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State of Mississippi  
Department of Finance and Administration  
Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management

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State Travel Policy  
Rules & Regulations

December 2019

**Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration  
Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management  
State Travel Policy Rules & Regulations**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Section 1 – General Information</b>	<b>Page</b>
100. Introduction	6
101. Definitions	7
102. Administration & Responsibility	9
A. State Travel Manager	9
B. Department Directors	9
C. Department Travel Coordinators	9
 <b>Section 2 – Travel Reimbursement</b>	
103. Travel Reimbursement	10
104. Travel Advances	10
A. Travel Advances (In-State, Out-of-State, International)	10
B. Prior to Trip Expense (PTE) (In-State, Out-of-State, International)	11
105. eWaiver Request Form	11
106. Travel Reimbursement Voucher	12
 <b>Section 3 – Transportation</b>	
107. Travel Routing	14
A. Trip Optimizer	14
B. Using the Trip Optimizer System	15
C. Exemptions	15
108. Combining Business Travel with Personal Travel	16
109. Vehicle Travel	16
A. Private Vehicle Used for State Business	16
B. Rental Vehicle Used for State Business	17

---

1.	In-State Vehicle Rentals	18
2.	Vehicle Rental Insurance	18
3.	Regional Price Differentials	18
C.	State-Owned Vehicle	19
D.	Calculating Reimbursement for Driving vs. Flying	19
110.	Public Carrier (Airplane)	20
A.	Airline Travel – General Information	20
B.	Frequent Flyer Program Awards	21
C.	Airline Penalty Fares	21
D.	Airline Reservation Changes	21
1.	Involuntary	21
2.	Voluntary	21
E.	Airline Travel Invoices	22
F.	Airline Traveler Profiles	22
G.	Cancellations/Refunds	22
H.	Lost Airline Tickets	22
I.	Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs)	22
J.	Delayed or Canceled Flights	22
K.	Overbooked Flights	23
L.	Baggage Allowance Information – Domestic and International	23
M.	Delayed, Lost and Damaged Baggage	23
N.	Flight Insurance	23

---

**Section 4 – Travel Card Program – State Agencies/Universities/Governing Authorities/School Districts**

111. Travel Card Program Overview	24
-----------------------------------	----

**Section 5 – Conferences, Seminars, Workshops**

112. In-State/Out-of-State/International Conferences	25
113. Conference Airlines	25
114. Conference Hotels	26
115. Conference Meals	26

**Section 6 – International Travel**

116. General Information	27
117. Approval Form Requirements	27
A. Travel Authorization Form (MAAPP Form 13.20.20)	27
118. Currency Exchange for Travel Reimbursement Voucher	28

**Section 7 – Lodging**

119. General Information	29
120. Lodging Shared With Someone Not a State Employee	29
121. Lodging Shared with State Employee	29
122. In-State Lodging	30
123. Out-of-State Lodging	31

**Section 8 – Meal Allowances**

124. General Information	32
125. High Cost Meal Allowances	32
126. Taxable and Non-Taxable Meals	33
127. Meal Tips	33

---

## **Section 9 – Contract Travel Agencies**

128.	General Information	34
129.	Payment to Travel Agencies	34

## **Section 10 – Other Allowable Expenses**

130.	Phone Charges, Postage, and Other Expenses	35
131.	Taxi Fares	35
132.	Miscellaneous Charges	35
A.	Baggage Handling	35
B.	Hotel/Airport Parking	35
C.	Laundry Charges	35

## **Section 11 – Forms**

133.	Travel Forms	36
A.	MAAPP Form 13.20.20 – Travel Authorization Form	36
B.	MAAPP Form 13.20.10 – Travel Voucher Form	36
C.	eWaiver Form	36
D.	Vendor Incident Form	36

## **Section 12 – Revisions**

134.	Revision Description	37
1.	Revisions Continued	38

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## Section 1 - General Information

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### 100. Introduction

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Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, establishes guidelines for travel reimbursement of officers and employees of the State of Mississippi, and of any department, institution, board or commission thereof. It also provides that the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) shall promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate economies for all expenses authorized under this section. All rules and regulations contained herein apply to all state officers and employees. The provisions governing reimbursement of actual expenses such as meals, lodging, and other necessary expenses applies to officers and employees of all other political subdivisions of the State as well as state officers and employees.

The State Travel Policy Rules & Regulations is a travel manual that is intended to serve as a quick reference for the provisions of Section 25-3-41 of the Mississippi Code and other relevant statutes, as well as rules and regulations adopted by the DFA affecting all areas of reimbursable state travel.

State departments and political subdivisions are authorized to supplement these regulations, providing the requirements set forth herein are not exceeded and any such supplement does not constitute deviation from provisions of law on allowable reimbursements. State departments and political subdivisions must ensure that adequate internal control is maintained over travel. State departments are responsible for providing a copy of the State Travel Policy Rules & Regulations and their department supplement, if any, to the employee or individual traveling on official business for the State of Mississippi. State travel regulations are also contained in the [Mississippi Agency Accounting Policies and Procedures \(MAAPP\) Manual, Travel Section](#).

Issued By:

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## 101. Definitions

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- A. Emergency Travel Status** - The official status of an employee when away from the employee's Official Duty Station and Official Residence on official state business during an emergency, as declared by an entity head or designee.

An employee may claim mileage reimbursement to travel from one office or regular place of work to another place of work, or from home to his Official Duty Station or any temporary work site, if the travel is necessitated by an emergency and it occurs outside the normal working hours of the employee.

Entities determine when an employee is in emergency travel status. There are no regulations set by DFA determining how many miles one must travel to be eligible for meal reimbursement or lodging reimbursement.

- B. High Cost Meal Allowance** - Cities designated in the Federal Register as having a maximum per diem rate of \$149 or higher. The Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Fiscal Management, will reimburse actual meal costs in those cities based on a sliding scale not to exceed the amount set forth in Section 8 – Meal Allowances of this document.
- C. International Travel** - All travel to areas other than of the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska.
- D. Meal Reimbursement** - Reimbursement of actual cost of meals when an employee is in travel status. Reimbursement shall not exceed the amounts set forth in Section 8 of the Travel Manual. Meals are reimbursed based on actual cost not to exceed the maximum daily reimbursement for the location of travel.
- E. Mileage Reimbursement** - The rate set forth per Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, which mandates that state officers and employees traveling on official state business in their private vehicle be reimbursed at the same rate federal employees are for official federal business in a private vehicle. The current reimbursement rate is set forth in the Mileage Reimbursement Rate memo (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>).
- F. Official Duty Station** - The city, town, or other location where the employee's regular place of work is located, or the city, town or location where the employee's primary work is performed on a permanent basis. If the employee regularly works in two or more areas, his official duty station shall be where the regular place of work is located. The regular place of work should be determined by the entity head or authorized designee based on total time ordinarily spent working in each area and the degree of business activity in each area.
- G. Official Residence** - The city, town, or other location where an employee maintains a residence which is used as a primary domicile by the officer/employee. Determination by the entity head or authorized designee regarding an employee's residence is to be based on items such as voter registration, ownership, or long-term rental of a personal residence, and the permanent address carried in the officer/employee's personnel file.
- H. Prior to Trip Expense** - Allows travelers to be reimbursed for lodging or public carrier ticket purchases paid prior to traveling.
- I. Public Carrier** - Any entity that offers transportation of people to the public for pay, which may include airlines, buses, rental vehicles, and trains.

