

GADSDEN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL
POLICY NUMBER: 18-03
EFFECTIVE DATE: TBD

1.01 TRAVEL POLICY

The travel policy of the County shall be divided into two parts: (1) that which shall govern travel by employees and authorized persons; (2) that which shall govern travel by members of the County Commission.

1. Employee Travel and Authorized Persons: The County Administrator or his/her designee shall have the authority and responsibility for approving or denying travel requests for employees or authorized persons directly or indirectly under the County Administrator's supervision.

Prior to approving a travel request, the County Administrator or his/her designee must confirm that sufficient funds are available in the budget of the department to which the employee or authorized person is assigned, to cover the cost of the travel. If funds are insufficient, the County Administrator may deny the travel request or approve a written request from the department for a budget amendment to cover the cost of the travel.

The County Administrator shall not approve his or her own travel request. The County Administrator must obtain advance approval for travel from the Chairperson, or Vice-Chairperson when the Chairperson is unavailable. ~~when the County Administrator will incur out of town, overnight travel expenses.~~

2. Travel Request: Travel requests from employees and authorized persons must contain the following information, additional information may be required: (To be included on or attached to the Travel Approval and Request for Advance Travel Form.)
 - a. Dates of Travel and a travel Itinerary;
 - b. Mode of Travel;
 - c. Specific Purpose or Reason for Travel;
 - d. Anticipated Travel Costs;
 - e. Description of the benefit to the county that will be derived from the travel.
3. Travel Costs: With respect to the cost of travel on county business for any purpose, the following guidelines shall apply:

- a. ~~Day trip, depending on the time of day travel begins and ends, reimbursement will be limited to meals and mileage. Travel that doesn't require an employee to leave prior to 6:00am to get to the event on time are not entitled to lodging costs.~~ Employees and authorized persons shall not be entitled to lodging costs for travel which does not require departure from the point of origin prior to 6:00 a.m. or return to the point of origin after 9:00 p.m.
- b. Mileage will be reimbursed only when privately owned vehicles are used for travel. When privately owned vehicles are used for travel, mileage will be paid at the most current IRS rate. Mileage must be documented and recorded to the nearest whole mile.
- c. Rental Car - Car rental expense is reimbursable, but only when prior approval is obtained on the Travel Approval and Request for Advance Travel form. However, a County approved traveler should not purchase collision-damage waivers when renting a car, as the County's self-insured program is adequate to cover claims. The purchase of "Personal Accident Insurance" by a traveler is also non-reimbursable, as employees on authorized business are covered under Workman's Compensation. The state contract for car rental providers should be used whenever possible. Any additional rental car miles accrued by a traveler that exceeds the miles disclosed on the advance travel form, will be at the expense of the traveler, if not included and documented on the travel reconciliation form.
- d. When County assigned vehicles are used, the actual costs of gasoline, oil, other fluids, and required maintenance while traveling shall be reimbursed. When County assigned vehicles are supplied with gasoline, oil, and other fluids expressly for the trip, those costs shall be charges to that trip and paid from the appropriate Department budget.

Employees with personally assigned County vehicles may utilize their vehicle for travel with the approval of the County Administrator or his/her designee. Travel should not impede the daily use and availability of a County vehicle for regular departmental use. Employees must still follow the County Vehicles policy 1.65 requirements.

- e. Meal expenditures will be reimbursed according to the most current federal government General Services Administration (GSA) per diem meal rates.

The GSA provides for differential rates depending upon the location of travel.

This approach recognizes cost differential between various cities.

The following times shall be used to determine when meal reimbursements may be claimed:

1. Breakfast: when travel begins prior to 6:00 a.m. and extends beyond 8:00 a.m.
 2. Lunch: when travel begins prior to noon and extends beyond 2:00 p.m.
 3. Dinner: when travel begins prior to 6:00 p.m. and extends beyond 8:00 p.m.
 4. For cities not included in the GSA list, ~~the standard rate applies. Meals~~ reimbursement for meals shall be charged at a limited to the maximum rate of \$10.00 for breakfast, \$15.00 for lunch, and \$25.00 for dinner. The total for meals cannot extend beyond exceed \$50.00 for one full day's travel.
 5. Under no circumstances may an employee be reimbursed for any meal or lodging included in convention or conference registration fees paid by the County. A continental breakfast provided as part of the conference/convention registration fee is considered breakfast and an additional breakfast meal may not be claimed for reimbursement. An evening reception or other function that serves only hors d'oeuvres are not considered dinner and dinner may be claimed for reimbursement. However, should the conference/convention registration fee include the provision of any lunches or dinners, these meals may not be claimed for reimbursement.
 6. Reimbursement for lodging expense is limited to single occupancy or occupancy shared with another County traveler. Cost of lodging shared with a non-official or non-employee (e.g., family members) is limited to the single room rate. In the event of an extenuating circumstance (e.g., death, accident, illness, etc.), staff exception may be granted by the signature of the County Administrator on the travel request form, and by the Board for an elected official.
- f. Employees and authorized persons traveling on county business, conventions and conferences included, shall have the option of traveling at a per diem (flat rate) not to exceed \$100.00 per day, \$25.00 per quarter of a day, or traveling at actual cost. Examples of quarters are: 12:01 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., 6:01 a.m. to 12:00 noon, 12:01 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 6:01 p.m. to 12:00 midnight. Any variation thereof that constitutes a six (6) hour block or portion thereof shall constitute a quarter of a day. Employees and authorized persons electing to travel at a per diem rate shall not be entitled to reimbursement of any additional amounts for meals or lodging.

