not reimburse individual traveler's membership programs (e.g., rewards program offered by credit card companies, TSA Precheck and Global Entry) or subscription (e.g., monthly/yearly Wi-Fi) fees unless statutorily authorized.

3.6.4.6 Other Miscellaneous Expenses

DOT may also reimburse the following miscellaneous expenses at the discretion of the traveler's AO:

- General expenses:
 - Storage of property used on official business;
 - Energy surcharge or lodging resort fee (when such fee is not optional);
 - Telephone calls/service (see Section 3.6.4.3); and
 - Wi-Fi flight duration passes.
- Special expenses associated with foreign travel:
 - Commissions on conversion of foreign currency;
 - Passport or visa fees, including fees for physical examination a country requires to obtain a visa or travel and transportation costs to the passport/visa issuing office (contact passports@dot.gov for assistance if necessary);
 - Costs of photographs for passports and visas;
 - Foreign country exit fees;
 - Costs of birth, health, and identity certificates; and
 - Charges for inoculations that cannot be obtained through a Federal dispensary.

AOs may approve other miscellaneous expenses necessary for lodging, transportation, or delivery of work products. Travelers must document that all expenses are necessary to accomplish the mission.

3.6.5 Reimbursable Expenses for Travel of Travelers with Special Needs

DOT reimburses reasonable expenses required to accommodate a traveler's special physical needs, as defined in FTR 301-13.2, when they are clearly visible and discernable or substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. DOT only requires a one-time certification statement. The medical authority certifying a traveler's special need must include at a minimum both an explanation that the special accommodations are necessary and the approximate duration of the special accommodation within the certification statement. DOT approved reasonable accommodation(s) may serve as a certification statement.

DOT reimburses reasonable expenses for the travel of travelers with special needs including, but not necessarily limited to:

- Transportation and per diem expenses for a family member or attendant when the traveler's travel would not be possible without them;

- Note: DOT treats a family member or attendant traveling with a DOT traveler as invitational travelers. See Section 3.2.2 for more information on invitational travel.
- Note: If an AO authorizes a traveler to have an attendant accompany them, the AO may also authorize the attendant to use other than coach class accommodations in this scenario if the traveler requires the attendant's services en route.
- Services of an attendant, when necessary, to accommodate the traveler's special needs;
 - Note: For limits on the amount that may be paid to an attendant, other than travel expenses, see 3102.
- Specialized transportation to/from and at the TDY location;
- Specialized services or accommodations provided by the common carrier;
- Luggage expenses directly associated with a special need;
- Renting and/or transporting a wheelchair; and
- Necessary premium class travel to accommodate a special need. Note, if an AO authorizes a traveler to have an attendant accompany them, the AO may also authorize the attendant to use other than coach class accommodations in this scenario if the traveler requires the attendant's services en route.

DOT's Reasonable Accommodation Order (DOT Order 1011.1B) governs the process of requesting an accommodation, requesting and reviewing medical documentation, and making determinations about:

- A traveler's special needs status;
- How to accommodate a traveler's acknowledged special need; and
- What travel expenses associated with accommodating a special need are reimbursable.

Please consult with the OAs' Offices of Human Resources, Office of Civil Rights, or Chief Counsels for additional information and guidance.

3.7 Claiming Reimbursement for TDY Travel Expenses

All travelers traveling on TDY assignment must use the eTravel system to file an electronic travel voucher within five business days of returning from travel. DOT requires that travelers include any written approvals or documentation supporting exceptional travel circumstances (e.g., premium class travel, emergency travel, per diem reimbursement for local travel) in their vouchers.

3.7.1 Documentation Required for Voucher Reimbursement

Voucher reimbursements for official government travel must be disbursed directly to the traveler—whether a Federal employee or an invitational traveler. To maintain financial integrity, transparency, and regulatory compliance, reimbursements must be issued in the name of the traveler who incurred the authorized travel expenses, through the DOT Financial Management (FM) System, and may not be directed to third parties unless explicitly authorized by law.

Travelers are required to electronically attach the following receipts to their travel vouchers:

- Air and rail;
- Itemized rental vehicle showing a zero balance;
- Rental vehicle fuel/EV charging expense;
- Itemized lodging showing a zero balance;
- Taxi, TNC, or IMTC; and
- Individual travel expenses over \$75.

Receipts for M&IE are never required, except for amounts over \$75 when claiming actual expenses. If it is impracticable to provide documentation as required by this section, the failure to do so must be fully explained on the travel voucher. Mere inconvenience in the matter of providing documentation will not be considered. In certain rare instances, AO may approve a copy of the travel card transaction in lieu of a receipt.

Note: Required receipts are maintained for six years in accordance with National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under General Records Schedule 1.1, item 010.

DOT may disallow a traveler's payment of a claimed travel expense under the following circumstances:

- The expense is prohibited by policy;
- The expense is an unauthorized travel expense;
- The traveler fails to properly itemize travel expenses; or
- The traveler fails to provide a receipt or necessary documentation to support claimed travel expense.

When DOT disallows payment of a traveler's claimed travel expense, the traveler, upon notification of disallowance, may challenge the decision by providing additional facts or documents to support the original reimbursement claim.

3.7.2 Reimbursement for Official Non-Travel Expenditures

Travelers whose assigned missions require non-travel expenditures such as the acquisition of materials, equipment, or services must procure these items prior to travel in accordance with DOT's Transportation Acquisition Manual.

3.8 Promotional Materials

Any promotional benefits or materials received from a travel service provider in connection with official government travel may be retained for personal use if such items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public and at no additional cost to DOT. However, promotional benefits or materials an employee receives from a travel service provider in connection with your planning or scheduling an official conference or other group travel (as opposed to performing official government travel for the employee) are considered property of the government. An employee may only accept the benefits or materials on behalf of DOT and for the use of official business.

Volume 3: Long-Term TDY

Chapter 1: DOT Long-Term TDY Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This volume sets forth the policy requirements and identifies DOT responsibilities related to Long-Term TDY and supplements the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) issued by the General Services Administration (GSA), with policy specific to DOT and the Enterprise Services Center (ESC) on managing Long-term Temporary Duty (TDY) travel, consistent with applicable Federal laws, policies, and guidance. Long-term TDY is pre-authorized official government travel to a location more than 50 miles from both the traveler's official duty station (ODS) and primary residence lasting 30 consecutive calendar days or longer at one location or 16 days or longer for training.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** Except for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), this Policy applies to all Secretarial Offices and Operating Administrations (OAs), including the Office of Inspector General per DOT Order 1320.16D, "U.S. DOT Directives System." January 19, 2021.
3. **BACKGROUND:** The FTR enumerates the travel and relocation policies and provides the method for calculating daily lodging rates when an employee is traveling on a long-term basis.¹ The FTR further states that such reimbursement, including an appropriate amount for Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE), may not exceed the maximum daily per diem rate for the TDY location.² However, the FTR allows, but does not require, agencies to reduce a per diem rate below the prescribed maximum when an agency can determine in advance that lodging and meal costs will be lower than the per diem rate.³ Thus the FTR allows an agency, at its discretion, to reduce per diem rates for travelers in long-term travel status if the agency has determined that lodging and meal costs will be lower than the typical per diem rate. DOT's long-term TDY policy aims to fairly reimburse travelers for long-term TDY expenses incurred while on official government travel. This policy eases administrative burdens and limits operational costs by simplifying long-term TDY administration.
4. **REFERENCES:**
 - a. FTR, 41 CFR Chapter 301, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances.
 - b. FTR, 41 CFR Chapter 302, Relocation Allowances, Subchapter B, Relocation Allowances, Part 302-3, Relocation Allowance by Specific Type, Subpart E, Employee's Temporary Change of Station.
 - c. Travel and Transportation Reform Act (TTRA) of 1998, Public Law 105-264.
 - d. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 463, Travel, Entertainment, Gift, and Car Expenses,
5. **DEFINITION:**
 - a. **Actual Expense:** Payment of authorized actual expenses incurred, up to the limit prescribed by the Administrator of GSA or agency, as appropriate. Entitlement to reimbursement is contingent upon entitlement to per diem and is subject to the same definitions and rules governing per diem.

¹ FTR § 301-11.14.

² FTR § 301-11.14.

³ FTR § 301-11.200.

- b. Actual Subsistence Expense Allowance (ASEA): An allowance that permits the payment of actual expenses for all subsistence expenses.
- c. Agency: An Executive Branch agency as defined in 5 U.S.C. § 5701. An agency may also be a military department, an office, agency, or other establishment in the legislative or judicial branch and the government of the District of Columbia.
- d. Approving/Authorizing Official (AO): An AO is the approving or authorizing official at the operational level who has the responsibility for the mission and the authority to obligate funds to support TDY travel for the mission. The AO authorizes only travel necessary to accomplish the mission of the Federal Government.
- e. Common Carrier: Private-sector supplier of air, rail, ship, or bus transportation to the general public, as well as local transit systems.
- f. Contract Carrier: U.S. certificated carrier under contract with the Federal Government to furnish Federal employees and other persons authorized to travel at the Federal Government's expense with passenger transportation service.
- g. Conventional Lodging: The most common types of lodging facilities, such as hotel/motel, boarding houses, or similar, that are usually found in non-remote areas.
- h. Invitational Travel: Authorized travel of individuals either not employed or employed (under 5 U.S.C. § 5703) intermittently in Federal Government service as consultants or experts and paid on a daily, when-actually-employed basis. Furthermore, this includes authorized travel for individuals serving without pay or at \$1 a year when acting in a capacity that is directly related to official activities of the Federal Government. Travel allowances authorized for such persons are the same as those normally authorized for travelers in a TDY status.
- i. Lodging Plus Per Diem: The method of computing per diem allowance for official government travel in which the per diem allowance for each travel day is established based on the actual amount the traveler pays for lodging expenses plus an allowance for M&IE, the total of which does not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned.
- j. Long-Term TDY Assignment: A pre-authorized trip that will meet all the following criteria:
 - 1) Traveler is anticipated to be in TDY status for 30 consecutive calendar days or longer at one location or for training of 16 class days or more,
 - 2) TDY location is outside both primary residence and the Official Duty Station (ODS), and
 - 3) Travel is not considered a Temporary Change of Station (TCS).
- k. Non-conventional Lodging: A type of lodging that may be necessary if there are no conventional lodging facilities in the area (e.g., in remote areas) or when conventional facilities are in short supply because of an influx of attendees at a special event (e.g., trade show, conference, or major sporting event). Such lodging includes college dormitories or similar facilities, internet-based temporary rooms, or apartment rentals or rooms not offered commercially but made available to the public by area residents in their homes (41 CFR 301-11.12(a)(4)).
- l. Non-Refundable Deposits: Refers to cost the Federal Government pays in advance for a traveler in the form of a security deposit. The Federal Government does not get this cost back.
- m. Official Duty Station (ODS): An area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain, provided no part of the area is more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or from an invitational traveler's home or regular place of business. If the employee's work involves

recurring travel or varies on a recurring basis, the location where the work activities of the employee's position of record are based is considered the regular place of work.

- n. Official Government Travel: Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee's official duty station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.
- o. Per Diem Allowance: The per diem allowance (also referred to as subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. The per diem allowance covers all charges and services, including any service charges where applicable. Lodging taxes in the United States are excluded from the per diem allowance and are reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense. In foreign locations, lodging taxes are part of the per diem allowance and are not a miscellaneous expense.
- p. Primary Residence: The location that a person regularly and primarily inhabits, also referred to as a main residence. It may be a house, apartment, trailer, or other dwelling; it is where an individual, couple, or family household lives most of the time. If the traveler maintains more than one residence and divides their time on a seasonal basis between them, the dwelling they spend more time in will be deemed their primary residence unless approved in writing by the OA CFO or Deputy OA CFO prior to approval of the Travel Authorization.
- q. Reasonable Accommodation: Any change to the work environment or to the way things are usually done that results in equal employment opportunity for a qualified individual with a disability or individuals covered under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. (See DOT Order 1011.1B).
- r. Reduced Per Diem Rate: A method of paying per diem expenses when there are known reductions in lodging and meal costs or when subsistence costs can be determined in advance and are lower than the prescribed per diem rate.
- s. Refundable deposits: Refers to costs the Federal Government pays in advance for a traveler in the form of a security deposit. The Federal Government expects to get this cost back after a specified time, or when certain conditions are satisfied. When entities such as long-term TDY hotels or lease entities collect this money, a refundable deposit is typically returned to the traveler after a relatively brief period or at the consummation of the long-term TDY assignment.
- t. Special conveyance: Commercially rented or hired vehicles other than a privately owned vehicle and other than those owned or under contract to an agency.
- u. Subletting/Subleasing: A rental arrangement that allows a new resident to move into an employee's apartment or home (or a room in the apartment) while the employee temporarily moves out. The individual renting the apartment/home or room will pay rent and utilities and will adhere to the lease terms.
- v. TDY Location: A place away from an employee's official duty station, where the employee is authorized to travel.
- w. TDY Assignment: A trip, usually of a short-term duration of less than 30 days, and the traveler returns to their ODS when the official government travel is complete.
- x. Taxable Long-Term TDY Assignment: A TDY single assignment one year or greater in length. Per the IRS Code, employees (travelers) on long-term/indefinite assignments are no longer considered temporarily away from their primary residence. When this situation occurs, all travel allowances (e.g., per diem reimbursement) become taxable.⁴
- y. Temporary Change of Station (TCS): The relocation of an employee to a new official duty station for a temporary period while performing a long-term assignment and subsequent

⁴ FTR § 301-11.601 through 301-11.60454.

return to the previous official duty station upon completion of that assignment. To qualify as TCS, the long-term assignment must be greater than six months and cannot exceed 30 months.

- z. Travel Advance: Prepayment of estimated travel expenses to a traveler.
- aa. Travel Authorization (TA): Permission (may be written or electronic) for a traveler to travel on official business.
- bb. Travel Claim/Voucher: A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of a traveler's expenses incurred in the performance of official government travel, including long-term TDY assignments.
- cc. Travel Management System: The Federal Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service and system that automates and consolidates the Federal travel process in a self-service web-centric environment. The service covers all aspects of official government travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement, and travel management reporting.
- dd. Traveler: An individual who is on official government travel.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. Office of the CFO (OST-Budget): Establishes and manages DOT-wide policy and internal controls for long-term TDY and delegates travel management duties to the designated OA travel management officials.
- b. OA CFOs/Deputy CFOs: Ensures compliance with this Long-Term TDY Policy and ensures their employees receive information on how the travel program operates and how the policies affect their travel decisions. All long-term travel that is not a reduced per diem rate must be approved by the OA CFO or Deputy OA CFO. This authority may not be re-delegated.
- c. Enterprise Services Center (ESC) Travel Branch/Relocation Team: Upon receipt of a long-term TA, either by memorandum or ESC travel-generated report from the travel management system, the ESC Travel Branch/Relocation Team:
 - 1) Assists the OA's AO with a cost analysis to determine which entitlement is most cost effective to the Federal Government, such as a TCS or long-term taxable travel analysis.
 - 2) Arranges and provides long-term travel counseling to the traveler's AO for any TDY determined to be long-term taxable travel. This counseling includes an analysis of authorized entitlements and the application of taxes.
 - 3) Flags long-term taxable travel authorized reimbursements or travel vouchers for application of taxes for Federal Income Tax, Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), and Medicare.
 - 4) Manually calculates applied taxes outside of the travel management system and records the travel voucher tax portion into the DOT Financial Management (FM) System.
 - 5) Reports applied taxes to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on a quarterly basis for each long-term voucher reimbursement.
 - 6) Notifies ESC Accounts Receivable to establish a debt for the traveler's share of FICA/Medicare.
 - 7) Reports the traveler reimbursement amounts and applied taxes to the Department of Interior's Interior Business Center (DOI IBC) for inclusion in the traveler's annual W-2 tax form.

