

Chapter 2.39TRAVEL/ADVANCE TRAVELSections:

- 2.39.010 General travel.
- 2.39.020 Claims for reimbursement of travel.
- 2.39.030 Policy regarding travel and advanced travel.
- 2.39.040 Audit of travel and advanced travel.
- 2.39.050 Advance travel policy.

2.39.010 General travel.

A. Definitions. All words shall have their ordinary and usual meaning except those defined in this section which shall have the meaning set forth below:

1. "County" means any office or department of Whitman County.

2. "Travel" shall consist of lodging, subsistence, transportation, seminar/meeting attendance and related activities in the conduct of official county business.

3. "Official county business" means, but shall not be limited to, conducting legitimate county business such as fulfilling normal job functions, negotiating agreements, inspecting or purchasing equipment, coordinating with other governmental agencies, serving on interview or judging panels, and providing consultation; or obtaining

***State law reference**—For statutory provisions on the bonds of county officers, see RCW 36.16.050.

information or training directly related to a person's official function; or serving as an official representative of Whitman County.

4. Certified Travel Voucher Form. For the purposes of this policy, a certified travel voucher form is certified by the employee's signature and the following language: "I hereby certify under penalty of perjury that this is a true and correct claim for necessary expenses incurred by me and that no payment has been received by me on account thereof," on a form approved by the board of county commissioners detailing travel expenses.

5. Valid Business Receipt. For the purposes of this policy, a valid business receipt shall be defined as a receipt, provided by the vendor, showing the vendor's name, date of the purchase and amount of the purchase. This receipt can be in the form of a cash register tape, a ticket stub, an itemized credit card charger receipt, an invoice, a statement, or in a form generally recognized by the public to be a receipt.

6. "Quasi-employees" are defined as non-compensated volunteers, advisory committee members, board and commission members and others who are participating in county business but are not on the county's payroll.

B. Objective. The travel policy for Whitman County is intended to provide a concise statement of practices and procedures to insure consistency for employee travel and insure the efficient use of county travel funds and equipment. The policy also allows for procedures that are designed for ease of audit. Any other travel policy inconsistent with the provisions of this policy are superseded and void.

C. General Policy. It is the policy of Whitman County to reimburse elected and appointed officials, employees, and members of boards and commissions for their reasonable in/out of state travel expenses actually incurred in the conduct of their business for Whitman County. Reimbursement for such necessary and reasonable expenses will be made subject to the rules herein by application and upon compliance with this policy.

D. Motor Pool.

1. The county has created a motor pool within the public works department for the use and convenience of

employees. Use of the motor pool should be encouraged. The Whitman County Motor Pool Information Manual concerning procedures shall be followed.

2. Only personnel on official county business are authorized to check out and use motor pool vehicles. Nonemployees may assist in driving motor pool vehicles if:

- a. In possession of a valid driver's license;
- b. Prior written approval is given by the employee's department head or elected official; and
- c. The department of public works is provided a copy of the above approval and, if not otherwise provided in the above approval, a written notification of the nonemployee's name, address, telephone number, driver's license number, with state of issuance if other than Washington State, and the nonemployee's automobile insurance company's name, address and insurance policy number.

E. Mileage Reimbursement.

1. Any employee of Whitman County utilizing his/her personal automobile for official county business shall be reimbursed at a specified rate per mile. The starting and ending locations of official travel is the official work place or the residence, depending on the work schedule at that point in time.

2. The rate of reimbursement per mile shall be the rate as determined annually by the board of county commissioners.

3. Reimbursement for mileage for travel by county officials or employees between their usual place of residence and their usual place of work shall be prohibited.

4. Parking expenses may be claimed under the category of incidentals and shall include official county automobiles.

5. Employees traveling by common carrier shall be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred; provided, the reimbursement rate of airline travel shall not exceed the coach class rate.

6. Personal Expenses. When an employee of Whitman County is traveling on official county business, it will be the policy of the board of county commissioners that any personal expenses of the employee will be paid directly to the vendor by the employee, except in emergencies. In the case of an emergency, where it becomes necessary for the

employee to reimburse Whitman County upon their return, such reimbursement to the county will include an explanation for the reimbursement, signature of the employee and signature of the elected official or department head or their authorized designee.

