

Travel Policy

ADOPTED BY LODI CITY COUNCIL
_____, 2025



1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Travel Policy is to establish responsibilities and guidelines for all officers, elected or appointed officials, staff, and persons in the service of the City of Lodi (hereinafter referred to as "Travelers") when attending business or professional conferences, training seminars, or other travel on authorized City business.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Travelers on official business for the City of Lodi. All travel arrangements, reconciliations and reimbursements shall be performed within the Approving Authority and in compliance with all federal and state regulations and laws, including the IRS regulations, Lodi Municipal Code, and this Travel Policy. All forms referenced in this policy (Business Expense Report, Mileage Reimbursement, Travel Authorization Form, Out-of-State/Out-of-Country Authorization, and Pre-Paid Lodging Certification) are available for download on the City of Lodi's Intranet site on the Finance Division page: <http://intranet/finance/finance.asp> , or upon request from Finance Division staff.

A. Definitions

1. Business Travel – authorized attendance at conferences, meetings, and seminars or authorized travel for any other purpose in connection with official City responsibilities. Business travel includes both day trips and trips requiring one or more overnight stays in connection with official representation of the City.
2. Local Travel – travel within a radius of 200 miles roundtrip from Lodi.
3. Out-of-Town Travel – travel greater than 200 miles roundtrip from Lodi.
4. Business Travel Period – period of time necessary to travel by the most cost effective and appropriate travel method to attend City business. Additional time required to travel as a result of the alternative travel methods selected by Travelers must be approved by the Department Head or Approving Authority prior to the time of booking.
5. Department Travel Coordinator – the person that a Department Head has designated to maintain and process travel arrangements and reimbursements for their department.
6. Mileage Allowance – the reimbursement paid to the Traveler for the use of his/her personal vehicle during travel on official City business. The mileage reimbursement rate will be the prevailing rate established by the IRS. The start and end point for calculating mileage shall start from the Lodi City Hall and return to the Lodi City Hall.
7. Allowable Expense – an expenditure deemed by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) as a stand-alone expense that is fully reimbursable and not included as an incidental expense under per diem rates.
8. Incidental Expense – federal regulations define "incidental expenses" as fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotels maids, stewards and stewardesses and others; transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken; and the mailing cost associated with filing travel vouchers.
9. Business Expense Report (BER) – report itemizing all business expenses incurred during the travel period. This report requires all receipts to be attached when submitted to Finance for reimbursement. BERs shall be submitted to the Finance Division within ten (10) working days of returning from travel. Travelers who fail to submit a travel reimbursement request within twelve (12) months of travel will not be eligible for reimbursement pursuant to Section 911.2 of the Government Code.
10. Travel Authorization Form – request for travel approval. This form shall be completed and approved by the Department Head, or Approving Authority prior to first day of the travel period and shall serve as the approval document retained for Traveler.

3. POLICY

Reimbursement of approved business-related expenses are available for any Traveler in the service of the City. Travelers must substantiate the expenses with original receipts. Expenses should be reasonable and shall not include personal items. A detailed record of all reimbursable expenses incurred during the travel period must be submitted on a Business Expense Report.

Travel associated with Peace Officer Standards Training (POST) shall be governed by the rules and regulations determined by POST.

In all instances, approval to incur any travel expenses shall be obtained from the Department Head or Approving Authority, prior to making travel arrangements. The approved Travel Authorization Form is required for the protection of the Traveler while traveling on behalf of the City.

A. Policy intent

The Travel Policy enunciated herewith shall be construed so that no Traveler shall suffer any undue loss while traveling on official City business.

1. California Government Code §53232.2

In accordance with California Government Code §53232.2(b), any local agency that reimburses members of a legislative body, including members of the City Council, for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official duties, is required to adopt a written policy specifying the types of occurrences that qualify a member of that legislative body to receive payment and or/reimbursement of expenses related to travel, meal, lodging, and other actual and necessary expenses.