- 8) Monitors the reimbursement of authorized long-term travel relocation allowances, which include Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA) and Extended TDY Tax Reimbursement Allowance (ETTRA) reimbursement.
- d. OA Travel Management Officials: Maintain oversight and management control of the OA TDY travel programs and its associated policies and procedures. The OA Travel Management Officials also:
- 1) Serve as the liaison between OA Program Offices and the OST Office of Financial Management (B30).
 - 2) Develop, implement, and disseminate long-term TDY policy and internal controls to promote good stewardship of travel spending.
 - 3) Monitor the activities of their respective OA program areas to ensure policy and internal controls compliance.
 - 4) Assist AOs in assessing the financial needs of the traveler to ensure the traveler has access to an adequate travel card credit line for either trip by trip or monthly long-term assignment expenses as needed and adjusting as necessary.
- e. Approving/Authorizing Official (AO): Determines whether travel is necessary and that the most economical means of transportation and lodging are being utilized. Specifically:
- 1) Determines whether travel is necessary based on agency mission needs.
 - 2) Authorizes long-term TDY assignments in advance under Trip-by-Trip authorizations.
 - 3) Ensures any expenses incurred by the traveler that vary from an approved TA have written approval prior to the expense being incurred.
 - 4) Ensures compliance with long-term TDY policies.
 - 5) Maintains and appropriately documents long-term TDY documentation.
 - 6) Completes or ensures the traveler completes lower cost option travel research prior to the traveler's long-term TDY that allows the Federal Government to pay reduced per diem rates as described in this Policy.
 - 7) Ensures the long-term TDY per diem rates are reduced below the GSA rate, where research has shown costs are expected to be lower OA CFO or DCFO approval for a higher rate will be requested if reduced rates are available, but the traveler is not able to secure lodging at the appropriate reduced per diem rate.
 - 8) Ensures a travel purpose is selected correctly in DOT's travel management system for TAs that are taxable long-term travel.
 - 9) Notifies ESC PCS Travel by e-mail, AMK-343 (9-AMC-AMK343-PCS-Travel@faa.gov) of taxable long-term TDY assignment.
 - 10) Examines travel authorizations and vouchers to ensure compliance with the FTR and DOT policy on receipts and applicable justifications/supporting documentation. OAs may have an additional reviewer(s) for a TA.
 - 11) Tracks deposits when the Federal Government funds a refundable deposit at the outset for a long-term TDY traveler, such as a security deposit on an apartment lease. Once the deposit is returned, it must be documented on the traveler's voucher appropriately.
- f. TA Funds Certifier: Ensures funds are available before travel is authorized and ensures all laws, regulations, and policies are being followed.
- g. OA Human Resources (HR) Department: Develops policies regarding discipline and adverse action. The OA's HR Department will consult with the supervisor/manager and legal counsel to assist the manager/supervisor in determining the appropriate disciplinary or

adverse actions should one arise involving long-term TDY assignment.

- h. Travelers: Adhere to the procedures set forth in this Policy and other applicable DOT Orders, the FTR, DOT memorandum on related topics, and other applicable OA guidance. In addition, the traveler should:
- 1) Be fiscally responsible and exercise the same care when incurring official government travel expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business;⁵
 - 2) Ensure travel vouchers are for authorized Federal Government travel TDY expenses only;
 - 3) File interim travel vouchers every 21 days or more frequently based on OA guidance;
 - 4) File a final travel voucher within 5 business days after travel ends;
 - 5) Submit travel card payments in full for each monthly billing cycle regardless of voucher reimbursement status;
 - 6) Make appropriate reimbursement claims. The traveler cannot claim overlapping M&IE allowances (i.e., travelers cannot claim M&IE for short-term and long-term TDY at the same time);
 - 7) Prepare written justifications of TDY costs and document cost comparisons prior to incurring these costs (before the long-term TDY assignment);
 - 8) Obtain AO approval for travel prior to travel;
 - 9) Ensure any expenses incurred that vary from an approved TA have written approval prior to the expense being incurred; and
 - 10) Ensure deposits are returned in the event the Federal Government funds a refundable deposit at the outset for a long-term TDY traveler, such as a security deposit on an apartment lease. Once the deposit is returned, the traveler must document this refund on their travel voucher and ensure that it is accounted for appropriately on their travel voucher.

7. **POLICY:**

Except for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), this Policy applies to all Secretarial Offices and Operating Administrations (OAs), including the Office of Inspector General per DOT Order 1320.16D, “U.S. DOT Directives System” dated January 19, 2021, and any subsequent amendments thereto.

Secretarial Offices and OAs must ensure compliance with the Department’s travel policy to support a well-managed long-term TDY travel program. Where applicable, OAs may develop supplemental internal travel policies to more directly address specific business needs of the OA. An OA-specific travel policy shall not conflict with the FTR or DOT travel policy, and may be more restrictive or add requirements, but may not be more lenient in requirements. FAA employees must follow the guidance outlined in the FAA Travel Policy Chapter 2, TDY Allowances/CONUS.

International travel should be coordinated with the appropriate International Affairs or Program Offices within each OA as required by OA policy. OA International Affairs or Program Offices, including program offices in the Office of the Secretary, will coordinate Departmental approval with the Office of Aviation and International Affairs. (Refer to Volume 4 “International Travel Approval” and Volume 5 “Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings.”)

⁵ FTR §301-2.3.

Personnel policies applicable to employees in travel status, such as pay and compensatory time off for travel, are outside the scope of this policy.

- a. Reduced Per Diem Rate for Long-Term TDY Assignment: Per diem rates for Long-Term TDY assignments may be reduced below the prescribed per diem rate for locations where the agency has determined in advance that lodging and meal costs will be lower than the prescribed per diem rate. Incidental expenses are not subject to the reduced rate. OAs should analyze expected costs for meals and lodging in advance of long-term TDY and reduce the per diem rate as appropriate if expenses are lower than the prescribed per diem rate. A reduced per diem rate should encompass the specific long-term travel expenses allowed by the FTR.⁶ When it is determined that expenses will not be lower than the prescribed per diem rates, OAs may approve prescribed per diem rates for long-term TDY.

Example of calculations for a reduced per diem rate of (60 percent) for Oklahoma City, OK:

- 1) The standard per diem rate for Oklahoma City is \$95/day for lodging and \$61/day for M&IE.
 - a) Reduced M&IE Rate: To calculate the 60 percent reduced daily per diem rate for M&IE, take the allowed daily M&IE rate, subtract the \$5 incidentals, multiply by 60 percent, then add the incidentals back to the total.
 $\$61 - \$5 = \$56$. $\$56 * 60\% = \$33.60 + \$5 = \38.60 (M&IE).
 - b) Reduced Lodging Rate: To calculate the 60 percent reduced daily per diem rate for lodging, take the allowed daily lodging rate, then multiply by 60 percent.
 $\$95 * 60\% = \57 (Lodging).
- b. Reduced Per Diem Rate for Lodging Instructions: Travelers, along with their AOs, must make reasonable efforts to secure lodging at an appropriate reduced per diem rate, if applicable, for long-term TDY assignments. The reimbursement of reduced per diem rates should be limited to common commercial lodging accommodations required for an individual traveler that is safe, clean, accessible, and sanitary. If reduced per diem rate accommodations are not available for conventional lodging, travelers are authorized to obtain non-conventional lodging. Non-conventional lodging rates should not exceed the appropriate reduced per diem rate.

Travelers must document a minimum of three lodging quotes when requesting approval for a per diem rate that is not reduced. If a traveler is assigned to a long-term TDY assignment and cannot obtain long-term lodging at the appropriate reduced per diem rate in advance of travel, the AO should authorize a lodging search period at full per diem not to exceed 15 calendar days from the day the traveler arrives at the TDY location. If the traveler is still unable to secure lodging at the authorized reduced rate, the OA CFO or OA Deputy CFO may authorize a higher reimbursement rate, not to exceed the daily per diem rate set by GSA. The OA CFO or OA Deputy CFO approval may not be re-delegated. AOs are not permitted to lower reduced TDY per diem while the traveler is currently at the TDY location. In instances where a special event (sporting, convention, etc.) is identified at the long-term travel location, which causes a temporary increase in lodging costs, the authorization must state that the lodging plus method will be authorized for this period of time and then revert back to the reduced method.

⁶ FTR § 301-11.15.

If a traveler negotiates a rate below the established reduced per diem rate, the OA may authorize more than the negotiated rate for lodging expenses.

NOTE: If the traveler is TDY to the same location and performing the same job, lasting 30 consecutive calendar days or longer, they will be reimbursed at an appropriate or reduced per diem rate. OAs may not use multiple travel authorizations for shorter periods to attempt to circumvent a reduced per diem rate or to avoid applicable tax laws.

- c. Determining Costs and Modes of Travel for Long-Term TDY Assignment: A traveler may be authorized to travel to and from a long-term TDY assignment using a common carrier, government owned vehicle (GOV), or privately-owned vehicle (POV), whichever is most advantageous to the Federal Government. If the traveler travels by POV, in lieu of a common carrier or GOV, the traveler must complete a cost comparison to be documented and included in their TA prior to travel. If travel by common carrier is determined to be advantageous to the Federal Government, but the traveler elects to travel by POV as a personal preference, the traveler's reimbursement is limited to the cost associated with the available common carrier transportation as presented in the cost comparison. The AO, with assistance from the traveler, should document a cost comparison and include the POV, rental car, and common carrier expenses, as shown in the example below. The cost comparison must also be included with the TA prior to travel anytime a traveler elects POV as the mode of transportation. A rental car option may not be feasible for a long-term travel due to the length of most long-term TDY assignment.

Cost Comparison POV vs Common Carrier					
POV Mileage Residence to TDY Site	Mileage	0	X	\$0.575 per mi	
Enroute Lodging (Stand CONUS)	Lodging	\$96.00	X	0.00 day(s)	
Enroute M&IE (Stand CONUS)	M&IE	\$55.00	X	0.00 day(s)	
POV Mileage TDY Site to Residence	Mileage	0	X	\$0.575 per mi	\$0.00
Enroute Lodging to Residence	Lodging	\$96.00	X	0.00 day(s)	
Enroute M&IE to Residence	M&IE	\$55.00	X	0.00 day(s)	
Total					\$0.00
* Days of travel based on 425 miles per day. Use Rand M & IE to determine mileage.					
Common Carrier					
Roundtrip GSA City Pair Airfare (YCA)					\$0.00
Standard fees in addition to airfare					\$45.60
Transportation to Airport					\$0.00
First Checked Bag Fee (Departure)	\$0.00	X	1.00	Bag	\$0.00
Additional Checked Bag Fee (Departure)	\$0.00	X	1.00	Bag	\$0.00
Transportation from Airport to Lodging					\$0.00
Transportation from Lodging to Airport					\$0.00
First Checked Bag Fee (Return)	\$0.00	X	1.00	Bag	\$0.00
Additional Checked Bag Fee (Return)	\$0.00	X	1.00	Bag	\$0.00
Transportation from Airport					\$0.00
Total					\$45.60
Instructions: Populate only the yellow highlighted cells. All other cells are automatically calculated. The allowable reimbursement is limited to the lesser of the costs.					

If lodging is secured prior to arriving, the reduced per diem rate begins on the arrival day at the traveler's long-term TDY assignment. For travel days where the traveler is traveling between their ODS and the long-term TDY assignment, travelers will be reimbursed at 100 percent of the maximum per diem rate. The first and last days of M&IE during en-route travel are reimbursed at 75 percent of the per diem rate based on the FTR.⁷

- d. Method of Payment: Travelers are required to use the individual government travel card for all official expenses while on long-term travel. Exceptions include:

⁷ FTR § 301-11.15.

- 1) Refundable and non-refundable deposits: Deposits should be charged to the centrally billed account (CBA); and
- 2) Properties and establishments where the use of a card is not accepted: Travelers are authorized to withdraw cash from an ATM or at a financial institution, not to exceed the authorized per diem allowance, deposit amount, or lease payment.

In instances where a refundable deposit becomes non-refundable due to unforeseen circumstances that are not the fault of the employee, the agency may fully reimburse the expense. AOs have the final determination on approving reimbursement for non-refundable deposits under these circumstances.

- e. Household Goods and Personal Effects: Travelers on long-term TDY assignments are not eligible for reimbursement of costs associated with shipping or transporting household goods or personal effects. A traveler authorized to travel by POV who instead chooses to rent a truck or trailer to transport personal effects and household goods may not claim reimbursement for the rental. Travelers authorized to travel by common carrier may be authorized excess baggage only to accommodate additional personal effects (e.g., clothing) due to the length of the assignment. The AO must establish appropriate baggage limitations on a case-by-case basis and document the allowable expenses on the TA. Equipment or effects necessary for a traveler's approved reasonable accommodation are eligible for reimbursement.
- f. Transportation Reimbursement While on Long-Term TDY Assignment: Travelers may be authorized to use a GOV, POV, special conveyances, or public transportation while on long-term TDY assignments. When a traveler is authorized to use a POV, the traveler is eligible to claim mileage for their daily commute from a long-term TDY lodging site directly to the TDY work or training location and for meal. POV-related expenses such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls are also reimbursable when incurred, as part of that commute, not to exceed the constructive cost of travel by common carrier. Non-reimbursable POV expenses include, but are not limited to, charges for repairs, depreciation, replacements, grease, oil, antifreeze, towage and similar speculative expenses, gasoline, insurance, and State and Federal taxes.
- g. Allowed Trips to the Primary Residence While on Long-Term TDY Assignment: The traveler and their AO should determine and document in the traveler's TA the appropriate frequency and duration of return to primary residence travel for long-term TDY prior to the beginning of the assignment. Generally, the AO may authorize the traveler no more than one return trip to the primary residence every three weeks for the duration of the long-term TDY assignment; however, the traveler may amend the TA to include, and the AO may authorize, shorter or longer intervals between return trips as appropriate.

Travelers will be reimbursed for transportation costs to and from the TDY site, airports, primary residence, or the ODS, which includes airfare and taxis. In addition, travelers may claim 75 percent of the full M&IE per diem rate on their travel day to the primary residence and travel day back to their long-term TDY destination. Travelers are not eligible for lodging at their ODS. Travelers must also ensure that they accurately account for M&IE and lodging expenses when completing vouchers for their trip to the primary residence, as well as any incremental vouchers for long-term travel during the duration of their trip to their primary residence. Travelers are encouraged to check out of lodging at the long-term TDY assignment location during return travel to the residence or ODS whenever possible and cost-effective.