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- J. Regular Place of Work** - The city, town or other location at which the state employee works or performs services on a regular basis as determined by the entity head. Mileage is not reimbursed between any regular place of work and home.
  - K. Restricted / Non-Refundable Airline Tickets** - If a passenger does not use this type ticket, none of the money paid for the ticket will be returned. Many airlines will allow unused tickets to be used as a credit towards future travel after paying a fee to change the ticket.
  - L. Taxable Meals** - Those meal expenses incurred during official travel where an overnight stay is not included.
  - M. Temporary Place of Work** - The city, town or other location at which the employee performs services on an irregular or short-term (generally one year or less) basis. State employees traveling on official business will be reimbursed for authorized and documented expenses between home and the temporary place of work, provided the temporary place of work is not within the city, town, or location of their regular place of work.
  - N. Travel Status** - The official status of an employee when away from the employee's Official Duty Station and Official Residence on official state business. The employee who works in two or more offices or regular places of work may claim mileage reimbursement to travel from one office or regular place of work to another place of work, but not between any regular work site and home, regardless of the distance of the commute.

An employee is not in travel status and shall not receive lodging or meal reimbursement while at his Official Duty Station. **Entities determine when an employee is in travel status.** There are no regulations set by DFA determining how many miles one must travel to be eligible for meal reimbursement or lodging reimbursement.

- O. Unrestricted/Refundable Airline Tickets** - Unrestricted airfares allow for refunds and changes in travel dates without penalties. Different airlines have different procedures for refunds and changes. This airfare usually has no special advance purchase, Saturday stay or certain days to travel requirements.



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## **102. Administration & Responsibility**

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The State Travel Office is established in the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management, to administer the State Travel Management Program.

### **A. The State Travel Manager will:**

- Oversee the operations of the Travel Management office;
- Monitor contractor performance and entity compliance;
- Work with state departments, boards, commissions and institutions to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Travel Management Program;
- Serve as liaison with state departments, boards, commissions and institutions for the appropriate resolution of problems and complaints; and
- Provide informational material concerning the Travel Program to travel coordinators and employees.

### **B. Department Directors will:**

- Be responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, by providing adequate internal control over employee travel; and
- Designate an existing employee(s) to serve as a department travel coordinator(s) within the organization for the purpose of monitoring employee compliance with these regulations.

### **C. Department Travel Coordinators will:**

- Monitor employee compliance in accordance with these rules and regulations;
- Provide assistance to employees concerning questions and problems with travel arrangements and reimbursement;
- Serve as liaison with the State Travel Manager's office;
- Book airline/railway travel, vehicle rentals, and lodging reservations for that department's employees through one of the state contract travel agencies or by other methods. This is not meant to indicate that no one else can make such arrangements, but rather to suggest that it is easier to monitor employee compliance when travel is handled by one person; and,
- Ensure that all employees are aware of and familiar with the guidelines set forth in this manual and that they understand that they are required to adhere to the established state travel policies and contracts.

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## Section 2 - Travel Reimbursement

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### 103. Travel Reimbursement

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These regulations establish a State Travel Management Program under the jurisdiction of the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration to ensure fairness and consistency in the application and administration of travel expense reimbursement and to reduce and control the state's costs related to all components of official state business travel.

An employee traveling on official state business is expected to exercise the same care incurring expenses as would a prudent person traveling for personal reasons. Travel for business should be conducted at a minimum cost for achieving the success of the mission. Travelers shall request air, train, bus, hotel and vehicle rental reservations as far in advance as possible and shall utilize the lowest logical rate available.

Travel reimbursement will be made for all taxes paid by the traveler; however, when expenses are billed directly to the governmental entity, taxes must not be charged or paid.

To be eligible for reimbursement at the state rate, the employee must have a W2 or receive the maximum state reimbursement rate allowed as per diem in lieu of salary. This applies to Board and Commissions. When an employee receives a per diem "in lieu of salary", they are considered "officers of the state".

**Travel Tip:** If you haven't received your reimbursement within the typical time, the agency, through their Travel Coordinator, should contact MMRS/SPAHRS directly at 601.359.6570.

**Note:** Entities who do not go through the Department of Finance and Administration for travel reimbursement will follow their own procedures for reimbursement of travel expenses.

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### 104. Travel Advances

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#### A. Travel Advances (In-State, Out-of-State, International)

Travel advances are authorized by Section 25-1-79, Mississippi Code of 1972, if approved by the Executive Director of the agency. Any officer or employee of the State traveling on official state business may receive an advance from state funds for the purpose of travel expense. A contract worker paid through SPAHRS may receive an advance. An independent contractor; however, may not receive an advance. An advance will not be issued earlier than 20 days before the travel start date. As soon as the employee returns from the travel, a Travel Voucher must be completed and the advance settled.

The Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration has the authority to withhold payment of further claims for reimbursement of any officer or employee of the State if any outstanding advances have not been settled. (Section 25-1-81, Mississippi Code of 1972.)

If an advance is not settled within 10 working days after the end of the month in which travel was completed the employee's paycheck will be held until the debt to the state is resolved. Only two (2) travel advances shall be outstanding at one time. Travel advances may not be made from petty cash accounts.

Please refer to [MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#) for more information.

**Travel Tip:** Before requesting a travel advance, be sure that your entity allows them. If your entity

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does allow Travel Advances, fill in the dollar amount you are requesting in the “Travel Advance Amount” field on the Travel Authorization Form found here: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/travel-forms-and-manuals/travel-authorization-forms/>

## B. Prior to Trip Expense (PTE) (In-State, Out-of-State, International)

The Prior to Trip Expense (PTE) allows travelers to be reimbursed for lodging or public carrier ticket purchases paid prior to traveling. PTE can be paid any time prior to the trip and is not subject to the 20-day prior to travel limit imposed for travel advances. There is no limit on the number of PTEs that can be outstanding for each traveler.

The PTE is necessary to accommodate payments required to be made in advance. Many hotels charge the first night’s lodging to the traveler at the time reservations are made or the traveler may utilize the Internet to purchase airline tickets using a personal credit card. The PTE should only be incurred if it is in the best interest of the state.

Please refer to [MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#) for more information.

**Travel Tip:** Before requesting the Prior to Trip Expense (PTE), be sure that your entity allows it. If your entity does allow (PTE’s), fill in the dollar amount you are requesting in the “Travel Advance Amount” field on the Travel Authorization Form found here: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>. When funding is verified the “Prior to Trip Expense Authorized: Yes or No” will be circled.

**Note:** Entities who do not go through the Department of Finance and Administration for travel advances and prior to trip expenses will follow their own procedures.

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## 105. eWaiver Request Form

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The eWaiver Request Form (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/1533/ewaiver.pdf>) is to be used to request a waiver from any standard travel procedures; however, eWaivers are **not** required when pricing is found for less than the state contract pricing.

This form should be submitted for approval **prior to** making any reservations or commitments.

On the form, select from the following, which are a list of possible reasons an eWaiver Request Form may be needed:

- Requesting authority to pay an amount greater than the state contract
- Requesting authority to rent a vehicle with a cost greater than the mid-size on state contract\*
- Requesting authority to purchase vehicle rental insurance
- Requesting authority to rent a vehicle not on state contract
- Requesting authority to pay a hotel other than the conference hotel
- Requesting authority to pay greater than the least expensive cost comparison for airline tickets
- Requesting authority to pay first-class or business-class airfare (six hours or longer non-stop)
- Other

Provide a clear explanation and all necessary information that proves the request to be economical or otherwise in the best interest of the State. Failure to provide adequate information will cause delay and may potentially

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cause rejection of the request. All applicable cost information, such as contract fare, lowest available fare, conference hotel rate, actual rate paid, etc., should be provided.

The form should be completely filled out and signed by the entity head or designee before submitting the form to the State Travel Office.