City funds, equipment, supplies (including letterhead), titles, and staff time must only be used for authorized City business. Expenses incurred by officials of legislative bodies in connection with the following types of activities generally constitute authorized expenses, as long as other requirements of this policy are met:

- Official board, council, committee, commission meetings scheduled subject to the Brown Act; and
- Attending conferences, seminars, workshops or educational events related to the business or operations of such groups; and
- Attending legislative and educational seminars, workshops and training, designed to improve legislative body expertise and information levels of City boards, commissions, committees, councils and affiliated City staff providing primary support will be offered in-house ethics training and will not be reimbursed for publicly offered ethics training classes; and
- Participating in regional, state and national organizations whose activities affect the City's interests; and
- Opportunities to meet with city, county, state, or federal officials to discuss legislative body interests and to implement City-approved strategy for attracting or retaining businesses to the City, which typically involve at least one staff member.

Expenditures not specifically covered by this list of occurrences will require prior approval by the City Council, or other legislative body action, at a public meeting before the expense is incurred.

Travel Authorizations and/or Business Expense Reports covered by this section will be documented and filed in a timely manner with the Finance Division of the Internal Services Department (Finance Division), as required by this Policy.

All documents related to reimbursable agency expenditures are public records subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Government Code §7920-7930).

Use of public resources or falsifying expense reports in violation of this policy may result in any or all of the following:

- loss of reimbursement privileges; and
- a demand for restitution to the appropriate legislative body; and
- the agency's reporting the expenses as income to the Traveler or elected official to state and federal tax authorities; and
- civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per day and three times the value of the resources used; and
- prosecution for misuse of public resources (Government Code §53232.4); and
- discipline, up to, and including, termination.

In accordance with Government Code §53232.3 (d), Council members shall provide a brief report on the meetings attended at City expense at the next available Council meeting. If multiple Council members attended the same meeting, a joint report may be made.

4. BUSINESS TRAVEL

A. Out-of-State/Out-of-Country Travel

All travel out-of-state or out-of-country must be pre-approved by the City Manager. All costs associated with obtaining a passport or immunizations required for out-of-country travel are not reimbursable. All unapproved out-of-state travel will not be reimbursable and those expenses will be the sole responsibility of the traveler.

B. Travel Authorizations

All travel requires authorization and must be approved prior to the first day of travel. The Department Travel Coordinator will complete the Travel Authorization Form and obtain approval from the Department Head, or its Approving Authority.

C. Approving Authority

All Travel Authorization Forms must be approved in advance by the Department Head or, in the absence of the Department Head, the person acting in their place. Department Head travel, including the Library Director, shall be approved by the City Manager, or their designee, in the absence of the City Manager. Council Appointee travel shall be approved by the City Manager, or their designee, in the absence of the City Manager. City Manager travel shall be approved by another Council Appointee. City Council travel shall be approved by the City Clerk, or the City Manager in the absence of the City Clerk.

The Finance Division is authorized to reimburse Travelers whose expenses are justifiable and in compliance with this policy. Any unresolved disputes between the Finance Division and the Traveler's department shall be resolved/approved by the City Manager. Disputes regarding reimbursement of Councilmember travel costs shall be heard by the Council in open session and resolved by a majority vote.

D. Cancellations

If cancellation occurs due to a City-related change, the department will be responsible for any cancellation charges incurred. If cancellation occurs at the Traveler's request, the Traveler will be responsible for all charges incurred and will be billed to the Traveler unless proper justification is provided and approved by the Department Head. Acceptable justifications are family death, illness, or family-related illness.

Any Cash Advances received must be returned to the Finance Division when an event is cancelled, postponed indefinitely, or another individual will be traveling on the City's behalf. **Under no circumstances** are Travelers to transfer a travel advance to another Traveler.

E. Meals

The Finance Division shall advance 100 percent of all meal expenses anticipated during the travel period that are not included in any other fees on a per diem basis. Per Diem is allowed for meals and incidental expenses. The Federal General Services Administration (GSA) establishes per diem rates for destinations within the Continental United States. As set by the GSA, the City will reimburse the Traveler a daily per diem rate equal to the GSA lowest tier rate for meals and incidental expenses, based on the travel destination, including taxes and gratuity. The rate will be adjusted down for partial days of travel and for meals included in conference registration fees. **No receipts** will be required for per diem travel advances. Current rates can be found on the Federal General Services Administration Per Diem website: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>.

