Financial Policy

Volume XIV
Travel

Chapter 7
Local Travel

Approved:

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And Acting Chief Financial Officer

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CHAPTER 7

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0701 Overview

This chapter establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) financial policies and procedures regarding local travel. Local travel at the official station includes official travel within the vicinity of the official duty station; specifically within 50 miles of an employee’s residence (known as the 50-Mile Rule) or the geographic boundaries as defined by the station. Local travel will generally not include lodging, M&IE (meals and incidental expenses) or expenses incurred for rental of a vehicle to conduct authorized official business, unless authorized as outlined in this chapter.

The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), as prescribed under 41 C.F.R. Chapters 300-304, delegates authority to agencies to define a local radius for official business travel either at or in the vicinity of the official duty station within which per diem will not be allowed. Established mileage radii must be uniform for overtime in accordance with 29 U.S.C. § 201, Fair Labor Standards Act, and travel allowance purposes in accordance with 5 C.F.R. § 550.112, Computation of Overtime Work. More information regarding overtime compensation can be found in Vol XV Ch. 6, Payroll Payments.

Union rights and privileges related to travel expenses, as defined in Union agreements, do not supersede the regulations contained in the FTR.

0702 POLICIES

070201 AUTHORITY FOR LOCAL TRAVEL.

A. VA employees are required to commute to and from their official station at their own expense. When an employee performs official duty at an alternate duty site within the geographic boundaries as defined by the station or within 50 miles of their residence, reimbursement for transportation expenses will be limited to those expenses in excess of the normal daily commute.

Local travel is defined as travel within the local radius of the official station AND travel within the 50-mile radius of the employee’s residence. For example, a VACO employee has training in Baltimore. Baltimore is outside the local radius for VACO employees; however, the employee lives 25 miles from Baltimore. Travel to Baltimore for this employee would be considered local travel, and the employee would not be entitled to per diem expenses (reference Appendix A, Local Travel Examples).

Where an employee’s regularly scheduled duties involve assignments to which he or she commutes daily from his/her official station or residence, the travel is no different than travel required of an employee in reporting to his/her permanent duty station (52 Comp. Gen. 446). For example, if an employee is regularly scheduled to perform work at their permanent duty station at a VA medical center on Monday and Tuesday, and is scheduled to perform work at the consolidated mail-order pharmacy Wednesday through Friday, travel to both locations is considered a normal transportation expense and is not in excess of their daily commute.
B. Field Facility Directors and the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Business Operations in VA’s Central Office (VACO) will determine the area to be covered by local travel by using the 50-Mile Rule or geographic boundaries as defined by their respective stations. The local radius cannot exceed 50 miles. For example, VACO has defined its local travel area as the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia; and all cities now or hereafter existing in Maryland or Virginia within the combined geographic area of said counties.

C. VA will provide mass transportation tokens and/or tickets for local travel when practicable and will also reimburse local travel expenses for privately-owned vehicles, taxis and other expenses as discussed in 070502B. VA employees may also be reimbursed for excess local travel expenses under 41 C.F.R. Chapters 300-304.

070202 ACTIONS FOR LOCAL TRAVEL.

A. Approval. VA supervisors or delegated authorities must approve local travel expenses with a written or electronic authorization (i.e., memorandum or email) prior to incurring local expenses. The VA Secretary Memorandum, “Essential Employee Travel (VAIQ# 7803910)”, dated June 29, 2017, only applies to temporary duty (TDY) official travel not local official travel (reference Vol XIV Ch. 1, Travel Administration). A travel authorization in VA’s travel system will not be issued for strictly local travel expenses, but may be required in certain situations (e.g., approved rental vehicle). VA may approve a specific authorization for reimbursement of travel expenses after the travel has been completed, with proper justification.

B. Local Travel Expenses.

1. VA will approve local public transportation when practicable. Tokens, transit cards and/or tickets may be issued to employees for local travel. When tokens and/or tickets are not furnished, employees will be reimbursed for expenses that exceed their normal commuting cost. For more information regarding the financial policies and procedures of the VA transit benefit program, refer to Volume III, Chapter 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program.

2. VA will first use Government-owned vehicles (GOV) for local travel whenever an automobile is required, authorized and available.

3. VA will reimburse employees for privately-owned vehicle (POV) travel to the extent that allowable costs exceed the employee’s normal commuting expenses between his or her residence and the official duty station.

4. VA will allow the use of taxis if the employee does not have a Government vehicle available and/or a Government-provided shuttle, or mass transportation cannot be used for local travel.
5. VA Approving Officials (AO) may approve the use of a rental vehicle for local travel. A travel authorization in the travel system must be issued for all rental vehicle expenses. All receipts associated with rental vehicles must be attached or faxed into the travel system.

6. VA may authorize the actual cost of lodging and/or meal(s) expenses (not per diem) in the local area only when one of the following exceptions listed below applies:

   a. Under 5 U.S.C. § 4109, (a)(2)(F), Government Employees Training Act (GETA), VA may approve the cost incurred (not per diem) for lodging and/or meals in their defined local area for employees to obtain training or for employees supporting the training, when a determination has been made these expenses are a necessary expense of the training. A temporary duty (TDY) is not required to reimburse local lodging and/or meal expenses under GETA. Reference Section 070502C for approval requirements.

   b. Under 5 U.S.C. § 4110 Expenses of Attendance at Meetings, VA may reimburse the actual cost for occasional meals incurred in the local area at a conference or a non-VA scheduled meeting when conditions specified in Section 070502D are met.