Approval of the eWaiver Request Form will depend on the State Travel Office being able to clearly determine the anticipated cost to the State and/or any anticipated savings.

The eWaiver Request Form should be attached to the employee's Travel Voucher when the voucher is submitted for reimbursement.

Universities are exempt from submitting eWaivers effective August 15, 2012; however, each University shall maintain in its own travel policies and procedures regarding the waiver process at the University. Each University traveler should follow the University's policies and procedures for waivers. The University should maintain all records of deviations from state travel policy guidelines in its files for auditing purposes.

**It is the responsibility of the agency to ensure its employees are familiar with and adhere to established state travel policies.**

**Travel Tip:** eWaivers should be emailed to [travel@dfa.ms.gov](mailto:travel@dfa.ms.gov). This results in faster approval and less paperwork for all involved. Use the eWaiver form found on the Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management's website located here: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/1533/ewaiver.pdf>.

\*eWaivers are not required to be submitted when a vehicle is rented using a state contract vendor to carry multiple eligible passengers or many bags and equipment are required to be transported. A note should be attached to the Travel Voucher and signed by the Agency Head or designee when this occurs.

**Note:** This section does not apply to Governing Authorities, School Districts or Universities, although it may be adopted for use by such entities.

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## **106. Travel Reimbursement Voucher**

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The Travel Reimbursement Voucher can be found on the OPTFM Travel Information website at: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>.

**Although the Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management publishes this form on our website, the Office of Fiscal Management should be contacted when questions arise regarding the status of the form or if help is needed in filling out the form. This is not an OPTFM document.**

- Travel Vouchers must be typed or completed in ink and signed by the traveler. The signature is a certification by the traveler that reimbursement is being requested for actual expenses that are valid business expenses.
- All Travel Vouchers must have the original invoices for which reimbursement is claimed attached. Invoices must be submitted for hotel, airfare and airport parking and other charges in excess of \$10.

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- The traveler should indicate that phone calls itemized on a hotel bill are business related.
  - Travel reimbursement will be made for all taxes paid by the traveler; however, when expenses are billed directly to the governmental entity through direct bill or through the State Travel Card, taxes shall not be charged and paid.
  - When conference hotel rooms are booked, a copy of the conference literature showing the rates must be attached to the Travel Voucher.
  - Meals shall not be claimed as expenses if the meals are included in the conference registration fee.
  - Meal tips should be included in the actual cost of the meal unless the inclusion of the tips causes the meals to exceed the Department of Finance and Administration's maximum daily meal reimbursement. If the daily meal limitations would be exceeded, then the tips can be separated and recorded as other expenses. All tips reported in this manner should be totaled for the day and not exceed 20% of the maximum daily meal reimbursement or the actual meal expense, whichever is less.
  - The single hotel room rate must be written across the face of the invoice if more than one guest is listed. Reimbursement is made only for the single room rate.
  - If two or more travelers share a hotel room, each should report their pro rata share of the costs. If one of the travelers does not have an original hotel invoice, a copy of the invoice, along with the name of the traveler who submitted the original invoice, should be submitted with the Travel Voucher.
  - For travel in a privately-owned vehicle, the mileage between points of travel should be made from the most direct practical route.
  - Travel Card expenses may now be reported on the Travel Voucher.

More information on the Travel Voucher can be found in the [MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#).

**Travel Tip:** For assistance in filling out this document correctly, refer to instructions in the DFA MAAPP Manual found in the DFA Resource Library located here: [MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#) and click on "Travel Voucher". For further assistance, please contact the DFA Office of Fiscal Management at 601.359.3538.

**Travel Tip:** If you haven't received your reimbursement within the time normally allotted, you or your Travel Coordinator may call DFA's Office of Fiscal Management for the status of the reimbursement at 601.359.3538.

**Note:** Entities who do not go through the Department of Finance and Administration for reimbursement should contact their own Travel Office for status updates.

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## Section 3 – Transportation

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### 107. Travel Routing

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Whether by public transportation, privately-owned vehicle, state-owned vehicle, etc., reimbursement will be made for the most direct practical route. The least expensive and most practical method of transportation should be used.

#### A. Trip Optimizer System

Each state agency subject to oversight by the Bureau of Fleet Management shall use the Trip Optimizer System developed and administered by the Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management, in computing the optimum method and cost for travel by state officers and employees using a motor vehicle where the travel will exceed one hundred (100) miles per day and the officer or employee is not driving a state-owned or state-leased vehicle that has been dedicated or assigned to the officer or employee.

The Trip Optimizer System is used to determine the most cost-effective method of travel by motor vehicles, whether those vehicles are owned by the state agency, leased by the state agency, or owned by the officer or employee, and shall be applicable for purposes of determining the maximum authorized amount of any travel reimbursement. The Trip Optimizer System provides a calculation of rates, enabling the accounting for distance that an officer or employee must travel to pick up a rental or state fleet vehicle, and accounts for the long-term rate discounts offered through the state purchasing contracts for vehicle rentals.

The maximum authorized amount of travel reimbursement related to motor vehicle usage shall be the lowest cost option as determined by the Trip Optimizer System. All travel claims submitted for reimbursement shall include the results of the Trip Optimizer System indicating the lowest cost option for travel by the state officer or employee. A copy of the calculation must be submitted with the travel reimbursement voucher as well as kept on file at the agency in order for vehicle travel to be reimbursed, or if no reimbursement is requested, must be kept on file at the agency.

Note: This shall not apply to travel by state officials in motor vehicles driven by the official or in vehicles used for the transport of the official. The exemption in this paragraph applies only to the state official and not to the staff or other employees of the state official. "State official" means statewide elected officials and the elected members of the Public Service Commission. See Section 107.C Exemptions for more information.

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## B. Using the Trip Optimizer System

The Trip Optimizer is an Excel spreadsheet with variables that will help you determine whether renting a vehicle or using a privately-owned vehicle (POV) is the most inexpensive option for the State.

Access the Trip Optimizer System on the Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management's website found here: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>.

Additionally, employees should use the DFA Trip Optimizer Decision Flow Chart as a guide.

Variables will need to be entered into the calculator for:

- Total miles to be traveled where travel will exceed 100 miles per day.
- Total days in the trip (in 24 hour increments).
- Total miles to Rental Car Location.
- Vehicle rental costs. Daily/Weekly rates may be found on the Vehicle Rental Rates Tab of the Optimizer. You will need to call the location and provide the contract # or corporate id # (also on Vehicle Rental Rates Tab) and ask what allowable fees will be added to the total, including tax from the City you will be renting **only** if you are not using direct bill or an agency travel card, to be entered into the Miscellaneous Fees field.
- Cost of gasoline per gallon. Utilize the higher cost between City from which the travel will begin and the destination.
- Average gas mileage for rental car to be utilized (see Average MPG Tab of Optimizer).

The variables listed above will calculate which method of travel is the most economic use of state resources.

**NOTE:** The Trip Optimizer System calculation must be performed prior to traveling. In the event any variable values differ from those estimated prior to travel, a second calculation must be performed and attached to the Travel Voucher along with the original calculation to substantiate any request for an increase in allowable reimbursements.

## C. Exemptions

By its nature, the Trip Optimizer System is an estimate which serves to mitigate the cost of employee travel to the State. It will not encompass every possible scenario. For example, emergency situations may arise which will result in the inability to perform the calculation prior to travel. In such situations, a written justification signed by the agency head must be attached to the Travel Voucher instead of the Trip Optimizer System calculation. A **sample form** of the written justification is provided on the Travel website.

Additionally, some federal grant agreements may exclude reimbursement for rental vehicles. In that instance, a Trip Optimizer calculation does not have to be performed. The grant number must be provided on the Travel Voucher when seeking reimbursement.

