

## **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

This policy is intended to establish processes and procedures regulating Out-of-Town Travel by SANDAG Board and Committee members and employees while on SANDAG business, and to provide a basis for budgeting Board member and employee attendance at conferences, training, seminars, or other meetings. Employees should refer to the Administrative Guidelines/Procedures for Employee Business Travel for Additional Information.

It is desirable and beneficial to SANDAG and its constituents to have Board and Committee members and employees participate in state and national activities, training, and conferences related to SANDAG's subject matter jurisdiction.

### **1. Definitions Applicable to Policy**

- 1.1 *Out-of-Town Travel* – Any travel outside San Diego County.
  - 1.1.1 One-day trips within San Diego County will be treated as in-town expenses and not *Out-of-Town Travel*.
- 1.2 *Authorizing Authority* – SANDAG Board Chair for Board and Committee member travel, or SANDAG Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and those delegated authority by the CEO to ensure SANDAG compliance with this Policy, but do not include positions lower than a Director for SANDAG employee travel.
- 1.3 *U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)* – GSA establishes the per diem rates for the lower 48 Continental United States (CONUS), which are the maximum allowances that federal employees are reimbursed for expenses incurred while on official travel. (See [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov).) The GSA's Federal Travel Regulation shall be used in interpreting this policy.

### **2. Budgeting**

- 2.1 Each year the CEO will survey the Board and Committee members to ascertain their interest in attending upcoming conferences and meetings. These conferences may include legislative and annual meetings for the California Transit Association, the American Public Transit Association, and the National Association of Regional Councils, as well as California Transportation Commission meetings and legislative hearings. The Chair of the Board will make the final decision regarding which Board and Committee members should attend all conferences and meetings. Upon return, Board members will be asked to present their experiences to the Board in order to share the knowledge obtained from their attendance.
- 2.2 Employees may attend conferences related to their respective disciplines consistent with this Policy's procedures. The CEO or his/her designee will make the final decision regarding which employees should attend conferences and meetings

- within the adopted budget. Upon return, employees will submit a report to their Director in order to share the knowledge obtained from their attendance.
- 2.3 Board and Committee member and employee attendance will be funded in the annual budget subject to the availability of funds and based on the results reported by previous attendees. As part of the budgeting process, the CEO or their designee will set objectives to ensure minimum representation at key conferences, and to make sure that cumulative attendance by Board and Committee members and employees at any one conference is not excessive.

### **3. Procedures**

- 3.1 Requests for Out-of-Town Travel in all cases shall be limited to SANDAG business, conferences, and meetings, legislative hearings, and training classes from which SANDAG will derive a specific benefit through the attendance of a representative and must be approved in advance by an Authorizing Authority.
- 3.2 Out-of-Town conference Travel by SANDAG employees shall be limited to positions of a highly technical or professional nature as designated by the Authorizing Authority.
- 3.3 Any reimbursable Out-of-Town Travel expenses must be properly documented in accordance with a travel request form and shall be submitted for reimbursement within 10 (ten) business days following the completion of travel.
- 3.4 Employees must fill out a travel request form prior to traveling out of San Diego County on SANDAG business. The project code, purpose of travel, and trip budget must be filled in on the form. The form must be approved by the Authorizing Authority prior to travel arrangements being made.
- 3.5 For Board and Committee member travel, the Clerk of the Board or Executive Assistant will fill out the travel request form and the Chair of the Board, or upon their written delegation the CEO, shall determine whether to approve it based upon the standards in this Policy.
- 3.6 Basic travel arrangements for flights, hotels, and rental cars will be made by the Clerk of the Board, Executive Assistant, or other designated staff. Board and Committee members and employees are responsible for contacting the Clerk of the Board, Executive Assistant, or other designated staff if itinerary changes are needed. Board and Committee members or employees desiring different travel arrangements will contact the Clerk of the Board or other designated staff to place them on notice and will be financially responsible for any costs over and above those costs for the basic trip.
- 3.7 If a Board or Committee member or employee initiates a change in travel plans that is not due to a medical/death emergency by the Board or Committee member or employee, or his/her immediate family, then the Board or Committee member or employee will be responsible for the cost impacts of those changes.
- 3.8 Use of air, train, private vehicle, bus, SANDAG vehicle, or other travel mode shall be selected on the basis of the lowest reasonable cost to SANDAG after all expense items are tabulated, including but not limited to travel time salary costs. The

responsibility for this consideration rests with the respective Authorizing Authority in approving the proposed travel and may be based upon the assessment of the Clerk of the Board, Executive Assistant, or other staff member or agency charged with making travel arrangements.

- 3.9 When the use of public air carrier transportation is approved, the travel expense will only be reimbursed for the equivalent of reserved coach class service. Airfare will be reimbursed for actual expenses; the use of personal mileage or vouchers for airfare will not be reimbursed.
- 3.10 Authorized travel time shall be based on that required by the most appropriate mode of transportation. Should an employee desire travel time in excess of the above, such time must be approved by the respective Authorizing Authority.
- 3.11 Additional fees such as luggage fees will be reimbursed on the basis of one bag fee per traveler. Extended travel that requires extra luggage may be approved by the respective Authorizing Authority.
- 3.12 Board and Committee members and employees will be reimbursed for meals and incidentals using the per diem rates established by the GSA. There are circumstances where these guidelines may not be appropriate. Examples of these circumstances include, but are not limited to the following, and such exceptions must be approved by the Authorizing Authority for reimbursement at actual expense:
  - 3.12.1 Meal costs incurred in connection with training, travel, civic/professional group meetings, etc., which have a set price and for which the individual has little or no choice in the amount paid. These costs usually include speaker, facility, and meal costs.
  - 3.12.2 Circumstances specifically identified in the GSA's Federal Travel Regulation as allowing actual expense reimbursement instead of per diem rates.
- 3.13 Lodging will be reimbursed at actual expenses, not to exceed the guidelines set by the GSA. (See [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov).) Exceptions will be granted at the discretion of the Authorizing Authority for hotels included with training, travel, civic/professional group meetings, etc., which have a set price and for which the individual has little or no choice in the amount paid, or where specifically allowed in the GSA's Federal Travel Regulation. The use of personal mileage/points or vouchers for lodging will not be reimbursed.
- 3.14 It is the responsibility of Board and Committee members and employees to ensure that expenses are within the guidelines of this Policy.
- 3.15 The number of Board members or Committee members attending any conference or meeting should not exceed a quorum unless this provision is specifically waived by the Board after seeking advice from legal counsel.
- 3.16 The CEO shall develop and implement administrative travel policies and procedures consistent with this policy. Among the requirements in those policies and procedures, the following shall be mandated:

- 3.16.1 The travel request form used to approve travel must be documented separately from the travel expenses report used to reimburse travel; and
  - 3.16.2 Only those executive assistants and other staff who have received training and are sufficiently familiar with the requirements for reimbursement and supporting documentation may process or submit travel requests and/or travel expense reports for final approval; and
  - 3.16.3 Travel request and reimbursement approvals shall be documented by digital signature unless a digital signature cannot be acquired in a timely manner, in which case a text message or email may be used. Any record of emailed or texted approval and documentation shall be included with the travel request or reimbursement approval.
- 3.17 The CEO shall report any exceptions granted under this Policy to the Board of Directors on a regular basis.

Adopted June 2003

Amended January 2006

Amended December 2006

Amended December 2008

Amended January 2010

Amended November 2012

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