Generally, airfare, lodging, car rental expenses, and reservation fees shall be paid via City-issued credit cards. When the lodging provider requires pre-payment, the Finance Division may issue a warrant payable to the lodging establishment. The department must present written documentation from either the lodging establishment or the conference materials that states the amount of the required pre-payment. The Traveler must sign a statement that they will not request reimbursement for any pre-paid expenses on a Business Expense Report. Any cash advance request must be reduced by the amount of all pre-paid expenses. Additionally, \$5.00 per day for incidental expenses may be requested as part of the cash advance.

Travelers may also request their airfare to be advanced, per diem, in lieu of paying via City-issued credit card. The Department Travel Coordinator shall submit documentation to the Finance Division showing the cheapest flight roundtrip to the Traveler's destination. The Finance Division shall issue the advanced airfare with the Traveler's per diem meals by warrant payable to the Traveler.

All cash advance requests shall be received by the Finance Division for processing a minimum of twenty (20) working days prior to any required action on the request, or as soon as may be practicable. Requests to attend meetings, conferences, or training must include documentation which indicates the meeting place, time and agenda, if available. Cash advances will not be issued prior to five (5) working days before expected travel and shall not be made for amounts less than \$100.00, unless adequate justification is submitted to show that undue hardship to the individual will result in the event the smaller advance is not made.

All per diem and cash advances will be mailed to the address of record of the Traveler. The Finance Division has the option of withholding advances if a previous advance is unsettled or if the Traveler has been notified of ineligibility for an extended period of time.

F. Lodging

Reimbursement for the cost of lodging is limited to the actual cost incurred and should not exceed the maximum GSA rates (domestic or foreign) excluding tax, per day. Government Rates should always be requested. The City is not responsible for luxury upgrades (ocean views, king-size beds, suites, etc.). In the event that the Traveler is attending a conference, the acceptable rate for lodging shall be the negotiated rate secured by the conference, regardless of cost. All exceptions shall be approved by the Approving Authority.

The City will allow a Traveler to arrive the evening prior to an event when the event location is a 90-minute or more drive from Lodi. Locations in the South Bay Area and in San Francisco are exceptions and will automatically qualify for an overnight stay. All other exceptions will require prior approval of the Approving Authority.

The City will not reimburse a Traveler for costs incurred for a stay at a room-sharing type of location (Air BnB-type site) that is not properly licensed through their respective city, county or state or one that does not pay Transient Occupancy Tax.

Most hotels offer self-parking while some require valet parking. The City preferred parking option is that which offers the lowest cost and will generally be the self-parking option. If valet parking is the only option, or the safest option that a hotel offers, reimbursement will be approved for the valet option.

When a companion accompanies a Traveler on official business, reimbursement for lodging will be at the lowest available single-occupancy rate for the accommodations. It is the Traveler's responsibility to obtain the lodging rates for both single and double occupancy accommodations and indicate those rates on the Business Expense Report.

G. Transportation

Generally, the method of travel will be by the most reasonable means available, taking into consideration requirements for reimbursement for lodging and Traveler time devoted to travel at the expense of performance of other duties.

The Department Travel Coordinator will arrange for reservations and tickets for approved travel authorizations approving air transportation. The lowest available fare will be used for air travel unless otherwise specifically authorized by the Approving Authority. As a general rule, Travelers will be expected to accept flights departing within two (2) hours of the desired departure time. Such a window may not be suitable for all situations.

The Department Travel Coordinator must carefully monitor flights with cancellation penalties. If a Traveler wishes to drive their personal vehicle in lieu of air travel and possibly a rental car, reimbursement will be authorized only up to the amount of the least expensive alternative. The request for reimbursement must include a printed copy of the quoted airfare as justification for the cost of air travel and the cost of the Traveler's mileage and attest to the least expensive alternative.

