



## Staff Report

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
**FROM:** Kari Mendoza, Interim Deputy City Manager  
**BY:** Darron Usher, Principal Management Analyst  
**DATE:** January 20, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Revisions to the City's Travel Expenses and Reimbursement Policy

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**Description:** Discussion of proposed revisions to the City's Travel Expenses and Reimbursement Policy.

### **Background and Analysis:**

The *Travel Expenses and Reimbursement Policy* establishes guidelines for authorizing, participating in, and reimbursing travel-related expenses incurred by elected officials, appointed officials, commissioners, employees, and volunteers while conducting official City business.

In 2015, City Council adopted a Travel Expense and Reimbursement Policy for all elected and appointed officials. Additional reviews have been completed over the years by the city council, legal, finance and audit committee and staff for transparency and government code compliance.

Staff has completed a reorganization and modernization of the policy to ensure alignment with current City practices, legislative requirements, and internal consistency. The updated policy was presented to the City Council on November 18, 2025, for consideration. The City Council directed staff to make additional revisions and schedule the review for a future Council meeting to provide greater clarity on authorization procedures, travel eligibility, and departmental coordination.

### **Proposed Changes:**

#### **Section A – Required Forms**

- **Subsection 1:** Forms must now be submitted at least two weeks before scheduled travel for destinations within California and at least one month before out-of-state travel. The prior policy did not list a specific time – it only needed to be submitted prior to the travel.

- **Subsection 3:** The point of contact has been updated for assistance with completing travel forms to the Human Resources Department. The previous point of contact was not listed.

### **Section B – Authorized Expenses**

- Expands allowable minor incidentals consistent with IRS definitions.
- Adds the following statutory language to ensure compliance with State law: “In accordance with Government Code Section 53232.2(f), all expenses that do not fall within this reimbursement policy must be approved by the City Council in a public meeting before the expense is incurred, except as provided in Government Code Section 53232.2(d).”
- References the Finance Department’s Policies and Procedures Manual for additional guidance on authorized expenses.

### **Section C – Unauthorized Expenses**

- Adds language specifying that personal losses incurred while on City business are not reimbursable.

### **Section D – Lodging and Meals**

- Adds a clear distance and timing standard for overnight lodging eligibility: “Only conferences located more than 40 miles from the City qualify for overnight lodging. Additionally, if a conference includes an evening event extending past 5:00 p.m., lodging shall be considered.”

### **Section E – Transportation**

- **Subsection 1 (General Rules):** Clarifies that employees may use paid time off (PTO) to extend a trip, provided prior approval is obtained and all employment conditions and MOUs are satisfied.
- **Subsection 3 (City and Personal Vehicles):** Removes language that allows non-City persons to travel within City vehicles for business. Remove to avoid potential liability issues.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

The estimated cost of preparing this staff report is \$400.

### **Recommended Action:**

Adopt the proposed Policy revisions as presented; or

Adopt the proposed Policy revisions with additional modifications; or

Direct staff to make additional changes and bring back Policy to a future meeting for consideration.

### **Attachments:**

- A. Current Policy
- B. Updated Policy