



Department of Veterans Affairs

Financial Policy

Volume XIV

Travel

Chapter 3

Transportation Expenses

Approved:

Jon J.

Rychalski

1367389

Digitally signed by

Jon J. Rychalski

1367389

Date: 2022.02.15

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Jon J. Rychalski

**Assistant Secretary for Management
and Chief Financial Officer**

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0301 Overview

This chapter establishes Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies regarding the authorization and payment of transportation expenses for official government travel. This chapter supplements those portions of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) pertaining to temporary duty travel (TDY) and Title 41 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapters 300 through 304.

Key points included in this chapter:

- Travelers will utilize the most cost advantageous methods of transportation based on the order of precedence;
- Official travel reservations will be made through the VA travel system, Online Booking Tool (OBT), or the Travel Management Center (TMC) unless an exception applies;
- Travelers must select General Services Administration (GSA) City Pair fares in VA’s travel system for scheduled air passenger transportation service unless an exception applies;
- Travelers will use coach-class accommodations for domestic and international travel;
- Other than coach-class travel requires advance approval;
- When driving a government-furnished automobile (GOV), an employee must possess a valid operator’s license and only use the vehicle for official business;
- Employees may use their privately-owned vehicle (POV) on official travel when authorized;
- VA employees are not permitted to use electronic equipment, such as cell phones, computers, or any other electronic devices when driving a GOV or POV while on official Government business; and
- The Fly America Act requires government employees to travel on U.S. flag carriers with few exceptions (49 U.S.C. § 40118, Government financed air transportation).

0302 Revisions

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Various	Minor format corrections.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	February 2022
030503 Selecting a Fare	Changed paragraph E.,1., to clarify only required to provide documentation of the of the cost between a contract and non-contract fare.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	February 2022

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix D	Clarified use of most advantageous ground transportation for Government constructive cost, citing mission requirements as a factor.	OFP (047G)	General Update.	February 2022
0304 Roles and Responsibilities	Added responsibility for the Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Other Key Officials delegated authority to approve other than coach-class air/train/ship travel.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
030504 Other Than Coach-Class Travel	Updated positions delegated the authority to approve other than coach-class air travel.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
030507 Train Travel	Updated positions delegated the authority to approve other than coach-class train travel.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
030512 Other Uncommon Modes of Transportation	Updated positions delegated the authority to approve other than coach-class ship travel.	OFP (047G)	SECVA Memorandum, "Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences".	October 2021
0307 Recissions	Rescinded August 2021 published chapter.	OFP (047G)	General Update	October 2021
0302 Revisions	Moved September 2020 revision history into Appendix A.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update.	August 2021

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
030509 Rental Automobiles and Special Conveyances	Added requirement to attach mission justification or cost comparison for rental car to the TA.	OFP (047G)	General Policy Update.	August 2021
030510 Authorization of Privately-Owned Vehicle	Moved from Section 030511 and updated POV costs may be authorized for travel to/from common carrier terminal. Added conditions for reimbursing POV official use while at the TDY site and the reimbursement is at the full GSA mileage rate.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	August 2021
030511 Privately-Owned Vehicle in Lieu of Authorized Mode	Clarified VA Form 10079 is required when POV is chosen instead of the authorized common carrier. Moved POV reimbursement for travel to/from common carrier terminal to Section 030510.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	August 2021
0306 Authorities and References	Added link for VA Form 10079a, Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	August 2021

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix D: Constructive Travel	Updated to clarify when a cost comparison is required (including personal travel), costs required to be included, and applicable travel segments.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	August 2021

Reference Appendix A, Revision History for a listing of previous changes.

0303 Definitions

Approving Official (AO) – A VA employee designated the authority to approve travel requests.

Business-Class – A class of accommodation offered by airlines that are higher than coach-class and lower than first-class, in both cost and amenities.

Coach-Class – The basic class of airline accommodation that is normally the lowest fare offered regardless of airline terminology used. For reference purposes only, the coach-class may also be referred to by airlines as “tourist class,” “economy class,” or “single class,” when the airline offers only one class of accommodations to all travelers.

Continental United States (CONUS) – Refers to the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia as defined in FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, CONUS.

Common Carrier – Private-sector supplier of air, rail, bus, or ship transportation.

Constructive Travel – A cost comparison of differences between authorized common carrier cost and cost from choosing another method of travel (i.e., traveler chooses to drive to a location and seek mileage reimbursement over common carrier flight, etc.). Cost comparison will ensure reimbursements do not exceed the total cost that would have been incurred if a common carrier was used.

Contract Carriers – U.S. certificated air carriers under contract with the Government to furnish federal employees and other persons authorized to travel at government expense with passenger transportation service. GSA’s City Pair contracts include scheduled airline passenger service between selected U.S. cities/airports and between selected U.S. and international cities/airports at reduced fares.

Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) – FTR Chapters 300 – 304 are the regulations contained in Section 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) that implement statutory requirements and Executive branch policies for travel by federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at government expense.

First-Class – The highest class of accommodation offered by the airlines in terms of cost and amenities. This is generally termed “first-class” by airlines and reservation systems.

Foreign Area – Any area, including the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside CONUS and the non-foreign areas per FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, CONUS.

Government-furnished Automobile (GOV) – An automobile, or “light truck”, including a van or pickup truck, that is owned by VA, assigned, or dispatched, to VA on a rental basis from a GSA Fleet, or leased by VA for 120 days or longer from a commercial firm.

Invitational Travel – Authorized travel of individuals either not employed or employed intermittently in the government service as consultants or experts who travel on official government business. Travel allowances authorized for such persons are the same as those normally authorized for employees in connection with TDY (5 U.S.C. § 5703 Per diem, travel, and transportation expenses; experts and consultants; individuals serving without pay).

Miscellaneous Travel Expenses – Other miscellaneous travel expenses are those expenses identified in 41 C.F.R. § 301-12 Miscellaneous Expenses, which are directly attributable and necessary to the travel and temporary duty as authorized and performed. When authorized or approved, these expenses are reimbursable. Reference VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 4, Miscellaneous Travel Expenses for further guidance.

Non-Foreign Area – Areas outside of the Continental United States including the states of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories and possessions of the United States (excluding the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands) as defined in FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, CONUS.

Official Station – An area defined by VA as the employee’s official duty station (as established in an employee’s SF 50) which is the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties, or an invitational traveler’s home or regular place of business per FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, Official Station. Reference VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 7, Local Travel for local area guidance.

Official Travel – Travel under an official travel authorization (TA) to and from an employee’s official station or other authorized points of departure and a temporary duty

location, travel between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a federal agency.

Online Booking Tool (OBT) – An Internet-based system that permits travelers to make their own reservations for transportation (e.g., air, rail, and car rental) and lodging while using VA’s travel system.

Other than Coach Class (OTCC) – Any class of transportation accommodations above coach-class, e.g., first-class or business-class.

Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) – Includes both non-foreign areas and foreign areas.

Payment In-Kind – Any goods, services, or other benefits provided by a non-federal source for travel, subsistence, and related expenses in place of funds paid to VA by check or similar instrument for the same purpose.

Per Diem – A daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. The per diem allowance covers all charges and services, including any service charges where applicable. Lodging taxes in the United States are excluded from the per diem allowance and are reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense. In foreign locations, lodging taxes are part of the per diem allowance and are not a miscellaneous expense (FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, Per Diem Allowance). Maximum per diem rates for TDY locations are established by GSA are available at the GSA Per Diem Rates website.

Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV) – Any vehicle such as an automobile (including vans and pickup trucks), motorcycle, aircraft, or boat operated by an individual that is not owned or leased by a government agency and is not commercially leased or rented by an employee under a government rental agreement for use in connection with official government business (FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, POV).

Rest Period – A “rest period” is personal time on either end of TDY travel that permits the employee to rest before reporting for duty.

Rest Stop – VA defines a “rest stop” as a break in TDY or relocation travel while employees are en-route to their destinations.

Special Conveyance – Commercially rented or hired vehicles other than a POV and other than those owned or under contract to an agency.

Temporary Duty (TDY) Location – Travel by an employee on official business to a designated location(s) away from their local area, as authorized by an employee’s AO through a TA.

Transportation Expenses – Fares, rental fees, mileage payments, and other reimbursable expenses related to transportation. Reference VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 3, Transportation Expenses for additional guidance.

Transportation Network Companies (TNC) – A company that uses an online-enabled platform to connect passengers with drivers using their personal, non-commercial vehicles (e.g. Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, Wingz, Summon, and Haxi).

Travel Authorization (TA) – A written or electronic authorization to incur expenses while on authorized official business for the Government, which must include specific purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs (FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1, Travel Authorization).

Travel Card (Government Travel Charge Card) – A convenient method for federal agencies and their employees to make payments for official government travel-related expenses. The three types of travel card accounts available under the GSA SmartPay Master Contract are Individually Billed Accounts (IBA), Centrally Billed Accounts (CBA), and Single-Use CBA.

Travel Claim – A certified document submitted by the traveler in VA’s travel system, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable. The travel claim is a request for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel.

Travel Management Center (TMC) – A common carrier travel firm available in VA’s travel system providing reservations, tickets, and related travel management services for official travelers.

Travel System – The government-contracted, end-to-end travel management system that automates and consolidates the federal travel process in a self-service web-centric environment, covering all aspects of official travel, including travel planning, authorization, reservations, ticketing, expense reimbursement, and travel management reporting.

0304 Roles and Responsibilities

Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials (OKOs) have the delegated authority to approve other than coach-class for air/train/ship travel, with no further re-delegation authorized.

Approving Officials (AO) are knowledgeable of the employee’s travel plans, the travel funds paying for the travel involved, and understand how the authorized travel will support the agency’s mission. AO’s are responsible for ensuring that travel is:

- Mission essential and cannot be accomplished through other means;
- Performed economically and prudently; and

- Consistent with FTR Chapters 300 – 304, VA travel policy, and any other Department-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices).

AOs will also ensure adequate funds are available and required documentation and receipts are in the travel documents in VA's travel system.

Travelers will be knowledgeable of and comply with the FTR, VA travel policy, and any other agency-specific guidance (e.g., travel notices). Travelers will minimize costs, ensure travel is approved in advance; arrange travel using VA's travel system; submit travel claims promptly (within 5 business days of completion of travel); and comply with VA's travel charge card program guidance in VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program.

0305 Policies

030501 Methods of Transportation

- A. Per 5 U.S.C. § 5733, Expeditious Travel: "The travel of an employee shall be by the most expeditious means of transportation practicable and shall be commensurate with the nature and purpose of the duties of the employee requiring such travel." The traveler and AO will determine the most advantageous method of transportation based on the order of precedence (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.5). When selecting the best method of transportation there are several factors to be considered.
1. The total cost to the Government, including costs of per diem, overtime, lost work time, and actual transportation costs (round-trip costs for use of taxicab versus mileage and parking costs for the use of a POV).
 2. The accessibility and availability of public transportation.
 3. The duration of travel, and if travel involves holidays or weekends, and when applicable the urgency of the travel.
 4. The total distance of the travel.
 5. The number of locations visited.
 6. The number of travelers involved in the travel.
 7. Reimbursement of costs associated with the authorized mode of transportation will only be reimbursed up to the lesser amount of available options (e.g. most economical parking, etc.).

- B. The various methods of transportation which may be authorized for official travel include common carrier transportation, GOV; contract rental automobiles, POV, train, helicopter service, ships, buses, streetcars, subways, local transit systems, taxicabs, TNCs, courtesy transportation, and any other necessary means of conveyance.
- C. Employees will not use a GOV or aircraft for other than authorized official government purposes. An employee's use or authorization of a government-owned or leased vehicle or aircraft for other than the performance of official purposes is subject to adverse personnel actions (31 U.S.C. § 1349, Adverse Personnel Actions, and 31 U.S.C. § 1344, Passenger Carrier Use).
- D. VA will not reimburse the cost of flight insurance purchased by a traveler incident to official travel. Travel insurance for a Government trip must not be purchased by the traveler.
- E. Per Executive Order 13513 (October 1, 2009), Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving, VA employees are not permitted to engage in text messaging or using any electronic equipment, such as cell phones, computers, or blackberry devices, when driving a GOV or POV while on official government business. The use of electronic equipment supplied by the Government is also prohibited while driving.

030502 Air Travel – General

- A. VA travelers on official business will use commercial air carrier coach-class accommodations for domestic and international travel (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.122).
- B. All foreign air travel must be on airlines designated as U.S. Flag Carriers unless an exception applies (refer to Section 030505).
- C. All official travel reservations will be made through the VA travel system's OBT or the TMC unless there are extenuating circumstances and the traveler has been authorized an exception. The AO will need to grant this exception. Reservations using commercial means (e.g., Orbitz, Travelocity, other travel agents) are not permitted for official travel.
- D. Transportation and lodging reservations should be made using VA's travel system as early as possible in advance of the travel start date to obtain the best flight.
- E. When selecting lodging reservations, the first consideration should be given to available FedRooms (FTR Part 301-11, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-11.11).

- F. When reservations are made involving restricted fares or less than 2 weeks before the travel start date, travelers are responsible for communicating to all approval routing levels on the TA to ensure final approval is obtained in advance of the ticketing deadline.
- G. VA will pay for all common carrier services (air, rail, bus) using a CBA travel card. The charges to the CBA will include the transportation total cost (fare, taxes, etc.) and any associated TMC transaction fees incurred.

Common carrier transportation costs and travel system transaction fees paid by the CBA for official travel are itemized travel expenses but are not reimbursable directly to the traveler. Travelers will ensure the payment method on all claims for these expenses reflects “CBA”.

- H. Only VA travelers (including employees and invitational travelers) on official government business may use government contract fares. Contract employees may not use government contract fares.
- I. Coach-class seating upgrade programs are often referred to by airlines as “Coach Elite”, “Coach Plus”, and “Preferred Coach” or by some other identifier. Some airlines have instituted charges for seats they believe to be premium such as:
- Aisle;
 - Front of the cabin; and
 - Larger seats, etc.
- J. An AO may authorize the use of two coach-class seats for a VA employee to accommodate a disability or special need instead of authorizing OTCC.
- K. Generally, the use of upgraded/preferred coach-class seating options is a traveler's personal choice and is at the traveler's personal expense. However, if the purchase of an upgrade coach-class seat would reasonably accommodate a traveler with a special need, the additional cost may be an authorized expense. Guidance on coach-class upgrade programs can be referenced in FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.124. These coach-class upgrade options are not considered OTCC accommodation since the seating is still in the coach cabin. Refer to Appendix B, Travel Management Center Ticketing Procedures, for additional guidance.
- L. Travelers, who live near more than one airport or traveling to a TDY location with more than one airport, will use the airport that is most advantageous to the Government in terms of expediency and cost-effectiveness. The cost comparison must be attached to the TA.
- M. Travelers will cancel reservations in VA's travel system promptly. If a traveler is denied boarding on a confirmed seat, the employee should ensure the trip is canceled in the system and refunded immediately upon return to their duty station.