Travelers cannot leave from the long-term TDY assignment, travel to a location other than their primary residence, prepare a reconstructive cost comparison, and claim the lower amount. If a traveler on long-term TDY elects to travel on non-workdays to a location other than their primary residence, they will not be reimbursed for transportation costs. Instead, they may only be reimbursed for lodging and per diem costs under the long-term TDY travel authorization up to the maximum amount allowed at the long-term TDY location. No additional per diem or lodging may be reimbursed. If a traveler on long-term TDY goes on leave status, only lodging allowed at the long-term TDY location may be reimbursed.

- h. Documenting Long-Term TDY Assignment TAs: The OA funding the long-term TDY assignment must authorize the assignment on a Trip-by-Trip authorization. When long-term TDY is expected to extend into a new fiscal year, but funding does not extend beyond the current fiscal year, the traveler must establish a new TA each fiscal year with budgetary language “subject to the availability of funding” included in the TA. Travelers must confirm that the travel dates in the travel management system clearly state that the trip is a long-term TDY assignment, identify if the trip is long-term or indefinite, and attach a copy of the documentation supporting the per diem reimbursement rate and schedule for return travel. In addition, a traveler must establish a short-term TDY TA for all return trips to trips to their primary residence.
- i. Travel Vouchers: Travelers must file travel vouchers in compliance with the Department’s TDY travel policy Volume 2. Travelers must submit travel vouchers at least once every 21 calendar days or more frequently if required by OA-specific guidance. Travel vouchers must include all expenses incurred during the period covered by that voucher. Travelers must file final travel vouchers within five business days of completing the long-term TDY assignment.

Lodging receipts or lease documents are required as supporting documentation to confirm that an expense was incurred and the dates that the expenses were incurred. These documents must show the number of days the expense was incurred. If no lodging expense is incurred (e.g., lodging is provided by the Federal Government, or the traveler is staying with a friend or family member), lodging costs are not authorized, and the traveler can only claim the authorized reduced rate for M&IE. Travelers are only eligible for M&IE when they meet the criteria for Long-term Travel per Section 6.A of this policy.

- j. Documenting Interruptions to Long-Term TDY Assignments: OAs may reimburse travelers to offset costs associated with certain types of interruptions that occur during long-term TDY assignments. The most common types of interruptions are:
 - 1) Return Travel for Official Work Purposes or Illness or Injury: During a long-term TDY assignment, an OA may reimburse costs associated with limited return travel to the primary residence or ODS for official work purposes or the traveler's treatment for illness or injury. OAs shall follow the current DOT Travel Policy regarding reimbursable expenses incurred by employees incapacitated by illness or injury.
 - 2) Travel to an Alternate TDY Location While in Long-Term Travel Status: There is no limit on the frequency of travel to an alternate TDY location while in long-term travel status, but the alternate TDY travel must have an official purpose, and travelers must create, and the AO must approve the authorization. Travelers may not use directed travel to “break up” a long-term TDY assignment into shorter trips for increasing the per

diem reimbursement. As with return travel, travelers should explore options to minimize the cost to the Federal Government for lodging at the long-term TDY assignment location whenever feasible and cost effective. Travelers are reimbursed at the full locality per diem rate for the alternate location. The AO may authorize dual lodging as needed on a case-by-case basis. Receipts are required to support reimbursement of this expense. Dual lodging is not allowable when the lodging at the second alternate TDY location is necessary solely to accommodate a traveler who is on approved leave (other than sick or other approved leave due to illness preventing the employee's return to the primary TDY location) at the second alternate TDY location. The AO may, with justification, determine that the reduced per diem rate is sufficient, in which case the traveler would receive the reduced per diem rate for the alternate TDY location. The OA may authorize the use of a rental car at the alternate TDY location to allow the traveler to accomplish official business. Travelers must obtain pre-authorization to obtain a rental car.

- 3) Documenting Leave While on Long-Term Travel: To provide full reimbursement for lodging expenses to the traveler while on long-term TDY, the traveler must take the following actions on the travel voucher:
 - a) Document leave days in the remarks section.
 - b) Zero out the M&IE for the days the traveler is on approved annual leave. The traveler should not change the reduced daily lodging rate for their monthly rental lease or other applicable period. This will ensure proper reimbursement and still permit the Department to categorize and report lodging expenses appropriately based on the daily rate calculation in the FTR.⁸
 - c) The AO must confirm a voucher reflects these actions before the AO approves a voucher.
- k. Leave during Long-Term TDY Assignments: Travelers on long-term TDY assignments are not eligible for M&IE per diem or dual lodging reimbursement when on approved leave other than sick leave (e.g., annual, credit hours or compensatory time off or leave without pay [except as described in the following paragraph]) for more than one-half of the daily prescribed work hours in a day (e.g., four hours for a standard eight-hour work-day). OAs will reimburse lodging for long-term TDY leases while a traveler is on such approved leave.
- l. Sick Leave during Long-Term TDY Assignments: OAs may reimburse the travelers on long-term TDY assignments for per diem expenses for up to 14 consecutive calendar days if they are incapacitated by illness or injury or require medical care not caused by their misconduct. If a traveler must interrupt or discontinue a long-term TDY assignment because of serious injury or illness experienced by the traveler or a member of the traveler's immediate family, the traveler must notify the AO as soon as possible.
- m. Personal Assistance Services During Long-Term Travel: Requests for Personal Assistance Services during Long-Term travel should be made through the Department's Reasonable Accommodation process as outlined in DOT Order 1011.1B, "Procedures for Processing Reasonable Accommodation Requests and DOT Employees with Disabilities." Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- n. Early Termination of Long-Term TDY Assignments: If the Federal Government terminates a long-term TDY assignment, the traveler may claim reimbursement for any penalties associated with the early cancellation of lodging leases. This does not include charges for

⁸ FTR § 301-11.14.

damages to lodging accommodations caused by the traveler. Travelers should attempt to enter long-term lodging commitments with built-in flexibility when possible; these types of commitments may eliminate some of the costs associated with assignment termination.

- o. Determining when Long-Term TDY Assignments are Taxable: If a traveler is on a long-term TDY assignment in one TDY location for one year or longer, any reimbursement provided to the traveler is considered income, regardless of the duties that the traveler performs (see the IRS Publication 463 for additional information).⁹ In accordance with this guidance, when there is a separate bona fide requirement or project in the same location, the taxability clock does not reset unless there is also a significant break between the two TDY assignments. A significant break will break the continuity between trips to the same location. The traveler's supervisor must determine when a long-term TDY assignment will be temporary, long-term, indefinite, and taxable. This determination is made before travel and is based on "intent;" this means the expected duration of the TDY assignment at the time the work begins. If the long-term TDY assignment is established as taxable based on the intent and the project changes at any point, the traveler is still assessed taxes based on the initial intent. See **Table 1 Expense Reimbursements** of the Chapter 2 Section 2 to this volume 3 for further clarification on whether long-term TDY assignments are taxable.
- p. Tax Implications of Long-Term TDY: If a traveler is on a taxable long-term TDY assignment, all allowances, and reimbursements for travel expenses, plus all travel expenses that the Federal Government pays directly on the traveler's behalf in connection with the TDY assignment, are taxable income to the traveler. This includes all allowances, reimbursements, and direct payments to vendors from the day that the traveler or OA recognized the traveler's long-term TDY assignment is expected to exceed one year.¹⁰ The OA will reimburse the travelers for substantially all income taxes the traveler incurs as a result of the traveler's taxable long-term TDY assignment. The reimbursement consists of two parts:
 - 1) Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA): The amount paid to the Federal IRS by the OA as withholding income taxes for any taxable relocation allowance, reimbursement, or direct payment to a vendor.
 - 2) Extended TDY Tax Reimbursement Allowance (ETTRA): The amount paid to reimburse a traveler for substantially all income taxes incurred as a result of a taxable long-term TDY assignment.

The WTA and ETTRA for taxable long-term TDY assignments cover fares, rental fees, mileage payments, and other expenses related to transportation. Travelers are not eligible for the other benefits that travelers would receive if the OA had permanently relocated the travelers.

- q. Procedures for Calculation and Reimbursement of WTA and ETTRA for Taxable Long-Term travel: If the OA identifies at the start of the traveler's TDY assignment that the assignment qualifies as taxable long-term TDY, the traveler shall complete a travel authorization in the travel management system as usual. "Taxable Long-Term Travel" should be selected as the travel type in the travel management system. A comment should also be added to the remark section that states, "This is taxable long-term travel. ESC has the authority to obligate money for the tax portion only." After the AO approves the travel authorization, the AO, or person to whom this responsibility is designated, will immediately

⁹ FTR § 301-11.601.

¹⁰ FTR § 301-11.603.

notify the ESC Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Travel team that a travel authorization has been created for taxable long-term travel. The ESC PCS Travel team will retrieve the travel authorization number from the travel management system and create an obligation in DOTs FM System for the tax portion only. ESC will estimate the amount of WTA for the traveler. The WTA is taxable income to the traveler and reported to the IRS for the duration of the traveler's long-term TDY assignment. See [Table 3 ETTRA Tax Table](#) in Chapter 2 of this volume for the DOT formula on ETTRA/WTA reimbursement. Once a taxable TDY assignment begins, it cannot be changed to non-taxable Long-Term Travel TDY. If a non-taxable long-term TDY assignment becomes taxable (i.e., the TDY assignment has lasted or is going to last longer than originally intended), then the AO, or person to whom this responsibility is designated, will work with ESC to compute the WTA for all taxable benefits received since the date it was recognized as taxable.

- r. Filing Statement of Income and Tax Filing Status: A traveler should file their "Statement of Income and Tax Filing Status" for their taxable long-term TDY assignment at the beginning of their long-term TDY assignment or as soon as the traveler or OA realizes that a traveler's TDY assignment will become taxable.¹¹
- s. Long-term TDY Assignments Exceeding 30 Months: If an employee is assigned to a temporary duty station for a period exceeding 30 months, the Department must either permanently assign the employee to the temporary duty station or return them to the ODS.

Chapter 2: Tax Liability for Long-Term Temporary Duty Travel

This chapter provides general instructions and guidance related to the traveler's tax liability for long-term TDY assignments. This appendix is not intended to be all-encompassing. The traveler is responsible for paying appropriate taxes. DOT advises all travelers performing long-term TDY to consult with their AO, ESC Travel Branch/Relocation Team, and a tax professional when calculating their potential tax liability.

Section 1: General Tax Guidance for Long-Term TDY

DOT and OAs should take note of the following guidelines:

- Paying Appropriate Taxes is the Responsibility of the Traveler: There are multiple scenarios where a traveler may have a taxable income reporting requirement based on the duration and intent of the TDY assignment. Such scenarios are described below.
- Long-Term Travel Assignments: For taxation purposes, the IRS defines two types of long-term assignments: temporary (non-taxable TDY) and long-term/indefinite (taxable TDY). Both types of assignments are described below:
 - Temporary (Non-Taxable TDY): If an assignment is expected to last less than one year and is completed in less than one year, the assignment is temporary and travel expense reimbursements are not taxable.
 - Long-Term/Indefinite (Taxable TDY): Long-term TDY assignments considered long-term/indefinite are taxable under any of the following scenarios and must be reported taxable to ESC via e-mail, 9-AMC-AMK343-PCS-Travel@faa.gov:

¹¹ FTR § 301-11.605.

- a) If an assignment in a single location is expected to last more than one year or there is no realistic expectation that it will last less than one year, the assignment is long-term or indefinite and reimbursements are taxable for the duration of the assignment.
- b) If an assignment in a single location is initially expected to last less than one year (temporary) but it is then determined that the assignment will last longer than one year, then the tax status changes from temporary (non-taxable) to long-term or indefinite (taxable) on the date this determination is made, not retroactively. Travelers and their AO must promptly report adjustments and assignment duration to ESC via e-mail, 9-AMC-AMK343-PCS-Travel@faa.gov.
- c) If a traveler has a realistic expectation that travel will last more than one year but the assignment lasts less than one year, the assignment is considered long-term or indefinite and all reimbursements pertaining to that assignment are taxable.
- d) AOs must report long-term travel TDY taxable TAs to ESC via e-mail, 9-AMC-AMK343-PCS-Travel@faa.gov.

Section 2: Guidance Tables

Table 1: Taxability of Travel Expense illustrates when travel expense reimbursements are taxable.

Table 1 Taxability of Travel Expense			
Expected Length of Assignment	Actual Length of Assignment	Type of Assignment	Taxability of Travel Expenses
Less than one year	Less than one year	Temporary	Not taxable
Unable to determine if more or less than one year	One year or longer	Long-Term/Indefinite	Taxable from day one
Over one year	One year or longer	Long-Term/Indefinite	Taxable from day one
Over one year	Less than one year	Long-Term/Indefinite	Taxable from day one
Less than one year	One year or longer	Long-Term/Indefinite	Taxable from the day assignment is determined to extend past one year

Failure to show tax liability on the TA or to report to an OA's finance office that a TDY assignment is long-term, or indefinite will have adverse effects on the taxes the finance office reports for the traveler through payroll and may cause the traveler to default on their Federal, State and local tax obligations. Travelers are ultimately responsible for correctly reporting their tax liability to the IRS and should work with the AO to ensure that the accurate classification is reflected on their TA prior to the beginning of their long-term TDY assignment.

- a. **Significant Break in Long-Term TDY Assignment:** The IRS determines when breaks in long-term TDY assignments are long enough to be considered significant. In this sense, "significant"

refers to periods of time that are long enough to end the long-term TDY assignment taxability. For example, a 90-day long-term TDY assignment followed by a break for 30 days and then a return to the long-term TDY location for another 90 days does *not* constitute a significant break in taxability. In other words, the taxability clock that runs during long-term TDY assignments would *not* reset to zero. To reset the taxability clock, the time spent at the travelers ODS or other LTDDY location must equal the time spent on long-term TDY.

- b. **Table 2: Taxability Clock Example** illustrates an example of a taxability clock.

Table 2 Taxability Clock Example	
(Taxable TDY)	(Non-taxable TDY)
90 days at long-term TDY	
30 days at ODS	
90 days at long-term TDY	90 days at long-term TDY
30 days at ODS	90 days at ODS
90 days at long-term TDY	90 days at long-term TDY
<u>+30 days at ODS</u>	<u>+90 days at ODS</u>
12 months total = taxable TDY	12 months total = <i>Not</i> taxable TDY

If a person performs TDY travel at one location, on and off, for one year or more and most of their time is spent at the TDY location, they are considered to be on a long-term or indefinite assignment and any travel reimbursements received are taxable. OAs must report all reimbursements as income paid to the traveler from the point it can be reasonably determined that an assignment will exceed 365 days. This duration may cross calendar and/or fiscal years. Additionally, if a traveler's official duties require a series of short assignments to the same location that together span the majority of one year or longer, these trips are considered one taxable long-term or indefinite TDY assignment. Supervisors shall not break long-term TDY assignments into shorter period trips or adjust assignment durations to change tax implications. A traveler who takes vacation or breaks from a long-term TDY assignment for fewer than 45 days or performs TDY at an alternate location for fewer than 30 days is still considered to be on a long-term TDY assignment and must report their taxes accordingly.

