



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy #	23-01 Agency Operations <i>(This policy supersedes 15-03 and any previous SCC travel policies or guidelines)</i>
Title:	Conservation Commission Travel Policy
Applies to:	All Travelers of the State Conservation Commission
Effective Date:	January 2023
Authorizing Sources	State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM Travel Chapter 10) Office of Financial Management (OFM)
Executive Director Signature	

POLICY STATEMENT

All travel must be work related, obtained at the most economical price, and be both critical and necessary for state business. Supervisors are to review all trips and ensure they meet these requirements. If trips are not critical and necessary, travel expense reimbursement is not allowed.

Policies and procedures for the travel reimbursement can be found in the [State Administrative and Accounting Manual](#) (SAAM), specifically in [Chapter 10- Travel](#), from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Department of Enterprise Services [Enterprise Wide Transportation Policy](#). SAAM and DES set the general policies and this State Conservation Commission (SCC) internal policy explains agency specific items. Individuals requesting travel reimbursement must comply with this policy. Failure to follow these policies will result in traveler responsibility for the excess costs.

In addition to the requirements listed in this policy, travelers must follow the SAAM travel requirements and other DES travel policies.

VEHICLE USAGE AND MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

Agency defined policy to ensure all claims for personal vehicle mileage are for travel that is both critical and necessary for state business required by [SAAM 10.50.25.b](#).

The SCC has motor pool vehicles permanently assigned and available for employees' use. Because SCC pays for the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to have these vehicles available for employees' use, they are the priority method of travel for state business. The SCC is also housed in the Department of Ecology, which also has a large vehicle fleet SCC which staff are able to utilize by calling Building Services (360) 407-7509.

Employees with specific vehicle requirements will be given preferred use of applicable agency motor pool vehicles. Staff is to coordinate with administrative support staff.

Mileage reimbursement will be determined by evaluating the most cost effective manner that meets the traveler's scheduling and the agency's business needs.

1. Travelers must use, in order of preference:
 - an SCC vehicle
 - an Ecology vehicle
 - a DES Motor Pool vehicle
2. If an SCC, Ecology or DES Motor Pool vehicle is available and an employee elects to use their personal vehicle, the employee will not be reimbursed.
3. After all efforts have been made to secure an agency or state motor pool vehicle and none are available, the employee may use their personal vehicle and will be reimbursed the full [OFM approved mileage rate](#), ***provided the employee has received advanced approval from their supervisor via email.*** This authorization must be sent to fiscal staff via email and entered into the comments in TEMS.
4. In rare circumstances, an employee may use their own personal vehicle when state vehicles are available ***provided the employee has received advanced approval from the SCC Executive Director.*** Per RCW [43.03.060](#), the executive director is allowed to set a POV rate. The SCC reimbursement rate in these instances will **not** be at full OFM approved mileage, but will be calculated at 50 percent of the current privately owned vehicle (POV) reimbursement rate set by the GSA. Executive Director approval must be sent to fiscal staff via email and must be entered into the comments in TEMS.

When inclement weather is present and the employee's personal vehicle is more suitable for safety purposes, the employee may get full reimbursement. Discussion with supervisor **must** occur prior to travel.

***Definition of inclement weather:** Stormy, severe, or tempestuous; snow or other mountain pass conditions where all vehicles except all-wheel drive vehicles are prohibited and no such vehicles are available from the agency.

As special circumstances arise, please work with your supervisor.

It is each traveler's responsibility to maintain a valid Washington State driver's license and drivers insurance.

EXEMPTIONS

Employees who are special project positions with limited hours, or employees who's work station is located outside the Lacey office and do not have an agency motor pool vehicle issues to them due to motor pool mileage requirements, will be reimbursed the full personal owned vehicle (POV) mileage rate set by the Office of Financial Management.

The SCC Executive Director may approve exemptions from stated travel policies. All exemption requests must be sent in writing to the Executive Director of the Washington State Conservation Commission via email or mail for approval. Approval must be attained in advance of travel; any requests for retroactive approval will be denied.

TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES

Agency policy for developing and implementing alternatives to travel, as well as less expensive means of travel as required by [SAAM 10.10.25](#).

