



## Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District Policy & Procedure Manual

Title:	Meeting and Travel Expense Reimbursement	
Department:	Personnel	Effective Date: May 5, 2014
Policy No:	2007	
Related Procedures:	District Forms	Revisions: August 7, 2019

### 1.1 Policy Statement

To provide District Officials and District employees with direction on the types of Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District-related expenditures that can, and in some cases cannot, be made without prior authorization of the Board of Director's or General Manager or his or her designee, reporting procedures, and the use of District credit cards.

### 1.2 Purpose and Scope

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (District) takes its stewardship over the use of its limited public resources seriously and acknowledges that these resources should only be used when there is a substantial benefit to the District. The purpose of this Meeting and Travel Expense Reimbursement Policy is to provide uniform guidelines for review and approval of travel and meeting expenses for those persons authorized to expend District funds.

This policy does not claim to address every issue, contingency, exception or condition that may arise in the course of authorized travel for District business. Accordingly, the basic standard that should always prevail is that District Officials or employees should exercise good judgment and should incur only those expenses that a reasonable and prudent person would incur when traveling on official District business. Consideration should be given to such factors as suitability, convenience, and the nature of the business involved. Travel and meeting expenses are reimbursable for District Officials and employees travel on official business of the District, subject to the allowances, limits, and requirements discussed below. All expense reimbursements for District Elected Officials and District employees require substantiation by itemized receipt.

Generally, approved out-of-town travel should be included in the current year budget of each division.

### 1.3 Policy

#### Authorized Travel

Authorized expenses shall include, but are not limited to, expenses incurred while engaging and/or participating in the following activities and/or events which constitute authorized and reimbursable expenses as long as other requirements of this policy are also met:

- The seminar, meeting, certification training or conference is mandatory, reimbursable, or otherwise necessary to accomplish key District or employee goals and objectives and is physically or electronically unavailable locally if overnight accommodations are required;
- Communicating with representative(s) or regional, state, and national government and their various agencies and entities on District adopted or authorized policy positions;
- Attending educational seminars designed to improve skill and information levels;
- Attendance at District or community events, division approved conference, convention, hearing, training, seminar, or other meeting;
- Participating in regional, state and national organizations whose activities affect the District's interests;
- Implementing District-approved strategy for attracting or retaining revenue to the District; or
- Attending functions of local civic or community organizations where there is a clear nexus between the event and District Official or employee duty or duties.

## **Transportation**

All modes of transportation should be researched for the most economical means, whether it is air, rail, bus or vehicle. Government and group rates for transportation will be used when available. In determining the best and most economical travel, consideration should be given to all aspects of cost to the District, such as daily expenses, overtime, lost work time, as well as the actual transportation cost, such that:

- The District is responsible for determining the need for and method of travel;
- Reimbursement for travel is governed by the applicable Government Code sections; or
- Reimbursement for transportation expenses will be based on the method of transportation that is in the best interest of the District, considering both direct expense and the employee's time.

A cost comparison will be prepared and the traveler shall be reimbursed only the amount that would have been reimbursed had the traveler traveled using the least costly method. If an employee chooses and is authorized to use a method of transportation that is:

- Not the least costly,
- Not the typical method of getting from one location to the other, or
- Not "in the best interest of the District."

### **Commercial Airline Carrier**

Air travel shall be authorized and reimbursed at the lowest possible fare class. Authorized travelers shall attempt to book air travel as to take advantage of discounts offered for purchasing flight tickets in advance of departure; i.e., 14 or 21 days, and take advantage of non-refundable ticket fares where practical.

### **District Vehicles**

District-owned vehicles may be used for travel, as scheduling permits, to and from designated places outside of the local area. No allowance or reimbursement for transportation is authorized when a District-owned vehicle is used. All District vehicles have a Voyager fleet gasoline credit card located in the vehicle, which shall be used for all fuel purchases. Any unanticipated services shall be charged to the respective District traveler's CAL-Card.

### Personal Vehicles

Unless authorized by the General Manager, no traveler shall be reimbursed for the use of a privately-owned vehicle for travel, if a suitable District-owned vehicle is available for such use. Pool travel is preferred when more than one traveler is traveling to the same function. When using a privately-owned vehicle, traveler's accompanying the owner of a privately-owned motor vehicle in which the official travel is performed, shall not be entitled to any reimbursement for mileage.

Mileage for use of a private vehicle shall be reimbursed at the current rate set by the Internal Revenue Service. In all cases, reimbursement for travel mileage shall be determined by the most direct route from point of departure to point of return with mileage calculated from the shortest distance. Any and all reimbursement requests must be accompanied by an itemized receipt issued by the vendor.

Mileage reimbursement covers:

- Gasoline;
- The cost of maintenance (oil, lube, routine maintenance);
- Insurance (liability, damage, comprehensive and collision coverage);
- Licensing and registration; and/or
- Depreciation and all other costs associated with operation of the vehicle.