- c. **Long-Term Extended TDY Tax Reimbursement Allowance (ETTRA):** When a traveler's TA will include taxable long-term TDY, the traveler's AO will work with ESC travel and Permanent Change of Station (PCS) team personnel (AMK-343) to create the estimated Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA). This WTA is an estimate of taxes owed and intended to reimburse most of the taxes the traveler will owe on their taxable reimbursement. Since the OAs reimburse most of the traveler's taxes, there is an additional expense to the OA. At the end of the tax year, the traveler will be required to file a travel claim for ETTRA reimbursement. The ETTRA is designed to offset the true tax implications associated with completing a long-term TDY assignment during a tax year. The ETTRA reimbursement is approximately equal to the taxes paid in the prior tax year and the taxes due on the ETTRA in the upcoming tax year. The allowance is considered taxable income and is subject to the same tax withholding as other income. These withholdings may include income and employment taxes, Federal Insurance Contributions Act tax (FICA) (i.e., social security tax), and Medicare. Travelers are prohibited from claiming reimbursement for any employment taxes that are withheld. The ETTRA reimbursement is included on the traveler's W-2 as taxable income for the tax year payment was received. DOT's payroll provider, Department of Interior (DOI) Interior Business Center (IBC), will not issue lump-sum payments for the ETTRA.

Table 3: Relocation ETTRA Tax Table demonstrates the tax implications for a traveler and OA.

ETTRA Tax Table		
WTA Entitlement		\$1,000.00
TAX Category	Tax Percentage	Amt. Taxed
Fed Income Tax Withholding (FITW) - Reflects Gross-Up for WTA	28.205%	\$282.05*
Entitlement plus WTA Gross-Up		\$1,282.05
FICA	6.200%	\$79.49
MEDI	1.450%	\$18.59
		\$901.92
Net Amount of Voucher		**
NOTES: *The FITW is offset by the WTA. The WTA is an entitlement and is taxable. The FITW is grossed up to cover the taxes on the WTA entitlement. The FITW adjustment is computed when the traveler files their Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA) claim. **The net amount is the amount of the entitlement minus FICA and MEDI taxes. A debt will be created for traveler's portion of FICA and MEDI. This debt calculation will occur for each entitlement paid. FTR Reference: § 302-17.24		

- d. Documentation Required to Substantiate ETTRA Claims: IBC does not accept Federal or State income tax returns as supporting documentation for ETTRA claims; travelers should not send tax returns to a Department or OA finance office. Travelers must provide the following documentation to substantiate ETTRA claims:
 - 1) Travel vouchers;
 - 2) ETTRA Certification; and
 - 3) Copy of the W-2(s). Travelers can obtain copies of the W2 through the Employee Express website, or they can contact their payroll offices to request duplicate copies.
- e. Timelines for ETTRA Claim Submissions: ESC will assist the OAs in sending notifications regarding ETTRA filing deadlines and forms to all travelers who have been on taxable long-term TDY assignments during the year. Travelers must file ETTRA claims annually for taxable travel. ETTRA claims are typically due in March or April and processed no later than June 30th. The reimbursement allowance will offset the additional taxable income resulting from travel reimbursements as reported on a traveler's W-2 Form(s) for the year.
- f. ETTRA Calculations Explained: The ETTRA is calculated by the same method used for RITA reimbursement. ESC will assist the OA official in calculating the reimbursement and must first determine the appropriate Federal, State, and local marginal tax rates. The official should refer to the marginal tax tables for the RITA and the RITA tax table(s). The official must consider

any excess per diem payments. If a traveler is authorized a higher per diem rate (i.e., actual expense reimbursement), the amount of per diem exceeding the locality rate is considered a withholding tax allowance for the ETTRA calculation. If a traveler was issued any excess payment for WTA for a tax year, the traveler's finance office is responsible for collecting those excess payments. If the traveler was not issued enough WTA during the year to offset their Federal, State, and local taxes, a payment for that amount of taxes owed will be issued. ESC will assist the OA if there is a need to issue corrected W-2 or 1099 Forms in some instances.

- g. Subletting a Residence: Any tax obligations incurred by a traveler because of subletting a residence while on long-term TDY assignment are solely the obligation of the traveler.

Volume 4: International Travel Approval

Chapter 1: DOT International Travel Approval Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This Volume sets forth an updated U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or the Department) policy for the planning of all DOT international travel by U.S.-based DOT employees (career and non-career officials) and the approval of such travel by the Under Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, General Counsel, Administrators, and Secretarial Directors reporting directly to the Secretary, collectively referred to as Officials.¹²
2. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**
 - A) **INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL MEMORANDUM:**
 - 1) **Scope:**
 - a. Under Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, General Counsel and Chief Counsels, Administrators, and other non-career appointees and accompanying staff.
 - b. Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Administrators, Assistant/Associate Administrators, and other non-career appointees and accompanying staff.
 - c. Trips involving delegations of - or more DOT employees, travel over a weekend (that have official business activities on a Friday that continue to the following Monday), travel that requires TDY engagements in more than three countries or and travel that circum-navigates around the globe on a single itinerary (all levels, including career and non-career officials and staff). This subsection does not apply to travel fulfilling routine, time-sensitive mission tasks like safety inspections and maintenance activities.
 - d. Trips that include Business or First-class travel (all levels, including career and non-career officials and staff).
 - 2) **Requirements:**
 - a. For each of these trips, submit an approval memorandum in the format outlined in Annex A by submitting a signed copy and Word file to the Office of the Executive Secretariat (S-10) through the EDMS system. Include in the justification the role of each individual on the trip. All individual travel memoranda must include an attached agenda and detailed travel itinerary that reflects the use of the traveler's time during the entire trip. The justification should explain the expected outcome and benefit in achieving the OA's and the Department's programmatic goals and priorities. Your Agency's Executive Secretariat can assist with transmitting these documents to S-10; and
 - b. Regarding policy coordination prior to attending international meetings or events, refer to Volume 5, "Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings."
 - 3) **Timeline:**
 - a. Travel memoranda must be submitted 35 days prior to travel departure for approval by the Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs and Chief of Staff.
 - b. Memoranda received after the 35-day deadline must include a Statement of Lateness from the appropriate office explaining the delay. Late requests

¹² This Order does not apply to international travel by employees and students at the United States Merchant Marine Academy unless they are supporting a U.S. delegation at an international organization or in similar international meetings.

- risk potential disapproval; and
- c. Approval must be secured prior to departure. Approval will come in the form of the Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs and the Chief of Staff's signatures.
- 4) General policy:
- a. OST and all OAs must follow broad DOT guidelines and implement their own policies for approving international travel. International travel undertaken by OST staff must be approved by the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, and for OAs, by the Administrator, Senior Directors, or their delegates; and
- b. The OAs and OST will follow best practices in developing their international travel approval policies and will adhere to the requirements found in Volume 2 and the Federal Travel Regulations, 41 CFR 300–305, keeping in mind that all travel must be a responsible use of public funds.
- B) ANNUAL TRAVEL PLAN:
- 1) Overview: The Under Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, General Counsel, Administrators, and Secretarial Directors reporting directly to the Secretary (Officials), shall submit to the Chief of Staff through the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs an annual international travel plan by September 1 immediately preceding each Fiscal Year. The travel plan, which must be submitted under the Official's signature, shall include all international travel for U.S.-based DOT employees all levels, career and non-career, that is anticipated for the new Fiscal Year and be transmitted with a signed cover memorandum (See Annex B for format).
- Prior to October 1 and the start of each Fiscal Year, each Official shall meet with the Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs to present and explain his or her OA's or Secretarial Office's international program and associated annual international travel plan. At this meeting, each Official shall describe how each element of said annual international travel plan is consistent with the OA's and the Department's programmatic goals and with U.S. foreign and trade policy objectives. Each Official is also expected to develop and present their OA's international travel approval policy, along with an explanation of how international travel is categorized (e.g., routine versus non-routine, type of program, etc.).
- 2) Scope: The travel plan should include all international trips planned or anticipated at that time for the coming Fiscal Year by all U.S.-based officials and staff, and should be divided into broad programmatic categories (examples of which are provided in Annex C of this Volume). These categories can be expanded on or further classified as routine or non-routine. This will make it easier to understand the broad themes and purposes of the planned travel and how each OA or Secretarial office classifies its routine and non-routine travel.
- a. Within each category, the trips should be described in chronological order. Use the standardized format and include cost estimates as outlined in Annex D, which will be emailed to OAs and Secretarial Officials by OST-X. This will ensure each plan provides similar justification and information for each trip or category of trips in the plan.

- b. The justification for each trip should explain the expected outcome and benefit in achieving the OA's or Secretarial office's and the Department's programmatic goals and priorities.
- c. For delegations that include more than one person, identify the role of each delegate. Also, indicate whether non-DOT employees (e.g., employees of other Federal agencies, Congressional staff, State government employees, private sector representatives, etc.) are a part of the delegation and identify their affiliation.
- d. For recurring meetings considered by your OA or Secretarial office to be of routine or technical nature (e.g., technical inspections of airports or pipelines, technical meetings on standards, and similar matters), there is no requirement to list each trip separately, but they should be combined under one entry with the following information provided: the anticipated overall number of trips, the number of travelers for each trip, the countries to be visited, the overall cost, and an explanation of why you consider these meetings to be routine.
- e. For invitational travel or travel paid by other agencies of the U.S. Government, nongovernment organizations, or foreign governments/entities, identify the agency, organization, or entity covering the expenses of the trip.¹³

- 3) Coordination Procedure: Each Official should approve all international travel included in the annual plan prior to submission. Annual plans will be reviewed by the Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs. The Chief of Staff and the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs will then meet with Officials and approve the plans. Trips covered by the Individual Travel Memorandum requirement still require an approval memorandum to be submitted to the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs and Chief of Staff, even when on an approved annual plan.

C) MONTHLY OUTLOOK UPDATE:

- 1) Overview: Prior to the 15th of each month, each Official shall submit an updated travel plan for the next month to OST-X. The monthly outlook update should be submitted under the Official's signature or provided by an executive in the Official's designated foreign travel management office. This can be done by email to the Office of International Transportation and Trade. Any significant changes (e.g., enlargement of delegation, level of participation, length of the trip, cancellation or postponement), or new proposed travel should be highlighted and explained. If there are no significant changes to report, Officials need only report that there is no update.
- 2) Scope: The monthly outlook plan should include trips by all officials and staff, including recurring meetings of a routine nature.
 - a. The information for each trip in the monthly outlook plan should be submitted in accordance with the standardized format and include cost estimates as outlined in Annex IV, which will be emailed to OAs by the Office of

¹³ In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 7342, the Department is required to submit to the Department of State, for an annual report to Congress, a list of gifts of more than minimal value, as defined by the General Services Administration (GSA), received by, or given to an employee of a foreign government or organization each year. These gifts include travel and travel-related expenses for activities undertaken by an OA or OST component as part of official duties. The Office of International Transportation and Trade will be able to assist in this matter.

International Transportation and Trade. This will ensure each plan provides similar justification and information for each trip in the plan.

- b. The justification for each trip should explain the expected outcome and benefit in achieving the OA's or office's and the Department's programmatic goals and priorities.
 - c. For delegations that include more than one person, identify the role of each delegate. Also, indicate whether non-departmental employees (e.g., employees of other agencies, Congressional staff, State government employees, private sector representatives) are a part of the delegation and identify their affiliation.
 - d. For invitational travel or travel paid by other U.S. Government agencies, nongovernment organizations or foreign governments/entities, identify the agency, organization, or entity covering the expenses of the trip.
 - e. The updated monthly submissions should describe the trips in chronological order.
- 3) Coordination Procedure: Each Official, or an executive in the Official's designated foreign travel management office, must approve all travel included in his or her monthly outlook update prior to submitting it to OST-X. Each monthly update will be reviewed by OST-X and, based on that review, additional information or a special meeting regarding an individual trip not previously reviewed may be requested by the Assistant Secretary of Aviation and International Affairs prior to the trip. If, by 2 weeks prior to the trip, additional information or a meeting is not requested, travel is considered approved based on the Official's approval, except as required under the Individual Travel Memorandum guidelines.

D) OTHER REQUIREMENTS:¹⁴

- 1) In addition, each OA and Secretarial Office is responsible for requesting country clearance and accreditation through the Department of State (DOS) My Services application system and for ensuring that Department officials travel on their official passports and have any appropriate visa.¹⁵ The Office of International Transportation and Trade can provide assistance with these matters.
- 2) Note that DOS requires Foreign Affairs Counter-Threat (FACT) and Counter Threat Awareness Training (CTAT), formerly known as High Threat Security Overseas Seminar (HTSOS) training, for travel to many regions prior to international travel. Completion of the training will need to be noted in the electronic country clearance system. Online CTAT training can be taken on the internal DOT Learns site.
- 3) DOS also may require travel insurance policies that include medical evacuation.
- 4) For travel that is reimbursable by a source outside of the Department, in addition to the procedures outlined above, seek approval through your Office of Chief Counsel (OA officials) or the Office of the General Counsel (OST officials) prior to submission for approval. This applies to reimbursable travel by another agency, nongovernment organizations and foreign governments/foreign entities.

¹⁴ A DOT employee going on official government travel can request a reasonable accommodation, pursuant to DOT Order 1011.1B, "Procedures for Processing Reasonable Accommodation Requests from Job Applicants and DOT Employees with Disabilities."

¹⁵ The Office of Security, Passports and Visas (M-40) will provide guidance for passport and visa requirements.

3. **POLICY:** The Department's leadership and engagement with counterparts in multilateral organizations and in bilateral relationships is a critical part of its mission. It helps the Department accomplish several policy goals relating to safety, infrastructure development, system and procedure harmonization, influencing global standards and recommended practices, the safe integration of innovative technologies, and the safeguarding of the economic competitiveness of the U.S. transportation industry. In addition, the pursuit of many of the Department's international activities is critical to achieving broader U.S. foreign and trade policy objectives. To that end, Operating Administrations (OA) and the Office of the Secretary (OST) are encouraged to continue to support a strong international agenda. In doing so, they should plan associated travel responsibly, in a manner consistent both with the policy and programmatic goals of the Department and its responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds. All DOT-funded travel is subject to the availability of funds.

Annex A: Format for Individual Trip Approval

(**Note:** The travel request memo must be on official OA letterhead and signed by the Administrator or designee before being submitted via the EDMS system.)

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM: (Name)
Administrator of XXX *(or designee)*

PREPARED BY: (Name)
Director of International
Programs Phone Extension

SUBJECT: XYZ's International Travel Request

ACTION REQUIRED:

I request your approval of XYZ's International Travel to specific destination and travel dates.

STATEMENT OF LATENESS: *(only include if 35-day submission requirement is not met)*

SUMMARY/JUSTIFICATION:

Dates of Travel:

Operating Administration/Office:

Program Activity Title:

Travel Destination(s):

Routine or Non-routine:

Names and positions of Travelers(s):

Non-DOT Delegation Participants:

Purpose of Trip/Objective/Background:

Role of each Delegate at Event:

Estimated Cost/Person:

- Airfare:
- Lodging:
- M&IE:
- Additional expenses, if applicable:

Point of Contact:

Assistant Secretary
for Aviation and International Affairs

Approved: _____

Disapproved: _____

Date: _____

Comments:

Attachment(s):
Meeting/Program
Agenda
Travel Itinerary(ies)

Chief of Staff

Approved: _____

Disapproved: _____

Date: _____

Annex B: Format for Annual Plan Cover Memo

(**Note:** Memorandum should be signed and on official letterhead prior to submission)

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF

From: (Name)
Administrator or Assistant Secretary

Prepared by: (Name)
Position/Title

Subject: XYZ's Fiscal Year ____ Annual International Travel Plan

ACTION REQUIRED

The [Operating Administration or Office] requests that the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs and Chief of Staff review the XYZ's Fiscal Year ____ Annual International Travel Plan attached to this memorandum.

