

Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)

RAILS Employee Travel Policy

Revision Control

- RAILS Employee Travel Policy – APPROVED by RAILS Board December 19, 2011
- RAILS Employee Travel Policy – APPROVED by RAILS Board September 27, 2013

Introduction

RAILS recognizes that employees may be required to travel on RAILS business¹ from time to time. It is the policy of RAILS to reimburse full and part-time employees for reasonable authorized expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties. All RAILS personnel are responsible for controlling travel and meeting expenses and are expected to exhibit good judgment, as well as to supply receipts documenting expenses, when requesting reimbursement for such expenses.

The purpose of this policy is to establish control of travel sufficient to prevent obligation of funds exceeding budget limitations and to hold travel to the minimum required for the efficient and economical conduct of the system's business. Whenever possible and cost efficient, RAILS business travel arrangements will use governmental entity discount rates.

Allowable Expenses

- *Ground Transportation*

Whenever possible, RAILS encourages use of a RAILS-owned vehicle for transportation. If use of a RAILS-owned vehicle is not viable, employees may use their own personal vehicle and request mileage reimbursement. For mileage expense reimbursement, RAILS follows the U.S. General Services Administration guidelines at <http://www.gsa.gov/>. These guidelines, upon entering a travel location, show maximum lodging rates (excluding taxes) by month and a daily meal and incidental expense amount for that location.

If car rental is necessary, all travelers are expected to rent intermediate sized cars or smaller unless prior approval is obtained. Rental vehicles must be used for RAILS business only. Travelers must decline all fuel option purchases and return the car with a full tank of gas or whatever amount is required to avoid a fuel charge. In addition, travelers are to decline all insurance options as these coverages are provided by RAILS. Rental vehicle usage is not eligible for mileage reimbursement, but other rental vehicle costs such as parking, tolls, and fuel are eligible for actual reimbursement. For rental vehicle expenses, RAILS requires employees to secure the lowest cost option that reasonably meets the required travel schedule.

Travelers may be reimbursed for the use of transportation to and from their homes to an airport or travel depot if reimbursement is less than the total cost of mileage and associated parking costs. Long-term parking must be used if a personal vehicle is used to travel to the airport.

Other types of ground transportation, such as rail or bus, may be reimbursed if the costs and convenience justify their use.

¹ Please note that these guidelines refer to travel on behalf of RAILS that will be paid for by RAILS. For travel on behalf of an LLSAP that is being paid for by an LLSAP, see your LLSAP manager for travel guidelines.

- *Meals While Traveling*
RAILS will reimburse for actual and reasonable meal expense when travel is required. A full day's meal and incidental expenses should not exceed the per diem amounts for the travel location as prescribed on the U.S. General Services Administration website.
- *Lodging*
For lodging expenses, RAILS requires employees to secure lodging that offers a governmental rate where possible. Please note that RAILS employees are not State of Illinois employees, and are not eligible for State discounts, only a "governmental rate." Rates for lodging reimbursement should not exceed the actual cost of travel as determined by the General Services Administration for the travel location. Any employee attending a conference or seminar may stay in accommodations arranged by the conference/seminar organizations and will be reimbursed for the conference lodging rates as negotiated for the event.
- *Airfare*
For airfare expenses, RAILS requires employees to secure the lowest cost option that reasonably meets the required travel schedule.

Non-Allowable Expenses

- Alcoholic beverages
- Coat check
- Entertainment
- Late checkout and room guarantee charges (unless special circumstances exist and Executive Director approval is obtained)
- Meals for other system employees or board members (unless special circumstances exist and Executive Director approval is obtained)
- Parking tickets or other traffic tickets and charges associated with locksmith services
- Transportation to procure meals (unless special circumstances exist and Executive Director approval is obtained)

Travel Approval Procedure

Authorization to travel lies with the employee's supervisor. Employees should obtain verbal authorization from their supervisor before arranging for in-state travel. For out-of-state travel/all conference attendance, the employee must complete, and obtain advance approval of, the "Training Request Form," located on the intranet under Forms & Documents > Expenses & Purchasing.

Additionally, the "Driver Safety" and "Business Use of Vehicles" sections of the RAILS Employee Handbook provide guidance and information about business travel.

Travel Reimbursement Procedures

Once travel has been approved by the supervisor, there are several options for paying for or being reimbursed for expenses. Options 1 and 2 are strongly preferred.

- 1) Use a RAILS-owned vehicle for transportation, and use the vehicle's Wright Express credit card for fuel expenses. Use of the Wright Express fuel card requires that you have a personal PIN, which you can request by contacting the Staff Accountant or Controller. If you use the vehicle's Wright Express credit

card, you must submit fuel receipts to Accounting in Burr Ridge for purposes of invoice reconciliation.

- 2) Use your personal credit card or cash to pay for travel expenses, and request reimbursement after the travel has been completed. To request reimbursement, complete the "Employee Expense Reimbursement Request" located on the RAILS intranet under Forms & Documents > Expenses & Purchasing. Complete the form, attach original receipts, have your supervisor approve by signing, then send to Accounting in Burr Ridge. Accounting will process the request and issue you a paper check.
- 3) Request funding in advance, then reconcile the differences after the travel has been completed. To request funding in advance, complete the "Advance Check Request Form" located on the RAILS intranet under Forms & Documents > Expenses & Purchasing. Complete the form, have your supervisor approve by signing, then send the completed form to the Accounting department at Burr Ridge no later than four weeks in advance of when you need the funds. RAILS Accounting will process the request and issue you a paper check. After your travel has been completed, complete and submit the "Employee Expense Reimbursement Request" with original receipts to the Accounting department at Burr Ridge. If the amount you spent exceeded the estimate, but was within the General Services Administration Per Diem Rates and or is determined to be a reasonable authorized expense, then RAILS will issue you a paper check for the difference. If the actual expenses were below the advance amount, you should submit a check to RAILS for the difference.

If you have any questions about the travel procedures, please contact the RAILS Controller, preferably as far in advance of the planned travel as possible.