In some instances, train travel may be a viable alternative to air travel or car travel. The Department should evaluate the cost and time involved, prior to approval. In most instances it would be expected that the Traveler would incur additional taxi or rideshare fares at their destination. This cost should be included in the analysis. In addition, the time involved with the trip must be considered as a factor. A two-hour train trip to San Francisco is reasonable, but a 12-hour trip to San Diego would not be reasonable, unless the Traveler is taking vacation time en route.

Travelers on out-of-town trips should use public conveyances (taxis, rideshares, airport shuttles, buses, etc.) whenever such uses appear to be more economical than a rental car. Department Heads have discretion to approve rental cars which do not meet these criteria. A rental car should not be requested unless one or more of the following criteria are met:

- Multiple business meetings that require travel between points make use of public conveyance impractical.
- Three or more City Travelers are attending the same meeting and one rental car for the group would be more economical.
- It is less expensive to rent a car overall.

The Department Travel Coordinator will arrange for reservations only upon receipt of an approved travel authorization form. Car rental expenses are to be paid by City-issued credit card or the Traveler's personal credit card.

The Traveler must fill the gas tank before returning the car to avoid fuel surcharges. Fuel expenses will be reimbursed based upon the receipts provided. Exceptions to the use of self-service fueling will not be allowed unless the Traveler can demonstrate and justify the reasons for not using available self-service fuel dispensing facilities. In emergency situations, use of rental car company fueling options may be authorized by the Department Head.

Employees traveling on City business and renting a vehicle are required to purchase the **optional Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)** offered by the rental car agency at the time of rental.

The City's excess liability coverage extends to authorized employees operating rental vehicles for official business, so additional liability insurance (such as the Liability Insurance Supplement) is **not required** and **will not be reimbursed**.

However, the City's vehicle damage coverage does **not** apply to rental vehicles. Therefore, the **CDW must be purchased** to ensure coverage for damage to or theft of the rental vehicle. Reimbursement for CDW is authorized and should be submitted with appropriate rental documentation as part of the Business Expense Report. Failure to purchase CDW is a violation of this policy.

Traveling outside the city in City vehicles is the preferred method of travel after common carrier. The Fleet Services Division has a wide variety of vehicles available to Travelers. If more than one Traveler is traveling on the same trip, all reasonable efforts will be made to minimize transportation costs by using a single vehicle. Individuals that are not City Travelers or participants in City sponsored programs are prohibited from being transported in City-owned vehicles.

While City vehicle use is preferred, Department Head approval is required when the Traveler chooses to use a private vehicle. All private vehicle travel will be reimbursed at the current IRS approved mileage rate.

For the purposes of this Policy, a private vehicle must meet the following:

- The vehicle shall be a conventional four-wheel, enclosed vehicle; and
- The vehicle must be equipped with seat belts; and
- The vehicle must be in sound mechanical condition, adequate for providing required transportation in a safe manner and without unreasonable delay; and
- The vehicle must be insured to, at least, the state minimum required coverages; and
- Proof of Insurance - upon request, Travelers must provide current proof of insurance to the Risk Management Division or their department head; and
- Primary Coverage - when a Traveler uses a personal vehicle for City business, the Traveler's personal auto insurance is primary. The City does not provide coverage for physical damage to a Traveler's personal vehicle or for any liability arising out of personal use; and
- Reimbursement Does Not Imply Coverage - receipt of mileage reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle does not imply that the City has assumed liability or provided insurance coverage for such use; and
- Driver Responsibility - Travelers are responsible for ensuring their vehicle is in safe operating condition and complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

The approved method of travel may differ from that requested as deemed appropriate by the Department Head, or Approving Authority.

