



TRAVEL POLICY		
EFFECTIVE: 9/9/2024		APPROVED: 9/9/2024

PURPOSE:

Commissioners Court recognizes that expenditure of public funds for travel is necessary to conduct county business. This policy establishes appropriate requirements, limitations, and guidelines for county employee business travel. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish the appropriate use, and limitations on use, of public funds for travel by employees
- Ensure travel expenses of employees are for legitimate, reasonable business travel
- Provide an expectation to employees to be conscientious of their use of public funds for travel
- Require accountability for the use of public funds by county employees and officials

DEFINITIONS:

County business travel pertains to meetings, courses or other travel should be specific to the job of the traveling employee or as required by statute to fulfill educational requirements of the office or required certification. Travel, registration, or fees to attend general education courses (i.e., college course for credit) of a personal nature are not to be reimbursed.

Overnight travel must be greater than 100 miles out of county unless **pre-approved** by the Commissioners Court.

AUTHORITY:

Section 152.011 of the Texas Local Government Code gives the Commissioners Court the authority to set the amount of travel expenses allowable for county officials and employees who travel on official county business.

Upon adoption of this policy by Commissioners Court, the County Auditor shall be responsible for the implementation and interpretation of this policy, as well as enforcement of the policy, in accordance with Local Government Code 112.002, 112.006 and 112.007.

The County Auditor shall issue, maintain, and update any procedure, control and form needed to ensure compliance with this policy.

The County Auditor shall notify Commissioners Court whenever a change occurs in the optional standard mileage rate set by the IRS and the [Per Diem Rate](#) set by the U.S. General Services Administration. (GSA).

PROCEDURE:

All requests for travel reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days of the return from travel. Conference or training agendas/itineraries are required to be attached to travel reimbursements requests.

Forms to use to follow this policy include:

1. [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#): This form is to be used for requesting reimbursement for any overnight travel expenses or mileage.
2. [NON-OVERNIGHT TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#): This form is to be used for requesting reimbursement for any non-overnight meals. These reimbursements will be paid in accordance with IRS Publication 5137.



3. [MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT LOG](#): This form is to be used for requesting reimbursement of mileage based on odometer readings. This form must include details of each trip taken. (i.e., home to hotel, hotel to restaurant, restaurant to hotel, hotel to home)

Credit Card Use:

When using a county credit card, travel expenses, including conference/training, hotel, flight reservations, etc., charged on the procurement card must be submitted to the County Auditor's Office in accordance with the *Hutchinson County Credit Card Program Policy*. The County Auditor shall determine if there are sufficient budgeted funds available; if there is not sufficient funding, the County Auditor will notify the department. The county official or department head may be held liable for any travel without sufficient budgeted funding.

MILEAGE:

The use of a personal vehicle for county business will be reimbursed at the IRS mileage reimbursement rate. Mileage is calculated from the workplace to the destination unless the starting point (residence) is closer. Any out-of-the way travel or travel for personal use shall be at the expense of the official or employee and not claimed.

Mileage reimbursement requests are to be submitted to County Auditor's office using a [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#) for accounts payable processing. All travel reimbursement forms must be signed by the employee and the official/department head. Travel claim forms must detail mileage, destination, and purpose of travel. Documentation must either include a printout of a map(s) showing the number of miles claimed or a completed [MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT LOG](#).

PARKING/TOLL FEES/TAXI:

Reimbursement shall be made for any reasonable transportation by taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc while conducting County business. Documentation for these charges must be submitted with the [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#).

Only self-parking is an allowable expense if necessary for official County business. Self-parking may be reimbursed if a personal form of payment is used.

Valet parking shall not be chosen for convenience but used only in cases when there is not another option at the hotel, or it is in the best interest of the County. In this case, the expense will be reimbursed if the Official/employee provides documentation either from the venue stating that valet is the only parking available or sufficient explanation for the use of valet parking. This documentation must be submitted with the [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#).

County credit cards may be used for self-parking only. Valet parking may be reimbursed if proper documentation is submitted. If an Official/employee charges valet parking to a County credit card, they will be responsible for reimbursing the County.

AIRFARE:

For destinations over 400 miles, air travel may be considered. For destinations within 400 miles, air travel may be an option if it is more cost effective than traveling by automobile.

Flights must be booked, whenever possible, at least one month in advance to take advantage of early booking discounts.

Air travel should be scheduled to allow for the most economical fares; this shall not require an employee to travel after 10:00 PM.