The SCC encourages employees to use the following alternative methods or other cost-saving options to travel at all times and when inclement weather has prohibited staff to travel:

- Teleconferencing and/or online meeting (using Zoom/Microsoft Teams or similar software);
- Video recordings and published reports;
- Carpooling and using public transportation when it is convenient and most effective;
- Use of hybrid vehicles from our fleet, Ecology or the state motor pool;
- Reduced frequency of regularly scheduled out-of-town meetings;
- Restrictions on the number of staff traveling to the same destination in single passenger or separate vehicles; and
- Coordinating between agencies for joint travel arrangements.

MEALS

Agency defined meal periods, required by [SAAM 10.40.50](#).

For overnight travel assignments, travelers are eligible for meal reimbursement throughout the duration of travel status.

For non-overnight travel assignments, a traveler must meet the eleven-hour rule in order to be eligible for meal reimbursement. The traveler must be in travel status for at least eleven hours in order to claim meals and also has to be in travel status during the entire agency-determined meal period(s) in order to claim respective meal. The traveler can not stop for a meal in order to meet the eleven hour rule

Defined meal periods are as follows:

- Breakfast: 6:00 am – 7:00 a.m.
- Lunch: 12:00 pm – 1:00 p.m.
- Dinner: 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Meals are reimbursed at the current OFM rates based on the destination of the traveler. If there are multiple destinations in the non-overnight trip, the reimbursement is determined by the county the traveler is in during the meal period. Receipts are not required for meals.

NOTE: If meal costs are reimbursed when in non-overnight travel status, the amount of reimbursement will be taxable and it is the employee's responsibility to click the appropriate box in TEMS (Travel Expense Management System).

If a meal is eligible, and not claimed, please do not leave that field blank in the TEMS. Travelers need to check "provided" next to the meal.

LODGING

It is preferred that the SCC state travel charge card or personal agency issued card be used to make hotel reservations. Arrangements for use of the agency charge card for reservations must be made with SCC administrative staff assigned with these responsibilities. However, if circumstances prevent the use of the SCC state travel charge card the employee may make lodging arrangements and request reimbursement. These situations should be rare and will require an explanation in the TEMS Per Diem Memo field regarding the reason the travel charge card could not be used.

Reimbursable lodging expenses include the basic commercial lodging cost up to the current OFM rates and any applicable sales taxes and/or hotel/motel taxes on that amount. Lodging costs in excess of the allowances and the associated taxes will be paid by the traveler unless authorization is received from the SCC executive director. An original itemized lodging receipt, including the tax break out, is required in order to receive reimbursement.

Reimbursement is allowed for lodging expenses when the temporary duty station is located more than 50 miles of the closer of either the traveler's official residence or official work station. Any exceptions to the 50-mile rule must be requested and approved in writing in advance of travel. ([SAAM 10.30.30.b](#))

In certain situations, the maximum allowable lodging amounts may not be adequate and the agency head or authorized designee may approve payment of lodging expenses that exceed the applicable allowable maximum. Advance written approval for the exception must be authorized and submitted to the SCC administrative staff. Staff is to use the [Exceeding Max Per Diem Form](#) for approval for the lodging exception. An original itemized lodging receipt is required in order to receive reimbursement. ([SAAM 10.30.20.b](#))

If lodging is eligible - and not claimed - please add a note in TEMS to the voucher, explaining that lodging was not claimed because it was provided.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

Prior authorization is required from the SCC Executive Director or designee for all out-of-state travel. Approval will be in the form of an email. Out-of-state travel with respect to the requirement for prior authorization does not include travel to counties and/or cities in the state of Idaho and Oregon that are contiguous to the border between Washington – Idaho and Washington – Oregon and prior authorization is not required.

Travel to Hawaii or foreign countries requires the Conservation Commission Board pre-approval. British Columbia, Canada is not considered a foreign location for purposes of foreign travel pre-approval.

TRANSPORTATION – AIRLINE, TRAIN OR RENTAL CAR

The SCC state travel charge card is required to purchase airline or train tickets or to reserve a rental car. All air and rental car travel must be booked and paid for using the agency travel credit card.

EXCEPTION - If there is a lower price that is more cost effective than purchasing through a state

contracted vendor, the airfare may be purchased through a different vendor using the agency credit card.

SCC will reimburse baggage fees for up to one carry-on and one checked bag per traveler for any SCC approved airline. This includes any flights, domestic or international. The reimbursed costs will include all applicable taxes.