C. Processing Local Travel Expenses.

1. VA’s travel system must be used to process all local travel claims.

2. VA will require receipts for all other single expenses when the expense is greater than $75. An employee may aggregate all other local expenses when each individual expense is under $75.

3. VA AO’s will review local travel claims for proper reimbursement to employees.

4. VA will pay reimbursable amounts by direct deposit to the employee’s financial institution.

5. Employees may use the Individually-Billed Account (IBA) travel card to pay for approved transportation expenses within the local commuting area whenever possible. The employee is responsible for paying the servicing bank directly for any charges made to the IBA Travel Card. Local travel claims in the travel system do not have the split disbursement feature. Reimbursement for all approved expenses will be made directly to the employee by electronic fund transfer (EFT).

0703 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES

070301 Executive Order 13150, Federal Workforce Transportation

070302 29 U.S.C. Chapter 8, Fair Labor Standards

070303 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41, Government Employees Training Act (GETA)
070304 5 U.S.C. § 4101 Definition of Training

070305 5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a Conference is a Training Activity

070306 5 U.S.C. § 4110 Expenses of Attendance at Meetings

070307 41 C.F.R. Chapters 300-304, Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)

070308 5 C.F.R § 550.112, Computation of Overtime Work

070309 General Services Administration (GSA) Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Reimbursement Rates

070310 52 Comptroller General Decision 446 (B-181347), Overtime Compensation for Travel

070311 VA Handbook 5011, Hours of Duty and Leave

070312 Civilian Board of Contract Appeals, 15655-TRAV, Anthony Milano, November 2001

070313 Civilian Board of Contract Appeals, 16069-TRAV, Robert M. Malone Jr., August 2003

070314 General Services Board of Contract Appeals 15548-TRAV et al

0704 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

070401 The Assistant Secretary for Management/Chief Financial Officer (CFO) oversees all financial management activities relating to the Department’s programs and operations, as required by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and 38 U.S.C. § 309. Specific responsibilities include the direction, management and provision of policy guidance and oversight of VA’s financial management personnel, activities and operations. The CFO establishes financial policy, systems and operating procedures for all VA financial entities and provides guidance on all aspects of financial management.

070402 Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Chief Financial Officers, Fiscal Officers, Chief Accountants, Chiefs of Finance Activities and other key officials are responsible for ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures set forth in this chapter. The authority delegated to Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials to approve the “necessary expenses of training” under GETA, must only be given on GETA requests in compliance with Section 070202B6a and Section 070502C.
070403 The Office of Finance, Office of Financial Policy (OFP) is responsible for developing, coordinating, reviewing, evaluating, and issuing VA financial policies, including those that impact financial systems and procedures for compliance with all financial laws and regulations. OFP is also responsible for working with the Office of Inspector General’s independent contract auditors on VA’s annual Consolidated Financial Statements audit and preparing and reviewing Consolidated Financial Statements, Notes and Required Supplementary Information.

070404 Office of Human Resources Administration (HRA) is responsible for determining if an event is classified as a bona-fide training event as specified in 5 U.S.C. § 4101 Definition of Training, and 5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a Conference is a Training Activity. HRA concurrence must be provided before an approval request for GETA can be forwarded for approval.

0705 PROCEDURES

070501 APPROVAL FOR LOCAL TRAVEL

A. VA employees will pay for their own commuting expenses, including those occasions when they work overtime or are called back to work to perform involuntary, unscheduled overtime duty, except when a VA official approves the reimbursement of excess commuting expenses. If it is not practicable or possible to obtain such authorization prior to travel, the employee’s supervisor may approve a specific authorization for reimbursement of travel expenses after travel has been completed.

B. Field Facility Directors and the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Business Operations in VACO will determine the area to be covered by local travel, as prescribed by the Federal Travel Regulation under 41 C.F.R. Chapters 300-304. VA will determine the local travel area in consideration of the normal commuting area of the facility and the corporate limits of the city or town in which the facility is located or a mileage radius measured from the official duty site normally not to exceed a 50-mile radius. VA will use the defined official duty station as the guiding principle to determine when travel is either a normal commuting expense or a travel expense.

C. VA will provide mass transportation tokens and/or tickets to employees for local travel when it is practicable and permits accomplishment of official business. VA will also reimburse local travel expenses related to the use of privately-owned vehicles, Government-owned vehicles, and taxis as well as other expenses in excess of an employee’s normal commuting expenses as discussed in Section 070502B.

070502 ACTIONS FOR LOCAL TRAVEL.

A. Approval.

1. VA employees will obtain written or electronic authorization (i.e., memorandum or email) from the supervisor or delegated AO prior to incurring local travel expenses. If it
is not practicable or possible to obtain such authorization prior to travel, the employee’s agency may approve a specific authorization for reimbursement of travel expenses after travel has been completed. A travel authorization must be issued in the travel system for local official rental vehicle expenses.

