

Response to Questions on the FY 2018 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Foust

Question: Please provide a summary of travel expenses that exceed 100% of the GSA per diem. In addition, please provide an overview of the travel policy and procedures including the approvals required for reimbursement of expenses (specifically lodging).

Response: See below and attached spreadsheet

Background

In 2004, the Department of Finance (DOF) released a revamped employee travel policy which capitalized on the best practices of federal and state government travel and included uniform, equitable standards for travel authorization and reimbursement.

The policy incorporated the use of the federal government’s General Services Administration (GSA) and State Department schedules for national and international travel lodging per diem rates, respectively; and in 2007, was further enhanced to incorporate the use of GSA/State Department per diem schedules for meal and incidental expenses (M&IE).

Lodging Per Diem

While the GSA per diem schedule is intended for use by federal employee travelers, many public entities, including the Commonwealth, have adopted its use for employee travel. GSA rates are published each October, and DOF maintains links on their intranet (FairfaxNet) website for County employees to obtain the most up-to-date rates when planning their travel.

Travel Approvals

County travel is authorized based on the type of travel being performed, and is outlined below:

Type of Travel	Authorization Requires Signature By:
Domestic Travel (other than Department Heads)	Department Head or Designee
International travel by employees (other than Department Heads)	County Executive or Deputy County Executive
Travel by Department Heads	County Executive or Deputy County Executive
Travel by Deputy County Executives	County Executive
Travel by members of boards and commissions, prospective employees/interviewees, guest speakers and other invitees	County Executive or Deputy County Executive
Travel by judges	Chief Judge of the applicable court
Travel by members of the Board of Supervisors and their designees is administered by the Offices of the County Executive and Clerk to the Board. Such travel does not require advance authorization by the County Executive, but shall comply with all other aspects of this travel policy.	
Travel by the following elected officials and their staff is administered by the Offices of the County Executive and Clerk to the Board, but does not require the authorization of the County Executive:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sheriff ➤ Clerk to the Court (Circuit Court & Records) ➤ Electoral Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commonwealth’s Attorney ➤ Economic Development Authority

Lodging Per Diem Exceptions

County Travel

- Travelers are required to obtain advance authorization to exceed the federal lodging per diem rate limits.
- Department heads may authorize up to **150%** of the federal lodging per diem rate. Written justification, signed by the department head (or designee) should be included with the travel voucher.
- All other exceptions require the advance approval of the County's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or his or her designee. Requests should be submitted in writing.

Examples of exception approval criteria:

- **Isolated Event Location** – no public transportation easily obtainable to access location if staying off-site
- **Physically Challenged Employee** – staying off-site would present increased obstacles for employee
- **Safety Concerns** – staying at an alternate site would pose safety issues for employee
- **Transportation Costs Exceed On-site Stay Costs** – Alternative site not within walking distance of event location and cost of transportation to and from alternate site exceeds the costs of lodging at the event location
- **Formal Committee Membership** – attendee is a member of a formal committee or other decision making body and often required to attend early and late meetings around the conference event
- **Specific Request by the Federal Government** – federal government has requested employees to stay in a designated hotel and will reimburse the County for all expenses
- **No Alternative Hotel within Rates** – department head can show that they are unable to obtain the GSA rate or 150% of GSA for any hotel within a reasonable distance of the event.

As previously stated, the County travel policy adopted the best practices of the Commonwealth and Federal Government travel policies. Highlighted below are the lodging exception levels allowable by both entities.

Commonwealth Travel

- Travelers are required to obtain advance authorization to exceed the federal lodging per diem rate limits.
- Agency heads may authorize **up to 150%** of the federal lodging per diem rate. Written justification, signed by the department head (or designee) should be included with the travel voucher.
- All other exceptions require the advance approval of the Agency Head's Fiscal Officer (Cabinet Member travel requires alternate approval authorization).
- Requests should be submitted in writing.

