

Travel Policy – FAQ

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1054411&mode=2>

The current travel policy for commonwealth travelers became effective January 1, 2012. The policy is detailed in [Management Directive 230.10, Commonwealth Travel Policy \(Effective January 1, 2012\)](#) and [Manual 230.1, Commonwealth Travel Procedures Manual \(Effective January 1, 2012\)](#), but to help clarify the changes we have compiled the following frequently asked questions.

Updated: 10/01/12

Ground Travel

- 1. Q: Do people who have permanently-assigned state-owned vehicles have to do the ground travel worksheet that figures out the most cost efficient mode of travel?**

A: No. The ground travel worksheet is intended to provide alternatives to those individuals who do not have a permanently-assigned vehicle.
- 2. Q: Do people who wish to use a privately-owned vehicle and receive the lower GSA rate have to do the ground travel worksheet that figures out the most cost efficient mode of travel?**

A: No. But, the ground travel worksheet is advisable for personal vehicle use if an employee is seeking reimbursement at the standard GSA rate in order to show such usage is the least costly option.
- 3. Q: Is there a difference between the definitions for commute miles for income tax purposes versus commute miles when analyzing a traveler's total mileage for determination of assignment of a state-owned vehicle?**

A: To some extent, yes. The IRS considers the first trip from home and the final trip to home a commute, regardless of the first and last destinations. DGS-BVM, for the purposes of vehicle assignment, considers the fact that sometimes employees must report to alternate locations which may be further than their normal commute. By considering these additional miles as "business" miles, they are excluded from consideration for tax purposes, but are considered part of overall usage for assignment determinations.
- 4. Q: If an employee has a question or is stranded after hours with a state-owned vehicle, who should he/she call?**

A: (877) 347-9966, the Department of General Services Bureau of Vehicle Management (BVM) Customer Service Division. Employees in commonwealth vehicles who find themselves stranded should immediately phone BVM to report any vehicle breakdown. BVM personnel will arrange for vehicle towing as needed. If a stranded employee is unable to obtain transportation from site, BVM can assist in identifying transportation. BVM has also recommended every agency develop its own after hours plan to assist their travelers, regardless of whether they are driving a state-owned vehicle.
- 5. Q: Who is authorized to drive and/or ride in a state-owned vehicle?**

A: Only commonwealth officers or employees are authorized to drive state-owned vehicles. Authorized passengers are commonwealth officers or employees or other individuals involved in the conduct of official commonwealth business. When a hotel is authorized per travel policy and it requires valet parking, the hotel's valet may drive the state-provided vehicle in order to park it in the hotel's required parking facility.
- 6. Q: How should contractors and consultants, who are non-Commonwealth employees but whose contract with the Commonwealth requires adherence to Commonwealth Travel Policy, make the determination of the least expensive mode of ground transportation?**

A: As non-Commonwealth employees, contractors and consultants may not operate state-owned vehicles and may not book rental vehicles at the Commonwealth's rates. However, contractors and consultants must consider the cost effectiveness and efficiency of ground travel options available to them, such as rental vehicles booked either through their own corporate accounts or through utilization of commercial rental car providers, when traveling for the purposes of official Commonwealth business.