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## 108. Combining Business Travel with Personal Travel

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Business travel and vacation/personal leave may be combined when **all** of the following conditions are met:

- The primary purpose of the trip is official state business;
- The employee uses his approved leave for the personal part of the trip;
- The state agency incurs no expenses beyond what it would have incurred had there been no personal travel involved in the trip. (If the employee would normally be expected to arrive the day before, or remain in the area of official business overnight and return the following morning, and does so, expenses for either/both night(s) and the appropriate meals will be allowed.); and,
- The contract travel agency should be advised that the business part of the ticket will be billed to the state and the personal travel part to the employee's personal credit card at the time the transportation reservations are made.

**Note:** Business related airfare combined with personal airfare is an unauthorized expense when using the Travel Card.

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## 109. Vehicle Travel

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### A. Private Vehicle Used for State Business

Reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle for official state business (includes private airplanes flown by the employee) is based on actual miles traveled and will be at the same rate that federal employees are reimbursed for using private vehicles for official federal business travel. The General Services Administration, commonly referred to as GSA, not the IRS, publishes this rate. The current reimbursement rate is listed in the Mileage Reimbursement Rate memo (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>). Mileage reimbursement shall not exceed the maximum published rate. Local boards may set a rate which shall not be less than the rate referenced above and not greater than the maximum reimbursement rate for state employees.

When two or more employees travel in one private vehicle, only one travel expense at the authorized reimbursement rate per mile shall be allowed. The person claiming reimbursement shall report the names of other state employee passengers. If a cost comparison must be made between driving vs. flying cost, see Section 108.D.

The State does not reimburse private vehicle mileage for optional travel.

Entities must establish in house guidelines which are consistent with OPTFM policy in their agency travel manual for mileage reimbursements of private vehicles submitted to DFA on travel vouchers. These guidelines should address procedures used to determine if government-owned vehicles are available or not. It should also include procedures used to determine mileage reimbursement rates charged on employee travel vouchers. It is the agency's responsibility to maintain all documentation for audit purposes supporting rates reimbursed and the documentation must be available to DFA or the Office of the State Auditor if requested.



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## Quick Tip:

### When Are Transportation Expenses Reimbursable?

**Travel Tip:** GSA keeps an archive of past mileage rates. This can be found by going to <http://www.gsa.gov/mileage>, and clicking on the link that reads “POV Mileage Rates (Archived)”.

#### B. Rental Vehicle Used for State Business

When a rental vehicle is used for official state business within the state, the actual cost of the rental vehicle and fuel can be claimed for reimbursement only when such rental is less expensive than the current mileage reimbursement rate referenced in the Revised Mileage Reimbursement Rate memo (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>.) Rental vehicles as well as fuel for rental vehicles are authorized charges on the Travel Card.

Travelers are required to show the comparison of the total rental vehicle expense to the total mileage expense. Reimbursement for the lesser of the two expenses shall be shown and claimed on the Travel Voucher.

A mid size vehicle is normally the largest rental that will be reimbursed. Naturally, there will be occasions for which a larger vehicle will be required in order to carry out the State's business. An eWaiver request form should be submitted along with the Travel Voucher for reimbursement. **eWaivers are not required to be submitted when a vehicle is rented using a state contract vendor to carry multiple eligible passengers or many bags and equipment are required to be transported. A note should be attached to the Travel Voucher and signed by the Agency Head or designee when this occurs.**

Charges for rental cars shall be allowed only when there is a demonstrated cost savings, including compensated employee time, over other modes of transportation such as buses, subways, taxis, etc. Only the rental vehicle which is consistent with the size requirements of the business task to be performed will be reimbursed. The cost of rental vehicles for personal use will not be reimbursed.

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## 1. In-State Vehicle Rentals

The In-State Vehicle Rental contract is referenced on the OPTFM Travel Information website at <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>. The corporate identification number listed in the contract must be referenced to obtain the state contract price. If asked, when picking up the vehicle, be prepared to show identification. An employee name badge, business card, or letter from the supervisor will be sufficient. The contract references coverage of insurance information. **The option to purchase insurance should always be declined when utilizing this state contract.**

Fill the vehicle with gasoline prior to return. You may be charged up to the amount per gallon as listed in the state contract referenced above for a full tank of gasoline even if the tank is 3/4 full when returned.

**Travel Tip:** To use this contract, click on the link above and contact a local dealer. If there is a reference code or corporate ID number, use this number when making reservations. Remember to decline the option to purchase insurance. If you encounter issues with the rental, contact the Contract Administrator listed in the contract.

## 2. Vehicle Rental Insurance

The current vehicle rental contracts **include** unlimited mileage and CDW/LDW insurance. **The option to purchase insurance should always be declined when a vehicle is rented utilizing the state contract.** Insurance purchases will not be reimbursed. Entities should purchase CDW/LDW only when a rental vehicle is rented not utilizing the state contract.

You must always be covered by insurance either provided by the contract or by purchase, should you utilize a vendor that is not on state contract.

## 3. Regional Price Differentials

Regional price differentials will be added to the daily rate at cities specified in the contract. The rate quoted by the travel agency will include any applicable differentials.

**Note:** Rental Vehicles as well as fuel for vehicle rentals are authorized expenses on the Travel Card.

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## C. State-Owned Vehicle

Actual operating expenses incurred in the use of state-owned vehicles for official travel will be reimbursed based on information found in the Fleet Manual, which is available on the OPTFM website at: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-fleet-management/>.

**Note:** Fuel for state-owned vehicles is not an authorized expense on the Travel Card. Please reference the Fleet Manual as listed above for the appropriate method of payment for fuel.

## D. Calculating Reimbursement for Driving vs. Flying

When travel is by private vehicle, the total travel expenses reimbursed, including meal and lodging costs incurred as a result of driving instead of flying, shall not exceed the cost of the lowest unrestricted air fare unless a complete written justification signed by the employee's Agency Head determines that it is in the best interest of the agency that the employee drive, or that, on comparison of "total driving" and "total flying" expenses, it is less expensive to drive than to fly. If the employee chooses to drive and expenses exceed the cost of the lowest unrestricted air fare, reimbursement will be limited to cost of flying.

To determine reimbursable driving expenses the "total cost of driving" must be compared with the "total cost of flying".

"Total cost of driving" shall include enroute meals, enroute lodging, and the official rate for mileage reimbursement when a private vehicle is used for state business.

"Total cost of flying" shall include the lowest unrestricted air fare, any charges for shipping of equipment and/or supplies required at destination, and all required ground transportation at destination, e.g., taxis to/from meeting site. If a vehicle is deemed by the Agency Head to be required at the destination, then the cost of a rental vehicle will also be included in this total cost for comparison.

In order to be reimbursed for mileage, meals and lodging for approved travel to/from an out of state destination when an employee drives and there exists reasonable air service, the Travel Voucher must include a written statement from the Agency Head **specifically** making one or the other of the following statements:

"It is less expensive for (employee name) to use his private vehicle for travel on (date from), (origin), (date to), (destination)."

"In my opinion, it is in the best interest of this agency that (employee name) use his private vehicle for travel on (date from), (origin), (date to), (destination)."

This statement will require a complete justification by the Agency Head.

If the driving expenses will be held to the lowest unrestricted air fare, that fare should be checked and noted that reimbursement is being restricted to that amount, or if it is evident that driving is cheaper than flying, such as (to/from New Orleans, Memphis, Mobile, Birmingham), no further authorization is required.

If a cost comparison must be made between driving versus flying cost, the cost of flying should be multiplied by the number of passengers and compared to the cost of driving.