Federal Employee Travel

- Allows agencies to reimburse actual hotel charges **up to 300%** of the established per diem rates.
- GSA travel policy specifically cites the following reasons pre-determined GSA lodging per diem rates may not be available:

- Lodging is procured at a prearranged place such as a hotel where a meeting, conference or training session is held;
- Costs have escalated because of special events (e.g., missile launching periods, sporting events, World’s Fair, conventions, natural or manmade disasters);
- Lodging and meal expenses within prescribed allowances cannot be obtained nearby;
- The costs to commute to/from the nearby location consume most or all of the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging;
- The location is subject to a Presidentially-Declared Disaster;
- Because of mission requirements;
- Any other reason approved within a federal agency.

Summary chart of exception approval thresholds and authorized personnel for travel by County, the Commonwealth and federal government:

ENTITY	EXCEPTION APPROVAL THRESHOLDS and AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL		
	150% of GSA	Over 150% of GSA	Up to 300% of GSA
County	Department Head	County CFO	
Commonwealth	Agency Head	Agency Head’s Fiscal Officer	
Federal Government			Federal Agency

Data Request Analysis

As discussed at the March 7, 2017, Audit Committee meeting, accessing employee travel data to the level of detail requested (i.e., number of trips that exceed 100% of GSA) requires a manual review of each travel document submitted to the Department of Finance for reimbursement.

In order to provide a response in a timely fashion, 100% of travel conducted by four County departments, for the period of July 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016 was reviewed. These departments included: Circuit Court, Department of Transportation, Planning Commission, and the Retirement Administration Agency.

As noted in the attached spreadsheet, a total of 58 non-local travel events occurred during the period listed. Of the 58 travel events, 59% were within the GSA lodging rate, 40% fell within 150% of the GSA lodging rate, and 1% was over the 150% of the GSA lodging rate.

Fairfax County Government
Traveler Lodging Costs Compared to GSA Rates
For Period Covering July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016