2. VA AO’s will approve reimbursement for travel expenses in excess of normal commuting costs in the official duty station area for any official travel between:

a. Office/point of duty and other place of business;

b. One place of business and another place of business; or

c. Residence and place of business other than the office or point of duty.

3. If approved, VA will authorize and reimburse expenses associated with an official rental car for local travel through a travel authorization in the travel system prior to incurring such expenses.

4. VA employees are responsible for commuting to and from their official station. This responsibility applies to regular work days as well as non-work days (i.e., weekends or holidays). For example, an employee is not reimbursed mileage when called into work on a holiday or Saturday (non-work day) (reference Civilian Board of Contract Appeals Decisions 15655-TRAV and 16069-TRAV). The AO who has the authority to direct the employee to perform the overtime work will approve any reimbursement in excess of their normal commuting expenses when the employee is:

a. Officially approved to work outside of his or her regular working hours (e.g., weekend) (see Appendix A, Example 6a);

b. Dependent on public transportation for travel and traveling during hours of infrequently scheduled public transportation (reference Appendix A, Local Travel Examples, Example 6b).

For more information regarding overtime compensation reference Vol XV, Payroll.

B. Local Travel Expenses.

1. Transit Tokens/Tickets/Cards. VA travelers will use mass transportation when it is practicable and permits accomplishment of official business. VA will furnish tokens, cards and/or tickets for local travel whenever possible. When tokens and/or tickets are not furnished, employees will be reimbursed for expenses that exceed their normal commuting cost.

a. VA-designated personnel will procure and maintain mass transportation tokens, cards and/or tickets for use of authorized local travel by employees. Requests for quantities of tokens and/or tickets for transportation will be made on VA Form 3079,
Request for Tokens or Tickets (Appendix B, VA Form 3079), to the official authorized to issue tokens and/or tickets.

(1) VA Form 4530, Accountability Record for Tokens or Tickets (reference Appendix C, VA Form 4530), will be used to maintain records of receipt and issuance of tokens and/or tickets. Tokens, cards and tickets will be kept in a locked receptacle.

(2) VA issuing officials will contact carriers to determine automatic expiration dates and will periodically check tokens and tickets to ensure they are used before the expiration date or turned in for redemption.

(3) VA-designated officials in the issuing office will audit tokens, cards and tickets on a monthly basis

b. VA will provide a "transit pass" transportation fringe benefit program for its qualified Federal employees’ regular commuting costs. For more information on this program, reference Vol III, Ch. 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program. If the employee normally uses a mass transportation system for his or her daily commute, only the excess cost above and beyond daily commuting cost will be claimed as a local travel expense.

2. Government-Owned Vehicle (GOV). VA will use Government-owned vehicles as the first resource for official travel performed locally or within commuting distance when an automobile is required in order to fully utilize the Government fleet and lower costs. VA employees must hold a valid state, District of Columbia or territorial motor vehicle operator’s license to operate a GOV. If a GOV is unavailable, a rental car or POV may be used. Vol XIV, Ch. 3, Transportation Expenses, discusses detailed policies and procedures relating to GOV.

3. Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV). VA will reimburse employees for privately-owned vehicle travel when allowable costs exceed the employee’s normal commuting expenses between his or her residence and the official duty station to include:

a. Privately-owned vehicle (POV) mileage reimbursement rates as established by the General Services Administration (i.e., POV as advantageous or when a Government-owned vehicle is not available, or POV in lieu of Government-owned vehicle);

b. Parking;

c. Bridge and road tolls; and

d. Other local transportation expenses.

Mileage payments and expense reimbursement will only be paid to the employee who owns and incurs the POV operating expenses, regardless of the number of passengers
who accompany the employee or whether passengers contribute funds to defray POV operating expenses.

4. Taxis. VA will allow the use of taxis if the employee does not have a GOV available and/or a Government-provided shuttle, or mass transportation cannot be used for local travel.

5. Rental Vehicles. VA AO’s may approve the use of a rental vehicle for local travel. In this case, a travel authorization must be prepared for local travel.

6. Non-Motorized Bicycles. VA employees must complete a bicycle safety training course in the state or district from which he/she commutes. Both the rider and bicycle shall be subject to the laws and regulations applicable to their commuting area. Each bicycle and rider shall be equipped with safety equipment as required. VA will not reimburse bicycle commuters for violations incurred.

Reimbursement for bicycle use will be at the prorated daily rate based on established amounts in VA Handbook 0634, Transit Benefit Bicycle Program. An employee cannot claim bicycle reimbursement for the same days under both the Transit Benefit Bicycle Program and under a local travel claim.

C. Exceptions for Authorizing Lodging and/or Meal Expenses in the Local Area Under GETA.

1. The VA Secretary (SECVA) has the authority to determine which expenses constitute “the necessary expenses of the training” under GETA, 5 U.S.C. 4109, (a)(2)(F). The SECVA has delegated this authority to the VA Deputy Secretary (DEPSECVA), who in turn has re-delegated this authority to the Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials, with no further re-delegation.