The agency will not reimburse out-of-pocket purchase of airfare or car rental unless preauthorized by the Executive Director or designee in emergency situations such as, but not limited to, inclement weather. The lead accountant shall periodically review airline ticket purchases and ensure SCC is following the SAAM policies as required by [10.10.10.a3](#).

CONFERENCE REGISTRATIONS

Conference registrations should always be paid with the agency credit card. If you need to register for a conference please send an email, along with the conference information, and any extras you would like added onto your conference registration (welcome receptions, meals etc.) to the agency administrative staff responsible for these arrangements.

TRAVEL EXPENSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TEMS)

Authorized travelers are required to use the [Travel and Expense Management System](#) (TEMS) to claim reimbursement for travel expenses. This system is a web-based application that facilitates processing employee reimbursements. The system can assist in choosing the proper per diem rates, calculating totals, and saving employee profile history and information.

Original receipts are required for the following items:

- Lodging
- Car rental (if paid by the traveler)
- Taxi, shuttle, and ferry tolls (if over \$50.00 per trip)
- Parking fees (if over \$50.00 per trip)
- Miscellaneous supplies (under \$50.00)

Each employee is responsible for submitting receipts via email or original documents to the appropriate agency administrative staff. Reimbursement requests cannot be approved without these documents.

(Note: Employees requesting reimbursements while not in travel status should not use TEMS. Employees requesting reimbursement for items exceeding \$50.00, for approved purchases, should use an A19 invoice voucher and include original itemized receipts.)

Contact the appropriate agency administrative staff if you need assistance with or access to TEMS.

TRAVEL ADVANCES

Requests for travel advances are submitted on a Travel Authorization form (A-40) by the employee and approved by their supervisor. Travel advances are limited to 80% of the estimated travel expenses, not including mileage. At the conclusion of travel, the employee submits a travel request through TEMS and deducts the amount of the advance from the amount of reimbursable expenses.

If the employee receives a travel advance and fails to substantiate their travel expenses and/or fails to return travel advances within 60 days after incurring travel expenses, the advance will be reported to the IRS as income. This income is subject to withholding taxes. SCC is required by federal law to consider the advance as income and deduct the applicable payroll withholding taxes from the employee's next semi-monthly earnings.

SCC will make reasonable efforts to recover the unreturned portion of the travel advance from the employee before reporting the advance as income, including deducting the advance from the employee's paycheck. ([SAAM 10.80.60](#))

MISCELLANEOUS

Sustainability -Agency employees are encouraged to carpool when such arrangements will result in lower total travel cost to the state.

Getting the Employee Paid - Each employee, Commission member, and volunteer who is reimbursed travel costs must have a statewide vendor number in the Agency Financial Reporting System (AFRS). These numbers are based on the employee id. The home address and payroll Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) information from employee's HRMS records will be used to populate employees' vendor number in AFRS.

Negligence of the Traveler – Any unexpected expenses due to the negligence or misconduct of the traveler is the responsibility of the traveler. These may include, but are not limited to, parking tickets, speeding tickets, and miscellaneous service calls. If any charges submitted on a travel voucher are deemed negligence of the traveler, the charges will be removed and the traveler will be notified of the deduction. Payment of any fines or citations is solely the personal obligation and responsibility of the driver and is not a qualified reimbursable obligation of the agency. ([SAAM 10.20.20.3](#))

Insurance Coverage for POV- When driving privately owned vehicles (POVs) on official state business, state drivers are to comply with the state of Washington's liability insurance laws, chapters [46.29](#) and [46.30](#) RCW. If an accident occurs when the state driver is operating a POV, the state driver's personal automobile insurance is primary and will be exhausted prior to application of the state's self-insurance coverage. Insurance deductibles are the responsibility of the POV driver and are not reimbursable by the state (DES Enterprise Wide Transportation Policy [12.30.30.a](#)).

Travelers must notify their supervisor of their planned itinerary, in writing, prior to entering travel status. Travelers become personally liable when they go "off the clock" per the itinerary. Any changes to the itinerary must be communicated to the traveler's supervisor immediately they are known.

A POV Driver involved in an accident while driving on state business must complete a State of Washington Vehicle Accident Report (SF 137). This form is available on-line at <http://www.des.wa.gov/services/Risk/StateDrivers/Pages/stateEmployeeIncidentReporting.aspx>.