


TRAVEL POLICY & PROCEDURE

Policy Number	Responsible Department	Effective Date	Approval
BOD 3.01	Board of Directors	January 22, 2026	<i>Board of Directors</i> 

I. PURPOSE

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority is a quasi-public corporation. The purpose of this Travel Policy is to ensure compliance with R.I. Gen. Laws §42-155 – Quasi Public Corporations Accountability and Transparency Act.

II. POLICY

This Policy and Travel Procedures sets forth the expectations, guidelines and procedures for business and travel expenses incurred by RIPTA employees, members of the RIPTA Board of Directors and subcommittees while conducting Authority business.

RIPTA supports employee travel for the purposes of education, training, quality assurance, and information sharing. The Authority will pay for reasonable and necessary business and travel expenses for RIPTA employees, members of the RIPTA Board of Directors and subcommittees.

Employees should conduct travel with an awareness that Authority funds are being utilized, and therefore keep the best interests of the Authority in mind when arranging and booking travel. Employees are expected to exercise judgment when incurring expenses, this includes applying for any scholarships or discounts when available. Expenses should be consistent with the purposes and levels of business being conducted.

Travel arrangements for all RIPTA employees and Board Members will be made by the Executive Assistant to the CEO or their designee. No other RIPTA personnel are authorized to make travel arrangements on behalf of the Authority.

Out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed by the Authority as outlined in this policy and may be requested in advance of travel.

If any part of a trip is considered personal, the personal portion of the trip and any related expenses are not reimbursable by the Authority.

If the Authority pays for travel in any manner, and a refund is later issued, the refund is the property of the Authority. If the refund is issued directly to the employee, the employee must remit the refund to the Authority, to the extent it was paid for by the Authority.

Fees charged by airlines, hotels, and other travel providers for changes made to travel arrangements (date changes, time changes, name changes, etc.) are reimbursable if the changes made were because of work related reasons. Changes made to travel arrangements for personal reasons are not reimbursable. Expenses incurred due to special needs of the Traveler are reimbursable upon review and approval of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

NO OUT OF STATE TRAVEL WILL OCCUR WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL BY THE CEO.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Pre-Travel

The Employee requesting travel ("Traveler") is required to submit a Travel Request Form (Form A) to obtain approval for all Authority-related travel.

1. Traveler must fill out the Travel Request Form (Form A) in its entirety, which includes an estimate of travel expenses, and then submit it to their department Director as far in advance as possible and no later than three weeks prior to travel date.
 - View Sections V and VI for guidance on estimated travel expenses.
 - Per Diem expenses are established by the State of Rhode Island and is based on a flat rate of \$50 per full day and may be reduced based on departure and arrival times.
2. Department Director reviews proposed expenses in relation to the Department's travel budget. In state travel is approved at this level. Out of state travel requests are forwarded to the CFO and CEO for review and approval.
3. Approved Travel Request Form is returned to the Traveler who must then request a meeting with Executive Assistant to the CEO to book travel. All arrangements will be booked using RIPTA credit card. If the Executive Assistant to the CEO finds economically advantageous arrangements, the form will be updated with revised costs. Once all travel is booked, the Executive Assistant to the CEO will provide a copy of the revised form to both, the Traveler and the Finance Department and will retain a copy for their own records.
4. If the Travel Request Form is not correctly filled out, the Executive Assistant to the CEO has the authority to deny the form and request that

it be resubmitted.

5. Prior to traveling, the Traveler must confirm that all travel arrangements are in order. This includes calling the hotel to confirm that the payment/credit card authorization form has been received.

B. Booking Travel

All airline, rail, lodging, conference, and ground transportation reservations will be handled by the Executive Assistant to the CEO. All travel arrangements will be booked using the RIPTA credit card.

The Executive Assistant to the CEO will make travel arrangements. **No out of state travel will occur without prior authorization by the CEO.**

The Executive Assistant to the CEO will book travel using corporate travel awards programs/discounts when available. Currently, the Authority has accounts with Delta SkyBonus and Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

C. Requirements for Travel Advances

Employees traveling on official RIPTA business may request a travel advance for out-of-state travel for per diem expenses, as described in Section VIII. In order to receive payment for per diem expenses ahead of travel all arrangements must be booked at least ten (10) business days before trip is to occur.

The Traveler may also request per diem after the trip has been completed along with any other eligible travel expenses as outlined in section VIII. Supporting documentation including receipts are required for reimbursement to occur.