When exercising this authority Senior Executives must minimize the cost for lodging and/or meals to the Government. GSA locality rates are a baseline for evaluating the lodging and/or meal cost required to be identified in the approval memorandum. Memorandums which do not cite event specific justifications for lodging and/or meals in accordance with Section 070502C3 below should be returned for corrective action.

For VA sponsored or co-sponsored training events with attendees or support personnel from different administrations, the VA organization hosting the training will approve which expenses constitute "the necessary expenses of the training" under GETA for all attendees and required support personnel. Advance approval documentation and reimbursement instructions must be provided to the local attendees, and support personnel as applicable, when a determination has been made the cost(s) for lodging and/or meals are reimbursable.

2. The event organizers should consult the Office of General Counsel (OGC) for legal guidance if needed. OGC has opined that appropriated funds may be used to finance
overnight lodging and meals for VA employees at their duty stations where the SECVA or his delegatee determines such expenses are necessary expenses incident to an authorized training program under 5 U.S.C. § 4109;

3. The cost of lodging and/or meals (not per diem) may be authorized as a necessary expense for local employees attending or supporting a GETA training event. Procedures for requesting this exception are provided in Appendix D, Procedures for Requesting Approval for the Necessary Expenses of Training. To obtain approval for the necessary expenses of training the following conditions/justifications must apply and be included in the approval memorandum specific to the training event:

a. The event must be classified as a bona-fide training event as specified in 5 U.S.C. § 4101 Definition of Training, and 5 U.S.C. § 410.404, Determining if a Conference is a Training Activity. VA Central Office, Office of Human Resources Administration (HRA) must concur on the determination.

b. For authorizing lodging in the local area all training participants and support personnel must be required by VA to stay in the same local hotel to foster the participation in daytime and evening activities in order to achieve the objectives of the training. Local employees who are required to provide support at a GETA training event may be authorized lodging only when lodging is essential to the training and necessary due to the specific mission requirements in support of the training.

- Approval of lodging for attendees and/or support personnel does not automatically provide approval for meals. Event specific justification as a necessary expense of the training must be provided for each expense type separately; and

- Unusual work days (i.e., extended hours) alone are not sufficient for approval for lodging and/or meal expenses. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) long recognized that employees are not entitled to reimbursement of subsistence costs at the official station because of unusual working conditions. GSA Board of Contract Appeals' decisions are consistent with GAO rulings (reference GSBCA 15548-TRAV et al).

c. Meals may be authorized for attendees and support personnel in the local area when a written justification, citing event specific requirements, substantiates the partaking of meals is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training; such as a guest speaker or the objectives of the training (workshop) are part of the scheduled agenda to be delivered at the same time that a meal is provided.

4. When the cost of lodging and/or meals has been authorized as a “necessary expense of training” under GETA, employees may claim the cost incurred not to exceed the negotiated or stated amount on the approval letter, and must attach to their local travel claim a copy of the signed approval memorandum in addition to the lodging and/or meal receipts, regardless of amount, for reimbursement.
D. Reimbursement of Occasional Meals in the Local Area at Conferences or Non-VA Meetings.

1. As a general rule, VA may not pay a traveler’s subsistence expenses (per diem) for a meal(s) within the defined local area of their official station. Organizers holding VA meetings in the local area of the official station must schedule time for attendees to obtain their meal(s) at no expense to the government. However, in accordance with Comptroller General decisions interpreting 5 U.S.C. § 4110, Expenses of Attendance at Meetings, VA may reimburse VA employees the cost of a meal(s) consumed near the official station under certain circumstances.

2. An AO may authorize the use of appropriated funds for the expense of a meal(s), regardless of whether the conference or non-VA scheduled meeting takes place within the employee’s duty station area, under the following circumstances:

   a. If a single registration fee is charged covering both attendance and meals, and no separate charge is made for meals, the VA may pay the full registration fee using a Government Purchase Card when the conference or non-VA meeting is related to agency functions or management, under the legal authority of 5 U.S.C. § 4110; or

   b. If a separate charge is made for meals, the VA may pay for the cost of the meal(s) (not M&IE) on a local travel claim, under the legal authority of 5 U.S.C. § 4110, only if there is documentation or an administrative determination all three of the following conditions exist:

      (1) The meal(s) are incidental to the conference or meeting;

      (2) Attendance of the employee at the meal(s) is necessary for full participation in the business of the conference or meeting; and

      (3) The employee is not free to take the meal(s) elsewhere without being absent from essential formal discussions, lectures, or speeches concerning the purpose of the conference or meeting.

Absent the supporting documentation in VA’s travel system to show what is listed in 2.(1) thru 2.(3) above, VA may not reimburse the employee for the meal(s).


3. When an employee is designated to attend a conference or non-VA meeting in their local area as a VA representative by the SECVA, DEPSECVA, an Under Secretary, an Secretary, Other Key Officials, or a Field Facility Director, and either condition provided above in paragraph D.2.(1) or (2) applies, reimbursement of a meal may be authorized.
The documentation designating the employee to attend must be attached to the local travel claim.