F. Meals.

1. Individuals on travel status shall be reimbursed for meal expense while on travel status at the per diem rate as established by the board of county commissioners annually. Per diem rates include the costs of tax and gratuity. No receipts are required for meals not exceeding per diem rates.

2. Reimbursements shall be made for expenses incurred for meals as follows: Meals in connection with authorized attendance at meetings, conventions, or conferences; meals when official business prevents an employee from returning to his or her home by six p.m. except for employees whose normal duty hours extend beyond six p.m.; meals for employees engaged in authorized emergency repair or operations substantially beyond their normal duty hours.

3. The amounts allowed for meal reimbursement shall be as follows:

a. For a full day, which for purposes of this section means a travel period beginning before eight a.m. and ending after five p.m., the daily per diem amount;

b. The amount of per diem authorized that is determined on a per meal basis depends on the departure time from Whitman County and the arrival time on return to Whitman County. Departure prior to six a.m. qualifies an employee for breakfast, prior to twelve p.m. qualifies an employee for lunch, and returns after six p.m. qualifies for dinner per diem;

c. If on approved county business for the full day, but one or more meals are included in the registration fee, the amount authorized for the included meal will be subtracted from the total authorized per diem allowance to establish the maximum amount available for the remainder of the day.

4. Per Diem Exception. If a compelling business related circumstance exists, meals purchased while on travel status may be reimbursed at actual costs, under the following conditions:

a. It shall be at the discretion of the board of county commissioners to determine if this exception applies in a particular situation.

i. If the exception is found to not apply, the applicable per diem rate may be reimbursed.

ii. If the exception is found to apply, the board may grant reimbursement either at actual costs based on valid business receipts, or, if the board determines the actual costs are excessive, unreasonable, or exorbitant, the board will authorize reimbursement at an appropriate sum. For the purposes of this section, "excessive" shall include seeking reimbursement for more than three meals per day, or more meals than are allowed pursuant to subsection (F)(3)(c) herein; "unreasonable" shall include seeking reimbursement for a meal the board deems "excessive" and "exorbitant" shall include obtaining the meal from an establishment which charges excessive prices for meals when other moderately priced establishments are available.

iii. An employee, who anticipates that this exception may apply to a pending situation, may obtain a determination by the board prior to departure. While pre-approval is not mandatory, failing to do so could result in the employee bearing meal expenses exceeding the per diem amount. Upon issuing a pre-approval the board shall specify a maximum amount allowed for meals, which shall be binding on the employee and actual costs shall not exceed that amount.

b. While not exclusive, the following situations shall be recognized as being within this exception:

i. An employee participating in required scheduled training outside of Whitman County, which by necessity occurs between the hours of six p.m. and six a.m., during which the employee is required to purchase a meal(s), upon submitting a valid business receipt(s) such employee shall be reimbursed for the reasonable meal expense(s) at a per meal sum not to exceed the per diem amount authorized for dinner under subsection (F)(3)(b) herein.

ii. An employee participating in required scheduled training within Whitman County, which by necessity occurs between the hours of six p.m. and six a.m., during which the employee is required to purchase a meal(s), upon submitting a valid business receipt(s) such employee shall be reimbursed for the reasonable meal expense(s) at a per meal sum not to exceed the per diem amount authorized for lunch under subsection (F)(3)(b) herein.

5. Reimbursement shall be made for reasonable expenses for meals, coffee and light refreshment served to elected and appointed officials, quasi-employees, volunteer board/committee members and county employees regardless of travel status at a meeting where:

a. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct official county business or to provide formal training to county employees or county officials.

b. The meals, coffee, or light refreshments are an integral part of the meeting or training session.

c. The elected official, the board of county commissioners, or the department head or designee approves payments in advance for the meals, coffee, or light refreshments.

(Ord. 66916 (part), 2007; Ord. No. 71609, 2-7-2011)

2.39.020 Claims for reimbursement of travel.

A. Claims for reimbursement of travel shall include a valid business receipt for all meals not qualifying for per diem, lodging and travel related expenses requested on the appropriate, certified travel voucher form.

B. The claim for reimbursement of travel shall be properly certified by the employee and submitted to his/her elected official or department head (or their authorized designee), who will be responsible for checking and verifying the accuracy of the claim. After signing the employee's claim for reimbursement of travel, the claim will be delivered to the county auditor's office.