- N. If an employee voluntarily surrenders a seat at the request of the airline, compensation may be accepted only when:
- Surrendering the seat does not interfere with performing official duties;
 - Voluntarily surrendering the seat does not result in additional expense for which the employee will not otherwise be reimbursed; and
 - An employee requests and is approved annual leave for any duty hours affected.
- O. Travelers will make reservations timely to ensure the best price is obtained.

030503 Selecting a Fare

- A. VA employees will select fares in VA's travel system using either the OBT or TMC that will adequately provide the necessary transportation to meet VA's mission. Available fares will be selected in the following order:
1. Capacity controlled, Contract City-Pair Fares (CA Fares).
 2. Non-capacity controlled Contract City-Pair Fares (YCA Fares).
 3. Government unrestricted fares.
 4. Restricted non-contract carrier fares.
- B. CA and YCA fares are contract fares under the GSA City Pairs Program. Travelers must select GSA City Pair fares in VA's travel system for scheduled air passenger transportation services. For exceptions to using City Pair fares see FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.107.
1. CA Fares are capacity controlled, i.e., they are limited in the number of seats the contracting airline makes available on a contracted flight and are offered at lower fares than YCA Fares.
 2. YCA Fare seating is not capacity-controlled, i.e., as long as there is a coach-class seat on the plane, the traveler may purchase it.
- C. Failure to use the contract carrier because of personal preference or to use frequent flyer programs may violate the contract. If the traveler does not select the required contract carrier, they may not be reimbursed for the difference in cost between the two methods and VA may take appropriate disciplinary action.
- D. City Pair fares shall be selected instead of a lesser unrestricted or restricted fare as the GSA City Pair Program provides the Government and the traveler with the following advantages:
- No advance purchases are required;

- No minimum or maximum length of stay is required;
 - Tickets are fully refundable without charge for cancellations or changes;
 - There are no blackout dates;
 - Locked-in fares facilitate travel budgeting; and
 - Tickets carry significant discounts over regular walk-up fares.
- E. A traveler may reserve a non-contract fare (unrestricted or restricted) (see FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.107) when:
- A traveler frequently travels;
 - The non-contract fare is more cost advantageous to the Government than an available contract fare;
 - To meet mission requirements;
 - Seating space is unavailable for the scheduled service or the scheduled service would require the traveler to incur overnight lodging expense; and/or
 - The contract's flight schedule is inconsistent with the Government's policy of scheduling travel during normal working hours to the maximum extent practicable.
1. Travelers will document in the TA the cost of both the contract and non-contract fares when a non-contract fare is reserved based on cost savings compared to an available contract fare.
 2. When implementing alternate station-funded travel, restricted fares should only be used when there are no other fare options available. As with station-funded travel, the traveler must obtain approval in advance from the station to fund the trip.
- F. An AO may authorize the use of a non-contract fare (see FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.108) if one or more of the exceptions in 030503E apply.
1. If the AO has determined a restricted fare meets one or more of the exceptions, the AO and traveler must be aware of the following:
 - Canceled restricted fares may result in a credit with an expiration date and only the traveler associated with the cancelation can apply it;
 - Travelers must use the credit at the next opportunity and only for official government travel;
 - Travelers must notify their Level 4 Agency/ Organizational Program Coordinator a credit has been obtained in accordance with VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program; and
 - The value of the credit belongs to the Federal Government.
 2. If the non-contract fare is non-refundable, restricted, or has specific eligibility requirements, the AO must know or reasonably anticipate the traveler will use the ticket. Restricted fares are typically the least expensive fare but may incur

penalty fees for canceling or changing reservations and require ticketing within 24 hours after the reservation is made. Travelers must ensure all approvers of the TA are notified of the time limit required for their approval.

- G. If the Agency cancels the travel when a restricted carrier fare was authorized, the AO may approve the expense and the Agency will pay for the ticket and any associated cancellation/penalty fees. However, if the traveler chooses to cancel or change the ticket for personal reasons, the traveler is liable for the cost of the ticket and any associated cancellation/penalty fees, and excess costs for personal changes not due to an emergency. VA will issue a notice of indebtedness to the traveler. Refer to VA Financial Policy Volume XII Chapter 3, Employee Debt, and Volume XII, Chapter 8, Notice of Indebtedness for guidance. When the traveler pays the debt the repayment receipt must be attached to the travel claim.
- H. The traveler has the responsibility to cancel ticketed reservations as soon as they know their travel plans have changed:
1. Travelers should keep the credit receipt until the government credit card company issues the appropriate credit on a later statement.
 2. Travelers will not submit unused tickets bought with a government charge card with the travel claim.
 3. Do not include the cost of any unused tickets on the travel claim for reimbursement.
 4. Amtrak will charge a 10 percent refund service charge (i.e., cancellation charge) on all returned, unused tickets, up to a maximum of \$100 per single reservation.
 5. The traveler will bear any costs assessed as a penalty or charge by a carrier if the AO determines that the traveler could have canceled and avoided the charge.
 6. Employees who are authorized to purchase a restricted ticket retain a credit on the ticket that may be used for a future trip, should their travel plans change. This credit may not be transferred; it is limited to the employee and the airline. Fees associated with restricted tickets that are incurred by a traveler who fails to use or cancel a ticket due to reasons beyond the traveler's control and acceptable to the AO will be considered a necessary cost of travel and payable from VA funds.
 7. Agency/Organization Program Coordinators of CBA accounts and AOs will create a tracking system to ensure optimal use of unused/canceled restricted airline tickets.
- I. Refer to Appendix B, Travel Management Center Ticketing Procedures, for additional information related to contract and non-contract airfares.

030504 Other Than Coach-Class Travel

- A. Other-than-Coach-Class (OTCC) air travel (see FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.121) must be approved in advance of the travel by the applicable DEPSEC, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or OKO for the traveler (VA Financial Policy Volume I, Chapter 1, VA Financial Policy and Accounting Overview, contains a list of OKO positions). Refer to VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 1, Travel Administration, for Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) Memorandum, “Delegation of Authority for Travel and Conferences”.
1. Request for approval will be submitted on VA Form 0899, Request for Other Than Coach (Premium) Class Accommodations.
 2. Under extenuating circumstances or emergencies where advance authorization is not possible, the traveler will obtain approval within seven (7) days of returning from the trip. Post-travel requests must include an explanation as to why prior authorization could not be obtained.
- B. The following conditions do not require VA Form 0899 to be completed, but do require a justification to be included and certified in their TA and/or claim for the AO to authorize:
1. Regularly scheduled flight between origin/destination points (including connecting points) provide only other than coach-class accommodations (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123) or if an airline flight has only two classes of accommodations available and you certify this on your voucher (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.121). However, if under this scenario, a first-class seat is reserved instead of an available business-class seat at a lower cost, then a VA Form 0899 would be required.
 2. In the case of Southwest Airlines, or other airlines, where an airline only provides one class of seat on a flight, even if the E-Ticket/Invoice is fare-coded first-class, the reservation is considered coach-class (Note to FTR § 301-10.121).
- C. Requests for OTCC must meet one of the allowable conditions for specific authorization as listed in FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123 (2)(A).
- D. Approved OTCC requests and appropriate documentation supporting the request shall be attached to the TA.
- E. The DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and OKOs may authorize OTCC travel, when necessary, to accommodate a disability or other medical condition, and the disability or condition is visible and discernable or substantiated in

writing by a competent medical authority. A “competent medical authority” is a physician licensed to practice medicine by a recognized government body, who has treated the employee for the condition requiring premium-class accommodations.