4. When an employee is on local travel and authorized reimbursement of meal costs under this paragraph, the employee must claim the local meal(s) expense on a local travel claim using VA’s travel system. The employee will identify the conference or meeting attended and who sponsored the conference, include documentation under this paragraph for incurring the cost, list the type of meal consumed (lunch, dinner, etc.) and itemize the actual meal(s) cost(s) that was incurred. Receipts are required to be attached, regardless of amount.

F. Processing Local Travel Expenses.

1. Local Travel Claims. All local travel claims will be processed in VA’s travel system. Employees will submit local travel claims at least every 30 days and in the fiscal year in which an expense is incurred.

Approved local travel expenses charged to the employee’s IBA travel card must be paid by the employee directly to the contractor bank. There is no split disbursement feature for a local travel claim. Payment must be made by the bank statement due date regardless of whether the local travel claim has been submitted and approved.

2. Receipts.

a. VA will require receipts for all other single expenses when the expense is greater than $75. VA will require that additional individual expenses greater than $75 be accompanied by a receipt and listed separately.

b. AO’s may require a receipt and justification for any expense, including those below the threshold, based on official local written organizational policy.

c. VA employees will attach (fax or scan) all required receipts in VA’s travel system before submitting the local travel claim to their AO.

d. If a receipt cannot be produced, VA employees will provide a written statement in lieu of a valid receipt. This statement will describe the circumstances, explaining why a receipt cannot be provided, and contain all of the information that would be included in a valid receipt, such as the service provider’s name and address, date(s) of service, itemized expenses and total amount paid.

e. Acceptable evidence for POV ground mileage will include odometer readings of actual and necessary distance traveled for conducting official business. A comparison of actual mileage will be made against the number of miles calculated using Mapquest® as the principal standard for determining approved reimbursement. Other standards (e.g., Rand McNally, Yahoo) may be used if data is not available in Mapquest.com®. When the deviation exceeds 5 percent between the actual and
standard (rounded up to the nearest mile), justification must be provided to the authorizing official.

3. Review. VA AO’s will review local travel claims submitted by employees for reimbursement. VA AO’s will return the local travel claim to the traveler for clarification or justification within three (3) business days. VA AO’s will forward approved local travel claims to the VA travel technician or VA’s travel system to ensure payment within 30 calendar days. VA employees will include the written or electronic authorization received with the local travel claim.

4. Payment. VA will pay reimbursable amounts by direct deposit to the employee’s financial institution. Under normal conditions, properly prepared local travel claims will be paid within 30 days of receipt. For more detailed policies relating to direct deposit and EFT, reference Vol VIII, Ch. 2, Disbursement and Collection Requirements, and for payroll payments to employees, reference Vol XV, Ch. 6, Payroll Payments.

5. VA Individually-billed account (IBA) travel card. VA employees will use the IBA travel card to pay for approved transportation expenses within the traveler’s local commuting area when the employee has been given written or electronic authorization (i.e., memorandum or email).

   a. Approved use of an IBA Travel Card for local travel includes taxis, tolls, local transit, parking, rental vehicle, and gas purchases for rental vehicles.

   b. Unauthorized use of an IBA Travel Card for local travel includes ATM cash withdrawals, gas purchases for POV, and lodging and meals (see c. below for an exception) in addition to the unauthorized uses cited in Vol XVI, Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program.

   c. When local lodging and/or meal expenses are authorized in accordance with Section 070502, paragraphs C or D, the IBA Travel Card may be used to pay for those authorized expenses, in addition to any approved local transportation expenses.

Reference Vol XVI, Ch. 2, Government Travel Charge Card Program, for detailed procedures relating to use of the IBA Travel Card.

0706 DEFINITIONS

070601 Approving Official (AO). An employee with authority to approve or direct travel for official Government business by the agency head.

070602 Authorization (see “Travel Authorization”).

070603 Geographic Boundaries. The specific area defined by a field facility, when the 50-Mile Rule is not applicable, to set parameters for local travel purposes.
070604 Government-owned Automobile (GOV). An automobile owned by VA, assigned or dispatched to VA on a rental basis from a GSA Interagency Fleet Management Center, or leased by VA for a period of 30 days or longer from a commercial firm.

070605 Local Travel. Travel performed within an established local radius of the official duty station. The standard local radius will be 50 miles from the official station. A VA station may establish a local radius different from the standard radius based on counties, geographical boundaries or nearby cities. This local radius cannot exceed 50 miles, must be established in writing and approved by the Facility Director. For virtual employees, the local radius will be 50 miles from the virtual/mobile office.

070606 Local Travel Claim. Written request, supported by documentation and receipts, where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel.

070607 Mass Transportation. Any form of public transportation operated for use by the general public (i.e., buses, subways, ferries, commuter buses, trains and qualified van pools).

070608 Necessary Expenses. The standard for measuring the propriety of an expenditure not specified in a statute is referred to as the Necessary Expense Test. Under this test, the expenditure is permissible if it is reasonably necessary in carrying out an authorized function or will contribute materially to the effective accomplishment of that function and if it is not otherwise prohibited by law.

070609 Non-Motorized Bicycle. A bicycle that is human-powered and designed to transport by the act of pedaling.

070610 Official Duty Station. The corporate limits of the city or town and any other established areas in which the employee’s permanent work assignment is situated.