(Ord. 66916 (part), 2007; Ord. No. 71609, 2-7-2011)

2.39.030 Policy regarding travel and advanced travel.

A. Reimbursement typically will be only for the expenses of the employee. If a nonemployee accompanies the employee and such nonemployee is not traveling on county

business, the employee will be reimbursed the cost of lodging equal to the single occupancy room rate. (Also, see subsection E of this section, expenditures for nonemployees.)

B. Tipping Policy. Officials and employees of Whitman County who are traveling on official county business are authorized to add a tip to a meal expense in an amount not to exceed 15 percent of the meal expense.

C. Personal Expenses Prohibited. Officials and employees of Whitman County are prohibited from spending travel funds for personal expenses and entertainment.

D. Exceptional Circumstances. In exceptional circumstances and prior to the travel, where pre-identified conflicts with the provisions of this policy exist, the chairperson of the board of county commissioners may grant written approval to accept a certified statement for specific and specified expenses. These exceptional circumstances include those travel and training expenses incurred by an employee in which no valid business receipt will be able to be obtained by the employee.

E. Expenditures for Nonemployees. If an elected official, department head, or employee is filing a claim for reimbursement on behalf of nonemployees, he/she must prepare a detailed account that includes:

1. Names of the others who traveled, partook of meals, or otherwise incurred expenses;
2. Whether they were county employees, and if not, who they were and what connection they had with county business. This shall not be construed to permit promotional hosting;
3. Who provided the lodging, meals or other services in question, dates and times;
4. A detailed breakdown of amounts;
5. Some statement sufficiently explicit to show that county business was being carried out when the expenses were incurred;
6. Quasi-employees do not qualify for per diem rates. Actual expenses with valid business receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

(Ord. 66916 (part), 2007; Ord. No. 71609, 2-7-2011)

2.39.040 Audit of travel and advanced travel.

A. The county auditor shall examine all claims to verify their payment does not violate state law, county ordinance or resolution.

B. The county auditor shall also examine all claims for completeness, proper BARS coding and accurate documentation attached to support the claim. Accurate documentation is defined as valid business receipts, if necessary, for all meals, lodging and travel-related expenses requested and the completed certified travel voucher form.

C. If a receipt has been irretrievably lost, the procedure detailed in Section 3.14.070, Lost credit card charge receipts, will be followed.

D. If complete, the claim will be presented to the board of county commissioners for consideration.

E. If not complete, the county auditor will follow the provisions of Section 3.12.060, Obligation to pay, previously stated in the Whitman County purchasing policy.

F. The board of county commissioners may approve/reject all or any part of the claim.

G. If the claim is approved, the county auditor will write a warrant payable to the employee, or in the case of advance travel, a warrant payable to the advanced travel revolving fund. The county auditor will debit the affected department's travel budget for the amount of the warrant.

H. When a claim or any part of a claim is rejected by the board of county commissioners, the clerk of the board will notify the employee and elected official or department head in writing, explaining the reason(s) for the rejection. The employee may make one additional accounting of the funds sought to be reimbursed and resubmit the claim. The decision of the board of county commissioners on the resubmitted claim shall be final.

(Ord. 66916 (part), 2007; Ord. No. 71609, 2-7-2011)

2.39.050 Advance travel policy.

A. General Policy.

1. Policy Statement. The board of county commissioners feels it is in the best interest of the county and the county employees to provide an advance travel revolving fund. This fund is for the benefit of those county employees required to travel for the county in pursuit of necessary education and representation of the county's interest in activities. These funds shall be used solely for travel-related expenses and shall not be used for direct payments to vendors. These funds also shall not be used for

personal loans, payment of airline tickets, pre-registration fees, or reimbursement to employees or officers for travel already incurred.

2. Objectives. The objective of this policy is to insure the efficient use and replacement of county advance travel funds in a correct and timely manner.

B. Qualifications for Use. Only Whitman County employees may receive advance travel funds. Members of voluntary boards do not qualify.

C. Restrictions. No more than one advance should be taken at any one time by an employee. Therefore, if the employee has not returned an advance, he/she will not be entitled to a second one.