D. Post Travel Requirements

Upon return, the Traveler may request reimbursement for any just and proper expenses incurred during travel when accompanied by a receipt, such as tolls, taxis, Uber/Lyft (or other transportation network companies), transit tickets, and baggage fees. A Purchase Request Form must be completed and all receipts or supporting documentation must be provided. Traveler must also substantiate the trip occurred by providing a boarding pass, hotel discharge papers or other documentation.

Meal receipts will not be accepted nor will reimbursement for meals be issued. The Authority reserves the right to deny reimbursement of any expenses not appropriately documented as required by this policy.

IV. AUTHORITY TO TRAVEL

Travel Within the State

The approval by the Department Director shall constitute authority for travel and expenses incurred within the State.

Travel Out of the State

Out of State travel requires the advance approval of the Department Director, CFO, and CEO using the Travel Request Form (Form A). The Travel Request Form must indicate the type of business travel. The types include:

- **Training** - Includes educational meetings and classes (i.e., managerial or technical training) which will increase the professional knowledge of the individual.
- **Seminars and Conferences** - Includes meetings not categorized as training.
- **Inspections** - Includes trips associated with on-site manufacturing and/or inspection of other work, services being performed per contract with Authority.
- **Other Business Trips** - Business trips which cannot be categorized as an inspection, training or seminar.

Employee Compensation During Travel

Exempt employees are not entitled to any additional compensation beyond the normal work week while attending to business away from RIPTA. Per the U.S. Department of Labor Section 785.39, non-exempt employees are entitled to payment for any additional hours worked beyond their normal work hours while on business. Non-exempt employees, however, are not entitled to compensation for time spent traveling outside their regular working hours on regularly scheduled working days.

Example: If Sally Joe, a non-exempt employee, regularly works Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM and travels at 6:00 PM on a Friday, then she would not receive any additional compensation. If the same non-exempt employee, with a work schedule of Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, travels on either a Saturday or Sunday, she would be entitled to additional compensation because the travel is on her regularly scheduled day off.

Holiday Travel Compensation

For business travel that extends to a scheduled RIPTA Holiday, all non-exempt employees will be compensated under the terms of their collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Exempt employees are not entitled to any additional compensation while attending to business away from RIPTA on a scheduled

holiday.

V. IN-STATE TRAVEL GUIDELINES:

In-state travel is defined as travel within a radius of approximately fifty-five (55) miles (including Boston).

Personally Owned Vehicles

All in-state travel should be performed using a RIPTA vehicle. However, if one is not available, the Traveler may be authorized to use their automobile for official RIPTA business by filling out the Automobile Expense/Reimbursement Form (Form B). The Traveler will be reimbursed at the current IRS approved rate.

Such authorization will be in accordance with the following conditions:

- The private automobile used for such travel will be made available for an odometer check whenever such a check is deemed advisable.
- The Traveler is responsible for the validity of any request for compensation for miles traveled on official business. Falsification of expense reports is a serious offense, which is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- All travel must be on commonly traveled routes. No transportation costs will be allowed between any Traveler's place of residence and the office. When the distance between the employee's residence and their travel destination is shorter than the distance between their office and the destination, such travel is not reimbursable.
- RIPTA will not pay or reimburse any costs, fines, penalties or assessments incurred by the Traveler that resulted from violations of any Federal or State law or local ordinances while operating a vehicle on official RIPTA business.

The Automobile Expense/Reimbursement Form (Form B) must include the following:

- Traveler's Name
- Department
- Date of trip
- Destination and purpose of the trip
- Beginning and ending odometer readings of each trip
- Signature of the Traveler, Department Director, and either CFO or Executive Director of Accounting. (For Chiefs seeking reimbursement, CEO signature will be required.)

VI. OUT OF STATE TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Airfare Guidelines

Allowable transportation accommodations will include coach fares, **utilizing the most economical fares possible**. Most economical fares consist of utilizing all available travel discounts including Saturday night stay-over where it is beneficial to the Authority.

Airfare costs in excess of the lowest available commercial discount airfare or customary standard (coach or equivalent) airfare on a U.S. carrier are not allowed except when the lower cost transportation would:

- Require circuitous routing
- Require travel during unreasonable hours
- Excessively prolong travel or greatly increase the duration of the flight
- Result in increased costs that would offset transportation savings

Traveler will not be allowed to take direct flights if there are other options which are economically advantageous to the Authority while still allowing the Traveler to conduct their business in a timely manner.

Traveler must consider the total costs of an itinerary when traveling to/from a destination or area. For example, when considering a departure out of Boston vs. a departure out of Providence, Traveler must compare the entire cost of the trip, including the increased cost of parking and/or any mileage that may be incurred.

Traveler must submit a minimum of three (3) flight options (and associated pricing) along with the Travel Form.