070611 Official Travel. Travel under an official travel authorization from an employee's official station or other authorized point of departure to a temporary duty location and return from a temporary duty location, between two temporary duty locations, or relocation at the direction of a Federal agency.

070612 Per Diem Allowance. A daily payment, also referred to as a subsistence allowance, 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.

070613 Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV). Any vehicle such as an automobile, 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.
070614 Rental Automobile (Government-Contract). An automobile obtained for short-term use from a commercial firm, as specified in the Federal Travel Directory, under the provisions of an appropriate General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Schedule contract.

070615 Telework Employee. A telework employee is one who performs work through the use of portable information technology and communications packages on a part-time basis. A teleworker is required to report to the official duty station based on the written agreement (VA Handbook 5011/5, Hours of Duty and Leave).

070616 Telework Office. A temporary location or environment, which may include customer sites, hotels, cars or at home, where a telework employee performs work through the use of portable information technology and communications packages (VA Handbook 5011, Part II, Chapter 4).

070617 Training. The process of providing for or making available to an employee and placing or enrolling the employee in a planned, prepared and coordinated program, course, or curriculum designed to improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance goals.

070618 Temporary Duty (TDY) Location. A place away from an employee's official station where the employee is authorized to travel.

070619 Travel Authorization. Written or electronic permission to travel on official business and may be Unlimited blanket, Limited blanket or Trip-by-trip.

070620 Travel System. The Government-contracted, end-to-end travel management service 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.

070621 Virtual Employee. An employee who performs work through the use of portable information technology and communications packages on a full-time basis. A virtual employee who works from the virtual/mobile office 5 days a week is not a teleworker as they perform permanent duties at a site other than the virtual/mobile office (VA Handbook 5011/5, Hours of Duty and Leave).

070622 Virtual/Mobile Office. A permanent worksite location or environment, which may include customer sites, another VA facility, or residence, where a virtual employee performs work through the use of portable information technology and communications packages (VA Handbook 5011, Part II, Chapter 4).
0707 RESCISSIONS

070701 VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Travel, Chapter 7, Local Travel, January 2013.

0708 QUESTIONS

Questions concerning these financial policies and procedures should be directed to:

VHA  VAFSCtravelpolicy@va.gov
VBA  TRAVEL.VBACO@va.gov
NCA  NCABudgetService@va.gov
OIT  VACOITTravel@va.gov
All Others  TravelPolicy@va.gov
## 0709 REVISIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Revision</th>
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<td>0701</td>
<td>Revised FTR supersedes Union agreements statement.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070202</td>
<td>Added local travel not subject to SECVA June 29, 2017 memo, “Essential Employee Travel”. Identified two conditions when the cost (not per diem) of lodging and/or meals can be authorized in the local area; Government Employee Training Act (GETA), and occasional meals, moved and updated from VoI XIV Ch. 2, Travel Per Diem. Under GETA added support personnel.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0703</td>
<td>Added law references for reimbursing cost of lodging and/or meals for two conditions in the local area.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0704</td>
<td>Added responsibilities and guidance for Senior Executive positions delegated approval of local lodging and meal expenses under GETA.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070502</td>
<td>Added paragraphs C and D, providing authority and approval request actions required for each condition referenced above in Section 070202, when the cost of lodging and/or meals (not per diem) can be reimbursed to VA employees. Under paragraph C, added condition for support personnel expenses, and OGC concurrence on use of appropriated funds. Updated delegation of authority for approval of lodging and/or meals under GETA, based on SECVA June 16, 2017 delegation. Removed requirement for a travel authorization for authorized GETA local travel, updating to submit all local travel claims in VA’s travel system with signed GETA approval memorandum.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0706</td>
<td>Added definition of Necessary Expenses to clarify GETA requirements, with links to definition in applicable sections.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Changed local expense voucher to local travel claim, a non-system specific term.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Effective Date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Replaced Per Diem in title with the Necessary Expenses of Training, and updated procedures to clarify approval request justification requirements.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Removed, all local travel claims are required to be submitted in VA’s travel system.</td>
<td>APS (047G)</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0701 Overview</td>
<td>Added paragraph relating to Union master agreements</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070201 Authority for Local Travel</td>
<td>Clarified local travel to apply to both official station local radius and employee’s residence local radius.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070202 Actions for Local Travel</td>
<td>Updated Vol III, Ch. 1, Transit Benefit and Bicycle Benefit Program title. Added employee responsibility for paying approved charges on IBA travel card.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070501 Approval for Local Travel</td>
<td>Included provision for post-travel approval.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070502 Actions for Local Travel</td>
<td>Added information on 6. Bicycles. Clarified 7. Approved Exceptions to Local Travel Per Diem. Removed parking receipt requirement of $25 to fall under $75 threshold. Updated approving officials review to 3 days to remain consistent for all local travel claims.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0706 Definitions</td>
<td>Added Approving Official, Authorization, Bicycle, GOV. Separated Telework and Virtual to provide clarity.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Added Procedures for Requesting Per Diem Approval in the Local Area</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Added copy of SF1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business.</td>
<td>APPS (047GA)</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A: LOCAL TRAVEL EXAMPLES

A. Example 1.

Situation: Lisa is stationed at the VA office in Cleveland. Her daily commute by POV is 30 miles round trip. Her boss wants her to go to a conference at a hotel in the local commuting area. The distance from Lisa’s home to the hotel is 50 miles round trip.