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## 110. Public Carrier (Airplane)

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### A. Airline Travel – General Information

Employees may make reservations for public carrier (airline, etc.) travel arrangements using a state contract travel agency or by booking flights over the Internet. A receipt (passenger receipt) and itinerary shall accompany the request for reimbursement.

For all flights which are not booked through one of the contract travel agencies, the state agency must maintain in its files a cost comparison showing a **minimum** of two (2) fares. This cost comparison must show the fare and any issuance cost and must show a savings, and shall be submitted along with the employee's Travel Voucher. **Neither of these quotes should be through a travel agency if they will not be used.**

If the employee must book a flight at a price in excess of the lowest rate on the cost comparison, the agency must, prior to booking the flight, submit an eWaiver Request found on the OPTFM website at <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/1533/ewaiver.pdf> to the Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management and include the amount of cost and the justification of using that fare on the eWaiver.

When traveling by regularly scheduled air service, travelers are to utilize their local airport. Use of the local airport is assumed to result in travel costs that are most economical to the State. Mileage to and from the airport is reimbursable.

The criteria for determining which airport or mode of transportation to use should be based on travel costs that are most economical to the State. All costs should be considered, i.e., travel, labor, lodging, meals, mileage reimbursement, etc., in making the determination.

The least expensive routing shall be used. In calculating the difference between airfare and travel by personal vehicle, factor in additional lodging and meal expenses, taxi fares, parking, and other airport related expenses.

Alternate departure and return dates and times should be considered by all travelers when they will result in lower fares. It is incumbent upon the traveler to provide information to the travel agent which could result in lower fares. If routing or accommodations other than the most economical are required, the Agency Head or designee may specify alternate routing and accommodations and eWaiver Requests found here: (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/media/1533/ewaiver.pdf> ) shall be submitted to the Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management.

"Direct" does not mean nonstop. It only means that you will not be changing aircraft. Choose the flight with the fewest stops for fewer chances for delay. A "direct" flight with only one stop might be preferable to connecting nonstop flights, however.

Preferred seating, business, or first-class service **may** be authorized if at least one of the flight segments exceeds 6 hours. A flight segment is defined as time in the air between stopovers, changing aircraft, or change of airline. Preferred seating, business or first-class travel is not reimbursable unless approved in advance. An eWaiver signed by the Agency Head or designee must be submitted and approved by OPTFM **prior** to the trip.

**Travel Tip:** For all flights which are not booked through one of the contract travel agencies, the state agency must maintain in its files a cost comparison showing a minimum of two (2) fares. This cost comparison must show the fare and any issuance cost and must show a

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savings, and shall be submitted along with the employees Travel Voucher. Neither of these quotes should be through a travel agency if they will not be used. This cost comparison must show the fare and any issuance cost and must show a savings, and shall be submitted along with the employees Travel Voucher.

## **B. Frequent Flyer Program Awards**

Any bonus or promotional gratuity received as a result of official state travel shall be used to offset or reduce the cost of subsequent official state travel. Under no circumstances can the traveler keep a bonus or other promotional gratuity so earned for his own personal use. As sufficient mileage, earned as a result of state-paid travel, is accumulated, free ticket coupons will be applied for and used to offset official state travel costs. Follow airline procedures to exchange the miles for a ticket.

## **C. Airline Penalty Fares**

Airline penalty fares may be utilized when needed. The DFA Office of Fiscal Management will honor requisitions for warrants in payment of penalties or administrative fees when business circumstances require that reservations be changed or canceled. Such tickets are non-transferable. Although the ticket is issued in the employee's name, the ticket belongs to the State.

To obtain the lowest possible penalty fare, airline travel should be booked as far in advance as possible.

Where the employee is required to go a day early to qualify for a lower priced penalty airfare, the State will pay the additional lodging and meal expenses not to exceed the amount of savings in the airfare.

Most carriers require that changes be made and re-ticketed on or before the departure date of each ticketed flight. You may be able to exchange the return portion for a fee. The carriers may also charge a fee for customers who standby for an alternate flight on their ticketed day of departure. Check with the airline or the travel agent for more information. A receipt for any fees charged should be attached to the Travel Voucher for reimbursement.

## **D. Airline Reservation Changes**

### **1. Involuntary**

A note of explanation should be attached to the Travel Voucher and does not require a waiver if an involuntary airline reservation change results in additional reimbursable expense.

### **2. Voluntary**

Voluntary enroute changes in travel arrangements should be handled through the original source of the reservations. Check the Travel Agency Services contract (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>). If the change is for personal reasons, the State will not reimburse any fees imposed by the airline or the travel agency. Emergency situations will require an eWaiver Request Form to be submitted to OPTFM for approval and the eWaiver must be attached to the Travel Voucher.

If the traveler is outside the continental U. S. and changes are required, make the change as needed and attach a note of explanation to the Travel Voucher. Necessary eWaivers should be submitted upon return from the trip to OPTFM.

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## **E. Airline Travel Invoices**

Airline tickets purchased from a state contract travel agency shall be directly billed to the department's Cardless Travel Account, cardholder account, or personal credit card. The travel agent will not issue invoices for later payment. Contract employee's travel can be charged to the Cardless Travel Account and coded to contract travel.

## **F. Airline Traveler Profiles**

State employees who travel frequently may expedite reservations and ticketing by having a "traveler's profile" on file at the travel agency. The profile will list such items as: passenger's name as it appears on frequent flier files, seating preference, credit card number, special meal requirements, and telephone numbers for home and office. The state contract travel agency which your agency chooses to use will provide this form for travelers.

## **G. Cancellations/Refunds**

Tickets returned to a travel agency for cancellation or refund may be assessed a charge. Check with the Travel Agency for applicable fees. This charge will be applied to the account used for the original ticket invoice.

## **H. Lost Airline Tickets**

When a ticket is lost after delivery of the ticket is accepted by the traveler or agency, any fee that the airline charges for searching and refunding lost tickets is the responsibility of the person to whom the ticket was delivered. When the ticket is lost by the employee, the employee must file a lost ticket application with the travel agency or the airline. There may also be an additional fee assessed by the travel agency for each lost ticket application filed.

## **I. Passenger Facility Charges (PFC's)**

PFC's are fees approved by the Federal Aviation Administration allowing domestic airports to charge an enplanement fee for all departing fare-paying-passengers. These fees may be assessed by any departure airport in all 50 States, U.S. Territories, and U.S. Possessions. All travel agents, airlines, and their ticketing agents are responsible for collecting these fees for the United States Government. Any such applicable PFC charges will be included in your ticket charge.

## **J. Delayed or Canceled Flights**

Ensure that the airline or travel agent is able to contact you when there is a cancellation or delay. Give the travel agent your contact information and keep the agency's contact information with you. Check the status of your flight directly with the airline at least 24 hours prior to departure (48 hours for international flights). The easiest way to do this is by visiting the airline's website.

If you are at the airport and find your flight is canceled or it appears it might be severely delayed, contact your travel agent or the airline reservation office immediately for alternate flights.

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## K. Overbooked Flights

Airline rules vary on overbooking. Ask the travel agency or the ticketing airline for these rules.

## L. Baggage Allowance Information - Domestic and International

Charges for baggage at check-in may vary per airline. Baggage fees are reimbursable expenses and are an authorized expense on the Travel Card. **A receipt is required for charges in excess of \$10.00.**

The employee should contact the travel agency or visit the airline's website for baggage allowance information.

## M. Delayed, Lost, and Damaged Baggage

Keep all items necessary for the trip in a carry-on bag if possible.

Check with the airline for policies regarding what can be carried on and what can be carried in your baggage.

