



Meeting Date: September 25, 2019

Agenda Item: # 10

AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

SUBJECT:

MTA Travel Policy – First Draft

SUMMARY:

MTA allows travel for business and training purposes that benefit the employees of MTA.

A comprehensive travel policy is a useful tool to ensure that expenses incurred while on MTA business are reasonable and a prudent use of public funds.

This policy provides the purpose, scope, authorization of travel, advances for travel expenses, eligible reimbursements and final review, approval and payment process.

The MTA Travel Policy has been reviewed and approved by legal counsel.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve Travel Policy as presented.
or
2. Approve Travel Policy with modifications.
or
3. Provide direction to staff and request final Travel Policy be presented to the Board in October.



TRAVEL AND BUSINESS EXPENSE POLICY

As approved by the Board of Directors:

DRAFT

Purpose

To establish a uniform policy for MTA Board Members and employees for travel and business expenses. Expenses incurred in connection with the following type of activities generally constitute authorized expenses as long as the other requirements of this policy are met:

1. Communicating with representatives of regional, state, and national government on MTA-adopted policy and/or program positions.
2. Attending educational seminars designed to improve employees' skill and knowledge related to their position within MTA.
3. Participating in local, regional, state, and national organizations whose activities affect the MTA's interest.
4. Attending MTA-sponsored events.
5. Implementing an MTA-approved strategy for attracting or retaining businesses to the MTA.
6. Other meetings as required to further the MTA's interest.

General Provisions

It is the policy of the Mendocino Transit Authority that all travel expenses and business expenses incurred meet the following criteria:

1. The expense incurred is of direct benefit to MTA.
2. The amount of the expense is reasonable in terms of the event or activity involved.
3. The expenses incurred are within the department's budget and are approved by General Manager. The General Manager or designee will approve travel and business expenses incurred by employees for all out of state and international travel only regardless of the funding source or reimbursement from an outside agency.

Responsibilities

Every employee who travels on official business on behalf of the MTA is responsible for knowing and complying with the Travel and Business Expense Policy. The General Manager or his or her designee, is responsible for reviewing and approving or denying all travel requests for compliance with this Policy.

General Business Travel Guidelines

When an employee is traveling for training, meetings, workshops, or conferences, the MTA's Training, Education or Conference Approval form shall be used and approved prior to traveling or incurring any associated expenses. Event brochures/agendas are required documentation to accompany the form. The form shall include the following advisory:

All expenses reported on this form must comply with the MTA's policies relating to expenses and use of public resources. The information submitted on this form is a public record. Penalties for misusing public resources and violating the MTA's policies may include, but are not limited to, the loss of reimbursement privileges, restitution, civil and criminal penalties, additional tax liability and employment disciplinary action (if applicable), up to and including termination of employment.

After travel is completed, employees must fill out the General Business Travel Expense form for all training/travel expenses incurred. In addition, the MTA's Training, Education or Conference Approval form must be updated to reflect actual costs. These two forms shall be included with every request for payment and separate forms must be used for individual employees. Detailed, itemized receipts for expenses shall be attached to the General Business Travel Expense form for reimbursement purposes (note: receipts that are not itemized are not acceptable). Receipts are not required for per diem meal and incidental expenses. The General Business Travel Expense form shall reflect all travel-related costs. If reimbursement is necessary, the form must be signed by the employee, their direct supervisor and the General Manager.

Meals

1. During travel, meal and incidental expenses are paid on a per diem basis. The MTA's per diem rate for Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) shall be equal to the U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) M&IE rates (<https://www.gsa.gov/>). For international travel, M&IE rates are set by the U.S. Department of State https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78.
2. For the first and last day of travel, an employee is limited to 75% of the applicable per diem rate for M&IE. If the employee leaves prior to 9:00 am or the employee returns after 6:00 pm on the first and last day, the employee is eligible for 100% of the per diem for those days.
3. When meals are included as part of the event (included in the registration fee), employees will not be provided per diem for these meals. When the employee can justify a legitimate business or personal, or medical reason and there are no accommodations available to not participate in the provided meal, the employee must submit written justification to receive per diem for that meal.
4. Employees will not be reimbursed for any purchase of alcoholic beverages.