D. Employees Terminating Employment. If an employee terminates his/her employment with the county and he/she has not returned an advance travel request, along with the certified travel voucher form with accompanying valid business receipts for an outstanding travel advance, the board of county commissioners will immediately be notified by the terminating employee's elected official or department head. If necessary, the board of county commissioners will refer the matter to the Whitman County Prosecuting Attorney for possible legal action. The elected official or department head shall have the responsibility to check with the county treasurer before submitting the final payroll prelist to the auditor's office for the employee upon his/her termination to insure that there are no outstanding travel advances.

E. Noncompliance.

1. Unspent advance travel, with attached certified travel voucher form and valid business receipts will be returned to the county treasurer within five working days of the employee's return date. On a case-by-case basis, the county treasurer is authorized to extend the return time period up to 15 days for those employees who request, in writing, a time extension. This will allow the county treasurer to let the county auditor know what amount to reimburse the advance travel fund, thus keeping adequate funds available for those needing to travel. The dollar amount of the fund is established by resolution adopted by the board of county commissioners.

2. Should an employee fail to file his/her return within the required five-day period (or length of extension previously authorized by the county treasurer), his/her elected official or department head will be notified.

The elected official or department head will have two working days from the time the problem is brought to his/her attention to require a proper return is completed. If this is not done there will be a ten percent penalty attached to the amount that was advanced. This penalty amount will be payable by the employee. This return must include unexpended funds, certified travel voucher form, and authorized expense receipts. Any outstanding advance travel will be brought to the attention of the board of county commissioners by the county treasurer if not resolved by the elected official or department head in two days. The board of county commissioners may suspend or prevent the employee from the use of advance travel funds. In the event that an employee has to be contacted for being delinquent on two consecutive advances, that employee's elected official or department head and the employee will be notified in writing by the board of county commissioners that the employee will no longer be eligible for advance travel funds.

F. Procedures for Obtaining Advance Travel.

1. A purchase order shall be filled out with the date of request, the name of the employee, anticipated departure and return dates, destination, purpose of travel, correct BARS coding, and amount requested.

2. The purchase order shall be signed and dated on the bottom right corner under "Authorized Signatures" by the elected official or department head (or authorized designee) and by the employee requesting the travel advance.

3. The two parts and one photocopy of the properly completed and signed purchase order form shall be presented at the county treasurer's office for review and issuance of a check in the amount requested.

4. The photocopy will be left at the county treasurer's office. The original will immediately be taken to the auditor's office. The elected official or department head responsible for the claim keeps the remaining copy until the employee returns.

G. Procedures to Account for Advance Travel Upon Return.

1. No later than five working days (or length of extension previously authorized by the county treasurer) after the employee returns, he/she must present the remaining copy of the purchase order form in its completed form,

certified travel voucher form and all valid business receipts for authorized expenses and all unexpended funds to the county treasurer.

2. If the employee spent more than the advance, the county treasurer's office should be notified immediately upon the employee's return. A general claim for expenses should be presented to the county auditor for the additional amount spent over and above what was advanced. Receipts for the expenses and the completed certified travel voucher form shall be attached to the general claim with references made to the original purchase order number and presented to the county auditor.

3. If the employee spent less than the amount advanced, the employee shall return to the county treasurer the difference between what was advanced and what was spent, along with receipts and completed certified travel voucher form attached to the purchase order, to document the expenses.

4. If an employee receives advance travel and fails to make the trip, the funds must be returned in full to the county treasurer immediately upon the decision not to travel.

5. The copy of the purchase order shall be signed under "Payment Certification" by the traveling employee upon return and by the elected official or department head (or authorized designee) responsible for completing the claims process.

6. When the unexpended funds are returned, the county treasurer's office will write a receipt to verify the amount returned. The copy of the receipt will be provided to the department for inclusion in their department's records. The copy of the purchase order will remain in the county treasurer's office along with all receipts and completed certified travel voucher form, which will then be submitted to the county auditor's office for reimbursement of the advanced travel fund.

7. Receipts for any expense must accompany the returned purchase order and completed certified travel voucher form. When such receipts are not provided, the employee must make reimbursement to the county for those expenditures. If a receipt has been irretrievably lost, the procedure detailed in Section 3.14.070, Lost credit card charge receipts, will be followed.

(Ord. No. 71609, 2-7-2011)