VA Reimbursement: Lisa would be reimbursed 20 miles net mileage over her normal daily commute.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Round trip from home to conference:} & \quad 50 \text{ miles} \\
\text{Less round trip from home to work:} & \quad -30 \text{ miles} \\
\text{Net mileage reimbursement:} & \quad 20 \text{ miles} \times \text{mileage rate}
\end{align*}
\]

B. Example 2.

Situation: Jill is stationed at the VA Medical Center in Kansas City. Her home is 20 miles from work. Jill’s boss wants her to attend a meeting at another agency in the afternoon (7 miles from work). Jill returns home from the meeting location (10 miles to home).

VA Reimbursement: Jill is not authorized for local mileage reimbursement, since the distance traveled is less than the ordinary round trip commuting distance to work.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Home to work:} & \quad 20 \text{ miles} \\
\text{Work to meeting:} & \quad 7 \text{ miles} \\
\text{Meeting to home:} & \quad 10 \text{ miles} \\
\text{Total mileage for day:} & \quad 37 \text{ miles}
\end{align*}
\]

Round trip from home to work: 40 miles

C. Example 3.

Situation: Gary is stationed at VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. He pays $10 a day out of pocket for Metro services. Gary’s boss wants him to attend a conference in Crystal City (30 miles from Gary’s home). Gary drives his car.
VA Reimbursement: Gary would be reimbursed 60 miles round trip reimbursement minus $10 a day Metro costs.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home to conference:</td>
<td>30 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference to home:</td>
<td>30 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mileage for day:</td>
<td>60 miles x mileage rate - $10 Metro costs benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Example 4a (Teleworker).

Situation: Sarah is a teleworker. She works from her virtual office (home) on Monday and Friday and reports to her official duty station on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Her home is 30 miles from the official duty station. Her boss wants Sarah to attend training on Monday and Tuesday. The training site is 20 miles from Sarah’s home.

VA Reimbursement: The reimbursement would not be calculated separately for Monday and Friday. The regular commute to the official station is always deducted.

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round trip home to training:</td>
<td>40 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less round trip home to work:</td>
<td>- 60 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mileage for the day:</td>
<td>- 20 miles (there is no reimbursement)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Example 4b (Teleworker).

Situation: John is a teleworker. He works from his virtual office (other than home) on Thursday and Friday and reports to his official duty station on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. His home is 10 miles from his virtual office and 43 miles from the official duty station. His boss wants John to attend a conference on Wednesday and Thursday. The conference is 25 miles from John’s home.

VA Reimbursement: The reimbursement would not be calculated separately for Wednesday and Thursday. The regular commute to the official station is always deducted.

Wednesday:

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round trip home to conference:</td>
<td>50 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less round trip home to work:</td>
<td>- 86 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mileage for the day:</td>
<td>- 36 miles (there is no reimbursement)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Thursday:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round trip home to conference:</td>
<td>50 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less round trip home to work:</td>
<td>- 86 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total mileage for the day:</td>
<td>- 36 miles (there is no reimbursement)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. Example 5a (Virtual Employee).

Situation: Charles is a virtual employee. He works from his virtual office (home) on a full time basis in Montgomery, Alabama. He is assigned to VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. His boss wants John to attend training on Monday. The training site is 20 miles from John’s home.

VA Reimbursement:

- Home to training: 20 miles
- Training to home: 20 miles
- Total mileage for the day: 40 miles x mileage reimbursement (There is no deduction for a daily commute as virtual office is home.)

G. Example 5b (Virtual Employee).

Situation: Pete is a virtual employee. He works from his virtual office (Memphis VA Medical Center) on a full time basis. He is assigned to VA Central Office in Washington, D.C. His home is 15 miles from his virtual office. His boss wants Pete to attend a conference on Wednesday. The conference is 25 miles from Pete’s home.

VA Reimbursement:

- Round trip home to conference: 50 miles
- Less round trip home to virtual office: - 30 miles
- Total mileage for the day: 20 miles x mileage reimbursement

H. Example 6a (Weekend/Non-Work Day Employee).

Situation: John is called into the office on Saturday (non-work day) by his supervisor. The office parking lot cost is $12 per day and John needs to park in the public parking lot incurring a cost of $20.

VA Reimbursement:

- Round trip home to office: 30 miles
- Less daily commute: - 30 miles
- Total mileage for the day: 0 miles (no reimbursement for commute)

Parking $20 - $12 = $8; reimbursed as cost in excess of daily commute.

I. Example 6b (Weekend/Non-Work Day Employee).

Situation: Susan is called into the office on Sunday (non-work day) by her supervisor. Susan’s only means of transportation into work is the public bus; she does not own a
car. The bus that services her home does not run on Sundays. Susan took a taxi into the office on Sunday.