SUMMARY

Summarize the Operating Administration or office's travel approval policy along with an explanation of broad travel categories and how trips are consistent with the Operating Administration's and the Department's priorities, programmatic goals and with the U.S. foreign and trade policy objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

The [OA or Office] recommends the approval of the FY ____ International Travel Plan. The [OA or Office] looks forward to meeting with the Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs to discuss the [OA or Office] international program and associated annual travel plan.

Assistant Secretary
for Aviation and International Affairs

Chief of Staff

APPROVED: _____

DATE: _____

APPROVED: _____

DATE: _____

COMMENTS:

Attachment(s):

Annex C: Examples of Broad Programmatic Categories Captured in Annual Travel Plan (Routine and Non-Routine) Based on Past Travel Plans

These are illustrative. Each Operating Administration (OA) or office should tailor to its particular circumstances and include its definition of routine and non-routine travel. Please be as succinct as possible.

1. Meetings or sessions under binding agreements, instruments, or Memoranda of Understanding to which an OA, the Department or the United States is a signatory; including meetings of international organizations and regulatory standardization bodies that are pre-scheduled, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), World Road Association (WRA- formerly PIARC: Permanent International Association of Road Congresses), Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories (FEHRL), Fédération Internationale du Béton (fib), or building SMART International (bSI);
2. Bilateral or multilateral negotiations;
3. Meetings or other travel that are required by statute;
4. Meetings under bilateral non-binding Memoranda of Cooperation;
5. International conferences or workshops, specified as recurring or ad-hoc;
6. Travel involving regular inspections of facilities and carriers, maintenance, safety, and air traffic personnel whose purpose of travel is related to, for example, accident investigation, aircraft repairs, hazardous material container inspections, air traffic operational issues, evaluation of maintenance practices, technical assistance, and similar activities;
7. Scanning, learning, or trade missions;
8. Travel to meetings with foreign manufacturers or non-governmental organizations;
9. Meetings to explore new initiatives and/or initiate new programs at the bilateral or multilateral level;
10. Meetings that are in support of other agencies of the U.S. Government and are requested by those agencies;
11. Travel associated with training opportunities overseas;
12. Meetings that are invitational in nature and involve a reimbursement by a source outside of the Department, including U.S. Government agencies, nongovernment organizations, or foreign governments/foreign entities; and
13. Other categories (please describe).

Annex D: Sample Annual International Travel Plan

[MODE] FY-2026 International Travel Plan (Spreadsheet will be sent electronically)

Month*	Travel Dates*	Travel Destination(s) (City and Country)	Program Activity Title/Category**	Region	Purpose of Trip/Modal Objective	Routine (R) or Non-Routine (NR) Also, list Departmental Priority	Name(s) and Title of Traveler(s)	Role at Event	Non-DOT Delegation Participants	Est. Cost (Total cost for all travelers)	Funding Source
October	10/2/25 10/5/25	Paris, France	XYZ Annual Transportation Conference	Select from the below list of regions: Asia Pacific Africa Europe Middle East Western Hemisphere	Please be succinct and provide the purpose of the trip and explain the expected outcome and benefit in achieving the modal and Departmental programmatic objectives.	NR - List Departmental priority	1. Jane Smith, Director 2. Jack Smith, Office Manager 3. Others TBD	Describe role/justification for each traveler. Due to space limitations, please be succinct.	EPA, USTDA	Provide travel cost for all travelers.	Indicate funding source, including invitational travel.

* If travel dates are unknown, please list quarter in which travel could potentially take place.

Volume 5: Coordination Requirements for International Policy Activities and Meetings

Chapter 1: DOT Coordination Requirements Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This Volume sets forth an updated Departmental policy for the coordination of international policy activities and meetings. In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or the Department) putting forward a cohesive and consistent foreign policy, the Operating Administrations (OAs) and components of the Office of the Secretary (OST) listed in Annex A must coordinate international activities, as outlined below, through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs (OST- X).
2. **RESPONSIBILITIES AND OVERVIEW:** The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs (OST-X) is responsible for monitoring and coordinating Departmental preparation for and participation in international meetings and conferences.

OAs and OST components coordinate with their foreign counterparts on numerous issues with regularity. Documents that convey U.S. Government positions, or that may be viewed as binding on the Department, must be cleared by OST-X and the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) prior to being shared with other agencies or a foreign entity.

3. **COORDINATION PRIOR TO ENTERING NONBINDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS:**
 - a. **Overview:** Negotiations with foreign counterparts may result in either a binding agreement or a nonbinding arrangement. For nonbinding arrangements, including Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC), Implementing Arrangements, or similar technical cooperative arrangements, the United States or the Department enters into a voluntary arrangement with a foreign entity that permits greater cooperation and coordination, often with counterparts in a foreign country. These arrangements can be very beneficial for the Department but require coordination to balance policy priorities and other relevant negotiations.
 - b. Accordingly, the OAs and OST components must seek policy clearance from OST-X and legal clearance/guidance from the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) prior to entering negotiations with the intent of concluding an MoC or similar arrangement. This will allow high-level foreign policy coordination and ensure that any new arrangements fit into the existing framework. The Department's policy for new cooperative arrangements is to add them as Implementing Arrangements to current umbrella MoCs that are already in effect, when possible. OST-X will help OAs and OST components develop these Implementing Arrangements. Additional final clearance from OST-X and OGC must be obtained prior to signing for language approval and final coordination.
 - c. **Scope:** All Memoranda of Cooperation, Implementing Arrangements, and other nonbinding arrangements.
 - d. **Coordination Procedure:** At least 60 days prior to initiating negotiations with a

foreign entity regarding an MoC or other arrangement, OAs and OST components must contact OST-X and OGC for policy clearance and legal guidance in how to structure the MoC so that it is nonbinding, and to determine whether it fits within a previously existing umbrella MoC. Internal Departmental review should take place prior to reaching out to interagency partners. OST-X will also determine if the proposed arrangement needs to undergo additional interagency review. When OAs and OST components receive a proposal from a foreign partner, coordination with OST-X and OGC should commence as soon as possible.

Once there is a draft document, it must be forwarded to OST-X as soon as possible to allow coordination with other OAs and within OST as necessary to make any required edits. OST-X will also forward the draft document to OGC for legal review and concurrence.

Once there is a tentatively agreed-upon version, it must be sent back to OST-X and OGC for final concurrence prior to signature.

4. **COORDINATION PRIOR TO ENTERING BINDING AGREEMENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS:**

- a. **Overview:** It is the Department's policy that OAs and OST components should, if possible, conclude nonbinding arrangements with foreign entities, rather than binding agreements. Negotiations with the intent of concluding a binding agreement must be authorized by the State Department under the Circular-175 (C-175) process before proceeding. This process can be lengthy and often requires approval by an Under Secretary at the State Department. The supporting documents for such an approval include a Memorandum of Law stating the underlying statutory and regulatory authority for the negotiation. OAs and OST components must notify OST-X and OGC for OST coordination prior to undertaking the C-175 process.

OAs and OST components are encouraged to explore innovative relationships with foreign partners, whether governmental or private. Research and cooperation arrangements or contracts with foreign private entities require notice to OST-X for policy review in addition to any legal review required.

- b. **Scope:** All prospective binding international agreements; documents that will be shared with foreign governments, including draft agreements, working group papers, and policy statements; proposed international contracts/agreements with foreign private entities, such as research institutions; and regulatory/enforcement-related consent orders and agreements with private foreign entities do not need to be coordinated as a matter of routine.
- c. **Coordination Procedure:** OAs and OST components must inform OST-X and OGC of potential negotiations that could result in a binding agreement as early as possible so that the clearance process can begin. Draft text of agreements must be sent to OST-X for review at least 180 days prior to reaching an agreement to allow for policy review and coordination with OGC. OST-X will forward the draft document to OGC for legal review and concurrence.

OAs and OST components must provide documents, including draft agreements, working group papers and policy statements, that take a position on behalf of the

Department to OST-X for review at least 30 days prior to sharing them internationally. Additional time may be required if interagency review is necessary.

OAs and OST components must notify OST-X and OGC of potential contractual arrangements with foreign private entities as soon as possible prior to negotiation, but no later than 30 days prior to signing such an arrangement.

COORDINATION PRIOR TO INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS:

- a. Overview: Many OAs and OST components conduct extensive work bilaterally and with international organizations and conferences, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Transport Forum (ITF), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Arctic Council, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). They also provide support to the United States Trade Representative in trade disputes and negotiations of trade agreements.

These organizations and bilateral meetings provide valuable opportunities to further Department policy goals, but only if OST-X and the OAs and OST components are working cooperatively. As it is important that the Department maintain a consistent, united position in foreign policy, a high level of coordination is often required. By coordinating and vetting policy positions taken at international meetings, including any abstentions and any resulting potential obligations to the Department, OST-X and the OAs and OST components can ensure that a position taken in one negotiation or proposal will not weaken the Department's position in other contexts.

Many international organizations also have mechanisms for issuing binding requirements or advisory guidance for member states to follow. OAs and OST components must provide notice well in advance of such undertakings, especially when U.S. Government representatives to the relevant body may have an opportunity to steer outcomes. Therefore, OAs and OST components must coordinate with OST-X and OGC prior to making international proposals that could ultimately bind DOT or commit the Department to a particular policy. OAs and OST components must also notify OST-X if such a proposal is made by a foreign government or entity and put on an international organization's voting agenda. The earlier such notice is given, the more time the Department has to develop its position.

- b. Scope: Any significant bilateral issues that require a DOT representative to make a commitment, binding or nonbinding, on behalf of the Department with their counterparts; international meetings include meetings with international partners whether in the United States or abroad, which includes bilateral discussions for the purpose of informal policy coordination; all significant issues before international organizations that require a DOT representative to either vote, abstain, or coordinate a vote with other agencies; any proposal put forward by the U.S. that may result in a change to Departmental policy or obligate it to take regulatory action; all proposals submitted to an international organization or treaty body for action that could potentially result in a resolution that could be binding on the Department.
- c. Coordination Procedure: OAs and OST components must confer with OST-X at least 180 days⁴ prior to making any proposals for consideration by an international

organization that could potentially bind the Department. During bilateral discussions, OAs and OST components must notify OST-X as soon as possible prior to proposing a significant new policy or international commitment. OST-X, in coordination with OGC and other relevant offices, will advise the OAs and OST components if they need to prepare a memo to the Deputy Secretary for decision. All such memos must reach the Deputy Secretary for decision at least 90 days in advance. If a potentially binding proposal is made by another country, OST-X must be notified at least 90 days prior to any vote to allow time to develop a position. (If such a proposal is made with less than 90 days' notice, OST-X must be notified as soon as possible.) If the Government's representative lacks a cleared position, OAs and OST components should make every effort to postpone the vote based on organizing body rules.

For nonbinding resolutions that are pending before an international body that could significantly affect Departmental policy, require the U.S. Government to take a consequential vote, or may have a public affairs, international policy or trade impact, please give OST-X notice as soon as practicable, but not less than 90 days before a decision is needed.

5. **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION:**

- a. **Overview:** The Department must work with other agencies to maintain a cohesive foreign policy that aligns with the administration's priorities. In international agreements, specific language may affect negotiations and relations far afield from the direct subject of the agreement. It is essential to engage with other agencies that may have equities at stake in a given issue. Coordination with other agencies must be facilitated through OST-X and OGC, which will ensure that the proper interagency process is followed.

As noted above, negotiations with the intent of concluding a binding agreement must be authorized by the State Department under the C-175 process before proceeding.

This process takes a significant amount of time due to the documents and approvals required. OAs and OST components must notify OGC for OST coordination with the Legal Advisor at the State Department well in advance of the prospective negotiation.

OAs and OST components often coordinate with their foreign counterparts on numerous issues. As discussed above, documents and proposals that convey U.S. Government positions or that may be viewed as potentially binding on the Department must be cleared by OST-X prior to being shared with a foreign entity. OST-X, in coordination with OGC, may decide that a potential position not only requires DOT clearance, but must go through an interagency process. The interagency process can take a significant amount of time, so it is important for OST-X to be involved as early as possible.

- b. **Scope:** All prospective binding international agreements and documents that will be shared with foreign governments, including draft agreements, working group papers, and policy statements; all nonbinding arrangements, including Memoranda of Cooperation and Implementing Arrangements; and all significant policy discussions with interagency partners should also be coordinated with OST-X.

- c. Coordination Procedure: OAs and OST components must inform OST-X and OGC of potential negotiations that could result in a binding agreement as early as possible so that the interagency clearance process can begin. The draft text of agreements must be sent to OST-X and OGC for review 180 days, or as soon as possible, prior to initialing an agreement. OGC will then coordinate with the State Department to conduct the C-175 process, as necessary. OAs and OST components must provide documents that will be shared internationally to OST-X for review at least 30 days in advance. Additional time may be required if interagency review is necessary. Significant policy discussions with interagency partners should be coordinated with OST-X and OGC at least two weeks in advance, when practicable.

Annex A: List of OAs and OST Components

List of Operating Administrations (OAs) and OST Components	
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)	
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)	
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	
Maritime Administration (MARAD)	
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)	
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)	
Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS)	
Office of Budget and Programs (OST-B)	
Office of Civil Rights (OST-S30)	
Office of Human Resources and Management (OST-M)	
Office of the General Counsel (OST-C)	
Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy (OST-F)	
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy (OST-P)	
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R)	
Office of Tribal Government Affairs (OST-T)	
Office of Intelligence, Emergency Response and Security (OST-S60)	
Office of the Chief Information Officer (OST-S80)	
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs (OST-X)	

Volume 6: Travel Card Management

Chapter 1: DOT Travel Card Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This volume establishes policy and responsibility of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT or Department) and its Operating Administrations (OA) for managing the travel card program. The policy is also intended to provide guidance to cardholders on the proper use of the travel card.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** This Order applies to all DOT employees executing official travel on behalf of the Department. For the purpose of this volume, Operating Administration (OA) refers to all Secretarial Offices, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) (except when inconsistent with OIG independence), and DOT OA's. Where the Federal Aviation Administration Travel Policy (FAATP) differs from this Order, the FAATP shall govern Federal Aviation Administration employees. Where a collective bargaining agreement conflicts with this Order, such agreement is a valid exception to and supersedes this Order for employees covered by the agreements.
3. **BACKGROUND:** DOT's travel card program provides cardholders with a safe, effective, convenient, and commercially available method to pay for expenses associated with official government travel. The travel card program offers many benefits for the Federal Government and taxpayers. Every fiscal year, millions of dollars are spent through travel cards and related payment transactions worldwide. This policy aims to maximize these benefits to DOT while continuing the application of internal controls to ensure the program is operating as intended. The benefits of this approach to travel card management include, but are not limited to:
 1. Reducing administrative costs and time for purchasing and paying for goods and services;
 2. Ensuring effective controls are in place to mitigate the risk of fraud, abuse, misuse, and delinquency;
 3. Improving financial, administrative, and other benefits offered to the government by travel card service providers, including maximizing refunds; and
 4. Leveraging travel card data and analytics to monitor policy compliance and inform management decision-making to drive a more cost-effective card program.
4. **REFERENCES:**
 - a. Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), 41 CFR Subtitle F.
 - b. Travel and Transportation Reform Act (TTRA) of 1998, Public Law 105-264.
 - c. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123, Appendix B, A Risk Management Framework for Government Charge Card Programs.
 - d. Public Law 112-194, the Government Charge Card Abuse Prevention Act of 2012.
 - e. General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Acquisition Service Smart Bulletin No. 025, Record Retention Requirements.
 - f. FAA Travel Policy (FAATP).
5. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - a. **Abuse:** The intentional use of the travel card in violation of the established policies and procedures.