1. Medical certification must be dated within three months of the first travel using that certification. The traveler’s doctor or medical professional must certify in writing annually regarding the special need (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123 (4)(ii).
 2. A certification from a competent medical authority must include the following:
 - a description of the disability, medical condition, or special need;
 - the approximate duration of the medical condition or special need; and
 - a recommendation of a suitable means of transportation for the employee based on the medical condition or special need.
 3. If an employee is authorized on a VA Form 0899 to have an accompanying attendant for services required en-route, the AO may authorize the attendant’s invitational TA to use the class of service required on the medical certification. The employee’s TA must cross-reference the attendant’s TA and vice versa. VA Form 0899 should also be attached to the attendant's TA.
 4. Instead of requesting approval for OTCC, an AO may authorize and reimburse two adjoining coach-class seats or reimburse the fee for an airline’s coach-class seating upgrade program to provide a passenger a more desirable seat choice within the coach-class cabin, when it will accommodate a disability or special need (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.124).
- F. In the absence of an approved VA Form 0899 (either pre or post-travel), the employee will be responsible for the difference in cost between the OTCC accommodations used and the cost of the coach-class accommodations (including taxes).
- G. If an employee is on official travel status and must use more costly accommodations than authorized because of official necessity, a statement will be included on the travel claim justifying the change to a higher-class accommodation. If an appropriate justification is not included on the travel claim and approved, the employee will be responsible for the difference in cost between the OTCC accommodations used and the cost of the coach-class accommodations (including taxes).
- H. In determining whether OTCC travel is appropriate, AOs will consider if travel is necessary to the public interest after all alternatives have been considered, including whether it is the most cost-effective. This evaluation should include whether flying coach-class and incorporating a rest stop at an intermediate point of travel or a rest period at the destination would result in substantial savings to the Government and

would be practical given time and travel requirements, compared to the high cost of OTCC accommodations.

- I. The DEPSEC, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and OKOs may authorize OTCC travel when required because of the agency mission. Use of this provision will be justified in writing with:
 - A full description of the mission requirements;
 - The reason(s) why other alternatives that would allow the use of coach-class accommodations are insufficient; and
 - The reason(s) why the trip may not be postponed allowing for the use of coach-class.
- J. While the nature of the traveler's pending duties may result in the approval of OTCC, a traveler's grade or position may not be the basis for the approval of OTCC.
- K. Employees may upgrade to OTCC at personal expense (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.124), including the use of frequent flyer benefits, at no additional cost to VA. Employees should document the upgrade was at a personal expense in the TA under comments, or when an airline elects to upgrade the reserved flight at no cost to the Government.

030505 Outside Continental United States Air Transportation

- A. The Fly America Act (49 U.S.C. § 40118, Government financed air transportation) requires government employees to travel on U.S. flag carriers with few exceptions. Refer to FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.136-137, for specific requirements and exceptions when reserving flights to and between foreign countries. Required justifications and other documentation supporting the need to use a foreign carrier must be attached to the TA.
- B. U.S. flag air carrier service includes service provided by a foreign air carrier under a "code-share" agreement with a U.S. flag carrier (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.134) when the ticket or documentation for an electronic ticket identifies the U.S. flag air carrier's designator code and flight number. A code-sharing agreement between two airlines allows one airline to put its two-letter identification code on the flights of another airline as they appear in computerized reservations systems (49 U.S.C. § 41102, General, temporary, and charter air transportation certificates of air carriers).
- C. Travelers may not use a foreign air carrier based on cost, preference, or greater convenience for the traveler.
- D. Travelers will not be reimbursed for any transportation cost associated with the improper use of a foreign air carrier service (when not permitted under this

regulation) (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.143).

- E. Before any international trips, employees should consult the State Department and Center for Disease Control and Prevention websites for country-specific information about security and health risks to help ensure a healthy and safe trip.

030506 Rest Stop and Rest Period

- A. When TDY involves OCONUS travel and the scheduled flight time exceeds 14 hours (sometimes referred to as the 14-hour rule), including non-overnight airport stopovers and plane changes, a rest stop not to exceed 24 hours may be requested. A rest stop allows employees to relax, recuperate, and acclimate themselves so that they are sufficiently refreshed to perform work when they arrive at the travel destination site.
- B. The following criteria will be met when authorizing a rest stop:
- Either the origin or destination will be CONUS;
 - Travel is direct between points, and accommodations are by coach-class; and
 - The rest stop is at any intermediate point, including points within CONUS, provided the point is at least midway in the journey.
- C. A rest stop may not be authorized when an employee, for personal convenience, elects to travel by an indirect route, resulting in excess travel time.
- D. If a rest stop is authorized, it will be indicated and detailed on the employee's TA. For reimbursement purposes, the traveler will use the per diem rate for the rest stop location.
- E. If the carrier schedule or the requirements to use U.S. flag carriers preclude an intermediate rest stop, or a rest stop is not authorized, the traveler should schedule coach-class travel to arrive at the TDY site with sufficient time to permit a reasonable rest period before reporting for duty.
- F. VA may authorize business-class accommodations in place of a rest stop. Travelers must complete a constructive travel cost comparison and attach it to the TA. When considering business-class accommodations for trips over 14 hours, the AO should consider these factors:
- The constructive travel cost of business-class accommodations versus the cost of coach-class accommodations including a rest stop; and
 - The purpose and urgency of the trip.

Refer to Appendix D for consideration of the types of expenses to be included in a constructive travel cost comparison.

- G. Requests for approval of OTCC in place of a rest stop or rest period must be submitted on a VA Form 0899, Request for Other Than Coach (Premium) Class Accommodations.
- H. Authorization of business-class accommodations for the outbound part of the TDY does not automatically justify business accommodations for the return trip. The AO should consider the same criteria regarding critical nature, authorizing rest stops, and/or the availability of rest periods.
- I. Business-class accommodations in place of a rest stop or rest period may not be authorized if:
 - An employee is not required to report for duty the following day, whether at the official duty station or a TDY location; and/or
 - Approval is granted for annual leave at the TDY or relocation point before the start of official business, or approval is granted for annual leave upon reporting to an official duty station location.

030507 Train Travel

- A. Coach-class accommodations will be used for all train travel. An AO may authorize other than coach-class service if exceptions identified are met (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.162). If train service only has two classes of accommodations available, i.e., as in the case of Acela which only has first-class and business-class, then the business-class is classified as coach-class for purposes of official travel, as it is the lowest class offered. The following are classes of train accommodations:
 - 1. Coach-class. The basic class of accommodations offered by a rail carrier to passengers includes a level of service available to all passengers regardless of the fare paid. Coach-class accommodations include reserved slumber coach-class accommodations when overnight train travel is involved.
 - 2. Slumber coach-class. Includes slumber coach-class on trains offering such accommodations, or the lowest level of sleeping accommodations available on a train that does not offer slumber coach-class accommodations.
 - 3. Business-class. A class of extra fare train service that is offered above coach-class, but is lower than first-class, as described above.
 - 4. First-class. Includes bedrooms, roomettes, club service, parlor car accommodations, or other premium accommodations.
- B. OTCC train travel must be approved on a VA Form 0899, in advance of the travel by the applicable DEPSEC, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or OKO for the traveler, in accordance with FTR §301-10.162.

- C. VA may consider the use of Amtrak coach service if it is cost advantageous to the Government. Amtrak offers a discount to federal employees traveling between selected cities (City Pairs). When these discount fares are available and the accompanying service will fulfill mission requirements, they should be used to the maximum extent possible. This discount is applicable only for official travel.