- g. To claim per diem, the travel by the employee or authorized person must include an overnight stay.
 - h. Receipts are not required to be submitted when an employee or authorized person claims travel reimbursement on per diem. However, in advance of the travel, the employee must submit a travel request that contains the information required under section (2) of this policy.
 - i. Employees or authorized persons traveling under the actual cost option, with no per diem, shall **only be entitled to the necessary reasonable and actual travel costs expended as shown in the documentation and receipts submitted.** ~~be afforded~~ **Costs for meals and lodging shall be limited as at the rates shown in section (3)(f) of set forth in this policy.** ~~To be reimbursed for lodging the employee must submit receipts for lodging.~~
 - j. Employees or authorized persons who use County vehicles are not entitled to mileage reimbursement.
4. County Commissioners Travel: County Commissioners shall abide by the same travel policies, regulations, and restrictions, provided in the employee and authorized person section of this policy, along with the following provisions:
- a. Commissioners shall have an established budget for travel. ~~The Chairman shall approve the travel of each Commissioner, and the Vice-Chairman shall approve the Chairman's travel.~~ **The Board shall approve the travel of each Commissioner and approve budget amendments as needed.**
 - b. Commissioners are limited to per diem or actual cost requirements as described in this policy.
 - c. Commissioners must submit completed Requests for Travel forms **with all required documentation** prior to authorized travel and must submit completed forms for reimbursement **with all required documentation and receipts** following the authorized travel.
 - d. ~~When Commissioners' travel budget is depleted, no travel may be authorized unless additional funds are allocated through a budget amendment submitted by the County Administrator.~~

1.61 ADVANCED TRAVEL PAY/REIMBURSEMENT

To claim Advance Travel Pay or Reimbursement of authorized travel, the following procedures shall be followed:

- 1. **Failure to provide advance notification of absence from travel when advance travel accommodations have been made, may result in the traveler**

reimbursing the County of all costs expended for travel. In the event of an extenuating circumstance (e.g. death, accident, illness, etc.), exception may be granted by the County Administrator, and by the Board for an elected official.

1.62 ADVANCE TRAVEL PAY

To claim Advanced Travel Pay for authorized travel, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Travel Approval and Request for Advanced Travel Form shall be completed, approved and submitted to the Department of Management Services seven (7) days prior to travel.
2. The following supporting information must be attached: copy of program or agenda with provided meals noted; copy of hotel **and rental car** information; per diem or meals information; registration information; mileage and any other expenses noted.
3. Should a traveler elect to depart later or return earlier than what is scheduled and calculated on the Request for Advance Travel Form, it is the responsibility of the traveler to amend the travel plans and accommodations to reflect the new travel arrangements and avoid added cost to the County. Should new travel plans not be amended prior to departure or return, any overage in advance accommodations or previously allocated advance travel pay shall be reimbursed to the County. All activity shall be documented on the Travel Reconciliation Form.

1.63 REIMBURSEMENT

To claim reimbursement of authorized travel, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. A ~~Voucher for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses~~ **Travel Reconciliation Form** must be prepared and signed by the traveler as well as the **County Administrator or his/her designee for County employees or the Chairperson for Commissioners as appropriate.** The required supporting documentation **and receipts** must be attached and submitted to the Finance Department within 7 days or reimbursement will not be granted.
2. Supporting receipts are required for all costs claimed for reimbursement, including but not limited to the following: meals, fuel, transportation expenditures (rental car, airfare, etc.), hotel bill and other related expenses. Receipts for incidental expenses are required to be reimbursed for taxi fare, tolls, storage, parking fees, communication expenses, copy of program or agenda.

Employees and elected officials are responsible for obtaining and reviewing receipts for accuracy. Any hotel receipts with taxes applied should be corrected prior to leaving the hotel.

3. Employees and/or elected officials who fail to submit the Travel Reconciliation Form a ~~Voucher for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses~~, along with the supporting documentation and receipts, within seven (7) days following the conclusion of travel, will not receive reimbursement of such travel costs and are subject to having the amount of the advanced travel funds withheld from their next pay check.
4. A Reimbursement check will be issued within ten (10) days from the date the Finance Department receives a signed claim and required receipts.
5. Employees and/or elected officials that fail/partially fail to attend seminars and trainings, will be required to reimburse the County within 14 days. Reimbursement includes all costs associated to travel such as: registration fees, cost of educational materials, lodging, rental car fees, gas and meals. The only exception would be in the event of an unforeseen emergency occurring after registration fees have been paid, but before completion of the seminar, conference, or training that may or may not be job related or related to the employee's duties (e.g. death, accident, illness, etc.), which will be considered on a case by case basis by the County Administrator or Board as appropriate.