7. **Q: Sometimes I have to transport clients as part of my work. Can I do so with a state-owned vehicle?**
A: Yes; other individuals involved in the conduct of official commonwealth business are authorized as passengers.
8. **Q: When using my privately-owned vehicle for work purposes, I have been able to drop off at/pick up my children from day care. If use of a state-owned vehicle is the least expensive mode of transportation for a given trip, there will be occasions that I will have to obtain the vehicle the evening before and leave my privately-owned vehicle at the location where the state-owned vehicle is housed. This will leave me with no way to transport my children to day care the next day, and I need to have my children cared for in order to work. What do I do?**
A: Children are not authorized to be passengers in state-owned or state-provided vehicles. In the event that business travel can be arranged to accommodate the drop off/pick up schedule, or that alternative arrangements can be made, the employee should utilize the least expensive ground travel option. In the event these arrangements cannot be made, the employee may have to utilize their personal vehicle and accept the lower GSA reimbursement rate.
9. **Q: For state-owned vehicles, what insurance coverage do I have in the event I'm in an accident on Commonwealth business? And what do I do if I'm involved in an accident?**
A: Please reference Section Twelve: "Liability and Accident Reporting" in the [Commonwealth Fleet Procedures Manual](#) (615.3). Detailed information relative to insurance coverage for operators of state-owned vehicles can be found on the DGS website here.
10. **Q: I have a "person with disability" license plate on my personally-owned vehicle. Do I have to use a state-provided vehicle instead of my own?**
A: Determination as to assignment and/or use of a state-provided vehicle (rental or state-owned) or use of a personally-owned vehicle in this circumstance will be made through a coordination of the employee, his or her agency Disability Services Coordinator (DCS) and the Bureau of Vehicle Management.
11. **Q: I have a disability-related accommodation for office-related work activities, but it does not address travel. Will I need to use a state-provided vehicle in lieu of my personal vehicle?**
A: Determination as to assignment and/or use of a state-provided vehicle (rental or state-owned) or use of a personally-owned vehicle in this circumstance will be made through a coordination of the employee, his or her agency Disability Services Coordinator (DCS) and the Bureau of Vehicle Management.
12. **Q: I live in an area of the state that experiences severe winter driving conditions from November into April and have always relied upon my privately-owned four-wheel drive vehicle to travel safely when conducting state business. Will I be able to continue to utilize my privately-owned vehicle in circumstances of extreme weather?**
A: Under the new travel policy, employees do have the option to utilize their privately-owned vehicle for business travel in this circumstance; however, if it is not the least expensive option, the employee may only be reimbursed at the lower GSA reimbursement rate.
13. **Q: Can I use a personal GPS in a state-provided vehicle?**
A: Yes. State employees may use a personally-owned GPS in a state-provided vehicle although permanent installation is not permitted.
14. **Q: If I am in travel status, can I travel beyond my hotel in a state-provided vehicle?**
A: Employees in travel status may use a state-owned or state provided vehicle to travel to meals and to other necessities when away from their residence on official commonwealth business. This could include travel to pick-up dry cleaning, medications and other personal care items. Sightseeing and travel to entertainment complexes that is not part of an official business agenda is not authorized.
15. **Q: Are personal items carried in state-owned or state-provided vehicles covered by the state's insurance?**
A: No. Only commonwealth property is covered by the state's insurance. Loss or damage to personal items carried in a state-owned or state-provided automobile may be covered by the personal insurance of the employee (vehicle or homeowner).
16. **Q: How can I be assigned a state-owned vehicle if I do not have parking available at my residence for a state-owned vehicle?**

A: The Department of General Services (DGS) Bureau of Vehicle Management (BVM) will work with agency employees who qualify for and require a state-owned vehicle for business travel but who cannot maintain a vehicle at their residence.

17. Q: If you have a permit to carry a concealed firearm, can you carry it in the state-owned vehicle?

A: No, only state employees who require a firearm as part of their state job duties may do so (parole officer, state police are examples).

18. Q: If employees are required to have a state-owned vehicle, they may stay at hotels as opposed to commuting back and forth, resulting in increased hotel costs that offset the vehicle savings. Who should decide whether an employee stays overnight or return to their residence?

A: The decision to stay overnight is one that should be made by the traveler and supervisor. There needs to be a legitimate business need for overnight travel status before a supervisor should approve.

19. Q: Where I am located, I must travel some distance to pick up a rental vehicle because it is the lowest-cost mode of ground travel. If I do this outside of my regular work hours will I be paid overtime and reimbursed for the miles I put on my personal car?

A: Such time would be considered compensable work time (assuming you are in an overtime-eligible classification), and mileage would be reimbursed appropriately. However, be aware that the commonwealth's contracted rental car company will often arrange for transportation to the rental location and travelers should avail themselves of this service when possible.

20. Q: What insurance coverage applies in the event I'm in an accident while driving on Commonwealth business in a state-owned, rental, or personally-owned vehicle?

A: [Select this link for details on the various insurances that apply if involved in an accident](#) on Commonwealth business.

Ground Travel Worksheet

1. Q: Am I required to complete the ground travel worksheet for every day that I travel to the field work site?

A: It is not required, but whether its use is advisable depends on the variables of the particular trip. The supervisor and the employee should evaluate the circumstances and decide the least expensive mode of transportation in advance of the particular trip, whether it is a one-day trip or a multiple day trip. The DGS Ground Travel Worksheet is the recommended tool that can be used in making that determination and is recommended to be submitted with the expense report to show the auditor the methodology used in making the determination ONLY IF the traveler is requesting the higher GSA rate for reimbursement of personal mileage.

2. Q: Do people who have permanently-assigned state-owned vehicles have to do the ground travel worksheet that figures out the most cost efficient mode of travel?