Attach strong, well-marked identification tags to luggage and affix an extra I.D. inside each bag. Remove old baggage tags from previous trips.

Check your luggage before leaving the airport for visible signs of damage. You should make a claim for lost or damaged articles as soon after arrival as possible.

If you find that your luggage is not at the airport, go to the airline's lost baggage office or to the ticket counter and file a "lost baggage claim".

**Note: Baggage fees are an authorized expense on the Travel Card.**

## N. Flight Insurance

Travel Accident Coverage is included for any scheduled airline transportation when a ticket is purchased with the OPTFM Travel Card. Some of the state contract travel agencies also provide flight insurance with ticket purchases. Additional flight insurance will not be reimbursed.

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## Section 4 – Travel Card Program

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### 111. Travel Card Program Overview

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The Travel Card is a travel tool that may replace the traditional purchasing method of purchasing airline tickets, booking hotel rooms, paying for vehicle rental services and more. The efficiencies and flexibility of the Travel Card allow users to focus on the value-added aspects of their jobs. The savings from reduced paperwork and online processing can provide a direct benefit to an entity.

#### Types of Travel Card Accounts

##### Cardless Travel Account

The cardless travel account allows travel related expenses to be delegated to one person, the Program Coordinator, the designated person responsible for making official business travel arrangements for others, including non-entity employees traveling on official state business. Any travel related services, such as travel agency fees, airfare, railway, vehicle rental, lodging, lodging deposits, travel related conference registration, etc., which are normally direct billed can now be billed to this account. Registration and conference fees may be paid with the travel card via the telephone or Internet if the hosting organization accepts payment in this manner.

This type of account is also called a “Ghost Account” or “BTA”, which essentially means a plastic card is not issued. Instead of an actual card, the Program Coordinator will receive an account number, expiration date and CVV code.

##### Individual Travel Card Account

This type of card allows for approved travel related expenses to be made only by the individual who has signed a cardholder agreement for that card. This card is kept by the cardholder and is only used for travel on official entity business.

##### Department Card Account

This type of card allows for approved travel related expenses to be made by one or more individuals who have signed a cardholder agreement for that card. This card is kept locked in a central location where the Travel Card Program Coordinator may check the card out and in as needed.

#### Travel Card Payments

Travel Card statements should be paid immediately whether or not travel has been performed. If the invoice is not paid within 45 days, a 1.5% penalty will be assessed for late payment. When requesting a Warrant for a late payment, a statement is required explaining the reasons payment was not made within 45 days.

#### Travel Card Guidelines

The Travel Card Guidelines are available on the OPTFM Travel Information website at: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>.



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Additional information also located on the OPTFM Travel Information Website includes Applications for the Travel Card Program, the Travel Card Guidelines, more detail on the types of travel card accounts, program coordinator information, cardholder responsibility, authorized and unauthorized expenses, and more. The website for this information is located here: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/> and scroll down to Travel Card Program Application and Guidelines section.

## **Section 5 - Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops**

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### **112. In-State/Out-Of-State/International Conferences**

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Section 25-1-83 of the Mississippi Code requires prior written approval from the department head for employee attendance at any convention, association or meeting in order for expenses to be reimbursed. Such reimbursed expenses must then be annually reported to the Legislature.

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### **113. Conference Airlines**

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Check conference materials to see if special airline discounts are offered. When a special airline discount rate is offered and conferees are instructed to go directly to an airline or a specific travel agency to obtain the discount fare, all fare and file number information may be given to a state contract travel agency. They will then attempt to obtain the conference rate, or lower rate, for the employee. Any time a lesser rate is obtained, an eWaiver is *not* required.

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## 114. Conference Hotels

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When hotel rooms are blocked for a conference, seminar, etc., and a special discounted hotel rate provided, the employee should go through the conference housing bureau or directly to the hotel to obtain lodging. The state contract travel agencies will not make reservations for conference hotels. **A copy of the conference literature showing the conference hotel and rate or the registration form which often includes the housing reservation must be attached to the Travel Voucher in order to be reimbursed.** A memo from the employee is acceptable if there are no rates listed on the brochure.

Reimbursement to employees for hotels guaranteed prior to completion of travel can be authorized using the PTE (Prior to Trip Expense) referenced in Section 104.B. of the State Travel Policy Rules & Regulations.

**Travel Tip:** Be sure to check the cancellation policy. Hotel charges will not be reimbursed if the employee is negligent in canceling reservations in accordance with the hotel's policy.

Reservations should be made as soon as possible to guarantee stay in a conference hotel. An eWaiver request form is required for any lodging reimbursement greater than the conference rate or when an employee stays somewhere other than the conference hotel and shall be attached to the Travel Voucher for reimbursement. Sufficient justification is required to obtain approval on the eWaiver.

**Note:** Governing Authorities, School Districts and Universities using the Travel Card Program will follow their own procedures for eWaivers and travel advances/PTEs.

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## 115. Conference Meals

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Meals shall not be claimed as a separate item of expense on the Travel Voucher when included in the conference registration fee. If special circumstances exist, for example, a food allergy prohibiting one from eating the meal provided, an exception will be made if noted by the employee and signed by the Agency Head or designee and reimbursement will be provided for that meal.

Fees charged for attending the official meetings of a convention or seminar where the meeting includes an additional meal cost not included in the registration fee which causes the employee to exceed the daily maximum meal allowance will be reimbursed if supported by an itemized receipt from convention officials.

Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.

The meal reimbursement rate shall be paid at the rate for the conference city location.

**Travel Tip:** Example: If the conference is in Tupelo, MS but you stay in Memphis, TN, you will be reimbursed the maximum daily rate for Tupelo, MS.

**Note:** Meals, alcohol, room service, etc., are not authorized to be charged on the Travel Card.

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## Section 6 - International Travel

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### 116. General Information

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All travel outside the **continental** limits of the United States (Canada, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Mexico are outside) must be approved by the Department of Finance and Administration (excluding Universities) prior to departure. An approved Travel Authorization Form, which can be found on the OPTFM website (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>) must be attached to the Travel Voucher (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>) when any associated reimbursement or payment is requested. A copy of this form shall be used to request a travel advance if one is necessary. If actual expenses exceed the estimated expenses listed on the Travel Authorization form the original form shall be resubmitted showing the excess charges and again approved by the Department of Finance and Administration.

A state contract travel agency may arrange for international travel, including lodging and vehicle rental services. They will also provide information on inoculation requirements and assistance in obtaining passports and visas, when needed. Changes after departure from the continental United States will be made independently by the traveler.

**Note: Travel to Alaska is considered within the continental limits of the United States and meals would be reimbursed at the maximum state reimbursement rate allowed.**

**Note: Governing Authorities, School Districts or Universities will follow their own procedures for International Travel.**

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### 117. Approval Form Requirements

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#### A. Travel Authorization Form

The Travel Authorization form is the standard form used by state officers, state employees, and board members of the State for requesting approval of travel, and is required to incur prior to trip expenses, and/or to receive travel advances. Any other form used by an agency must be approved by DFA's Bureau of Financial Control. The form must be used to request approval to travel outside the continental United States. Agencies may require the form for in-state travel when the traveler is attending a conference or seminar.

The Travel Authorization Form is located on the DFA website under Office of Travel – Travel Forms: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>.

**Note: Governing Authorities, School Districts or Universities using the Travel Card Program are not required to use DFA forms for authorization or reimbursement purposes; however, the guidelines and form mentioned above may be adopted.**

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## 118. Currency Exchange for Travel Reimbursement Expense Voucher

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When converting foreign currency to dollars for the purpose of reimbursement, you must attach proof of the official rate of exchange to the Travel Voucher (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel>) for reimbursement. Any official and documented statement of the official rate of exchange will be acceptable. It is recommended that the traveler obtain a currency conversion upon arrival at their destination so that the rate applicable to the dates of travel is documented.