Traveler	Agency Name	Depart Date	Return Date	Number of Days	Event	Destination City	State	GSA Rate 100%	GSA Rate 150%	Room Rate Per Night
CC-Traveler 1	Circuit Court	5/31/2016	6/2/2016	2	VA Court Clerk Conf	Richmond	VA	121.00	181.50	139.00
CC-Traveler 2	Circuit Court	5/31/2016	6/2/2016	2	VA Court Clerk Conf	Richmond	VA	121.00	181.50	139.00
CC-Traveler 3	Circuit Court	5/31/2016	6/2/2016	2	VA Court Clerk Conf	Richmond	VA	121.00	181.50	139.00
CC-Traveler 4	Circuit Court	6/25/2016	6/30/2016	5	NACRC 2016	Memphis	TN	106.00	159.00	129.00
CC-Traveler 5	Circuit Court	6/25/2016	7/2/2016	7	Fact Find Course	Missoula	MT	95.00	142.50	125.00
CC-Traveler 6	Circuit Court	6/26/2016	6/30/2016	4	NACRC 2016	Memphis	TN	106.00	159.00	129.00
CC-Traveler 7	Circuit Court	8/22/2016	8/26/2016	4	PRIA 2016	Des Moines	IA	101.00	151.50	94.00
CC-Traveler 6	Circuit Court	9/16/2016	9/18/2016	2	Court Clerk Conf	Virginia Beach	VA	96.00	144.00	96.00
CC-Traveler 4	Circuit Court	9/16/2016	9/18/2016	2	Court Clerk Conf	Virginia Beach	VA	96.00	144.00	96.00
DOT-Traveler 1	Department of Transportation	7/17/2016	7/20/2016	3	APA 2016 Conference	Virginia Beach	VA	176.00	264.00	150.00
DOT-Traveler 2	Department of Transportation	7/31/2016	8/3/2016	3	ACT 2016 Conference	Portland	OR	151.00	226.50	99.50
DOT-Traveler 3	Department of Transportation	7/31/2016	8/3/2016	3	ACT 2016 Conference	Portland	OR	151.00	226.50	99.50
DOT-Traveler 4	Department of Transportation	9/6/2016	9/9/2016	3	3CMA Conference	San Antonio	TX	120.00	180.00	165.00
DOT-Traveler 5	Department of Transportation	9/11/2016	9/16/2016	5	Pro Place 19 Conference	Vancouver	BC	233.00	349.50	228.00
DOT-Traveler 6	Department of Transportation	9/12/2016	9/14/2016	2	VDOT Workshop	Roanoke	VA	104.00	156.00	104.00
DOT-Traveler 7	Department of Transportation	9/12/2016	9/15/2016	3	VDOT Workshop	Roanoke	VA	104.00	156.00	52.00
DOT-Traveler 8	Department of Transportation	9/12/2016	9/15/2016	3	VDOT Workshop	Roanoke	VA	104.00	156.00	52.00
DOT-Traveler 9	Department of Transportation	9/13/2016	9/15/2016	2	VDOT Workshop	Roanoke	VA	104.00	156.00	52.00
DOT-Traveler 10	Department of Transportation	9/13/2016	9/15/2016	2	VDOT Workshop	Roanoke	VA	104.00	156.00	52.00
DOT-Traveler 11	Department of Transportation	9/24/2016	9/30/2016	6	NACTCO 2016	Seattle	WA	202.00	303.00	215.00
DOT-Traveler 12	Department of Transportation	9/25/2016	9/29/2016	4	2016 Clever Devices	Chicago	IL	212.00	318.00	269.00
DOT-Traveler 13	Department of Transportation	10/8/2016	10/13/2016	5	Railvolution 2016	San Francisco	CA	267.00	400.50	229.00
PC-Traveler 1	Planning Commission	9/27/2015	9/29/2015	2	85th VA Plan Comm	Newport News	VA	83.00	124.50	83.00
PC-Traveler 2	Planning Commission	9/27/2015	9/29/2015	2	85th VA Plan Comm	Newport News	VA	83.00	124.50	83.00
PC-Traveler 2	Planning Commission	12/10/2015	12/11/2015	1	85th VA Plan Comm	Newport News	VA	83.00	124.50	89.00
PC-Traveler 1	Planning Commission	12/10/2015	12/11/2015	1	85th VA Plan Comm	Newport News	VA	83.00	124.50	89.00
PC-Traveler 3	Planning Commission	7/17/2016	7/20/2016	3	2016 APA Virginia	Roseland	VA	89.00	133.50	149.00
RAA-Traveler 1	Retirement Administration Agency	6/8/2016	6/10/2016	2	Mid Atlantic Ed Conf	Baltimore	MD	151.00	226.50	151.00
RAA-Traveler 2	Retirement Administration Agency	6/12/2016	6/17/2016	5	Manager Visits	New York	NY	242.00	363.00	265.40
RAA-Traveler 3	Retirement Administration Agency	6/19/2016	6/22/2016	3	20th Pension Gold Con	O'Fallon	IL	125.00	187.50	105.00
RAA-Traveler 4	Retirement Administration Agency	6/19/2016	6/22/2016	3	20th Pension Gold Con	O'Fallon	IL	125.00	187.50	105.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	6/20/2016	6/22/2016	2	Managed Funds Forum	Chicago	IL	200.00	300.00	262.65