Employees and District Officials operating District-owned vehicles or using privately-owned vehicles traveling on District business must possess a valid California Driver's License as well as automobile insurance coverage with limits of not less than \$100,000 per person/ \$300,000 per occurrence (or a combined single limit of \$300,000) and property damage coverage in an amount not less than \$25,000 per occurrence. For additional details, see the approved Vehicle Usage Policy regarding the use of a privately owned vehicle.

### Taxi, Car Rental, Shuttle Service & Parking

Expenses for car rental will not be reimbursed unless authorization is received from the General Manager or his or her designee prior to the travel. Expenses may be reimbursed where use of such conveyances is reasonable and necessary in the conduct of District business. Itemized receipts must be provided. The use of rental vehicles will be permitted when alternate transportation would be more expensive or impractical. Economy vehicles and corporate or government rates shall be requested for vehicle rentals. Whenever possible, travelers should utilize hotel courtesy buses or local shuttle services. Taxi service should be used only when no other convenient, less costly transportation is available.

Long-term airport parking must be used for travel exceeding 24-hours.

### **Meals and Incidentals**

Meals may only be charged when overnight travel is required, or travel is required in excess of 50 miles from the employee's assigned duty station or in excess of 50 miles from the District Official's residence. Meals may be charged to the authorized lodging bill, District CAL-Card credit card, or be reimbursed by submitting an itemized cash receipt. Itemized receipts for all charges are to be turned in to the District Finance Manager. Itemized receipts for which reimbursement is requested must be submitted in the form of a hard-copy itemized receipt to the District Finance Manager for payment.

The following guidelines are not intended to be per diem rates, but are an indication of what the District considers to be reasonable maximums based on the US General Services Administration (GSA) rates for the highest county rate in California. A traveler may find that one meal costs more or less than the maximum below, and may for example, choose to pay more for breakfast and less for lunch, or less for breakfast and lunch and more for dinner if traveling for a full day. In any case a traveler may not exceed

the aggregate costs below for a full or partial day of travel. The maximum allowable costs also include tipping. Tips may not exceed twenty percent (20%). When traveling out of the State, travelers should review the current reasonable maximum GSA rates published at [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) for the destination location. Travelers may claim only their actual expense up to the following amounts and must have itemized receipts substantiating the amount claimed:

Breakfast (\$18)  
Lunch (\$19)  
Dinner (\$34)  
Incidentals (\$5)

### **TRIPS OF 24 HOURS OR MORE**

For travel lasting 24 hours or more, travelers may claim meals (as noted above), based on the following timeframes:

#### **First day of travel**

- Trip begins at or before 6 am - Breakfast may be claimed
- Trip begins at or before 11 am - Lunch may be claimed
- Trip begins at or before 5 pm - Dinner may be claimed

#### **Continuing after 24 hours**

- Trip ends at or after 8 am - Breakfast may be claimed
- Trip ends at or after 2 pm - Lunch may be claimed
- Trip ends at or after 7 pm - Dinner may be claimed

### **TRIPS OF LESS THAN 24 HOURS**

For travel exceeding 50 miles from the employees assigned duty station or exceeding 50 miles from the District official's residence, lasting less than 24 hours, travelers may claim breakfast and/or dinner, as noted above, based on the following timeframes:

#### **Fractional day of travel**

- Trip begins at or before 6 am and ends at or after 9 am - Breakfast may be claimed
- Trip begins at or before 4 pm and ends at or after 7 pm - Dinner may be claimed

Travelers may *not* claim lunch or incidentals for one-day trips, unless travel exceeds 30 miles from employee's assigned duty station or exceeds 30 miles from District Official's residence. When trips are less than 24 hours and there's no overnight stay, meals claimed are taxable.

Travelers may *not* claim meals provided by the District, meals included in hotel expenses or conference fees, meals included in transportation costs such as airline tickets, or meals that are otherwise provided. Snacks and continental breakfasts such as pastries, juice, fruit and coffee are not considered to be meals.

No meal expense may be claimed or reimbursed more than once in any given 24-hour period.

This policy recognizes that it is sometimes in the best interest of the District to provide meals for business guests or meeting participants during the conduct of official District business and pre-authorizes District Officials and Managers to make reasonable and appropriate expenditures for that purpose within the reimbursable limits established above. Any and all costs in excess of the aforementioned authorized reimbursement limits shall be the sole financial responsibility of the District Official or employee submitting a reimbursement request. Costs in excess of said reimbursement limits shall apply to all costs borne by said District Official or employee, and/or those of their respective guest(s) and/or meeting participant(s).

Reimbursement for alcoholic beverages associated with or without a meal shall not be reimbursed under any circumstance.