Baggage fees will be reimbursed as follows:

- Original detailed receipts are required.
- Traveler will be reimbursed for the 1st checked bag, each way.
- Any additional baggage fees greater than the 1st checked bag will be the sole responsibility of the Traveler.
- Traveler should read the airline's baggage fee rules before booking.

Vehicle Rental Guidelines

All drivers of rental vehicles must be current RIPTA employees with approved driver status. RIPTA utilizes Enterprise/National as the preferred car rental agency.

Employees should book with either Enterprise or National unless there is a less expensive or no other option available for the desired location.

Rentals are limited to the "standard" vehicle class unless circumstances dictate a larger vehicle is needed for the business purpose.

Safety guidelines include but are not limited to: no cell phone usage (unless hands- free); no texting while driving; driver must be properly insured; driver and passengers must obey all federal/state/local laws; driver must operate the vehicle in a responsible manner; no alcohol or illegal substances, as defined by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), will be used prior to, or while operating the vehicle.

Charges related to lost keys for vehicle rentals will not be reimbursed.

When a fly vs. drive option is considered, the mileage to and from a location for an approved business purpose (along with any additional costs related to driving), will be evaluated against the cost of charges that would be associated with flying (i.e. airport fees, drivers, shuttles, parking, etc.). Traveler will be reimbursed for the lesser of the two.

When booking a vehicle rental, the Executive Assistant to the CEO will purchase the insurance option.

Lodging Guidelines

Employees traveling on official RIPTA business are expected to stay at the hotel at which their respective conference is being held. If no rooms are available at the conference/host hotel, then employees are expected to stay at a comparably priced (tourist class) hotel, at the single room rate.

When available, the Traveler must book the **Government Rate** when the Government Rate is less expensive than the conference or best available rate. Traveler will be required to provide RIPTA ID at check-in to receive the Government Rate.

Upon check-in, the employee shall present a Credit Card Authorization Form when applicable.

Fees charged for damage to the hotel room or property, or loss of hotel property, are the responsibility of the employee.

VII. LIMITATIONS ON TRAVEL

Transportation includes all necessary authorized travel on railroads, airplanes, bus and other common carriers. Travelers will make use of shuttle buses and all other means of public transportation to the extent practical.

Allowable Accommodations:

- Railroad - Standard accommodations allowed where official necessity requires such means of travel.
- Airplane - One fare per person on air coach.
- Bus - One standard fare per person.
- Personally Owned Automobiles - Reimbursement will be made on the basis of miles traveled at the current IRS mileage rate, or common carrier fare, whichever is lower. When reimbursement or out of state auto mileage is requested in lieu of common carrier fares, the expense request should contain evidence as to the lower cost, as well as the reason why the automobile was used.

VIII. PER DIEM ALLOWANCE (Meals and Incidental Expenses)

A per diem allowance may be requested for out of state travel (excluding Boston) on official business. The per diem should be identified as part of the travel costs on the Travel Request Form (Form A). In accordance with Rhode Island law, the per diem amount is \$50.00 per day if the employee travel begins before 12:00 PM, and \$25.00 if the employee travel occurs after 12:00 PM.

a. Reimbursable Business Expenses

Business expenses are expenses incurred in connection with the transaction of official business. Authorized business expenses are allowed when they are properly explained in the expense request and supported with receipts. The necessity and nature of the expense must be clearly, fully, and satisfactorily explained on the travel expense form. Examples:

- Conference meal ticket (if not included in the conference fee).
- Reimbursement for wireless access at a hotel if the Traveler will be conducting work at night when wireless access is not available.
- Laundry/dry cleaning when the trip is five (5) days or longer.

b. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

Non-reimbursable expenses are types of expenses considered

personal in nature and no reimbursement will be made. They are:

- Air travel Insurance
- Traveler's check fees;
- In-room movies;
- Personal services and entertainment;
- Car washes;
- Gifts
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Traffic violations; and
- Personal credit card fees.

IX. EMPLOYEE TRAVEL EXPENSE/REIMBURSEMENT

At the end of a trip, documentation of traveling expenses must be submitted to the Executive Assistant to the CEO with the approved Travel Request Form (Form A) within five business days of return from travel. Receipts required:

- Transportation tickets - passenger receipts and boarding passes
- Receipted hotel bills
- Conference or registration fees and copy of printed conference itinerary
- Ground transportation receipts

In addition, reimbursement can be requested for out-of-pocket expenses not reimbursed prior to travel, including and limited to:

- Meals and Incidentals - The Traveler can request reimbursement at the rate outlined in Section VIII.
- Business Expenses