



## **OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY THE CITY COUNCIL**

**POLICY** | The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for official City Council travel. Travel must serve a legitimate public purpose, be conducted in a fiscally responsible manner, and comply with the City of Santa Clara Code of Ethics and Values. All expenses are subject to review by the City Auditor to ensure transparency and accountability.

Aligned with the City of Santa Clara Code of Ethics and Values, the City is committed to fiscal responsibility and the prudent use of public resources to protect long-term financial stability. To promote open and transparent government, the City Council establishes guidelines for official travel by Councilmembers.

Travel by Councilmembers is permitted and reimbursable when it serves a valid public purpose. This policy defines the types of expenses that are authorized during official travel and outlines the procedures for reimbursement. Reimbursements will not exceed the limits set forth in these guidelines.

All travel expenses are subject to review and verification by the City Auditor to ensure compliance with this policy and eligibility for reimbursement.

This policy governs City-funded travel only. It does not address reporting obligations for travel paid by non-City entities. City Councilmembers remain responsible for complying with all Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) reporting requirements regarding non-City payments for travel.

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### **ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA**

#### **Official Travel**

The City's annual operating budget for the Mayor and Council office includes funding allocated for official City travel. Travel meeting the criteria of this policy may be allowed as long as funding is available.

Official travel may be authorized when it meets one or more of the following:

1. **Official Duties:** Related to the Councilmember's elected role, committee assignment, or legislative priority (e.g. committee or liaison assignment, task force assignment, or council assignment).



## OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY CITY COUNCILMEMBERS (cont.)

2. Professional Development: Conferences, meetings, workshops, trainings or educational seminars that build skills or knowledge relevant to City service.
  3. Representation: Participation in regional, state, or national organizations that promote and advance the interests of the City.
  4. **Multiple Attendees:** When several Councilmembers request attendance at the same event, priority will be based on committee or legislative assignment; submission date of request; budget availability; and compliance with Brown Act quorum requirements. If multiple members of the City Council elect to attend the same event for travel, Councilmember(s) may attend based on available department budget or based on a committee assignment or legislative priorities of interest.
- ~~a. All requests for additional budget approval must meet all criteria for official travel.~~
- ~~b. Requests for travel approval requires five votes from the City Council.~~

### Types of Travel

- a. Local travel **(50 miles or less)** for single-day events which meet the official travel criteria above.
- b. **In-State Travel exceeding 50 miles must meet the official travel criteria above which may include:** League of California Cities Annual Conference, League of California Cities New Members Academy.
- c. **Out-of-State travel for events such as the United States Conference of Mayors and National League of Cities conferences and meetings.**
- d. **International travel is allowed for all City Councilmembers.** International travel may be initiated by invitation or commemoration of anniversaries with the City of Santa Clara's Sister Cities **or Friendship Cities.**



## OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY CITY COUNCILMEMBERS (cont.)

### PROCEDURES

#### Travel Arrangements

Travel arrangements should be made as far in advance as possible to obtain the best possible fares, early bird and discounted rates, and to avoid late registration fees.

- 1) Prior to travel, Councilmembers must submit a written request to City staff stating the purpose and benefit to the City.
- 2) City staff will verify available funds and prepare the pre-authorization form.
- 3) The City Manager or designee approves the pre-authorization form.

### REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

#### Lodging

Lodging is covered for approved travel, including the night before and the night after an event. Receipts are required, and reimbursement is limited to actual costs.

If no specific lodging site is designated for official City business, the City will reimburse the actual cost of lodging at an alternative location.

#### Meals

Meal expenses are reimbursed, including tax and tips and incidentals, up to the General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rate for the destination (available at <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>) for a full day of travel. Itemized receipts showing the expense amount are required for Councilmembers to receive reimbursement. Reimbursements are capped at the GSA amounts detailed below.

On the first and last travel day, meals are reimbursed at 75 percent (75%) of the per diem rate. The Meals & Incidental Expenses will be used to generate the per diem rate for meals. Any meals provided as part of the conference, event, or hotel, must be deducted from the reimbursement as listed on <http://www.gsa.gov/mie>.