- b. Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC): The A/OPC oversees the travel card program for the OA. The A/OPC helps set up accounts; provides on-going advice; reviews travel card accounts as required; and keeps necessary account information current.
- c. Approving Official (AO): An AO is the approving or authorizing official at the operational level who has the responsibility for the mission and the authority to obligate funds to support temporary duty (TDY) travel for the mission. The AO authorizes only travel necessary to accomplish the mission of the Federal Government.
- d. Cancellation of Travel Card: Permanent closing of the travel card account and termination of travel card privileges.
- e. Cardholder: The authorized individual using the travel card to buy goods and services in support of official government travel. The cardholder holds the primary responsibility for the card's proper use.
- f. Centrally Billed Accounts (CBA): An account issued to a DOT OA and managed by key travel card management officials to primarily book travel arrangements for individuals (employees, invitational travelers, potential hires, etc.) who are not eligible to receive a travel card. Payments are made directly to the travel card vendor by the agency.
- g. CBA Approver: Individual who verifies a traveler's status and approves or rejects the use of a CBA as the method of payment for a given transaction.
- h. Charge Card: The term "charge card" means "travel card." No revolving balance can be carried over from month to month. The entire balance is due within one billing cycle. This distinguishes charge cards from credit cards.
- i. Creditworthiness: An evaluation of an applicant's credit history to determine the credit limit of a travel cardholder.
- j. Data Analytics: An automated process used to scan databases to detect patterns, trends, or anomalies for use in risk management or other analysis areas.
- k. Delinquent Account: A travel card account balance that is unpaid for 45 calendar days or more from the billing date.
- l. Disposable Pay: The current pay remaining after the deduction of any amount required by law to be withheld (other than deductions to execute garnishment orders in accordance with 5 CFR 581 and 582). Among legally required deductions that must be applied first to determine disposable pay are levies pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code (Title 26, United States Code) and deductions described in 5 CFR 581.105(b) through (f). (5 CFR 550.1103).
- m. Dispute: A written challenge of an unresolved or disputed transaction on the cardholder's billing statement.
- n. Due Process: The legal process to which an agency, on behalf of the travel card vendor, must adhere to prior to the collection or salary offset on any undisputed delinquent amount due to the travel card vendor.
- o. Electronic Access System (EAS): The travel card vendor's internet-based system that provides a variety of reports that assist in the effective management of the travel card program.
- p. Fair Isaac Corporation (FICO) Score: A standard credit rating score that produces a portion of a credit report that lenders use to assess an applicant's credit risk and whether to extend the applicant credit.
- q. Federal Travel Regulation (FTR): The regulation that implements statutory requirements and Executive Branch policies for the authorization of Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel for official purposes at government expense.
- r. Frequent Traveler: An employee who travels at least once within a consecutive 12-month period.
- s. Local Travel: Travel within a 50-mile radius of employees' official duty station or an authorized, alternate telework location.

- t. Merchant Category Code (MCC): A standard 4-digit code used by card networks to classify businesses by the type of goods or services they provide.
- u. Misuse: Unintentional use of the travel card in violation of established policies and procedures. These actions are the result of ignorance or carelessness, lacking intent, and include honest mistakes.
- v. Official Government Travel: Travel under an official government travel authorization from an employee's official duty station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency. (FTR 300-3.1)
- w. Permanent Change of Station (PCS): An assignment of a new appointee to an official station or the transfer of an employee from one official station to another on a permanent basis.
- x. Restricted Card: A travel card issued with a credit limit of \$7,500 and a cash withdrawal allowance of \$500.
- y. Salary Offset: An involuntary garnishment or collection of undisputed, delinquent charge card amounts by direct deduction from the employee's travel reimbursement or retirement annuity on behalf of the travel card vendor or DOT.
- z. Split Pay: Process to split the travel voucher reimbursement between the travel card service provider and the traveler's personal bank account.
- aa. Suspension of Travel Card: The temporary termination of travel card privileges.
- bb. Temporary Change of Station (TCS): The relocation to a new official station for a temporary period while performing a long-term assignment, and subsequent return to the previous official station upon completion of that assignment.
- cc. Travel Authorization (TA): Permission (either written or electronic) for a traveler to travel on official business.
- dd. Travel Card Billing Statement: An itemized listing of all charges incurred during the billing period provided by the travel card service provider. It also includes any balances or credit carried forward from the previous billing cycle.
- ee. Travel Card: A service provider-issued travel charge card used solely for official government travel. A travel card is an account established by a travel card service provider on behalf of agencies or individual agency employees to which the cost of purchasing goods and services associated with official government travel may be charged in support of official government travel. Although actual plastic cards may be issued for these accounts, this term may also be applied to certain accounts established by the same travel card service provider that are billed directly to agencies, and therefore, are card-less accounts. The term charge card, card, or individually billed accounts means travel card, including accounts for which actual plastic is not issued.
- ff. Travel Management Center (TMC): A commercial travel agent that provides a full range of travel reservations and ticketing services for common carriers, lodging accommodations, and car rental services.
- gg. Travel Voucher: A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of a traveler's expenses incurred in the performance of all official government travel.
- hh. Undisputed Statement Balance: The remaining amount due on a travel card billing statement, not including disputed transactions.
- ii. Unrestricted Card: A travel card issued with a standard credit limit of \$10,000 and a cash withdrawal allowance of \$1,000.

6. **RESPONSIBILITIES**: The following personnel are responsible for implementing this Policy.

1. DOT Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/Chief Financial Officer (CFO): Oversees all financial management activities for the Department, as outlined by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, and provides policies on all financial management activities for the Department. Establishes internal controls to promote the use of the travel card and to protect against fraud, waste, and abuse. Delegates travel card program management duties to a DOT NPC, within the Office of Financial Management within the Office of the Chief Financial Officer.
2. DOT National Program Coordinator (NPC): Maintains oversight and management control of the overall DOT travel card program and its associated policies and procedures. The NPC:
 - 1) Serves as the liaison between GSA's SmartPay Program Office and DOT;
 - 2) Develops, implements, and disseminates travel card policy and internal controls;
 - 3) Monitors the activities of all DOT A/OPC's to ensure policy and internal controls compliance;
 - 4) Provides documentation in support of the A-123 Appendix A and B Travel Card Program Assessments;
 - 5) Consolidates the required OMB reporting and applicable audits related to the Program; and
 - 6) Compiles information and prepares reports for GSA and OMB as requested.
3. Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC): Ensures compliance with and implements all applicable requirements for the travel card program set forth in this Policy. Manages daily travel card program operations for their respective OA, including the following tasks as described in this document:
 - 1) Communicates travel card policy and serves as liaison between the cardholder, travel card service provider, supervisor, and HR;
 - 2) Establishes new employee travel card accounts;
 - 3) Monitors and verifies completion of required travel card training requirements;
 - 4) Ensures that OA HR offices have policies in place addressing appropriate administrative actions;
 - 5) Monitors cardholder accounts for delinquency and potential travel card misuse and abuse;
 - 6) Monitors travel card inactivity;
 - 7) Modifies and annotates cardholder account credit limit changes;
 - 8) Notifies appropriate individuals of potential misuse or abuse;
 - 9) Monitors cash withdrawals;
 - 10) Monitors to ensure proper approval is received prior to incurring travel expenses;
 - 11) Monitors questionable transactions and takes appropriate action;
 - 12) Monitors the use of the travel card for official government travel expenses;
 - 13) Oversees the reconciliation of the respective CBA accounts;
 - 14) Reviews and approves requests for cardholder account reinstatement and submits them to the NPC;
 - 15) Works with the NPC in transferring accounts within the EAS; and
 - 16) Verifies that the travel card has been closed when a cardholder leaves, retires, or transfers to another non-DOT Federal Government agency.
4. OA Chief Financial Officer: Ensures compliance with the Department's travel card policy and guidelines including designating the OA's A/OPC. Approves exceptions to CBA

requirements, guidelines, and restrictions as stated in the Employee Travel Restrictions due to Account Delinquency, Card Misuse or Abuse section of this document.

5. Cardholder's First Level Supervisor or Approving Official (AO):

- 1) Certifies that the applicant's position and duties necessitate a travel card account;
- 2) Works with HR and A/OPC to impose administrative actions related to delinquency, cancellation, misuse, and abuse;
- 3) Reviews and approves travel authorizations and vouchers to ensure all required receipts and other supporting documentation are included;
- 4) Approves sending reinstatement requests; and
- 5) Takes appropriate administrative action for misuse or abuse.

6. Human Resources (HR) Department: Advises the cardholder's supervisor or AO in determining whether travel card fraud, misuse, or abuse has occurred, and if so, the appropriate administrative action.

7. Individual Travel Cardholder: Shall adhere to the procedures set forth in this policy, applicable supplemental OA travel card guidance, and all policies and procedures of the travel card service provider. The individual travel cardholder is liable to the travel card service provider for full and timely reimbursement of all undisputed charges authorized by the cardholder.

7. **POLICY:**

Secretarial Offices and OAs must ensure compliance with the Department's travel card policy and guidelines established by the OST Office of Financial Management (OST B30) to support a well-managed travel card program. Where applicable, OAs may develop supplemental internal travel card guidelines that more directly address specific business needs of the OA. The guidelines may be more restrictive but may not be more lenient. An OA-specific guideline shall not conflict with the policy outlined in this document and a copy shall be sent to DOTtravelteam@dot.gov for recordkeeping purposes.

- a. Individuals Required to Receive a Travel Card: All DOT employees required to travel shall be issued a travel card for all official government travel expenses as the method of payment unless the issuance of a travel card would adversely affect the mission or put the employee at risk.
- b. Mandatory use of the Travel Card: The use of the travel card is mandatory for all official government travel expenses unless:
 - 1) There is a pending travel card application;
 - 2) Another payment method has been authorized (personal card, cash, etc.);
 - 3) Expenses are incurred for which payment through the travel card is impractical (e.g., vendor does not accept credit cards) or impose unreasonable burdens or costs (e.g., fees are charged for using the card);
 - 4) The travel card was lost, stolen, or damaged and a replacement card has not been received; or
 - 5) There are documented security or mission accomplishment reasons.

This applies to all forms of official government travel, including Temporary Change of Station (TCS) and Permanent Change of Station (PCS).

- c. Prohibited Use and/or Possession of the DOT Travel Card: The following categories of individuals listed below are not eligible to receive a DOT travel card:
 - 1) Contractors;
 - 2) Detailees from another Federal agency;
 - 3) Foreign nationals;
 - 4) Volunteers;
 - 5) Invitational travelers; and
 - 6) Individuals serving under an Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) (e.g., assignment) to the Department.
- d. Mandatory Training Requirements: OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B mandates that training must occur once every three years for all DOT travel card program participants, including:
 - 1) Employees/Cardholders:
 - a) Must complete travel card training prior to submitting a travel card application to the A/OPC; and
 - b) Must certify they have received the training, understand the regulations and procedures, and know the consequences of inappropriate actions.
 - 2) Approving Officials (AO):
 - a) Prior to assuming travel approver responsibilities, the AO must complete travel card training on policies, regulations, and how to identify misuse and abuse; and
 - b) Must certify they have received the training, understand the regulations and procedures, and know the consequences of inappropriate actions.
 - 3) Agency/Organization Program Coordinators (A/OPC):
 - a) Must complete A/OPC training prior to program position appointment;
 - b) Must certify they have received the training, understand the regulations and procedures, and know the consequences of inappropriate actions; and
 - c) Must maintain the most recent training completion records for all cardholders and AOs pursuant to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requirements.

Failure to complete the mandatory refresher training may result in administrative action and suspension of the travel card until training has been completed.

- e. Issuance of Travel Card: New DOT hires, including political appointees, are eligible to receive a travel card after being officially sworn in as a DOT employee. Employees must complete the required travel card training and the employee's supervisor must certify that the employee's position and duties require a travel card. The A/OPCs are the only officials authorized to process travel card applications. A/OPCs must:
 - a. Ensure employees have completed the required travel card training; and
 - b. Document approval from the employee's supervisor on the need for the travel card.

- f. Assessment of Creditworthiness: The travel card service provider must assess all new travel card applicants for creditworthiness prior to the issuance of a travel card. If an employee leaves Federal service and returns to Federal employment or transfers to DOT from a different Federal agency, they are considered a new applicant and are subject to an assessment of creditworthiness.

The travel card service provider will issue employees a restricted or unrestricted travel card based upon the employee's creditworthiness assessment. The travel card service provider will not deny new travel card applicants an account based on creditworthiness assessments. Employees whose creditworthiness assessments provide a FICO credit rating score equal to or exceeding a value of 660 will receive an unrestricted travel card. Employees whose creditworthiness assessments provide a FICO credit rating score less than or equal to 659 will receive a restricted travel card. If the travel card service provider is unable to perform a creditworthiness assessment due to the employee's insufficient credit history or an account security freeze, the travel card service provider will issue the employee a restricted travel card.

- g. Traveling Prior to Issuance of Travel Card: If an employee is required to travel before a travel card is issued, the employee will use the OA's CBA as a method of payment for common carrier transportation. The employee may use personal funds (cash, personal credit cards, etc.) to pay for the non-common carrier travel expenses until a travel card is issued. However, the cardholder must book travel and use government travel programs as outlined in Volume 2 Temporary Duty (TDY) and Local Travel. Once the employee has received the travel card, they shall not use personal funds to pay for any DOT official government travel related expenses.

Note: Foreign nationals are not eligible to hold travel cards. However, centrally billed travel accounts may be used to pay for their travel expenses when required by and approved by the sponsoring office.

- h. Infrequent Traveler: While all employees who travel on behalf of DOT will be issued a travel card, cardholders who do not maintain their status as frequent travelers will be subject to travel card credit and cash withdrawal limit restrictions. A/OPCs must monitor travel card activity and decrease credit limits to \$1 for infrequent travelers.
- i. Adjustments to Credit or Cash Limit: A/OPCs may temporarily adjust credit or cash withdrawal limits for travel card accounts on instances such as a lapse in appropriations or on a trip-by-trip basis up to the amount needed to complete a trip. A/OPCs must document increases in credit or cash withdrawal limits.
- j. Reissuance of Travel Cards: The travel card service provider, in coordination with DOT, will automatically reissue new travel cards to replace expiring travel cards for cardholders whose accounts are in good standing.

Cardholders with expiring or expired travel cards who do not maintain travel card accounts in good standing will not automatically receive new travel cards. Travel card re-issuance for cardholders who do not meet re-issuance requirements may be determined at the A/OPC's discretion in coordination with the travel card service provider.