H. Authorized/Unauthorized Reimbursable Expenses

While traveling on official City business, the following expenses are reimbursable at actual cost **upon presentation of original receipts**:

- Necessary taxicab, rideshare, airport transportation, bus fares, shuttle charges, or bridge tolls, including tips. Transportation justifications should be noted on the receipts and/or maps (ex. Hotel to Airport, Airport to Conference, etc.).
- Conference or seminar registration fees and associated materials, which can be shown to be of extreme value to the participant in their work for the City. The decision to approve these expenses rests with the Department Head or, Approving Authority.
- Parking fees.
- Postage.
- In-flight internet is allowable for business purposes on flights two (2) hours or more.

Other justifiable expenses will be approved based on a review of special circumstances.

If a Traveler does not have a receipt for a travel-related item, a memo is required. The memo must include all details and circumstances for not having the receipt and what corrective action they will take to prevent its reoccurrence. The Traveler and Department Head, or Approving Authority, must sign the memo.

Note: Receipts are not required for meal reimbursements consistent with *Section 4(E)* of this policy.

While traveling on official City business, the following expenses are reimbursable at **actual cost, without receipts**:

- Metered parking and parking in unattended lots (maximum of \$6.00 per travel day).
- Public transit fares (fee schedule must be attached to travel reimbursement request).

While traveling on official City business, the following expenses are **unauthorized and not reimbursable**:

- Baby-sitting fees.
- Personal toiletries.
- Traffic fines or parking tickets.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Laundry services (except for Long-Term Travel).
- In-room movies.

Entertainment or optional events offered as part of the conference registration package.

5. SAME-DAY TRAVEL

These trips are considered to be local and do not qualify for an overnight stay or per diem rates, unless prior authorization is obtained by the City Manager. Same-Day Travel, if using a private vehicle, qualifies for mileage reimbursement, and toll and parking reimbursements if the expenses occurred during travel. Mileage shall be reimbursed in accordance with the "Mileage Allowance" referenced in *Section 2(A)6* of this policy. Toll and Parking Expenses shall be reimbursed at actual cost or up to \$6.00 per day without a receipt.

A. Meal Expense for Travel Not Requiring Overnight Stay

Travelers who incur costs due to attendance at a meeting, training or conference which includes a meal will not be reimbursed for said meals consumed within the Lodi City limits during the individual's normal working day when it can be demonstrated that the meal or meals involved are included in the cost of the meeting or conference which the Traveler is attending for the benefit of the City. Meals within Lodi City limits will also be reimbursed based on per diem when the meal is approved by the department for Same-Day Travel of less than 200 miles round trip and will follow the process according to *Section 4(E)*.

6. OTHER PROVISIONS

A. City Hosted Meals

When on official City business, Travelers will not conduct City business at the expense of persons/companies doing or seeking to do business with the City. Specifically, transportation and related expenses associated with gaining knowledge about goods and services being offered by private persons or private entities doing business with the City shall be borne by the City. However, this provision may be waived by the City Manager, if it is determined to be in the best interest of the City. This provision shall not apply to transportation and related expenses paid as a normal part of a City contract for goods or services.

If the City deems necessary to host a business meeting(s) with outside stakeholders while attending meetings or conferences, when such meetings include a meal, the City will pay the actual cost of the meal for all attendees, including non-alcoholic beverages, tax and tip, when documented by appropriate receipts. Efforts shall be made to arrange for reasonably priced meals based on the area, the nature of

the meeting, and type of stakeholder group. All such hosted meetings must be approved in advance by the City Manager.

B. Candidate Travel Expenses for Employment Applications

The City Manager, or their designee, may approve payment for an employment candidate's travel expenses for selected employment interviews when the following circumstances exist:

- Recruiting was done outside the San Joaquin County area.
- The reimbursement would apply only at a point in the selection process that involves a limited number of candidates.
- Reimbursement amounts would be subject to the same limitations as City Travelers. Human Resources will advise the candidate of the City's travel policy limits and receipt requirements.
- The candidate may book their own travel arrangements; however, reimbursement will occur after the fact.

C. Long-Term Travel

Long-term travel shall be defined as Business Travel for thirty (30) or more consecutive calendar days outside of the City, notwithstanding any personal return trips home during the course of the extended work period.