Alcohol, guest meals, and hotel incidentals (e.g. in-room services) are not eligible for reimbursement.



## OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY CITY COUNCILMEMBERS (cont.)

### **Transportation**

**Use of City /Private Vehicles:** City vehicles are available for in-state or local travel. Councilmembers shall be compensated for the use of their private vehicles for approved business travel at the federal GSA standard rate, provided that it is the most logical and least expensive method of transportation.

To drive a vehicle on City business, Councilmembers must possess a valid California driver's license. A driver of a privately owned vehicle must carry liability insurance coverage, and be responsible for any damage, service, or repair to the car occurring on the trip, as these costs are included in the City's per mile cost reimbursement.

**Bridge Tolls/Parking:** Bridge tolls and parking fees incurred while traveling on City business are reimbursable with receipts. Councilmembers shall obtain itemized receipts and submit them with their Travel Expense Reports.

**Train /Other Mass Transit:** Councilmembers shall be compensated for train or other mass transit fares and fees provided that it is the most logical and least expensive method of travel.

**Ground Transportation:** Supplementary transportation within the destination city shall be accomplished by hotel courtesy buses, local shuttle services or public transportation, if available and logical. Taxi or rideshare may also be used.

**Rental Vehicles:** Rental vehicles shall only be used when no practical alternative exists; in such cases, Councilmembers must select economy class vehicles, and optional insurance is not reimbursable.

### **Airfare**

Airfare must be booked at the lowest reasonable fare that provides the most direct route. Air travel options shall not be limited to a specific airline. Refundable tickets are permitted if there is a risk of cancellation. One checked bag is reimbursable. Any unused credits from official travel must either be applied to future City travel or reimbursed to the City.



## OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY CITY COUNCILMEMBERS (cont.)

If travel arrangements must be canceled, Councilmembers are expected to notify staff as soon as practicable to allow sufficient time to avoid or minimize additional costs to the City.

### Expense Report

- All itemized receipts and documentation must be submitted within **thirty (30) business** days of travel to staff for processing with the City Auditor's Office.
- Expense and mileage reports must document that the expense meets the requirements of this policy. Inability to provide such documentation in a timely fashion may result in the expense being borne by the official.
- **Non-reimbursable expenses:** Expenses that are personal, political, or entertainment related are not eligible for reimbursement. **Alcohol expenses for family members or guests, and costs associated with extending a trip for personal reasons are also non-reimbursable.**

### Rewards and Promotional Benefits

Councilmembers may earn frequent flyer miles or other travel rewards (such as airline, hotel, or vendor loyalty points) while on official City travel. However, if personal frequent flyer miles or other reward points are used to purchase tickets or services for City business, the value of those tickets or services is not reimbursable.

Promotional benefits or materials received during official travel, if obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public and at no expense to the City, may be retained for personal use.

### Reports by **City Councilmembers**

Councilmembers must provide either a written or oral report to the City Council within fifteen (15) business days of their return, or at the next City Council meeting, whichever comes first. This requirement applies



## OFFICIAL TRAVEL BY CITY COUNCILMEMBERS (cont.)

to travel funded by the City as well as travel undertaken in an official capacity that is funded by a non-City entity. Any course or conference materials received may be shared in digital format with the full City Council.

**The report shall include, but is not limited to:**

- A listing of any workshops, presentations, educational seminars, speeches, or other sessions attended with summary and/or descriptions of information gathered
- A listing of meeting(s) held during travel with legislators, other governmental officials, or groups with subjects addressed during the meeting(s)
- A listing of any speeches, presentations, or other speaking roles during travel

### **Course Materials**

Course materials received may be shared with the Mayor and Council Office staff to include in a digital format to share with the full City Council, the Council Library or elected official's respective department's library, as applicable, for open accessibility, except for safety-sensitive portions of such materials.