A creditworthiness assessment must be conducted for restricted cardholders before the cardholder is issued a renewed card. Cardholders with restricted accounts both in good

standing and absent of any account suspensions (due to account delinquency or account misuse) in the previous 12 months may request an unrestricted travel card account. The cardholder's creditworthiness may be reassessed no more than once per year.

- k. Appropriate and Prudent Travel Card Use: Travel cardholders shall exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

Use of the travel card not associated with official government travel is strictly prohibited.

- 1) The travel card can only be used by the person whose name is on the travel card.
- 2) Cardholders shall not allow anyone else to use or charge someone else's expenses to their travel card, including group food and water or drinks.

Items for which the travel card shall not be used as the method of payment include (but are not limited to):

- 1) Tuition costs;
- 2) Training, conference fees, and conference room rentals;
- 3) Office supplies, including business cards;
- 4) Postal services;
- 5) Smartphones, smartphone repairs, or cellular wireless services;
- 6) Streaming or digital media services;
- 7) Equipment;
- 8) Copy services;
- 9) Membership fees; and
- 10) Privately owned vehicle repairs and towing.

Instead, OAs may only use a purchase card or other acquisition procedures to procure non-travel services and products, such as the items listed above.

Upon receipt of the travel card, cardholders shall exercise care and responsibility for the security of the travel card. A cardholder is personally responsible and must secure their travel card to prevent travel card loss or theft. Cardholders who fail to properly secure travel cards and associated Personal Identification Number (PIN) may be subject to administrative action. Cardholders must immediately report the following instances to both the travel card service provider and the A/OPC:

- 1) Stolen PIN or travel card numbers;
 - 2) Lost, stolen, or damaged travel cards; or
 - 3) Unauthorized travel card transactions.
- l. Disputed Transactions: Cardholders are responsible for disputing any unauthorized or inaccurate transactions with the travel card service provider in writing as soon as possible but not later than within 60 days of the date of the statement reflecting the transaction in question in order not to be liable for payment of the transaction.
- m. Travel Card Cash Withdrawals: A/OPCs must review cash withdrawals for reasonableness and association with official government travel. Reasonableness is measured by when the cash withdrawal is taken and the amount. Generally, cardholders are only permitted to withdraw cash within three calendar days before the trip start date up to the last date of travel. The total withdrawn at a financial institution shall not exceed an amount equal to:

- 1) The GSA published meals and incidentals amount multiplied by the number of travel days;
- 2) Deposit amounts; or
- 3) Lease payment.

An A/OPC may determine that due to unforeseen circumstances, cash withdrawals made outside of the measures described above are deemed reasonable. Unreasonable cash withdrawals and withdrawals not associated with official government travel may subject the employee to administrative action.

Cardholders may withdraw cash to pay for miscellaneous expenses when the travel card is not accepted or when the use of the card is impractical. However, employees must not perform a cash withdrawal to retrieve an account credit due to an overpayment or refund on their travel card accounts. Instead, cardholders must contact the travel card service provider to request that the funds be returned to them.

- n. Approval Prior to Use of Travel Card: The cardholder must be authorized to perform official government travel as defined in the Volume 2 Temporary Duty (TDY) and Local Travel. A traveler cannot approve their own authorization to travel. A/OPCs must identify the use of the card without proper authorization and follow-up with cardholders and approvers when instances of non-compliance are identified.
- o. Use of Travel Card for Local Travel: Use of the DOT travel card for local travel is at the discretion of each OA and is not required under this policy. However, use of the travel card to purchase TDY-related expenses such as meals or lodging while performing local travel is only permitted with OA CFO approval. Payment of conference registration fees within the cardholder's local duty station is not permitted except for payments of discounted, "early-bird" conference registrations.
- p. Travel Card Payment: The travel cardholder is liable to the travel card service provider for full reimbursement of all undisputed charges authorized by the cardholder. The amounts remitted by the cardholder and the travel system must equal the total outstanding undisputed statement balance. The amount is due by the date specified on the travel card billing statement. In coordination with the travel card service provider, DOT does not permit partial payments of outstanding undisputed statement balances. No revolving balance can be carried over from month to month. The entire balance is due within one billing cycle.
- q. Travel Voucher: All travel vouchers must be submitted through the electronic travel system for approval. The voucher approval process should include the separation of duties among roles, such as cardholders and approving officials. A traveler cannot approve their own voucher. Vouchers must include receipts consistent with agency policy and be reviewed and approved in a timely manner.
- r. Split Disbursement: OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B, mandates Federal agencies to make split disbursement (internally referred to as Split Pay) available to their travelers to reduce the cumulative dollar amount of delinquent travel card balances. The DOT electronic travel system gives travelers the ability to split reimbursement between the travel card service provider and their personal bank account.

- s. Salary Offset: The Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998 allows DOT to initiate a salary offset, defined as collecting undisputed, delinquent travel card balances via direct deductions from an employee's payroll disbursement or retirement annuity, on behalf of the travel card service provider or DOT. A salary offset, when necessary, is applicable to travel card accounts only and excludes CBA accounts.

DOT OAs electing to implement salary offset will collect undisputed delinquent account balances that are 121 days past due, equaling or exceeding \$1,000. Salary offsets are limited to 15 percent of an employee's disposable pay per pay period.

DOT OAs must take the following due process steps before instituting a salary offset:

- 1) Provide the employee written notice of the type and amount of the claim, the intention to collect the claim via deduction(s) from cardholder's disposable pay, and the employee's rights as a debtor;
 - 2) Provide the employee a copy of all records related to the claim for their review;
 - 3) Provide the employee with an opportunity for an internal DOT review of the OA's decision to collect the outstanding claim; and
 - 4) Provide the employee with an opportunity to establish a written agreement with the travel card service provider or DOT within 30 days of the written notice to remit the delinquent balance of claim.
- t. Travel Card Delinquencies: A cardholder's account is considered past due if the travel card service provider has not received full payment for the undisputed statement balance within 45 calendar days from the billing date. If payment for the undisputed statement balance has not been received by the close of the 60th calendar day from the billing date on which the charge appeared, the travel card service provider will suspend the account. The travel card service provider will automatically reinstate suspended accounts upon full payment of the undisputed statement balance.

If payment for the undisputed statement balance has not been received by the close of the 119th calendar day from the billing date on which the charge first appeared, the account will be canceled by the travel card service provider.

OMB defines three levels of Federal agency travel card delinquency performance: successful (accounts with a monthly delinquency rate less than 2 percent), minimally successful (greater than 2 percent to less than 4 percent), or unsuccessful (4 percent or more). A/OPCs must review applicable delinquency monitoring reports on a monthly basis and take appropriate preventive or follow-up actions to ensure the travel card's timely payment.

- u. Travel Card Misuse and Abuse: A/OPCs must review applicable travel card reports quarterly to identify misuse and abuse. Cash advances unrelated to official government travel are considered intentional use in violation of the established policies and procedures.
- v. Administrative Action: Determining the appropriate administrative action for travel card violations will be made on a case-by-case basis by the individual's supervisor or other management official in conjunction with Human Resources (HR). Therefore, the development of a penalty table is no longer required.

At a minimum, A/OPCs shall notify and receive acknowledgement from the cardholder when instances of travel card delinquency, misuse, or abuse occur. When delinquency, misuse, or abuse is found to have occurred, A/OPCs will inform the employee's supervisor to pursue the appropriate administrative action, if appropriate. An employee's supervisor must exercise prudence in managing travel card misuse and abuse. Failure to use travel cards in an appropriate manner and in accordance with policy and regulations may subject cardholders to administrative actions. Supervisors who fail to hold employees accountable for their actions may also be subject to administrative actions.

There is no standard administrative response suitable for all instances of travel card violations. A progression of increasingly severe penalties may prove appropriate for repeated minor cases of misuse, while a more severe violation may warrant the maximum penalty upon a first offense. Internal guidance should make sure to keep disciplinary actions appropriate for different kinds of violations, and to acknowledge that final decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Although penalties may differ for various travel card violation scenarios, timeliness of action on the part of a cardholder's supervisor upon notification of travel card violations is essential to the integrity of DOT's travel card program.

- w. Employee Travel Restrictions due to Account Delinquency or Card Misuse or Abuse: Employees with canceled travel card accounts due to account delinquency, insufficient funds payment returns, travel card misuse or abuse may not travel on behalf of DOT using personal funds, CBA, or other methods of payment. Only an OA CFO or Deputy CFO may grant individual exceptions.
- x. Travel Card Suspensions and Cancellations: Both A/OPCs and the travel card service provider may suspend or cancel travel card accounts at their discretion. Should the travel card account be suspended or cancelled due to delinquency or travel card misuse or abuse, a cardholder may appeal to the suspending or cancelling party to reinstate their travel card. Depending on the outcome of the appeal for canceled accounts, the employee may not be authorized to reapply for a new travel card.

The travel card service provider will immediately cancel a travel card account if two or more payments have been returned for non-sufficient funds within a 12-month period.
- y. Travel Card Reinstatement: If an employee's travel card account was canceled as a result of non-payment and the employee would like to request reinstatement, the outstanding balance on the account, including late fees, must be paid in full. Cardholders may file an appeal for reinstatement via a new card application. The cardholder's supervisor must concur with the reinstatement request and outline the steps taken to prevent future card cancellation. The OA A/OPC shall forward the request to the DOT National Program Coordinator (NPC) for processing. The travel card service provider will make the sole decision to reinstate a travel card account that they previously cancelled.
- z. Transfers: Cardholders transferring within the Department do not need to re-apply for a travel card. The current and gaining OA A/OPC must work with the National A/OPC in transferring the account within the EAS.
- aa. Closeouts: When an employee requests an account closeout upon transferring to another Government agency, separating from DOT or retiring, the A/OPC shall inform the cardholder to destroy the travel card. The departing cardholder retains all responsibility for

the payment of undisputed travel card balances remaining on the travel card account at the time of their departure. Whenever possible, A/OPCs should close travel cards and verify that the account balance is zero prior to the cardholder's departure date. A/OPCs are required to verify that accounts have been closed no later than 30 days after the cardholder's departure date.

- bb. Unused Tickets: DOT shall submit requests to servicing airlines for refunds of fully or partially unused tickets, when entitled to such refunds, and track the status of unused tickets to ensure appropriate resolution. DOT's Travel Management Center (TMC) performs this function on behalf of the Department. E-ticket refunds are processed immediately upon notification of non-use. For those tickets where the TMC is not advised by the traveler of a cancellation, the TMC's Global Distribution System (GDS) produces a daily report of all unused e-tickets. The TMC reviews this report daily and automatically processes refunds for any unused ticket.
- cc. Tax Exempt Status: Some States and U.S. territories provide tax exemptions for use of the travel card and may require a completed form to claim exemption. A list of all States and territories and their tax-exempt status can be found at <https://smartpay.gsa.gov/content/state-tax-information>.
- dd. Documentation and Records Retention: All official DOT travel-related records, to include required receipts, will be stored in the electronic travel system for six years. Unofficial records can be disposed of when business is completed.
- ee. Data Analytics: A/OPCs are required to use the Department's data analytic tools to assist in detecting potential instances of fraud, misuse, and abuse, as well as identifying delinquency trends in the travel card program performance. The travel card service provider's EAS provides a variety of reports that assist in the effective management of the travel card program.
- ff. Rebates: The Department receives rebates for travel card usage and timely payments. The Department's goal is to maximize the rebates by ensuring maximum card usage. To the greatest extent possible, travelers should use the travel charge card to pay for appropriate, approved travel expenses. ATM withdrawals do not provide rebates to the Department. The National A/OPC must review the refund agreement and technical requirements prior to each option exercise to ensure that the refund agreement provides the best competitive deal and is being carried out effectively.

Volume 7: Conference Reporting and Guidance

Chapter 1: DOT Conference Reporting Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** This volume provides the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or the Department) with policy and guidance on conference oversight and reporting. DOT-wide adherence to these requirements will achieve compliance with all applicable Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memoranda, Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), appropriations laws, and other guidance relating to conferences. The FTR does not apply to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has an independent personnel system under Title 49 of the United States Code. This policy also establishes standards that will help ensure that conference activity across DOT is managed with fiscal prudence.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to expenses related to Federally-sponsored and Federally-hosted conferences for all Secretarial Offices and DOT OAs per DOT Order 1320.16C, “U.S. Department of Transportation Directives System.”
3. **BACKGROUND:** The sharing of information and ideas at conferences can play a valuable role to DOT employees in helping to carry out our mission. However, all agencies have a responsibility to act as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, ensuring that Federal funds are used for purposes that are appropriate, cost-effective, essential to their core mission, and consistent with law.

In 2012, OMB issued Memorandum M-12-12, “Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations,” which outlined a series of practical steps agencies could take to improve operations, increase efficiency, and cut unnecessary spending. In an amending policy, Memorandum M-17-08, and subsequently in Memorandum M-17-26, OMB acknowledged the level of burden the previous policy imposed on Federal agencies and the difficulties of balancing transparency, conference approval, and reporting requirements with achieving agency mission. Therefore, M-17-08 and M-17-26 did the following:

- Refined agencies’ focus on the oversight of expenses related to Federally-sponsored and Federally-hosted conferences;
- Modified conference approval thresholds; and
- Proposed revised conference reporting requirements that were later enacted in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and repeated in subsequent appropriations acts, including the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.

4. **REFERENCES:** This Policy is issued pursuant to the following statutes, regulations, and guidance:
 - a. OMB Memorandum 17-26, “Reducing Burden for Federal Agencies by Rescinding and Modifying OMB Memoranda,” June 15, 2017: Proposed changes to conference reporting requirements.
 - b. Federal Travel Regulation Conference Guidance: Clarifies the term “conference” as defined by the FTR for reporting requirement purposes.

- c. Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024: Pub. L. 118-42, Division B, Title VII, Sec. 738(a) requires submission of annual reports to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) or the Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) regarding the costs and contracting procedures related to each conference held by an agency during the fiscal year 2023, for which the cost was more than \$100,000. Sec. 738(c) requires notification to the OIG or the DAEO within 15 days after the end of a quarter, the date, location and number of employees attending a conference held by any Executive Branch department for which the cost was more than \$20,000.
- d. DOT 2770.1F, Official Reception and Representation Expenses: Established DOT policy and guidance on reception and representation expenses.
- e. FTR 41 C.F.R. Subchapter 301, Part-74.1, Conference Planning: GSA conference planning - Agency Responsibilities GSAFTR, 41 CFR Chapter 301, Part-74.1, Conference Planning.
- f. General Records Schedules (GRS) | National Archives: National Archives and Records Administration: General Records Schedule Transmittal 31, April 2020, Disposition Authority DAA GRS 2013 0003 0001.

5. **DEFINITIONS:**

- a. Approving/Authorizing Official (AO): An AO is the approving or authorizing official at the operational level who has the responsibility for the mission and the authority to commit program funds for conference costs and to obligate funds to support temporary duty assignment (TDY) travel for the mission. The AO only authorizes travel necessary to accomplish the mission of the Federal Government.
- b. Conference: A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that involves attendee travel (includes virtual or a hybrid combination of the examples below). The term “conference” also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404. See 41 CFR 300-3.1 for examples that, Events. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Exchange of Information;
 - 2) Outreach;
 - 3) Workshops;
 - 4) Showcases; and
 - 5) Committee Meetings.