030508 Use of Government Furnished Automobile

- A. Employees may be authorized to use a government-owned or leased vehicle for both TDY and local travel.
- B. To operate a GOV, an employee must possess a valid State, District of Columbia, or territorial motor vehicle operator's license and only use the vehicle:
- Between places of official business;
 - Between places of official business and temporary lodging, when public transportation is unavailable, or its use is impractical;
 - Between places of official business or temporary lodging and restaurants, drug stores, barbershops, places of worship, laundromats, and similar places necessary for the sustenance, comfort, or health of the employee to foster the continued efficient performance of government business; and
 - As otherwise authorized by the agency under (31 U.S.C. § 1344, Passenger Carrier Use).
- C. Reimbursement for commuting expenses to and from the official duty station to pick up a GOV for official travel is not authorized regardless of the day of the week the government-furnished automobile is obtained.
- D. Travelers may request the use of a GOV rather than POV if authorized by the respective AO.
1. VA requires a traveler or group of travelers to complete a commitment form for the use of the GOV (FTR Part 301-70, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-70.102). Refer to Appendix C for an example of a GOV commitment form.
 2. Travelers will complete the commitment form and have it signed in advance of the travel. Any changes in the commitment period (for example long-term use) will be made with enough time to allow for the availability of the fleet vehicle.
- E. Factors that an AO will consider in determining whether to authorize the traveler to use a GOV include:
- Full utilization or availability of fleet vehicles;
 - Lower cost;
 - Official presence; and/or
 - Type of travel the employee will be performing.

- F. Employees are responsible for any additional cost resulting from unauthorized use of a GOV and may be subject to administrative and/or criminal liability for misuse of government property.
- G. A GOV will only be used for the accomplishment of official government business. The transportation of non-official passengers is not permitted unless SECVA (31 U.S.C. § 1344, Passenger carrier use) grants an exception allowing the incidental transportation of nonofficial passengers. An exception can only be granted if:
- The vehicle is only being used to conduct official government business;
 - Space is available and is not needed in connection with the accomplishment of official business;
 - It is not an additional expense to the Government;
 - It does not delay government business or result in circuitous routes;
 - It does not involve private profit-making activities; and
 - The exception has been documented and signed in a memorandum.
- H. The use of a GOV may be a taxable event for the user in some cases. The Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-369), and the Contemporaneous Recordkeeping Requirements Repeal Act (Public Law 99-44), requires that certain non-cash fringe benefits be subject to Federal income taxes as well as Social Security and/or Medicare taxes. Among these non-cash benefits is the use of a GOV for commuting. A GOV is considered as being used for commuting when it is used by an employee to travel between their residence and place of work, whether round-trip or one-way, where the Government would not fully reimburse the employee had the employee used a privately-owned vehicle.
- I. Refer to VA Fleet Handbook for additional details.

030509 Rental Automobiles and Special Conveyances

- A. When two or more persons travel together utilizing a rented vehicle or special conveyance, each traveler will state that fact on his or her travel claim, along with the names of each traveler and their employing agency.
- B. Rental cars will be authorized in advance of travel after a determination has been made by the AO that the use of the rental car is advantageous to the Government. A traveler is required to attach mission justification or a cost comparison versus alternate available transportation to the TA for the AO to consider (FTR 301-2.5).
- C. The use of the rental car for purposes other than official travel is prohibited.
- D. Travelers will adhere to the rental automobile regulations found in FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.45, concerning extraneous

expenses (e.g., gasoline and non-reimbursable expenses, pre-paid gasoline, global positioning systems (GPS), and toll collection transponders).

- E. Travelers will rent the least expensive compact size car available when conducting official travel unless an exception for another class of vehicle is approved. If an exception exists, it must be documented on the TA. Some common/acceptable justifications are listed below:
- Accommodate a medical disability or other special need;
 - VA mission requirement;
 - The cost of other than a compact car is less than or equal to the cost of the least expensive compact car;
 - More space is needed for equipment or other personnel; and/or
 - The traveler experiences inclement weather conditions (snow or ice) or his or her trip includes off-road terrain and a 4x4 vehicle is required.

Employees wishing to do so may upgrade to a larger vehicle at their own expense if none of the exceptions above are met.

- F. Travelers should not purchase additional rental car insurance as rental vehicles available under agreements with the Government include full coverage insurance for damages resulting from an accident while performing official travel. Reference FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.451, for more specific guidance.
- G. Travelers are responsible for reporting accidents while using authorized rental automobiles or special conveyances. The traveler will notify the rental agency of an accident and obtain a police report if possible. The traveler will prepare an (SF 91) Motor Vehicle Accident Report at the time of an accident and may also be required to fill out a rental agency accident report. Under some state laws, failure to report an accident may result in the traveler being responsible for the cost of repairs to the rental vehicle. Upon completion, the traveler will forward the accident report to his or her supervisor and regional counsel for review and appropriate action.
- H. The time spent while waiting for the replacement or repairs due to a mechanical failure of the rental vehicle will be deducted from the total amount of rental time.
- I. If the hire of a special conveyance does not include costs of the incidental expenses (i.e., gasoline, rent of garage, hangar, boathouse, tolls, etc.), the conveyance operator should itemize them in the bill to the traveler.
- J. When travelers are performing local travel or official TDY travel, they may be authorized and reimbursed costs incurred for:
- Shuttles and courtesy transportation;
 - Public transportation systems such as a bus, subway, or other common modes of transportation;
 - A taxi;

- A TNC, when it is advantageous to the Government, and these services are permitted by local laws and ordinances; and
- Use of a luxury chauffeured car service, such as a limousine, is allowable when cost-effective and a justification is included to AO. Travel AOs are cautioned before authorizing the use of a limousine to carefully weigh the justification against the appearance of impropriety to the public (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, §301-10.420).

Information on local travel can be found in Volume XIV Chapter 7, Local Travel.

- K. VA may authorize special conveyances including an employee's public transportation between the employee's residence and office in cases of necessity. The AO may authorize/approve the usual taxicab fare, plus tip, for travel between the employee's office and home when:
- Travel between places of business at the official or TDY station;
 - Travel between a place of lodging and a place of business at a TDY station;
 - Travel to obtain meals at the nearest available place where the nature and location of the work at a TDY station are such that meals cannot be obtained at the location;
 - Travel from the employee's home to the office to pick up government supplies or materials on the day the employee departs the office on an official trip requiring at least one night's lodging;
 - Travel from the office to the employee's home on the day the employee returns to the office after travel has been completed;
 - The employee depends on public transportation for officially ordered work outside regular working hours; and/or
 - The travel between the employee's office and home is during hours of infrequently scheduled public transportation or darkness.