The rate of exchange from and to U.S. dollars can be obtained from any bank. **This will be the rate of exchange for the specific date(s) given and may vary when the charge is transmitted to the employee's credit card.** If there is a difference between the amount the employee is reimbursed and the amount charged to the credit card, an amended Travel Voucher may be submitted to correct the reimbursement. A copy of the original reimbursed Travel Voucher and a copy of the credit card charge must be included.

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## **Section 7 – Lodging**

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### **119. General Information**

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Primary responsibility for the reasonableness of amounts charged rests with the Agency Head or designee. "Government rates" must always be requested by all travelers and the rate confirmed both at the time reservations are made and at check-in when reservations are made by phone. If lodging is within the state of Mississippi, "state rates" should be asked for rather than "government rates."

Commercial lodging other than hotels/motels, such as apartments, dormitories, etc., which are licensed businesses regularly offering lodging services to the general public may be used when they result in a lower cost, and an itemized receipt is required. Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.

Employees are discouraged from using private/residential lodging accommodations and must obtain prior written approval from the Agency Head or his designee. If approval is given, an itemized receipt is required for reimbursement.

When a contract travel agency makes lodging reservations, they will provide written confirmation of the reservation and rate. The rate quoted on the written confirmation is guaranteed by the contract travel agency, but any claim for discrepancy in rates must be documented with a copy of the confirmation and hotel bill. Proof that the hotel reservation was made by a contract travel agency must accompany the Travel Voucher.

Since hotels charge for unkept reservations, changes in travel plans must be communicated to the hotel as soon as possible. Exceptions may be made for emergencies beyond the employee's control.

Cancellation should always be made using the hotel/motel's policies. Note: If the traveler's reservations were made using an online booking tool, that site must be used for cancellation. If the reservations were made directly with the hotel, cancellation should be made through the hotel. The confirmation sheet will usually provide more details on how to cancel should the traveler need to do so.

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### **120. Lodging Shared With Someone Not a State Employee**

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If a member(s) of the state employee's family or other non-state employee travels with the officer or employee, the employee shall claim reimbursement at the single hotel/motel room rate only. Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.

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### **121. Lodging Shared With State Employee**

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If more than one employee shares a hotel/motel room, each employee may report a pro-rata share of the costs on his travel reimbursement request, or all lodging expenses may be shown on one reimbursement request, provided that both travelers note the sharing of the room on their individual reimbursement requests. Separate hotel receipts may be requested when registering. If the employee does not have an original hotel receipt, he shall write and sign the following statement on the copy, "This is a true and correct copy of the hotel receipt." Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.

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## 122. In-State Lodging

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“Government rates” must always be requested by all travelers and the rate confirmed both at the time reservations are made and at check-in so the State is saved money whenever possible.

Unless the agency pays the hotel directly, employees may pay taxes and be reimbursed; however, employees should request that taxes not be assessed when traveling on state business. When payment for in-state lodging is made with the UMB Travel Card, sales tax is considered an unauthorized expense and as such should not be placed on the travel card.

Reimbursement is based upon actual cost as shown on the itemized receipt, minus unauthorized charges. Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.

A business card and/or employee identification badge should be adequate if proof of employment is requested at time of check-in.

Most hotels require cancellation of room reservations be made at least 72 hours prior to scheduled check-in, otherwise your credit card will be charged for the first night. If the reason for cancellation is business or emergency related this charge may be reimbursed.

Reservations may also be made using online booking tools. **More than one quote is not necessary for lodging which is less than the government rate found here: <https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877> or when booked through one of the state contract travel agencies. However, the state agency must maintain in its files a cost comparison showing a minimum of two (2) quotes if the rate is higher than the government rate, if the reservations are made by phone, or if you do not go through a state contract travel agency. Neither of these quotes should be through a travel agency if they will not be used. This cost comparison must show the price listed by the online vendor and must show a savings, and shall be submitted along with the employee’s Travel Voucher.**

Cancellation should always be made using the hotel/motel’s policies. Note: If the traveler’s reservations were made using an online booking tool, that site must be used for cancellation. If the reservations were made directly with the hotel, cancellation should be made through the hotel. The confirmation sheet will usually provide more details on how to cancel should the traveler need to do so.

**Travel Tip: Don’t forget to ask for the “government rate” when making reservations at a hotel.**

**Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.**

**Hotel maid service tips may be reimbursed between \$3.00 - \$5.00 per night. The State generally does not reimburse for more than \$5.00 per night.**

**Valet parking tips may be reimbursed between \$2.00 - \$5.00.**

**Note: Travel Cards may not be used for meals/incidentals/room service/alcoholic beverages as outlined in the Travel Card Guidelines.**

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## 123. Out-Of-State Lodging

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Interstate discounted lodging is often available through government rate programs and honored by participating properties of most major chains (e.g., Holiday Inns, Hyatt Inns, Marriott, Hilton, Sheraton, Ramada and others). The state contract travel agencies will check for the government rate or lowest rate available. When making your own lodging arrangements, always request government rates.

A business card, employee identification badge, or letter from the agency should be adequate if proof of employment is requested at time of check-in.

Most hotels require cancellation of room reservations be made at least 72 hours prior to scheduled check-in, otherwise your credit card will be charged for the first night. If the reason for cancellation is business or emergency related this charge may be reimbursed.

**Travel Tip:** Express check-out receipts which do not provide an itemized hotel bill are not acceptable.

Hotel maid service tips may be reimbursed between \$3.00 - \$5.00 per night. The State generally does not reimburse for more than \$5.00 per night.

Valet parking tips may be reimbursed between \$2.00 - \$5.00.

**Note:** Travel Cards may not be used for meals/incidentals/room service/alcoholic beverages.

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## Section 8 - Meal Allowances

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### 124. General Information

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Officers and employees of the state and political subdivisions shall be reimbursed the actual cost of meals incident to official travel, not to exceed the daily maximums for the specific location of assignment. Section 25-3-41(4) does not require receipts for meal reimbursements; however, DFA recommends that agencies and governing authorities require them to sufficiently document reimbursements. However, it is not necessary for agencies to include these receipts with the Travel Voucher when submitting for reimbursement to the DFA Office of Fiscal Management.

The amount allowed for individual meals when traveling within the continental United States (including Alaska) shall be at the discretion of the governing authority or the department head, provided that the total does not exceed the maximum state reimbursement rate listed below.

Meal reimbursements are not allowed within the official duty station.

Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.

The State does not reimburse private vehicle mileage for optional travel.

**Note:** Travel Cards may not be used for meals and alcoholic beverages.

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### 125. High Cost Area Meal Allowances

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In-state and out-of-state high cost areas are those cities designated in the Federal Register as having a prescribed maximum per diem daily rate of \$149.00 or higher. Reimbursement shall be made based on the following sliding scale, which always remains constant, not to exceed the following rates.

Federal Register Maximum Per Diem Rate	Maximum State Reimbursement Rate
\$1 - \$149	\$41.00
\$150 - \$164	\$46.00
\$165 - \$179	\$51.00
\$180 - up	\$56.00

A list of the maximum state reimbursement rates for meals in high cost areas has been pre-calculated for your convenience and is available on the OPTFM Travel Information website at: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>. If you cannot find the city you are looking for, locate the county and use the amount listed. If neither the city nor county is listed, the maximum state reimbursement rate is \$46.00/day.