### **Lodging**

Lodging is allowed when approved by the General Manager or his or her designee for attendance at conferences, seminars or meetings.

Lodging shall be obtained at the most economical rate available for safe, clean and quality accommodations. The cost of lodging in connection with a conference must not exceed the group rate published by the conference sponsor for the meeting, if such rates are available. If the group rate is not available, travelers should request the government rate or the lowest available rate if it is less than the government rate. Lodging rates that are equal to or less than the government rates are presumed to be reasonable and hence reimbursable for purposes of this policy.

Lavish or oversized accommodations are not allowed. Lodging expenses will be reimbursed only at the single occupancy rate (including taxes and parking). Special effort shall be made to obtain accommodations at or near the facility where official District business is to take place to reduce the costs of transportation between meetings and conference sites. Lodging costs will not normally be approved for one-day meetings or programs, when the event is less than a commuting distance of 50 miles from the City of Carmel.

Travelers cancelling reservations shall do so according to the hotel's policy in order to avoid charges. The District does not reimburse for non-cancelled reservations, early departure, or late cancellation charges unless approved by the General Manager or his or her designee.

Travelers, who incur overnight lodging expenses at a commercial lodging establishment such as a hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, public campground, etc., must provide an itemized receipt to claim reimbursement. Reimbursement shall not be paid without an itemized receipt.

### **Telephone/FAX/Internet**

Staff shall utilize District-provided cell phones whenever possible. District Officials will be reimbursed for actual telephone and fax expenses incurred on official District business. Telephone bills should identify which calls were made on official District business.

Travelers will be reimbursed for internet access connection and/or usage fees away from home, if Internet access is necessary for official District-related business. Reimbursement will not exceed the actual amount charged and must be substantiated by itemized receipt.

### **Unauthorized Expenses**

Personal expenses are not reimbursable. Examples of personal expenses that the District will not reimburse include, but are not limited to:

- The personal portion of any trip;
- Optional tours, banquets, or other activities offered through the conference but as an additional cost to registration which are solely at the discretion of the employee;
- Political or charitable contributions or events;
- Any and all expenses associated with and/or borne by a spouse, partner, child/children, family member, friends, colleagues or pets;

- Entertainment expenses, including theatre, shows, movies (either in-room or at the cinema), sporting events, golfing, gym use, spa use, physical training or physical recreation participation such as “rock-climbing,” Segway sight-seeing, etc., or other cultural events;
- Non-mileage personal automobile expenses, including repairs, service, traffic citations, insurance, commuting mileage, tires, or gasoline;
- Alcohol, tobacco or related products;
- Laundry service, personal telephone calls;
- Loss or damage to personal items not related to the District’s business incurred while on District business; and
- Fees for changes to travel arrangements for personal reasons that could have reasonably been foreseen.

Any questions regarding the propriety of a particular type of expense should be resolved before the expense is incurred and should receive prior written approval from the General Manager.

**Credit Card Use (CAL-Card Program)**

If the traveler is an authorized primary CAL-Card cardholder, all authorized travel-related expenses should be paid with the respective traveler’s assigned CAL-Card. Travel expenses may be pre-paid (i.e., airfare, hotel, conference registration, etc.). These paid expenses will be reflected in the cardholder’s “Statement of Account.” The expenses will be listed on the CAL-Card log form and submitted with the monthly statement along with all supporting itemized receipts to the Finance Manager for review and reconciliation. All itemized receipts must clearly identify the amount of the transaction, the date, the vendor, and description of the product or service. The itemized receipt must be submitted in lieu of the credit card charge slip.

District-issued CAL-Cards shall not be used for personal expenses, even if the traveler subsequently reimburses the District.

**Non District Employees - Applies ONLY to persons who are NOT currently employed by the District**

This section applies only to travel expenses for persons who are called to interview for positions in District service.

The applicant must have been called for an interview to a position for which the Board of Directors has determined that the expenditure is necessary to recruit qualified persons. Reimbursement is for ground transportation to and from the nearest airport, coach air fare, lodging and meals not to exceed the aforementioned District rates, and only for the interviewee and only for the period of time needed to complete the interview.

**Misuse**

Misuse 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;
- Restitution to the District;
- Civil penalties for misuse of public resources; and/or

- Criminal prosecution for misuse of public resources.

## **Reporting**

Within five (5) days upon returning from travel status, the traveler will complete an Out-of-District Travel Report detailing all expenses and submit this along with all itemized receipts and any reimbursement requests on a District Reimbursement Request Form to their Supervisor for approval. Supervisors will submit these forms to the Finance Manager for processing.

District Officials shall provide brief reports on meetings attended at the expense of the District at the next regular Board meeting.

All documents related to reimbursable District expenditures are public records subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

### **1.4 Policy Revision Date**

The latest policy revision date appears in the lower right hand corner of the header. This date indicates the most recent published date of the policy.