030510 Authorization of Privately-Owned Vehicle

- A. Employees may use their POV (including automobiles, motorcycles, and aircraft) on official travel when authorized by the AO as advantageous to the Government (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.5). When a POV is authorized, the POV expenses incurred (e.g., mileage, tolls, parking etc.) may be reimbursed for the most direct route, unless extenuating circumstances exist (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.303 and § 301-10.304).
- B. Factors to be considered when determining if POV is advantageous to the Government should include:
- TDY location in relation to distance from the official station;
 - TDY worksite location in relation to the lodging, and whether alternative ground transportation is available;

- Overall cost advantage when there are accompanying passengers under official TAs in the same POV;
 - Salary cost associated with the additional travel time; and
 - Missed work when any substantial distances are involved.
- C. Travelers may not be directed to or prohibited from driving their POV, however, AO approval is contingent on whatever is advantageous to the government and any special circumstances that may apply.
- D. POV mileage for personal use while on official travel is not reimbursable.
- E. An AO may authorize POV transportation from either the traveler's residence or office to/from a common carrier terminal if a cost comparison of POV versus the cost of available alternate methods of transportation (e.g., free transportation, public transportation, special conveyance) substantiates POV travel is in the best interest of the Government. The cost comparison is required to be documented in the TA.
- F. POV use while at the TDY site may be authorized when official transportation is required from/to the lodging location and TDY worksite, or to obtain meals when not accessible at or within the lodging or TDY worksite locations. Documentation of a cost comparison between POV and available alternate methods of transportation is required in the TA for the AO to determine POV is in the best interest of the Government.
- G. The full applicable POV GSA mileage rate will be used for reimbursement when POV is authorized.
- H. Transporting other employees as passengers is strictly voluntary on the part of both the employee driving the POV, or GOV and any passengers.
- I. Other miscellaneous expenses (e.g., tolls, parking, etc.), incurred while using POV for official travel may be reimbursed per VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 4, Miscellaneous Travel Expenses.
- J. When an official traveler transports another official traveler to and from the same terminal, mileage reimbursement is authorized for the additional distance to transport the other traveler. Mileage reimbursement will only be paid to the official traveler incurring the expense.
- K. When POV ground transportation is authorized as most advantageous to the Government (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.306 and § 301-10.308) for a POV to be driven round trip by someone other than the traveler to drop off and/or pick up the official traveler at the common carrier terminal, the official traveler will be reimbursed mileage for two round trips and any associated fees (i.e., tolls, etc.), however, parking at the terminal will not be reimbursed.

- L. Travelers must attach to the travel claim, documentation of the miles traveled when requesting reimbursement of POV mileage. An online distance calculation tool may be used to calculate the mileage. AOs are required to verify the claimed mileage. Should a difference of more than five (5) percent exist between the traveler's calculated mileage and the AO's calculated mileage (rounded up to the nearest mile), the employee must attach a justification to the travel claim to support the difference of the reimbursement request.

030511 Privately-Owned Vehicle In Lieu of Authorized Mode

- A. When a traveler elects to drive their POV to/from a common carrier terminal or within a TDY location, in lieu of an authorized alternate method of transportation, the AO will state in the TA the method of transportation authorized including the rationale, and will limit reimbursement of POV expenses (e.g., mileage, tolls, parking) incurred for the most direct route not-to-exceed the authorized method of transportation (FTR § 301-10.6). The cost comparison is required to be attached to the TA.
- B. Travelers will need to complete VA Form 10079, Cost Comparison Worksheet for Privately Owned Vehicle versus Common Carrier Transportation, if he or she chooses to drive their POV instead of traveling by common carrier. VA will reimburse the traveler for distance traveled at the POV mileage rate and for other associated expenses, not to exceed the total constructive travel cost that would have been incurred if a common carrier was used. Refer to Appendix D for consideration of the types of expenses to be included in a constructive travel cost comparison.
- C. VA will charge annual leave for any additional days missed because of travel by POV.
- D. When an employee chooses to drive a POV, and a GOV is available and authorized as advantageous to the Government, VA will only reimburse the employee at the GOV available reduced POV mileage rate. Refer to GSA Mileage Rates for the current rate.

030512 Other Uncommon Modes of Transportation

- A. The AO may authorize the use of a government aircraft for travel for official purposes (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.261). The AO will ensure that travel on a government aircraft is the most cost-effective alternative that will meet the travel requirements before it may be authorized. Refer to (Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-126, Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft) for more information.

- B. VA does not encourage the use of reduced group or charter fares. However, they may be used when the AO has determined, on an individual case basis before travel, that use of such a fare is cost-effective and will not interfere with the conduct of official business. Chartered aircraft are subject to the same rules as government aircraft, and agencies in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are subject to the requirements of OMB Circular A-126, Revised (May 22, 1992), and 41 C.F.R. § 101-37, Government Aviation Administration and Coordination, in making such cost-effectiveness determinations. The TA should describe the use of a group or charter service. However, since charter reservations are not reimbursed to a single traveler no expenses should be included on the travel claim.
- C. VA does not generally consider travel by ship as advantageous to the Government. Travelers will complete a constructive travel cost comparison and provide justification to ensure that the advantages of such travel will offset the higher cost associated with ocean travel. Refer to Appendix D for consideration of the types of expenses to be included in a constructive travel cost comparison. The AO will consider:
- Per diem;
 - Transportation; and
 - Lost work time.
- D. The lowest class accommodations will be used when traveling by ship, OTCC ship travel must be approved on a VA Form 0899, in advance of the travel by the applicable DEPSEC, Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or OKO for the traveler, in accordance with FTR §301-10.183.
- E. If travel by ship is approved, travelers are required to travel by U.S. flagship for the entire trip, unless the use of a foreign ship has been authorized (FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.180), or unless the necessity of the mission requires the use of a foreign vessel (46 U.S.C. § 55302, Transportation of United States Government Personnel). When an AO authorizes travel on a foreign flag vessel, the AO must prepare a memorandum including a justification statement and the rationale for approving said transportation method and attach it to the TA for audit and review purposes. The criteria for the justifying statement are the same as those for use of a foreign air carrier under FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.136. Any cost that is attributed to the improper or unauthorized use of a foreign ship is the traveler's responsibility.
- F. When a group of persons will travel at the same time and on the same itinerary, consideration will be given to the use of either charter or contract services by use of the purchase card or purchase order.
- G. Where charter services are ordered from a carrier, their terms will be stated in writing:
- The statement will be prepared in duplicate and signed by the VA official designated to authorize travel and the carrier's representative; and

- The original will be given to the carrier and the duplicate to the Finance Activity concerned.
- H. Where contract services are ordered from a carrier, their terms will be stated in writing:
- The agreement will be prepared in duplicate, assigned a VA contract number, and signed by the VA official designated to authorize travel and the carrier's representative;
 - The original and copy will be forwarded to the concerned Finance Activity; and
 - The governing contract will be shown by number and date.
- I. No charter or contract services for air transportation will be made with a supplemental or non-scheduled carrier unless prior information has been obtained from the Federal Aviation Administration, Washington, DC, or its Regional or General Aviation District Office in the field, indicating the carrier is complying with their safety standards.

0306 Authorities and References

[5 U.S.C. § 5733, Expeditious Travel](#)

[5 U.S.C. § 5703, Per diem, travel, and transportation expenses; experts and consultants; individuals serving without pay](#)

[31 U.S.C. § 1344, Passenger Carrier Use](#)

[31 U.S.C. § 1349, Adverse Personnel Actions](#)

[41 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Chapters 300 through 304](#)

[41 C.F.R. § 101-37, Government Aviation Administration and Coordination](#)

[FTR Part 300-3, Glossary of Terms, § 300-3.1](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, §301-10.107, Are there any exceptions to the use of a contract city-pair fare?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.108 What requirements must be met to use a non-contract fare?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, §301-10.121 What classes of airline accommodations are available?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.122 What class of airline accommodations must I use?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123 When may I use other than coach-class airline accommodations?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123 \(2\)\(A\) A written statement by a competent medical authority stating that special accommodation is necessary](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.123 \(4\)\(ii\), A special need must be certified annually in writing](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.124, What are coach-class Seating Upgrade Programs?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.134, What is the U.S. flag air carrier service?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.136, What exceptions to the Fly America Act requirements apply when I travel between the United States and another country?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.137, Common Carrier Transportation, Use of United States Flag Air Carriers](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.143, What is my liability if I improperly use a foreign air carrier?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.162, When may I use other than coach-class train accommodations?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances 41 C.F.R. § 301-10.180 Must I travel by a U.S. flagship?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances 41 C.F.R. § 301-10.183 What class of ship accommodations must I use?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.261 When may I use a Government aircraft for travel?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.303, What am I reimbursed when use of POV is determined by my agency to be advantageous to the Government?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.306 What will I be reimbursed if authorized to use a POV between my residence and office and then](#)