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	6/20/2016	6/22/2016	2	Managed Funds Forum	Chicago	IL	200.00	300.00	236.38
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	6/26/2016	6/29/2016	3	IMN Conf	Los Angeles	CA	150.00	225.00	146.67
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	7/10/2016	7/12/2016	2	Manager Visits	New York	NY	242.00	363.00	242.00
RAA-Traveler 7	Retirement Administration Agency	7/10/2016	7/12/2016	2	Manager Visits	New York	NY	242.00	363.00	242.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	8/10/2016	8/12/2016	2	Due Dilligence	New York	NY	242.00	363.00	242.00
RAA-Traveler 1	Retirement Administration Agency	8/10/2016	8/12/2016	2	Due Dilligence	New York	NY	242.00	363.00	242.00
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	9/19/2016	9/22/2016	3	Morgan Stanley Conf	Bridgeport	CT	130.00	195.00	129.00
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	9/27/2016	9/28/2016	1	Real Assesst Insurance Conf	New York	NY	306.00	459.00	0.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	9/27/2016	9/29/2016	2	Real Assesst Insurance Conf	New York	NY	306.00	459.00	0.00
RAA-Traveler 8	Retirement Administration Agency	9/27/2016	9/28/2016	1	Real Assesst Insurance Conf	New York	NY	306.00	459.00	0.00
RAA-Traveler 1	Retirement Administration Agency	9/27/2016	9/28/2016	1	Real Assesst Insurance Conf	New York	NY	306.00	459.00	0.00
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	10/3/2016	10/5/2016	2	Real Assesst Insurance Conf	Chicago	IL	212.00	318.00	212.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	10/3/2016	10/5/2016	2	IMN Conf	Chicago	IL	212.00	318.00	212.00
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	10/13/2016	10/14/2016	1	Solus Investors Meeting	New York	NY	301.00	451.50	306.00
RAA-Traveler 1	Retirement Administration Agency	10/13/2016	10/14/2016	1	Solus Investors Meeting	New York	NY	301.00	451.50	301.00
RAA-Traveler 2	Retirement Administration Agency	10/21/2016	10/23/2016	2	NCPEERS 2016	Las Vegas	NV	102.00	153.00	139.00
RAA-Traveler 9	Retirement Administration Agency	10/21/2016	10/26/2016	5	NPEA 2016	Los Angeles	CA	158.00	237.00	189.00
RAA-Traveler 10	Retirement Administration Agency	10/21/2016	10/26/2016	5	NPEA 2016	Los Angeles	CA	158.00	237.00	189.00
RAA-Traveler 11	Retirement Administration Agency	10/22/2016	10/27/2016	5	NCPEERS 2016	Las Vegas	NV	102.00	153.00	77.84
RAA-Traveler 12	Retirement Administration Agency	10/22/2016	10/27/2016	5	NCPEERS 2016	Las Vegas	NV	102.00	153.00	77.84
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	10/24/2016	10/28/2016	4	BlackRock Conf	New York	NY	301.00	451.50	301.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	10/26/2016	10/28/2016	2	Epsilon Forum	San Francisco	CA	267.00	400.50	376.50
RAA-Traveler 2	Retirement Administration Agency	11/2/2016	11/3/2016	1	Manager Search	Chicago	IL	212.00	318.00	299.00
RAA-Traveler 6	Retirement Administration Agency	11/2/2016	11/4/2016	2	BlackRock Risk Factor	San Francisco	CA	267.00	400.50	304.00
RAA-Traveler 5	Retirement Administration Agency	11/2/2016	11/4/2016	2	BlackRock Risk Factor	San Francisco	CA	267.00	400.50	298.00
RAA-Traveler 2	Retirement Administration Agency	11/3/2016	11/4/2016	1	Manager Search	New York	NY	301.00	451.50	342.02

Yellow - over GSA but within 150%
Red - over 150% of GSA

- ¹ DOT-Travelers 1 and 2 shared a room and split the lodging costs
- ² DOT-Travelers 8 and 9 shared a room and split the lodging costs
- ³ DOT-Travelers 6 and 7 shared a room and split the lodging costs
- ⁴ RAA-Travelers 11 and 12 shared a room and split the lodging costs
- ⁵ Hotel Costs for RAA-Travelers 1, 5, 6, and 8 were covered by the conference sponsor, Cohen & Steers