1.64 MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS WITH NO OVERNIGHT STAY

Department Directors may authorize the necessary travel expenses for employees to attend meetings and workshops, not involving over-night accommodations, to improve their efficiency, if considered in the best interest of the county, and the money is in the budget.

To claim reimbursement for travel not involving over-night accommodations traveler shall follow guidelines established in Section 1.63.

1.65 TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with Florida Statute 125.0104, the Tourist Development department is authorized to provide, arrange, and make expenditures for transportation, lodging, meals, and other reasonable and necessary items and services in connection with the performance of promotional and other duties. Entertainment expenses shall be authorized only when meeting with travel writers, tour brokers, or other persons connected with the tourist industry. All travel and entertainment-related expenditures more than \$10.00 shall be substantiated by paid bills and justification shall be provided on the Travel Expense Report form. The actual reasonable and necessary costs of travel, meals, lodging and incidental expenses of officers, employees and other authorized persons when meeting with travel writers, tour brokers, or other persons connected with the tourist industry and while attending or traveling in connection with travel or trade shows shall be reimbursed. With the exception of provisions concerning rates of payment, the provisions of this policy and F.S. 112.061 are applicable.

Current Section 1.65 to be stricken from the County Travel Policy and added to the County Vehicle Policy.

1.65 — REQUIREMENTS TO DRIVE COUNTY VEHICLES

~~Employees authorized to drive County licensed vehicles are required to have:~~

- ~~• A valid Florida Driver's License or valid Florida Driver's License required by the employer's classification or the operation of the vehicle.~~
- ~~• A driving record acceptable to County Insurance Carrier.~~
- ~~• A driving record acceptable to the County Administrator.~~
- ~~• A review of the employee's driving record for the previous three (3) years of employees authorized to drive county vehicles, shall be conducted on October 1st of each year or upon the directive of the County Administrator.~~

1.66 — REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- ~~• All traffic citations received by employees while on-duty or during work hours must be reported immediately to the Department Director or to the Supervisor, in their absence the Department Director.~~

~~All traffic citations received by employees while off-duty must be reported to the Department Director as soon as practicable or upon their return to work.~~

- ~~• Upon the disposition of any traffic violation, the employee must notify the Department Director or Supervisor upon their return to work.~~
- ~~• Employees who fail to comply with the reporting requirements will be subject to disciplinary action.~~
- ~~• In case of an accident, a complete report of damages must be submitted to the County Administrator within 48 hours of the accident. Repairs not reimbursed by insurance will be billed to the Assignee's department budget.~~

1.67 — ASSIGNMENT AND USE OF VEHICLES

- ~~1. Purpose: To establish a procedure for assignment, use and maintenance of county provided vehicles.~~
- ~~2. Assignment: County vehicles are assigned by the County Administrator or designee to employees determined by the County Administrator to be appropriated for the assignment or use of a county vehicle.~~
- ~~3. Operation and Maintenance of Vehicles:
 - ~~a. General — Maintenance and the overall management of County vehicles is the responsibility of the assignee.~~~~

~~b. Condition of Operation— Vehicles shall operate under the following guidelines:~~

- ~~• Assignee shall possess a valid Florida Driver's License.~~
- ~~• Fuel, lubrication, maintenance insurance and repair cost will be paid by the County.~~
- ~~• Each County vehicle shall be equipped with the following:~~

- ~~1. First Aid Kit~~
- ~~2. Fire Extinguisher~~
- ~~3. Flares~~
- ~~4. Flashlight~~
- ~~5. Litter Bag~~

- ~~• Individuals on vacation or extended travel, or extended leave shall park return their assigned vehicle to their Department during that period. The County Administrator may authorize the use of the vehicle while the individual is on vacation, extended travel, or extended leave.~~
- ~~• Individuals with poor driving records, driving records not acceptable by the County insurance carrier, or a driving record deemed unacceptable by the County Administrator, will not be allowed to operate County vehicles unless special accommodations are negotiated with the County's Insurance carrier.~~

~~Employees who fail to obtain or fail to maintain authorization for the use of a County vehicle from the County Administrator, including Emergency Medical Services employees, may be reclassified or demoted to a non-driving position, if a position is available. If the employee is demoted the lower pay grade non-driving position, the employee's pay may be reduced in accordance with the lower pay grade.~~

- ~~4. Personnel Not Assigned a Vehicle: When transportation is necessary for County assignments, County Personnel may use a County vehicle. Authorization must be granted by the individual and Department responsible for the vehicle. Fuel, oil and other maintenance costs will be charged to the department using the vehicle.~~
- ~~5. Daily Fee for Personnel Provided County Vehicle: Individuals assigned County vehicles will be charged according to the Internal Revenue Service rules for Personnel use of vehicles. The amount is subject to the change according to Internal Revenue Service rulings.~~

~~A daily fee will be charged for day(s) or any part of a day worked.~~

- ~~6. Also reference vehicle usage policy No. 97.02.~~

~~***NOTE: Revisions to the travel policy were made and approved through resolution on November 18, 2014.~~