[from my office to a common carrier terminal, or from my residence directly to a common carrier terminal?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.308 What will I be reimbursed if I park my POV at a common carrier terminal while I am away from my official station?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, §301-10.420 When may I use a taxi, shuttle service, or other courtesy transportation?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.450 What are the policies when authorized to rent a vehicle for official travel?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.451 May I be reimbursed for the cost of collision damage waiver \(CDW\) or theft insurance?](#)

[FTR Part 301-10, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-10.5, What are the presumptions as to the most advantageous method of transportation by order of precedence?](#)

[FTR PART 301-11, Per Diem Expenses, § 301-11.11, How do I select lodging and make lodging reservations?](#)

[41 C.F.R. § 301-12 Miscellaneous Expenses](#)

[FTR Part 301-70, Temporary Duty \(TDY\) Travel Allowances, § 301-70.102, What governing policies must we establish for authorization and payment of transportation expenses?](#)

[46 U.S.C. § 55302, Transportation of United States Government Personnel](#)

[49 U.S.C. § 40118, Government financed air transportation](#)

[49 U.S.C. § 41102, General, temporary, and charter air transportation certificates of air carriers](#)

[Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990](#)

[Executive Order 13513 \(October 1, 2009\), Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving](#)

[FTR Chapters 300 – 304 Federal Travel Regulation \(FTR\)](#)

[GSA City Pair Fares](#)

[GSA Per Diem Rates](#)

[OMB Circular A-126, Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft](#)

[Privately Owned Vehicle \(POV\) Mileage Reimbursement Rates](#)

[\(SF 91\) Motor Vehicle Accident Report](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XII Chapter 3, Employee Debts](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XII Chapter 8, Notice of Indebtedness](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 4, Miscellaneous Travel Expenses](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 7, Local Travel](#)

[VA Financial Policy Volume XVI Chapter 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program](#)

[VA Fleet Handbook](#)

[VA Form 0899, Request for Other Than Coach \(Premium\) Class Accommodations](#)

[VA Form 10079, Cost Comparison Worksheet for Privately Owned Vehicle versus Common Carrier Transportation](#)

[VA Form 10079A, Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet](#)

0307 Rescissions

VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 3, Transportation Expenses, October 2021.

0308 Questions

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed as follows:

VHA

vafstravelpolicy@va.gov

VBA

TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov

NCA

NCABudgetService@va.gov

OIT

VACOITTravel@va.gov

All Others

vafstravelpolicy@va.gov

Appendix A: Revision History

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Various	Reformatted to new policy format and 5-year policy review.	OFP (047G)	Reorganized chapter layout	September 2020
0302 Revisions	Placed prior revision history into Appendix A	OFP (047G)	Updated to reflect current policy.	September 2020
0303 Definitions	Updated terms listed in this section, as well as deleted several terms which no longer apply to the chapter.	OFP (047G)	Revisions needed to reflect updated content.	September 2020
0304 Roles and Responsibilities	Updated delegations to reflect the most current information.	OFP (047G)	Language had been updated; the chapter needed to reflect this information.	September 2020
0305 Policies	Consolidated duplicate policy guidance under this section. Re-organized sub-sections. Added FTR references	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	September 2020
030501	Changed from bullets to paragraph format. Also used C.F.R. link as opposed to listing order of preference	OFP (047G)	General policy update	September 2020
030502	Added link to VA Form 0899 and removed form contained in the appendix.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	September 2020
030503 and 030504	030503 GSA City Pair Fare Program and 030504 on-Contract Carrier Unrestricted and Restricted Fares were deleted, and 030503 Selecting a Fair was created.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	September 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
030505	Added link to VA Form 0899 and removed form from Appendix C. Clarified other than coach-class exceptions. Added language stating that employees should document an upgrade from coach-class travel at their own expense.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	September 2020
030507	Updated language in reference to the Acela train, which only has business and first-class accommodations.	OFP (047G)	General policy update.	September 2020
0306 Authorities and References	Updated to reflect most current guidance	OFP (047G)	To reflect most recent information.	September 2020
0307 Rescissions	Removed recessions made prior to the 2017 targeted change	OFP (047G)	To reflect the most recent update.	September 2020
0308 Questions	Updated Travel Policy email address.	OFP (047G)	To reflect correct contact information.	September 2020
Appendix B	Updated ticketing time frames and improved other guidance.	OFP (047G)	General Update	September 2020
Appendix D	Appendix D Requesting Other than Coach Class Travel was deleted, and Constructive Travel replaced it.	OFP (047G)	General Update	September 2020
Appendices	Reordered appendices based on appearance in the chapter and reformatted. Removed previous Appendices F, G, H, I, J, and K, deleted and the material was moved to the applicable policy section.	OFP (047G)	Reorganized chapter layout	September 2020

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
030201 A & B	Order of precedence for the most advantageous method of transportation	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017
030206A, 030206D	Changed “Government” automobile to “Government-furnished” automobile	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017
030216C1	Updated applicable POV rate. Removed tips with reference to VOL XIV Ch. 4, Miscellaneous Travel Expenses	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017
030207.04	Changed appropriate mileage rate to reduced POV mileage rate	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017
030208 B	Inserted language referencing “Transportation Network Companies” as permissible methods of “special conveyance”	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Bulletin 16-05	September 2017
030208 C & D	Inserted additional language requiring travelers to select the “least expensive compact car available”. Also, provided FTR criteria which may exempt a traveler from having to select such a vehicle.	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017
030618	Changing “GSA Interagency Fleet Management Center” to read “GSA Fleet”. Also, changed the lease period from 30 days to 120 days.	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017

Section	Revision	Office	Reason for Change	Effective Date
Appendix H	Removed original Appendix H, Sample Cost Comparison Worksheet, in favor of a link to the new VA Form 10079 which can be found in 030207.03A	OFP (047G)	To comply with FTR Amendment 2015-03	September 2017

Appendix B: Travel Management Center Ticketing Procedures

A. Air Travel

1. General Information:

- a. VA travelers will select the method of transportation that is most advantageous to the Government. Travelers will obtain the lowest available fare that will adequately provide the necessary transportation when making their travel arrangements in VA's travel system.
- b. After all reservation selections are made, the traveler/alternate preparer should review the trip details on the "Review and Modify Trip" page. Upon review of the travel selections, changes should be made as needed. The traveler/alternate preparer will carefully read and take note of the important "Ticket by Date" information displayed and the general fare rules.
- c. Upon the completion of the reservation, the traveler/alternate preparer will receive an email from the VA's travel system and/or the Travel Management Center (TMC) provider which includes reservation information. The traveler/alternate preparer should verify the itinerary information is correct and populated onto the TA. The traveler/alternate preparer may receive a message from the TMC indicating the reservation was unavailable or the fare has expired (non-contract/ restricted fares) and to select another option. At this time, the traveler/alternate preparer should log into VA's E-Gov Travel Service (ETS) to select another fare.

2. Government Contract Fares:

- a. The TA will be approved promptly to allow the TMC to perform the ticketing process. Approved fully refundable contract transportation reservations are ticketed 72 hours (three (3) days) before departure.
- b. When the travel itinerary has a combination of government contract and non-contract/restricted fares, the more restrictive (i.e., non-contract/restricted) fare rules will dictate the ticketing requirements and will require government contract fares to be ticketed within 24 hours or less.
- c. Government contract fares are fully refundable when canceled.