Lodging

1. It is the MTA's policy to provide adequate lodging for its employees while they are out of town on MTA business. Out of town is defined as a location greater than one and one half (1.5) hours' drive of normal commute time from MTA. Lodging is an allowable expense for the evening preceding a training, meeting, or conference only when the employee would have to leave his/her residence before 7:00 a.m. on the day of the event to arrive at his/her destination at the designated time. Lodging is an allowable expense for the evening subsequent to an event when travel would result in the employee arriving at his/her residence after 9:00 p.m. Employees must submit an itemized hotel check-out receipts to obtain reimbursement. Booking receipts are not acceptable forms of documentation.
2. Lodging charges are based on single occupancy rates. The MTA will not reimburse employees for lodging expenses incurred by family members when an employee's family accompanies him/her, or for any charges above the single occupancy rate if the hotel charges more for additional guests in the same room.

3. If such lodging is in connection with a conference, lodging expenses must not exceed the group rate published by the conference sponsor for the meeting in question, or the rate for government employees on official business, if such rates are available at the time of booking. If the group or government rate is not available, lodging at accommodations at comparable rates to the group rate, which do not substantially increase transportation costs or interfere with an employee's duties, are presumed to be reasonable and reimbursable.
4. If an employee chooses to extend his or her stay for personal business, the employee is responsible for all associated costs.

Reimbursable Travel Expenses

1. Rail, bus, taxi, ridesharing or airfare expenses will be reimbursed at actual cost. Only economy or coach airfare will be authorized. When possible, travel arrangements should be made in advance by MTA. If there is not a pre-paid arrangement for travel, receipts are required for reimbursement.
2. Rental vehicles are only allowed for business reasons in the situation when the hotel location is not within walking distance of the event location and a shuttle service or other means of ground transportation is not available, impractical or too costly. Rental vehicles are only allowed as a business necessity, not for personal convenience. All rental car requests must have prior approval from General Manager. Rental car expenses without prior approval from the General Manager will not be reimbursed. Rental vehicle agreements should be limited to no more than a full-size model. If a portion of the trip includes personal business (i.e., staying over a weekend), then the employee shall pay the pro-rata cost of the rental car during the personal business time. Vans and other large vehicles may be rented if there is a group of employees and/or officials traveling together.
3. Garage, toll, taxis, rideshares, shuttles and hired vehicle fares, and parking expenses will be reimbursed at actual cost. It is recommended that employees obtain receipts for expenses and attach receipts to the General Business Travel Expense form. Reimbursement for airport parking will be at the long-term airport parking rate for travel exceeding 24 hours, with employee paying the difference, if any.

Mileage expenses will be reimbursed at the actual miles traveled times the Federal mileage rate. Travel by private vehicle is authorized when additional time away from the job is previously approved in lieu of flying when it does not necessitate more time away from the job. The total travel cost shall be computed on direct route distances, but in no case shall exceed the round trip by air. Employees who receive a monthly auto allowance, or use an MTA vehicle are not eligible for mileage reimbursement.

4. Baggage charges, tips and gratuities are eligible for reimbursement as long as charges are reasonable. Airline early check-in fees are not eligible for reimbursement.
5. Telecommunication expenses related to MTA business are reimbursable (i.e., cell phone calls on personal cell phones or internet costs at a hotel). Personal phone calls are not eligible for reimbursement.
6. Personal expenses including entertainment expenses are not eligible for

reimbursement. Moving violations, parking tickets or other fines are not reimbursable.

7. Detailed receipts are required if any MTA issued charge, debit or gasoline card is used for business travel.
8. If an employee changes a flight after it is booked and incurs a cost, the additional cost shall be borne by the employee, unless the change was required by business of the MTA.
9. For airfare expenses, if an employee chooses to extend his or her stay for personal purposes, any additional costs resulting from this extension is the responsibility of the employee and documentation (flight print-outs at time of booking) must be submitted to ensure compliance with this policy.

Approval of Business Travel Expenses

General Business Travel Expense forms without authorized signatures will not be accepted for processing payments.

The Finance Department will retain completed reports, documentation, and records pertaining to travel and business expenses.

