Policy 2.95
Air and Rail Travel

Responsible Official: Vice President for Finance/Chief Finance Officer
Administering Division/Department: Procurement Services
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Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the procurement of airline and rail tickets when traveling on behalf of the University.

Applicability

The Travel Policies apply to faculty, staff, students, and non-employees traveling on behalf of the University and seeking reimbursement or payment for travel-related expenses from Emory University funds, regardless of the funding source.

Policy Details

Traveler Responsibility

It is the responsibility of travelers to book the most economical air/rail fare with Emory’s travel providers. Travelers should be flexible regarding their travel dates and times and to make their plans as early as possible to take advantage of advance purchase fares.

Responsibility of Higher Level Approvers

Higher Level Approver must ensure that:

• the traveler is aware of the Emory Travel Policy in advance of the travel;
• travel expenses were incurred while conducting authorized University business;
• travel expenses were necessary, reasonable and consistent with University policies and the stated business purpose;
• an expense report includes the required documentation; and
• travel expenses meet any and all Sponsored Program guidelines, if applicable.

Air Travel

Air travel shall be arranged by using Emory’s air travel providers (with the exception of incoming guests/visitors). Use of Emory’s travel agencies for air travel provides a balance between overall cost-effectiveness and the traveler’s need for reliable services and support, and ensures that we are able to take full advantage of our corporate emergency travel services for the benefit of our faculty and staff.
Simple, single destination domestic trips should be arranged through Emory’s online travel providers. Complex, multi-destination, or international trips should be arranged directly with Emory’s agent-assisted travel providers.

Exceptions to the use of Emory’s travel providers for airfare must be pre-approved by submitting details and business reason to the Assistant Vice President for Procurement Services and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

1) Continuous flight time (non-stop) less than six hours:

Emory University will reimburse for only Coach/Economy Class tickets when continuous flight time (non-stop) is less than six hours. No reimbursement will be made for upgraded coach seating options such as Premium Economy, Economy Comfort, aisle seats, exit row seats, etc. or upgrades, upgradable fares (when non-upgradable fares are still available), or any Business/First Class fares. Requests for exceptions should be submitted in writing to the Assistant Vice President for Procurement Services. Final approval will be granted by the Vice President for Finance, Chief Financial Officer. This approval must be included with the Expense Report.

2) Continuous flight time (non-stop) six hours and greater:

When continuous flight time (non-stop) is six hours and greater, Emory University will reimburse for Coach/Economy Class, all upgraded seating fees such as Premium Economy, Economy Comfort, aisle seats, exit row seats, upgrades, upgradable fares as well as Business/First Class tickets, as long as it is not being charged to sponsored programs.

3) Travelers who elect to fly in Business/First Class for continuous flights that are less than six hours will only be reimbursed for, or payment made for, the least expensive coach fare available based on a 21-day advance purchase estimation for that same route. If documentation is not provided reflecting that cost estimate, Payment Services will not reimburse or pay.

4) Tickets or upgrades purchased with frequent flyer miles are not reimbursable.

5) Travel on charter or private planes is not reimbursable or payable, unless a specific exception exists as pre-approved by President, one of the three Executive Vice Presidents or a Senior Vice President. Air transportation is restricted to commercial flights. If an exception is granted, the cost of the least expensive coach fare will be reimbursed.

6) Senior Administrators traveling to the same destination should weigh the following guidelines against the business needs of the parties and the practicalities of the situation:

   I. No more than three department chairs should fly together.
   II. No more than five faculty and staff from the same department should fly together.
   III. The Chair of the Board and the President should fly separately.
   IV. No more than two cabinet members or deans should fly together.
   V. A senior administrator should not fly with more than two direct reports.

7) When already paid for by Emory, a non-refundable ticket for a cancelled trip can be applied to a future trip when taken by the same traveler on the same airline, subject to a change or cancellation fee. The traveler must notify the agency or airline in advance if he or she must cancel the trip. If the original airfare was directly billed to a department or charged to the Corporate Card, the value of an unused ticket must be applied towards a future business trip to mitigate any financial loss to the funding source. It cannot be applied towards a personal trip. In most cases, the traveler has a year in which to apply the unused ticket to future Emory business travel only.

8) When already paid for by Emory, a refundable ticket for a cancelled trip must be returned to the travel agency or airline for a refund. The traveler must notify the agency or airline in advance if he or she must cancel the trip.

9) Immunizations and travel visas necessary for Emory travel will be reimbursable, including expedition fees if dictated by business purpose and timing. Passport application and renewal fees are not typically reimbursable except in very rare exceptions granted by the traveler’s chief business officer.

A list of airfare-related non-reimbursable or payable expenses can be found in 2.104 TRAVEL POLICY - NON-REIMBURSABLE OR PAYABLE ITEMS.

Rail Travel

Airline travel is usually faster and less expensive than travel by rail and should be used whenever possible. However, Rail Travel is allowed but approval will need to be accompanied by a comparison of a flight purchased at least 21 days in advance of travel date to show cost savings.

1) First Class rail travel is not reimbursable or payable. Exceptions require written pre-approval by the President, one of the three Executive Vice Presidents or a Senior Vice President; said approval must be included with the Expense Report.

2) Roomette (a small private compartment for one on a sleeping car) accommodations may be used for overnight travel.
Emory University policies are subject to change at any time. If you are reading this policy in paper or PDF format, you are strongly encouraged to visit policies.emory.edu to ensure that you are relying on the current version.