3. Non-Contract/Restricted Fares:

- a. TAs containing Non-Contract/Restricted Fares (Lowest Available Fares) need to be approved and ticketed within 24 hours or less from the reservation time.

- b. Fares are not guaranteed until ticketed.
- c. In the event the TA is canceled, the traveler will receive a credit from the airline for future travel. The cost of exchanging the canceled ticket for a future restricted ticket currently averages \$150.
- d. When a future TDY has been approved and the TA has been created in OBT, the traveler will contact the TMC directly for travel reservations to allow for use of a previous credit.
- e. The TMC will apply the credit to the new travel itinerary. This process will also result in additional TMC transaction fees (non-self-service fee).
- f. The traveler is ultimately responsible for ensuring a credit refund is used on the next available travel episode.

B. Train Travel

When making train reservations through the OBT or the TMC, the traveler/alternate preparer will contact the TMC using one of the options listed below, regardless of the payment method (CBA or IBA travel card):

- Travelers may pick up the ticket at the train station ticket counter or the kiosk at the train station. This option requires the 3-digit card verification value code on the back of the card as well as the ZIP code of the billing address for the credit card being used;
- Travelers may have a paper ticket issued before departure. This option will incur a non-self-service transaction fee plus a delivery fee. Courier service has limited delivery areas; and
- U.S. mail delivery requires tickets to be issued at least 5 business days before the travel date. U.S. mail delivery is not guaranteed for on-time delivery. This option requires the three (3) digit card verification value code, ZIP code of the billing address for the credit card being used, and the name and mailing address where the ticket will be sent.

Appendix C: Sample Government Operated Vehicle (GOV) Commitment Form

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date:

From: <Employee's Name and Position>

Subj: Commitment to Use Government-Furnished Automobiles

To: <Approving Official's Name and Position>

1. I hereby agree to use a government-furnished automobile whenever it is determined that an automobile is required for official local and/or temporary duty travel. I understand that if a government-furnished automobile is not available; I will be reimbursed *<insert mileage rate as if a privately-owned vehicle is determined to be most advantageous>* ____ cents per mile. I also understand that if a government-furnished automobile is available, and I am permitted to use a privately-owned automobile at my request, my mileage reimbursement will be *<insert reduced mileage rate for an employee with a signed commitment letter but chooses to use a privately-owned vehicle>* ____ cents per mile.

2. This memorandum will be rescinded one year from the date signed or when new mileage reimbursement rates are published by the General Services Administration, whichever occurs earlier.

<Employee's signature>

<Approving Official signature>

Appendix D: Constructive Travel

A. Transportation Mode

A cost comparison of travel expenses must be included in the TA when a traveler uses an alternate method of travel rather than the commonly accepted method, for example the traveler selects:

- POV versus GOV;
- Rental car (FTR 301-2.5(g));
- POV versus rental car;
- POV versus special conveyance to and from a common carrier terminal or for TDY location official travel.

Properly prepared cost comparisons will include all en-route expenses and expenses required at the TDY location for both the standard mode of travel and the alternate mode of travel being considered. A constructive travel cost comparison can be provided as a word document or excel spreadsheet except for the below instances:

- For POV in comparison to an authorized common carrier, VA Form 10079, Cost Comparison Worksheet for Privately Owned Vehicle versus Common Carrier Transportation should be used; and
- For personal travel in conjunction with TDY, VA Form 10079A, Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet should be used.

B. Constructive Travel Considerations

Constructive travel helps the AO determine the best way for travel to be performed and whether to limit the traveler's reimbursement to the costs associated with the standard mode of travel. Factors that must be considered as part of the calculation are:

- En-route and TDY location transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses;
- Business-class accommodations versus the cost of coach-class accommodations, plus the cost of reimbursements in conjunction with a rest stop (e.g., per diem, hotel costs, and transportation fees);
- Privately owned vehicle instead of authorized mode including POV round trip mileage reimbursement and other POV reimbursable expenses (e.g., tolls, parking) consideration;
- Per diem allowances incurred during travel days consideration;
- Potential rest stop consideration using the 14-hour rule;
- The trip is unexpected and or the purpose and urgency of the trip may not be delayed or postponed, and the traveler is unable to schedule either a rest stop en-route or an earlier flight that would allow a rest period before reporting for duty;
- Use of an uncommon mode of transportation; and

- Local business rules may also determine the best way to perform travel.
- C. Constructive travel is required to include expenses for the following travel segments:
- Travel from the trip start location to the first TDY location;
 - Travel within a TDY location;
 - Travel from one TDY location to another; and
 - Travel from the last TDY location to the trip end location.
- D. Constructive travel Government costs will include:
- .When the common carrier is an airline or train, the round trip YCA contract fare plus taxes will be used for consistency, but if there is no City Pair contract servicing the official duty station and the TDY location, the lowest available government unrestricted fare will be used;
 - Baggage fees if the airline charges for baggage;
 - The most cost advantageous method of transportation to/from the common carrier terminal, e.g., POV costs, including mileage, tolls, most advantageous available parking; POV round-trip drop off, including mileage and tolls; or estimated round trip taxi or TNC fare to and from the common carrier terminal, including allowable tip (for further information on tips, refer to VA Financial Policy Volume XIV Chapter 4, Miscellaneous Travel Expenses); and
 - Per diem, most cost advantageous ground transportation at the TDY site for official travel, and other miscellaneous travel expenses as deemed required for the mission.
- In determining the most cost advantageous method for Government constructive cost, mission requirements are a factor.
- E. The following constructive travel POV actual costs incurred may be reimbursed not to exceed (NTE) the government estimated common carrier constructive travel cost:
- Mileage reimbursement for the travel segments involved based on the full GSA POV mileage rate;
 - Other POV reimbursable expenses (e.g., tolls, parking); and
 - Per diem allowances incurred during travel days.
- F. In addition to limiting transportation-related costs, it may be necessary to adjust the en-route per diem entitlements as part of the constructed travel process:
- If travel by air is the standard mode, then only one day of allowable travel (and related per diem) is typically authorized when traveling in CONUS and the AO will ensure that per diem entitlements are excluded correctly for any excess travel days included in the TA; and/or
 - If chargeable as leave, per diem, will be excluded from those excess days on the travel plan.

G. Personal travel in conjunction with TDY requirements:

1. Personal travel in conjunction with TDY must be identified under comments by the traveler.
2. When a traveler is taking personal leave to extend their stay at the TDY site, at either the beginning or end of their TDY, a constructive travel cost comparison is required to be made between the total cost (including taxes) of the airfare for the authorized official travel date and the total cost of the airfare for the travel date change due to personal travel.
 - a. If traveling to and from an authorized TDY location, VA's official travel system is required to be used but any differences in fares between the original travel date and the extended travel date must be reimbursed to VA by the traveler, following FTR § 301-2.4 and § 301-10.8.

Documentation of the compared fares (e.g., screenshots) are required to be uploaded into the TA, and the personal travel identified under comments.

- b. If a personal travel date change allows a YCA or CA to be reserved, a screen shot of the reserved flight must be attached to the TA to document no additional cost was incurred.
3. When traveling to or from a location other than your authorized official duty station or TDY site (refer to FTR § 301-10.7), a cost comparison form VA Form 10079a, Personal Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel Cost Comparison Worksheet, is required to determine the constructive cost for limiting reimbursement of costs incurred for personal travel following FTR § 301-10.8. The VA Form 10079a is required to be uploaded into the TA.
4. The VA travel system may not be used to purchase a flight from or to an unauthorized alternate location.