Indicators that an event may be considered a conference are:

- 1) Participant registration;
 - 2) A published, substantive agenda; and
 - 3) Scheduled speakers or discussion panels on a particular topic(s).
- c. Hosted/Co-Hosted: An event in which a DOT Secretarial Office or Operating Administration (OA) is providing full or partial financial support and has control or shares control of all or significant portions of the conference and includes conferences statutorily or legally mandated. In limited circumstances, a DOT Secretarial Office or OA will employ a contractor as a “conference planner” to manage the logistics of the event.
- d. Invitational Travel: Authorized travel of individuals either not employed or employed (under 5 U.S.C. § 5703) intermittently in Federal Government service as consultants or experts and

paid on a daily, when-actually-employed basis. Furthermore, this includes authorized travel for individuals serving without pay or at \$1 a year when acting in a capacity that is directly related to official activities of the Federal Government. Travel allowances authorized for such persons are the same as those normally authorized for travelers in a TDY status.

- e. Sponsored/Co-Sponsored: An external conference, organized by both a Federal and Non-Federal entity to advance the mission of the Federal entity utilizing shared interest, where a DOT Secretarial Office or OA provides full or partial financial support through any contracting vehicle or in-kind (non-monetary) services and where DOT's name is being used in association with the event. For these conferences, the co-sponsors should share responsibility for the agenda planning, conference logistics, speakers, and location selection. In all cases, there must be a clear benefit to DOT commensurate with the funding provided.

6. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- a. CFO and Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs: Establishes and maintains the guidance contained in this policy.
- b. Office of the Secretary of Transportation, OFM: Manages DOT's conference policies and approval and reporting processes for DOT.

In managing DOT conference approval and reporting, OFM:

- 1) Reviews conference packages requiring OST approval;
 - 2) Consolidates and submits DOT conference data per reporting requirements; and
 - 3) Establishes and manages DOT-wide policy and internal controls for conference travel and delegates travel management duties to the designated OA travel management officials.
- c. DOT OA CFOs: Ensure the Department's policies are upheld, and internal guidance and controls are developed to support a well-managed conference program. In addition, ensure the OA is adhering to the FTR part 301.74 Conference Planning. OA CFOs must submit a package for each conference for approval by the Deputy Secretary or Secretarial designee for conferences over \$500,000 as outlined in this policy. DOT OA CFOs must not proceed with a conference until the Deputy Secretary or Secretarial designee has authorized approval.

Conferences with expenses estimated to be greater than or equal to \$20,000 but less than \$500,000 require review and approval by the OA Administrator, OA CFO, or OA CFO designee and must be approved before making any final arrangements. OA CFOs are also responsible for ensuring:

- 1) Adherence to the threshold guidance (Section 8.b.);
- 2) The approval process follows the procedures outlined in this policy (Section 8.c.);
- 3) Proper use of Government funds (Section 6.a.);
- 4) Adherence to reporting guidance (Section 9);
- 5) Proper use of internal controls (Section 10); and

- 6) Appropriate legal review and approval when necessary.
- d. AO: Determines whether travel is necessary and that the most economical means of transportation and lodging are being utilized and determines whether travel is necessary based on agency mission needs. The AO:
- 1) Authorizes conference TDY in advance;
 - 2) Ensures compliance with conference and other volumes with this DOT Travel Order; and
 - 3) Examines travel authorizations and vouchers to ensure compliance with the FTR (as applicable) and DOT policy on receipts and applicable justifications/supporting documentation. OAs may have an additional reviewer.
- e. Travelers: Adhere to the procedures set forth in this policy and other applicable DOT Orders, the FTR, DOT memoranda on related topics, and other applicable OA guidance.
- f. Assistant Secretary for Administration, Office of Security: Reviews and approves hosted/co-hosted conference packages for appropriate physical and personnel security requirements.
- g. Assistant Secretary for Administration, Office of the Chief Information Officer: Reviews and approves hosted/co-hosted conference packages for appropriate cybersecurity and privacy requirements.

POLICY: DOT's Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs directs Secretarial Offices and DOT OAs to follow policy and guidance as described in this policy. Secretarial Offices and DOT OAs are responsible for adhering to DOT's policy, and for developing appropriate internal controls to support a well-managed conference program.

- a. Use of Government Funds: Appropriated funds may be used to pay for some conference expenses, both virtual and in-person, as long as the Department and OA determine that the conference is reasonably and logically related to carrying out its mission and is consistent with appropriations laws.

Federal funds shall not be used for certain unauthorized expenses, revenue, or gifts associated with a conference to cover entertainment-related expenses or the cost of amenities. Examples of such unauthorized expenses include motivational speakers, musicians or other entertainers, promotional items, decorations, or other goods and services for participants unrelated to the purpose of the conference, including tickets to recreational activities outside of the conference setting.

The number of Federal Government attendees shall be limited to the minimum number of employees necessary to achieve the mission and goals of the conference and be in compliance with all authorities and guidance. OAs must ensure they meet the special requirements for sponsoring or funding a conference at a venue in accordance with 15 U.S.C.

§ 2225a, and this requirement can only be waived by the Secretary or the Secretary's designee.¹⁶

- b. Food and Refreshments: Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 1345, an appropriation may not be used for travel, transportation, and subsistence expenses for a meeting, except when an agency is paying the expenses of an officer or employee of the Federal Government carrying out an official duty and on approved official government travel.

In certain instances, food and refreshments may be purchased using reception and representation funds (R&R) or Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (MECEA) funds. DOT Official Reception and Representation Expenses policy can be found in DOT Order 2770.1F.

Certain other limited exceptions may allow for the purchase of food for conferences. OAs should consult with legal counsel before using appropriated funds to purchase food or refreshments.

If statutorily-authorized and approved, agencies sponsoring a conference may provide light refreshments to agency employees only who attend the conference. Light refreshments should be negotiated with the hotel or venue to be as close as possible to the meal and incidental expenses rates for individual meals as set out by the FTR. Light refreshments for morning, afternoon, or evening breaks are defined to include, but not be limited to: coffee, tea, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, or muffins.¹⁷

Appropriated funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol. Exceptions to the general prohibition are the use of R&R funds (i.e., when protocol demands serving alcoholic beverages to international visitors pursuant to DOT 2770.1F) or funds authorized under MECEA.

- c. Per Diem Adjustments for Furnished Meals: In accordance with Volume 2, Temporary Duty (TDY) and Local Travel, food may be provided to those on official government travel; however, the traveler's per diem must be adjusted to account for the meal(s) furnished. It is the responsibility of the traveler's AO to ensure, prior to reimbursement to the traveler, that such adjustments are made to the travel voucher.
- d. Contract Conference Planner: In limited instances, DOT OAs may contract with a conference planner through traditional methods where funds are obligated and paid to the contractor for its services. In keeping with reducing excessive conference spending, conference planner costs should be kept within an appropriate amount as defined by DOT OAs.
- e. Collecting Attendance Fees: The Federal Government must have specific statutory authority to charge and retain attendance fees from outside sources. There is no

¹⁶ FTR § 301-74.9.

¹⁷ FTR § 301-74.7.

Department-wide authority to retain fees; however, individual DOT OAs may have specific authorities that authorize them to collect and retain fees.

An attendance fee may be charged by a non-Federal entity co-sponsoring an event provided the fee does not exceed what will cover the reasonable costs incurred by the non-Federal entity in sponsoring the conference.

Questions on this topic should be addressed to DOT Office of the General Counsel or OA's legal counsel before charging, collecting, or retaining attendance fees from outside sources.

- f. Non-Federal Attendee Travel Restrictions: Absent specific statutory authority, the Federal Government is prohibited from paying the travel expenses of Non-Federal participants attending meetings per 31 U.S.C. § 1345. However, if an individual provides a direct service to the Federal Government (e.g., speaking at an event), the individual may be placed on invitational travel orders pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 5703. In addition, a DOT OA may have unique statutory authorities that authorize it to use its appropriated funds for travel and other expenses of Non-Federal employees. Any such authority must be specific (i.e., general training and technical assistance authority are not enough). Statutorily required (rather than merely authorized) conferences may provide sufficient specificity. If a DOT Office or OA believes that it has such authority, it should consult with its legal counsel prior to relying on the authority. For a family member or attendant traveling with a DOT traveler when the traveler's travel would not be possible without them, see Volume 2 Section 3.6.5.

7. **CONFERENCE PLANNING:**

- a. When planning a conference, OAs and Departmental Offices must:
 - 1) Minimize all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees' travel costs, and conference attendees' time costs;
 - 2) Maximize the use of Government-owned or Government provided conference facilities;
 - 3) Identify opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility (e.g., through the availability of lower rates during the off-season at a site with seasonal rates);
 - 4) Ensure that the conference planner or designee does not retain for personal use any promotional benefits or materials received from a travel service provider (e.g., hotel points, airline miles, etc.) as a result of booking the conference (see FTR § 301-53.2 and 301-53.3); and
 - 5) Develop and establish internal policies to ensure these standards are met.¹⁸

DOT and OA offices should ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that appropriate personnel, physical, information, and information technology security and privacy-protective measures are identified and cost-effectively implemented.

¹⁸ FTR § 301-74.1.

- b. When planning a conference, OAs should consider all direct and indirect conference costs paid by the Federal Government, whether paid directly by agencies or reimbursed by agencies to travelers or others associated with the conference. Some examples of such costs are:

- 1) Authorized travel and per diem expenses;
- 2) Hire of rooms for official business;
- 3) Audiovisual and other equipment usage;
- 4) Computer, internet, and telephone access fees;
- 5) Light refreshments;
- 6) Printing;
- 7) Fees for sign language and/or captioning services;
- 8) Registration fees; and
- 9) Ground transportation.

DOT OAs should consider other costs related to conference scheduling, facilitation, presentation services, physical and personnel security requirements, cybersecurity, and privacy review controls and services. OAs should consider employees' time at the conference and en-route travel in their conference planning but are not required to include these in their cost calculations.

- c. To determine conference expenditures for Federally hosted/co-hosted events, DOT OAs must:

- 1) Ensure there is appropriate management oversight of the conference planning process;
- 2) Complete cost comparisons of the size, scope, and location of the proposed conference. Cost comparisons should include, but not be limited to, a determination of adequacy of lodging rooms at the established per diem rates, overall convenience of the conference location, fees, availability of meeting space, equipment, supplies, and commuting or travel distance of attendees;¹⁹
- 3) Determine if a Federal Government facility is available at a cheaper rate than a commercial facility;
- 4) Consider alternatives to an in-person conference (e.g., teleconferencing through virtual platforms); and
- 5) Maintain written documentation of the alternatives considered and the selection rationale used.

- d. Site selection is a final decision as to where to hold the conference. The term "site" refers to both the geographical location and the specific facility(ies) selected. In determining the best site in the interest of the Federal Government, you should exercise strict fiscal responsibility to minimize costs. The actions in FTR § 301-74.4 should be included in the cost comparisons. As part of the cost comparison host for federally hosted/co-hosted events, the

¹⁹ FTR § 301-74.5.

established per diem rate for the locations for which costs are being compared must be used.²⁰

- e. DOT must offer reasonable accommodations for all attendees and ensure that the conference and any materials provided are in accessible formats and that sign language interpreters are available. Any invitation to a conference must include the following statement:

“The U.S. Department of Transportation is committed to providing equal access to event for all participants. To request alternative formats or reasonable accommodations for this event, please contact:

- 1) Name for reasonable accommodation point of contact;
- 2) E-mail address;
- 3) Phone number; and
- 4) Your request must be submitted by [deadline].”

Information about requesting accommodations should also be included in any registration tool or website and on the event’s website.

8. **CONFERENCE APPROVALS:**

- a. Conference Approval Authority:

Threshold Value	Required Approvals
$\geq \$500K$ (<i>Estimated</i>)	Deputy Secretary of Transportation or Secretarial designee
$\geq \$20K - < \$500K$ (<i>Estimated</i>)	OA Administrator or OA Administrator designee ; OA Chief Financial Officer or OA Chief Financial Officer designee

- b. Thresholds:

- 1) Approval for Events Estimated Greater Than or Equal to \$500,000:

The Deputy Secretary or Secretarial designee is required to review and approve in advance each conference for which a DOT OA’s conference expenses are estimated to equal or exceed \$500,000.

In addition to the approval request for single conferences exceeding \$500,000, OA Management must submit a written justification demonstrating the expense is the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose.

- 2) Approval for Events Estimated Greater Than or Equal to \$20,000 but Less Than \$500,000:

²⁰ FTR § 301-74.5.

Conferences with expenses estimated to be greater than or equal to \$20,000 but less than \$500,000 require review and approval by the OA Administrator, OA CFO, or OA CFO designee. DOT OAs must implement and uphold robust internal conference procedures to ensure such events are internally approved and appropriate conference files are maintained.²¹

c. Conference Approval Packages:

For conferences with estimated expenses equal to or greater than \$500,000, OAs must submit a complete approval package to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) through the Executive Secretariat no later than 45 business days prior to the conference start date and before the approval is required. OAs must ensure the package is clear, concise, error-free (no spelling or mathematical errors, dollar amounts on all documentation are properly estimated and accumulated), and contains the appropriate OA-level approvals. A complete conference pre-approval package must contain the following:

- 1) OA Management Approval Memorandum;
- 2) Conference Synopsis;
- 3) Cost Estimate and Breakdown;
- 4) An estimate of local and non-local OA attendees;
- 5) Evidence that attempts were made to secure a competitively-priced venue; and
- 6) Conference Agenda.

Conference packages submitted fewer than 45 days from the start of the event must include an explanation for the late submission. This information should be included in the OA Management Approval Memorandum. Conference packages that are late or incomplete may be denied and may result in cancellation.

No contracts should be awarded unless the Deputy Secretary or Secretarial designee has approved the event; however, the contracting process may begin but may not result in an award until after formal approval.

9. **REPORTING AND RECORD RETENTION:**

- a. Annual Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report: Annually, Executive Branch Departments are required to report to the OIG the costs and contracting procedures related to each conference held during the fiscal year for which the cost to the United States Government was more than \$100,000. OFM will collect this information from the DOT OAs and submit one report to the OIG annually.
- b. Quarterly OIG Reports: The head of any department is required to notify the OIG of the date, location, and the number of employees attending a conference held by the department for which the cost to the United States Government was more than \$20,000. This notification is due to the

²¹ FTR § 301-74.14.

OIG within 15 days after the end of a quarter; therefore, OFM will collect this information from the DOT OAs within 10 days after the end of a quarter.

- c. Record Retention: For each conference that a DOT Secretarial Office or OA sponsors, funds, hosts, or co-hosts for 30 or more attendees, the hosting office or OA must maintain a record of the cost of each alternative conference site considered. The OA must consider at least three sites and must make these records available for inspection by the OIG or other interested parties.²²

OAs are encouraged to retain all conference records to validate costs, estimates, and policy compliance, regardless of the cost, reporting, or attendee threshold.

10. **INTERNAL CONTROLS:**

- a. DOT OAs must implement an internal conference policy to ensure all conferences are internally approved and appropriate conference documentation is maintained. Additionally, DOT must annually validate that the proper controls are established and are operating effectively as part of the Circular A-123 travel internal control testing.

²² FTR § 301-74.14.