




**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

OCT 3 2017

Subject: Interim Department of Transportation (DOT) Conference Policy

From: Jennifer Funk
Director, Office of Financial Management (B-30) 

To: Operating Administration (OA) Chief Financial Officers,
Deputy Chief Financial Officers, and Senior Financial
Management Officials

On June 15, 2017, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued memorandum M-17-26, *Reducing Burden for Federal Agencies by Rescinding and Modifying OMB Memoranda*. This new guidance includes proposed changes to the conference approval process and public reporting requirements imposed by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, OMB policies M-12-12, *Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations* (May 2012), and M-17-08, *Amending OMB Memorandum M-12-12, Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations* (November 2016). The proposed changes are contingent on the enactment of appropriations legislation for FY 2018 and the subsequent issuance of amended OMB policy.

These changes have significant implications on the way we currently manage conference approval and reporting here at DOT and impacts the new conference policy we were about to issue. Accordingly, DOT Order 2300.9, *DOT Conference Policy*, currently in draft, has been put on hold until final determinations of the proposed changes are made. This memorandum provides interim guidance for conference oversight here at DOT, including several policy and procedural changes effective immediately:

- 1) The threshold for conference approvals by the Deputy Secretary is changed from \$100,000 to \$500,000 and above. Approval packages for events estimated to cost less than \$500,000 are no longer required.
- 2) The Chief of Staff no longer needs to approve conferences attended by 10 or more employees.
- 3) Annual public reporting of all DOT-sponsored events in excess of \$100,000 is no longer required.
- 4) Bi-weekly reporting to the Inspector General for all events exceeding \$20,000 is still required, though we expect the reporting timeline will change to a quarterly report when the FY 2018 budget is enacted.

While these changes reduce the administrative burden surrounding conference activity, it is nonetheless critical that we maintain a heightened level of oversight to ensure vigilant stewardship of conference-related funds. To achieve a sustained level of integrity, OAs should continue to follow their internal approval procedures for conferences and related events, including Administrator (or designee) approval of all events.

To recap:

Conference Approvals by the Deputy Secretary

Conferences and related events over \$500,000 must be approved by the Deputy Secretary. Conference packages must be submitted to the Deputy Secretary no later than 45 days prior to the event and should include:

- OA Management Approval Memorandum;
- Conference synopsis;
- Cost estimate and breakdown;
- Estimate of local and non-local OA attendees;
- Evidence that attempts were made to secure a competitively-priced venue; and
- Conference Agenda

Reporting of Conferences Greater Than \$20,000

Bi-weekly reports must be reported to the Office of Financial Management (B-30) for all conferences exceeding \$20,000. We will consolidate this information and report to the Office of the Inspector General.

We will continue to monitor legislative and OMB-directed changes to conference oversight and will make policy changes as necessary. In the meantime, please feel free to direct any questions to Andrew Julian (x65623) or to Shelly Davis (x66092).