VA Reimbursement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily cost of bus</td>
<td>$6.00 (round trip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Taxi on Sunday</td>
<td>$18.00 (round trip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reimbursement</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B: VA FORM 3079

[Image of VA FORM 3079]

**REQUEST FOR TOKENS OR TICKETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO (Official authorized to issue tokens or tickets)</th>
<th>DATE OF REQUEST</th>
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<th>KIND</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOKENS</td>
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<tr>
<td>TICKETS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**CERTIFICATION:** I certify that the tokens or tickets requested will be used for official business only.

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL**

**SIGNATURE OF PERSON RECEIVING TOKENS OR TICKETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE RECEIVED</th>
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<tbody>
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APPENDIX C: VA FORM 4530

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<tr>
<th>RECEIVED</th>
<th>ISSUED</th>
<th>BALANCE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ISSUED TO</th>
<th>SIGNATURE OF RECIPIENT</th>
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APPENDIX D: PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING APPROVAL FOR THE NECESSARY EXPENSES OF TRAINING IN THE LOCAL AREA

The instructions below are for submitting for approval of the necessary expenses for local area employees or support personnel who are required to attend a GETA event. (reference Section 070202C for approval guidance).

In preparing a request for approval, all justifications must cite specific activities of the training event to substantiate the expense as a “necessary expense of the training”. Simply citing policy to support the request is unacceptable and will not be authorized by the delegated Senior Executive.

Once concurrence is obtained from HRA the event is classified as a bona-fide GETA training, the requesting office will forward the approval memorandum to their respective Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official for signature. Once approval is obtained the requesting office must provide the signed approval memorandum to all authorized local travelers.

When approval is obtained, the employees specified will be reimbursed for the authorized lodging and/or meal expenses on a local travel claim. The signed approval memorandum must be attached to the local travel claim when submitted for approval and receipts are required, regardless of amount.

**Request for Approval.** The requesting office must prepare a memorandum including the following information:

1. **Training Information.** The number of attendees from the local area, and a separate number identifying any local support personnel, for whom lodging and/or meal(s) are being requested; the costs for lodging and for meals per attendee and support personnel, and the overall total cost for attendees, and total cost for support personnel the name of the training event, the dates of the event, and a brief description of event.

2. **Justification for Lodging and Meals.** The agenda or event specific information justifying attendees and support personnel to incur lodging (reference Section 070502C3b for guidance) and/or meals (reference Section 070502C3c for guidance).

3. **Local Travel Radius.** The local radius of the participant(s) official station and the location of the training as being within the local radius.

4. **Local Travel Policy Reference.** The current policy reference in this chapter on the exception for lodging and/or meals in the local area.

5. **Delegation Authority.** The current delegation of authority.
6. **Requirements for Authorization.** HRA has concurred the event has been classified as a bona-fide GETA Training Event; meals and lodging have independently been determined to be necessary expenses of training.

7. **Contact Information.** The requesting administration’s point of contact information.

**SAMPLE**

Department of Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date:

From: (Title of Requesting Official)

Subj: Approval of the Necessary Expenses of Training for Locally Based Employees (VA document processing system # if applicable)

To: (Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Other Key Official)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to request your approval for lodging and meal expenses for (enter # of attendees and # of support personnel) at the upcoming training event (name of training). The dates requested for lodging and/or meals are (include dates). (Provide brief description of the training).

2. The attendees (and support personnel) will participate in (indicate the event specific justification which would require attendance and necessitate the lodging under Section 070502C3b, and separately for meals under Section 070502C3c). (Add cost information for approval per procedure 1. Training Information).

3. The local travel radius for the official station is (indicate local radius). The location of the training is (indicate location) which falls within the local radius.

4. Employees are not entitled to per diem while in a local travel status. In accordance with VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Travel, Chapter 7, Local Travel, as an exception, VA may authorize the cost of lodging and/or meals as a “necessary expense of training” in the local area if an employee is attending or supporting a Government Employees Training Act (GETA) event (5 U.S.C. 41). The Office of Human Resources and Administration must determine if the event qualifies as a training event under GETA, based on the guidelines in 5 U.S.C. § 4101 and § 410.404.
5. In accordance with the VA Secretary and VA Deputy Secretary Memorandums, Delegation of Authority to Authorize Other Expenses for Training (Local Per Diem) (VAIQ# 7682265), June, 16, 2016, authorization to make this determination is delegated to Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials with no further re-delegation authorized.

6. The following requirements have been met for authorizing reimbursement of lodging and/or meals in the local area:

(a) The event has been classified as a bona-fide training event and concurred on by VA Central Office, Office of Human Resources and Administration;

(b) I have made the determination all (attendees and support personnel) are required to partake of meals and the associated cost is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training; and

(c) I have made the determination all (attendees and support personnel) are required to stay in the same local hotel is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training.

7. Should you have any additional questions or need additional information please contact (provide name, title, and contact information).

__________________________________________________________  ____________________________
(Executive or Event POC)                                      Date

Recommend: Approve / Disapprove

__________________________________________________________  ____________________________
(Name)                                                        Date
Assistant Secretary
   for Human Resources and Administration

Approve/Disapprove