A: No. The ground travel worksheet is intended to provide alternatives to those individuals who do not have a permanently-assigned vehicle and who do not travel frequently for business.

3. Q: How much discretion does a supervisor have in determining that a mode of transportation that is less expensive than privately-owned vehicle use is inefficient and warrants use of the privately-owned vehicle?

A: Supervisors are responsible to make that decision consistent with operational/business needs. However, decisions must be based on legitimate operational/business needs, and failure by the supervisor to exercise care in the review and approval of travel expenses may result in disciplinary action.

4. Q: When using the ground travel worksheet to assist in calculating the least expensive mode of transportation, does the traveler use mileage from their home or from their headquarters?

A: Use the reimbursable number of miles. If leaving from their residence, travelers should use the shorter of residence to work site OR headquarters to work site.

Receipts

- 1. Q: My union's collective bargaining agreement says that receipts do not have to be obtained for certain expenses. Will I now have to submit receipts for these?**

A: No, the travel policy does not override such provisions of a collective bargaining agreement. But these are not flat allowances and submission for reimbursement should be for amounts actually expended, up to the maximum permitted.
- 2. Q: What is the supervisor's responsibility in reviewing and authenticating receipts – need clarification what the supervisor is required to do in order to approve? Must they add and arrive at same total – must they calculate percentages for breakfast, lunch and dinner?**

A: Yes, supervisors are responsible to review and verify all justification, including the amounts of receipts, and ensure the amount of the claim is accurate, necessary, and proper. (See section 7.2 of M230.1.) Supervisors do not need to calculate percentages to ensure travelers stay within the limits for each particular meal. However, subsistence claims may not exceed the allowance for each 24-hour period.
- 3. Q: Can an employee on weeklong overnight status buy all meals for the week in one grocery trip, cook and eat meals in the hotel room all week and have the daily subsistence limits accumulate to that one receipt? Will there be an issue when breakfast foods are eaten at lunch and dinner?**

A: Subsistence rates are generally intended for reimbursement of meals that are prepared and served, and include tax and gratuity. However, travelers may claim actual expenses from a grocery or convenience store provided the expense directly relates to the items or portion of items consumed during the business travel. Items not consumed during the trip are not reimbursable. An itemized receipt must be included with the TER with consumed items clearly marked and calculations to support any prorated portions. In general, the act of consuming breakfast foods during lunch or dinner will not be an issue.
- 4. Q: How detailed do receipts have to be? What information must be on the receipt for it to be acceptable? Some receipts do not come with all the required information.**

A: Receipts must contain the name and address of the vendor, date of service, description of service, and the amount paid for each individual item. In almost all cases, a valid receipt can be obtained simply by requesting one from the provider. However, we also recognize that providers sometimes will not provide a "valid" receipt. If that happens, make an effort to obtain the required information and document it along with what was provided. Credit card receipts by themselves are not acceptable since they are not itemized.
- 5. Q: When you don't have a receipt, such as when purchasing from a parking meter or a vending machine – will there be a form available to itemize these items and sign?**

A: Yes, the BCPO-3302 form is available on the BCPO website for these situations. The BCPO-3302 form no longer needs to be notarized but there is now additional information required on the form.
- 6. Q: The policy requires the traveler to first contact the vendor to obtain a receipt, and the BCPO-3302 form also asks for the address and phone number of the vendor. How do I do that if it's a vending machine or a parking meter?**

A: For parking meters and vending machine purchases where receipts are normally not provided, it is not required for travelers to contact a vendor to request a receipt. Also in these cases when a specific address and phone number is not obtainable, travelers should document the known location of the meter or machine where the expense was incurred (i.e. parking meter on Market St. next to State Office Bldg., vending machine on 15th floor of State Office Building, etc.) on the BCPO-3302 form.
- 7. Q: Some hotels have valet parking that a traveler must use because parking garages are inconvenient or maybe full. When the valet pulls my car around for me, and I tip him/her, how do I get a receipt for that, or document it on the BCPO 3302?**

A: In cases where a receipt is not normally provided, document the amount and location of the expense on the BCPO-3302 form. Please be advised, avoiding self-parking as a matter of personal inconvenience is not justification for incurring additional expenses.
- 8. Q: Is a hotel receipt showing "room service" and just the price of the meal without itemizing the food items, sufficient for reimbursement for that meal?**

A: No, all receipts must be itemized to be valid. The receipt must show that no non-reimbursable expense, such as alcohol, has been included.