It is acceptable to travel a day early to receive a discounted air fare; however, the savings in air fare should exceed any additional hotel, meal and incidental expenses incurred due to early travel.

Employees are required to travel economy or coach class unless there are documented extenuating circumstances. Documentation must be submitted with the [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#).

The county will pay reasonable fees for luggage or other expenses when traveling by air.

Any compensation received from the airline for moving flights or other flight issues is to be paid to the county.

HOTEL:

The actual cost of lodging, including both state and local hotel taxes, will be paid or reimbursed for a traveling employee on official county business. An exception to this will be for the District Judges and the District Attorney as they are exempt from hotel/motel tax. These individuals should claim the exemption using Texas Comptroller Form 12-202 – Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate. Hotel/motel tax will not be reimbursed and will be payable to the County if charged on a County credit card for any exempt employees.

Hotel/Motel room rates will be paid at conference block room rates (including overflow hotel room rates) or less. For non-conference travel, rates will be paid up to the daily lodging rate set by the GSA. Hotel/Motel receipts must show the days that were stayed.

Depending on the beginning and ending time of the conference/seminar, reimbursement will be paid for a maximum of one day lodging before the start of the conference and a maximum of one day after the end of the conference. Travel requests for additional days should include documentation to support the additional days. Events such as socials and recreational activities are not considered official County business.

Personal expenses (movies, laundry, etc.) are not allowable county expenditures and will not be reimbursed. Extra day(s) spent for personal reasons, are not allowable county expenditures and will not be reimbursed.

If hotel/motel charges are paid with a Hutchinson County credit card, hotel receipt must be submitted to the County Auditor's office, along with a copy of the conference registration form or flyer, upon return of the county credit card.

If an employee has an emergency requiring a change in the length of the stay, any additional charges incurred, within reason, are allowable for payment or reimbursement.

MEALS:

Meals are reimbursed for out-of-county travel. Meals are reimbursed at a per diem rate of \$50 per day. **NO RECEIPTS ARE REQUIRED FOR ANY MEALS. COUNTY CREDIT CARDS ARE NOT TO BE USED FOR MEALS.**

MEAL	PER DIEM
Breakfast	\$16
Lunch	\$19
Dinner	\$28

Depart before 7 AM	Receive full days per diem
Depart after 7 AM and before 12 PM	Receive lunch & dinner per diem
Depart after 12 PM	Receive dinner per diem
Arrive before 11 AM	Receive breakfast per diem
Arrive after 11 AM and before 6 PM	Receive breakfast & lunch per diem
Arrive after 6 PM	Receive full days per diem



Room service charged to the hotel room is not allowed and will not be reimbursed.

The per diem reimbursement will not be paid to employees when meals are provided by a third party or conference unless there is a medical reason for not accepting the provided meal. Any reason for not accepting the provided meal must be documented on the [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#).

Meals will be reimbursed only in cases with a minimum of a four-hour conference or training. Meal reimbursement for a non-overnight trip will be added to the individual's W-2 as wages for tax purposes (per IRS regulations). To claim a meal reimbursement for a non-overnight trip, a [NON-OVERNIGHT TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#) should be completed, signed by both the employee and official/department head, and submitted to the County Treasurer's office for processing with payroll.

INMATE MEALS:

Meals purchased for an inmate while being transported to or from Hutchinson County Jail, will be reimbursed up to \$15 per meal. Inmate meals may be charged to the County credit card. Any meal charged or requested for reimbursement that is over \$15 could be the responsibility of the transport officer. A detailed receipt of the meal purchase is required to be submitted with the credit card statement or the [TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM](#).

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL:

On occasion, a department may have a need to send an employee out of state for official County business. Out-of-state travel must be pre-approved by the Commissioners Court except for prisoner transportation. Any out-of-state travel not pre-approved by the Commissioners Court will not be reimbursed unless first approved by the Commissioners Court.

Travel outside the continental United States is prohibited without prior approval of Commissioners Court at least 45 days before the departure date.

TRAVEL CANCELLATIONS:

In the event a trip must be cancelled, the Official/employee must cancel as early in advance as possible to receive refunds on hotels, airfare, conference registration fees, etc. The official/employee is responsible for making sure that refunds have been received.

If expenditures cannot be refunded after cancellation, the Official/employee must submit documentation to the Auditor's Office stating the reason for cancellation. The Official/employee could be held responsible for reimbursing the County for any travel expense not refunded.

SPECIFIC TRAVEL LIMITATIONS:

Extension Service:

Vehicle Allowance is set by annual budget and paid monthly. This allowance is to cover all intra-county travel.