

## **Employee Travel Policy**

### **Effective July 21, 2025**

#### **Purpose**

This policy establishes consistent procedures for travel conducted by Roane County Government employees while performing official county business. It ensures travel is cost-effective, properly authorized, and reimbursed in accordance with established rates and guidelines.

#### **Policy Overview**

Employees should not incur out-of-pocket expenses for approved travel conducted for county purposes. Travel must be authorized in advance and carried out using the most economical and practical methods. All reimbursements will follow IRS mileage standards and applicable per diem rates set by the U.S. General Services Administration (CONUS).

Departments are encouraged to consider virtual meetings as an alternative to travel when feasible and practical, especially for training, briefings, or meetings that do not require in-person presence.

#### **Travel Authorization**

All travel must be pre-approved by the employee's department head or designated supervisor. Out-of-state travel requires additional approval from the County Executive or designee. Requests must be submitted in advance and documented appropriately. Exceptions to this policy must be requested in writing and approved by the County Executive's Office prior to travel.

#### **Official Station and Commuting**

An employee's official station is typically the county office or facility where they are assigned to work. Travel between an employee's home and their official station is considered commuting and is not eligible for reimbursement. For employees authorized to work remotely, the County Executive or department head may designate the residence as the official station for specific days or arrangements.

#### **Transportation and Mileage**

Use of a personal vehicle for county business must be authorized by the department head. Reimbursement for personal vehicle use will follow the current IRS business mileage rate. Travel must be limited to official county business, and commuting mileage must be excluded from claims.

Reimbursable mileage must follow these general rules:

- If travel begins or ends at the official station, mileage is calculated from the official station.
- If travel begins or ends at the employee's residence, the lesser of the distance from home or the official station to the destination will be used.
- On weekends or holidays, actual mileage from residence may be reimbursed.

County-owned or rental vehicles should be used when available and feasible. Only authorized employees may operate a county or rented vehicle. Use of rental vehicles must be pre-approved and limited to circumstances where no practical alternative exists. Charges for rental car insurance are not reimbursable. The county is self-insured.

Employees are responsible for coordinating their own travel arrangements unless otherwise directed by their department. Any travel reservations made using county funds must follow this policy and obtain prior approval.

### **Lodging and Meals**

Lodging must be approved in advance and will be reimbursed up to the allowable CONUS rate for the location. Employees must submit an itemized receipt showing the nightly rate and applicable taxes. If lodging exceeds the standard rate due to a conference or special circumstance, documentation must be provided for approval.

Meal per diem will follow the federal CONUS M&IE rates. Reimbursement for meals is only allowed when overnight travel is involved. Meals provided by a conference, hotel, or host agency must be deducted from the daily per diem. Travel days (departure and return) are reimbursed at 75% of the daily per diem. Reimbursement for meals is not allowed on same-day travel without an overnight stay.

### **Other Reimbursable Expenses**

Expenses such as parking, tolls, public transportation, internet access, and reasonable baggage fees (up to two bags) may be reimbursed with itemized receipts. Airport ground transportation should be reasonable and cost-effective. Employees are encouraged to use hotel shuttles or group transportation where available.

Incidentals include minor travel-related costs such as tips for baggage handling, phone calls home, or similar items. Internet charges will be reimbursed when needed for business purposes and supported by receipts.

### **Travel Advances**

Travel advances may be issued only under extraordinary circumstances and must be approved by the County Executive. Employees must sign an agreement allowing the county to recover unused funds if a claim is not submitted.

Advances will not exceed 80% of the estimated total travel cost and will not be issued for amounts less than \$100. Employees must submit a travel claim upon return regardless of any balance owed.

### **Extended Travel and Special Cases**

Employees on extended travel status (defined as travel exceeding two consecutive weeks) may request alternate lodging arrangements, such as short-term furnished rentals, in lieu of hotel stays. These arrangements must be approved in advance by the department head and the County Executive.

Travel involving county representation at events with state officials, economic development functions, or special assignments must be pre-approved and documented. Business meals with official guests or community partners may be reimbursed when properly authorized and accompanied by receipts.

### **Travel Reimbursement Procedures**

Travel reimbursement requests should be submitted within 30 days of the trip's conclusion. Requests must include a completed travel reimbursement form and itemized receipts for all applicable expenses. Reimbursements submitted after 60 days may be treated as taxable income under IRS guidelines.

Travel expenses paid by the county directly (e.g., registration, airfare) must still be included on the reimbursement form for recordkeeping but will not be reimbursed to the employee.

### **Non-Reimbursable Expenses**

The following expenses are not eligible for reimbursement:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal entertainment or services
- Mileage related to commuting

- Expenses incurred by accompanying family members or guests
- Tips beyond those covered in the per diem rate
- Travel insurance or personal upgrades (airfare, hotel, vehicle)

### **Rate Updates and Policy Maintenance**

Mileage, lodging, and per diem rates will be updated automatically in accordance with IRS and GSA (CONUS) guidance. The Roane County Finance Department will monitor changes annually to ensure ongoing compliance and accuracy.

### **Violations**

Any deliberate misuse of travel funds or submission of false or misleading claims may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Exceptions**

The County Executive may grant reasonable exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis, provided the exception is documented and in the county's best interest.