9. **Q: If the only receipt I have from refueling a rental car is the credit card slip that the pump dispenses, will that be sufficient to submit for reimbursement? If not, what do I need?**

A: Receipts dispensed by fuel pumps are generally acceptable. If a required piece of information is missing, the traveler may handwrite the information on the receipt.

10. **Q: If not paying with a credit card, how do I provide justification for a tip?**

A: A cash tip may be hand-written by the traveler on the receipt. For tips on other services where a receipt is not normally presented, they should be documented on the BCPO-3302 form.

11. **Q: I work out of my home and my Commonwealth-provided portable computer was never set up for scanning. Now that everything must be scanned into the system, what am I to do? Is there still an option to mail receipts?**

A: Your agency should devise a process in which your receipts can be scanned and attached to the expense report. If a scanner is not available, a travel arranger may scan and attach receipts on your behalf. You should discuss the issue with your supervisor.

Rental Cars

1. **Q: Do the same usage restrictions that apply to state-owned vehicles apply to the use of rental vehicles?**

A: Rental vehicles are considered state-provided and are subject to the same policies and procedures as state-owned vehicles.

2. **Q: Who is authorized to drive and/or ride in a rental vehicle?**

A: Rental vehicles are considered state-provided and are subject to the same policies and procedures as state-owned vehicles. Therefore, only commonwealth officers or employees are authorized to drive state-provided rental vehicles. Authorized passengers are commonwealth officers or employees or other individuals involved in the conduct of official commonwealth business. When a hotel is authorized per travel policy and it requires valet parking, the hotel's valet may drive the state-provided vehicle in order to park it in the hotel's required parking facility.

3. **Q: When I refuel a rental car before returning it, can I use my Corporate Card to pay for it?**

A: Yes. When seeking reimbursement for fuel dispensed for a rental vehicle, employees should submit the rental vehicle receipt along with the fuel receipt.

4. **Q: If a rental vehicle is the least expensive option, how do I work through the logistics of picking the vehicle up, dropping it off, and securing my personal vehicle?**

A: Most vehicle rentals are based on a 24-hour period, which typically allows for a night before pick-up or early morning return. In some instances, the rental company may pick you up and take you to the rental vehicle. In other instances, your personal car may be parked on their rental lot. All of these logistical considerations should be coordinated with your supervisor and contemplated along with your travel itinerary before placing a rental reservation.

5. **Q: I travel four out of five days most weeks and a rental vehicle has been determined to be the least expensive mode of transportation available to me. Will I be required to pick up and drop off the rental car daily? Won't that reduce the amount of time in which I can complete my work?**

A: Based on these travel requirements, BVM would first look to provide a state-owned vehicle. In the event one is not available for assignment, rental contracts are available on a monthly basis and would avoid the need for daily attendance to these matters.

6. **Q: If I have a monthly rental vehicle, can I use the car on weekends for personal travel if I pay for the gas?**

A: Restrictions on the use of a rental vehicle are the same as a state-provided vehicle. Except for de minimis use, rental vehicles may not be used for personal travel.

- 7. Q: For rental cars, what insurance coverage do I have in the event I'm in an accident on commonwealth business? And what do I do if I'm involved in an accident?**

A: [Select this link for details on the various insurances](#) that apply if involved in an accident on Commonwealth business.

Subsistence

- 1. Q: What are the new maximum subsistence allowances for breakfast, lunch and dinner – do they still differ by region?**

A: Maximum subsistence allowances for overnight travel are determined by the General Services Administration (GSA). Subsistence rates do vary by region – detailed information can be found on the [GSA website \(http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877\)](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877). However, allowances are not flat rates and in order to claim reimbursement, eligible employees need to incur the expense. Receipts are required.

Carpools

- 1. Q: Is car-pooling with a co-worker (if feasible and reasonable) a requirement?**

A: The travel policy does not require employees to carpool, although carpooling is an excellent way to save costs and is encouraged whenever possible, regardless of whether it is in a state-owned or rental vehicle. However; agency policies may be more restrictive so it is recommended you check with your supervisor or agency Administration Office.

Attaching Documents to Travel Expense Reports

- 1. Q: What do I do if I have questions on attaching documents to SAP travel expense reports?**

A: [Select this link for a list of frequently asked questions \(FAQs\) on attaching, viewing, and deleting files in ESS and SAP.](#) Contact the BCPO travel audits help desk at co-travelaudits@pa.gov if you have other questions that are not in these FAQs.