**Note:** Travel to Alaska is considered within the continental limits of the United States and would be reimbursed at the maximum state reimbursement rate allowed.

**Note:** Travel Cards may not be used for meals/incidentals/room service/alcoholic beverages.



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## **126. Taxable and Non-Taxable Meals**

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Travel Vouchers require that actual meal expenses be reported separately from lodging and that taxable meals be separated from non-taxable meals. Pursuant to the Internal Revenue Service, any reimbursement of meal expenses for travel not including an overnight stay is considered non-deductible compensation and therefore taxable to the traveler. Entities have the discretion to determine if taxable meal reimbursements will be paid. Certain travelers within an agency may be paid taxable meals, while others are not.

If taxable meals will be reimbursed by your employer, employee W-4 forms must be adjusted to take care of additional tax liability, and all employment taxes withheld from the reimbursement matched and properly reported. These payments are reported on the traveler's W-2 as wages.

For more information on taxable meal reimbursement reference Subsection 13.20.30 of the DFA MAAPP Manual.

**Note:**           **Travel cards may not be used for meals.**

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## **127. Meal Tips**

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Meal tips should be included in the actual meal expense unless the inclusion of the tips would cause the meals to exceed the maximum daily limitations placed on meals by the Department of Finance and Administration. If the daily limitation would be exceeded, the employee is allowed to record meal tips for each day under other authorized business expenses. Total meal tips shall not exceed 20% of the maximum daily meal reimbursement claimed.

**Travel Tip:**   **Total meal tips shall not exceed 20% of the maximum daily meal reimbursement claimed.**

**Note:**           **Travel cards may not be used for meals.**

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## Section 9 - Contract Travel Agencies

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### 128. General Information

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The Office of Purchasing, Travel and Fleet Management has approved a list of travel agencies (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/>) to provide travel services for the officers and employees of the State of Mississippi. This multiple award contract is based on proposals received from various agencies.

Employees may make reservations for all travel arrangements, either through one of the state contract travel agencies or by other methods.

When travel arrangements are handled by a state contract travel agency an itinerary form will be attached to the inside of the ticket jacket which will include all travel confirmations. A copy of this itinerary form must be attached to the Travel Voucher for reimbursement. Travelers should keep their copy of the ticket itinerary/invoice to avoid fees charged by the travel agency for additional copies.

The state contract travel agencies are not required to enforce state rules and regulations, only to administer them, and will book arrangements as specified by the traveler.

**Travel Tip:** To utilize the contract, each state agency may choose one or more state contract travel agencies to handle its travel requirements. Simply contact the travel agency contact listed in the contract and identify yourself as a state employee. It is our recommendation that the agency advise its employees which travel agency(s) is to be used and designate a liaison to work with the travel agency(s).

More than one quote is not necessary for all flights which are booked through one of the state contract travel agencies. However, the state agency must maintain in its files a cost comparison showing a minimum of two (2) fares if you do not go through a state contract travel agency. Neither of these quotes should be through a travel agency if they will not be used. This cost comparison must show the fare and any issuance cost and must show a savings, and shall be submitted along with the employee's Travel Voucher.

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### 129. Payment to Travel Agencies

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The methods for paying the state contract travel agencies for reimbursable expenses are through charges on the Travel Card, the employee's personal credit card, or direct bill upon approval by the travel agency.

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## Section 10 - Other Allowable Expenses

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### 130. Phone Charges, Postage, and Other Expenses

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Phone calls, postage, and other expenses included in the "other authorized expenses" column must be certified at the bottom of the Travel Voucher by the employee that they are for valid business expenses. The employee's signature on the Travel Voucher qualifies as such certification. Phone calls itemized on a hotel bill should be circled and indication made if they were for business, or deducted and not claimed if they were personal calls. Calls home are considered personal expenses and are not reimbursable. Calls to the office to check voice mail are reimbursable. **Calls via personal cell phones are not reimbursable.**

### 131. Taxi Fares

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Fares for taxis or airport transportation services in excess of \$10.00 require a receipt which must be attached to the Travel Voucher to receive reimbursement. The State does not reimburse taxi fares for **personal** travel.

**Travel Tip: The average tip for taxi services is between 15% - 20% of the total fare. Tips that exceed \$10.00 must be justified and require a receipt to be attached to the Travel Voucher.**

### 132. Miscellaneous Charges

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#### A. Baggage Handling

Skycaps: Reasonable charges will be allowed without receipt. Reasonable is usually defined as \$1 per bag for each level of handling.

Counter: Charges for baggage at check-in may vary per airline. These charges are allowable and will be reimbursed. Baggage fees are an authorized expense on the Travel Card. **A receipt is required for charges in excess of \$10.00.**

#### B. Hotel/Airport Parking

For charges in excess of \$10.00/day, receipts must be attached to the Travel Voucher.

**Travel Tip: Valet parking tips may be reimbursed between \$2.00 - \$5.00.**

**Shuttle tips may be reimbursed up to \$5.00 per ride and baggage handling may be reimbursed at \$1.00 - \$2.00/bag.**

#### C. Laundry Charges

One reasonable laundry expense is reimbursable for each seven (7) consecutive days that travelers are required to be away from their official duty station on official state business. Laundry charges may not be made once the employee returns home. If the employee will be away from home seven days, a reasonable laundry or cleaning expense will be reimbursed recognizing that it would be difficult to carry more than five (5) days clothing at a time. If after a written justification, the Agency Head deems it necessary for an employee to be paid for additional cleaning/pressing charges the attachment of the justification to the Travel Voucher will be sufficient for reimbursement.

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## Section 11 – Forms

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### 133. Travel Forms

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- A. [DFA MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#) – Travel Voucher Form
- B. [DFA MAAPP Manual Travel Section](#) – Travel Authorization Form
- C. [eWaiver Form](#)
- D. [Vendor Incident Form](#)

**Note:** Entities who do not go through the Department of Finance and Administration for travel reimbursement will follow their own procedures for reimbursement of Travel Vouchers.

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## Section 12 – Revisions

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### 134. Revision Description

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02/01/14 - Added language allowing fuel as an authorized purchase for rental vehicles when using the Travel Card in Section 108B.

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02/25/14 - Added language allowing cardless accounts to be used to pay for non-employer travelers traveling on official state business in Section 110. Travel Card Information.

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03/01/14 – Removed all but general information to Travel Card information Section 110. Users may visit the Travel Information Website at: <http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/bureau-of-purchasing-and-contracting/travel/> for the most recent Travel Card Guidelines.

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03/31/14 – Added Flight Insurance section to Section 109 N.

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04/08/14 – Added illustrated example of when mileage can be reimbursed to Section 108 A.

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12/16/16 – Illustrated example of when mileage can be reimbursed modified for clarification purposes in Section 108 A.

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12/16/16 – Added clarification that mileage to and from the airport is a reimbursable expense to Section 109.

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12/16/16 – Clarifications and emphasis on the receipt requirements were added to Section 118. Lodging.

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12/16/16 – Clarified policy regarding receipts for meal reimbursements in Section 123.

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12/16/16 – Airline baggage is now an authorized expense on the Travel Card. This was changed wherever necessary.

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12/16/16 - General re-wording for clarification and updating language was done throughout the Manual.

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07/01/17 – Language added to explain the Trip Optimizer and how to use it.

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07/01/17 – Section 107. Travel Routing – added A. Trip Optimizer and B. Using the Trip Optimizer System

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10/30/2019- Section 122. In-State Lodging- Hotel/Motel Services Contract- Removed all Hotel Motel

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Service Contract section.

12/3/2019- Section 109. Out-of-State Vehicle Rentals- Removed Out-of-State Vehicle Rental Section.

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