Conferences, Meetings, and Training Expenses

The MTA encourages employee's participation in special training and educational activities that are directly job related. Reimbursement for tuition and cost of materials is available from the MTA of approved training courses. Receipts are required for registration fees, books, and supplies related to approved conferences, meetings and/or trainings.

All training and educational activities require prior approval of the General Manager or designee.

The guidelines for general business travel apply to the lodging, meals, and transportation costs associated with training, conferences, workshops, and meetings. Employees seeking to attend a meeting, training or conference for professional development, or to make a presentation, or to accept an award, and who have not been assigned to attend under the preceding paragraph, may, at the discretion of the General Manager, attend such meeting or conference on MTA time up to three calendar days, and be reimbursed for part or all of any registration costs, if it deemed that the resulting education or information derived will be of benefit to the MTA, but such employee will be required to pay for all other out-of-pocket costs such as food, transportation, and lodging.

Cash Advances

Generally, the MTA will pay in advance for registration, hotels, and airfares. All other expenses will be reimbursed after the MTA's General Business Travel Expense form is submitted to reflect actual costs incurred. Detailed, itemized receipts for expenses must be attached to the General Business Travel Expense form for reimbursement purposes.

Out of State Travel

The General Manager or designee must approve, in advance, all out of state and international

travel requests. The General Manager's travel out of state and international travel requests must be approved by the Board of Directors.

Employees may travel out of state if assigned by their department head with prior General Manager or designee approval to: (a) attend training on systems, equipment or procedures used by the MTA, where such training is either not offered in California, or is offered at lesser cost than comparable training in California; or (b) conduct interviews or gather information related to a law enforcement, economic development or other MTA operation or project, where such access to individuals or information is not available in California. An exception is made and no General Manager or designee approval is required for travel associated with ongoing criminal investigations.

DRAFT

TRAINING, EDUCATION OR CONFERENCE REQUEST

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EMPLOYEE

Date _____

Employee Name _____ Supervisor _____

Name of Program _____

Program Date(s) / Time(s) _____

Location _____

Describe how this is directly related to your job (justification): _____

If it is necessary to take time off from scheduled work, please list the time and dates _____

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

(Attach a copy of brochure/program announcement, if applicable or available.)

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR AND/OR MANAGER

Employee eligible: Yes No (If no, see justification below.)

Approximate cost:

\$ _____

Transportation

\$ _____

Lodging

\$ _____

Meals

\$ _____

Related Expenses

\$ _____

TOTAL

Supervisor and Manager Signature _____ Date _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTOR AND/OR DESIGNEE

Approved _____ Disapproved _____

Justification for denial: _____

Director's Signature _____ Date _____

Note: If an overnight stay and/or commercial transportation is required, a Travel Authorization form must be completed prior to the trip. If not, appropriate expenses can be reimbursed on a Petty Cash Voucher (under \$100) or Department Purchase Order (over \$100). See department accountant.

Mendocino Transit Advance Travel Request Form

NAME: _____

EE NUMBER: _____

COUNTY: _____

PURPOSE: _____

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

Date	Description	Miles	Mileage Rate .55	Lodging	Travel (Airfare/Rental Car)	Meals (B,L,D, IE)	*Misc. (Explain in Notes)	Total
			\$ -					
			\$ -					
			\$ -					
			\$ -					
			\$ -					
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
			\$ -					\$ -
		0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total								\$ -

APPROVED BY: _____

*NOTES: _____

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury, that this is a true and correct claim for necessary expenses incurred by me and that no payment has been received by me on account. All receipts and other pertinent information are attached as needed.

SIGNATURE: _____

MTA BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENSE FORM

Purpose: _____
Statement #: _____

Pay Period	
From:	_____
To:	_____

Name: _____
Employee ID: _____

Department: _____
Manager: _____

Date	Description	Air & Trans.	Lodging	Fuel / Mileage	Phone	Meals & Tips	Other	Total
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
								-
		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Subtotal \$ -
Advances _____
Total Reimbursement \$ -

*** Don't forget to attach receipts ***

Itemized Expenses or Description for "Other"

Date	Description	Amount

Authorized By Date

For Office Use Only