The Department Head or, Approving Authority is responsible for advising the Finance Division at least thirty (30) days in advance of any long-term travel. The Finance Division and the department requiring long-term travel shall have the authority to negotiate lodging rates, mileage reimbursement rates, and incidental expenses for the Traveler that may differ from those designated in this policy. Efforts will be made by the Finance Division and the Department Head, or Approving Authority, to ensure that lodging is adequate for a long-term stay and that the provider will invoice the City, rather than require the Traveler to incur the cost of lodging. Travelers who choose to make arrangements that differ from the negotiated rates must do so at their own expense.

D. Tips

GSA per diem rate for meals include taxes and tips. The GSA per diem rate for incidental expenses intended to cover fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, or other service providers.

E. Contest/Drawing Prizes at Conferences/Events

If a Traveler attending a conference or training event, on City time as a representative of the City, wins a prize, collects items from vendors or is given items that aggregate over \$50 by a single vendor, such prize or items are deemed to be City property.

Example 1: Traveler is selected as a winner in a blind drawing of all registered attendees for a \$1000 Visa gift card. Traveler must turn over the gift card to the City.

Example 2: A vendor gives a Traveler a polo shirt(s) with the vendor logo. Traveler must determine the value of the polo shirt(s). If value exceeds \$50, Traveler must report such shirt(s) to their department head. The department head may allow the Traveler to keep the shirt(s) or take the shirt(s) from the Traveler and dispose of it/them. If the Traveler is allowed to keep the shirt(s), this will likely become a reportable item on the Traveler's annual Conflict of Interest statement (Form 700), if they are subject to such reporting.

Example 3: Traveler picks up pens, pencils, toys and Post-it note pads from multiple vendors while at a conference. The aggregate value of the items exceeds \$50, but the value from any given vendor does not exceed \$50. Traveler may keep the items for personal use and has no reporting responsibilities for these items.

Example 4: Vendor scans Traveler's badge. Subsequently, Traveler is notified that they are the winner of an iPad. The iPad is considered City property and must be turned over to the City.

Example 5: Traveler drops their business card in a bowl at a vendor booth. Traveler is subsequently notified that they are the winner of a Harley Davidson motorcycle. The motorcycle is considered City property and must be turned over to the City.

7. RECONCILIATIONS & REIMBURSEMENTS

A. Business Expense Report (BER)

Upon return from the event, the Traveler must submit an approved Business Expense Report (BER) to the Finance Department. This report itemizes all expenses associated with the event and is approved by the Department Head. All original receipts must be attached, including the original itemized hotel bill. Additionally, the approved Travel Authorization Form must be attached to the BER and submitted to the Finance Department within ten (10) working days of the Traveler's return.

B. Outstanding Business Expense Reports

Each Department is responsible for monitoring outstanding BER's for its Travelers. The Department Travel Coordinator should contact the Traveler within ten (10) working days of return if the Traveler has not submitted the necessary receipts and a completed BER. Failure to settle outstanding cash advances in a timely manner may result in a delay in reimbursement, and the Traveler may be required to pay their personal credit card bill prior to reimbursement.

The Finance Division will send a written memorandum to the Department Head for distribution to the Traveler when the Traveler has not completed the BER within eleven (11) working days. If an outstanding BER has not been received within thirty (30) calendar days, the Finance Division will notify the Traveler's Department Head to advise the Traveler that cash advance privileges have been revoked and send a copy of this revocation to the Traveler. The Finance Division will create a journal entry and transfer the cost of any outstanding cash advances that are sixty (60) calendar days delinquent to the Traveler's department. Notification of the journal entry will be sent to the Traveler's Department Travel Coordinator. Any inaccuracies regarding organization units or general ledger accounts will be the responsibility of the Traveler's department. Any collection of funds after the journal entry has been issued shall be deposited by the Traveler's department.

8. PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS TRAINING (POST)

Travelers that are required to attend POST training events will be required to follow the travel policy referenced above.

9. VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Any violations of this policy may be subject to revocation of travel privileges and may be subject to disciplinary action.