

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
POLICY
FOR USE AND APPROVAL OF PREMIUM CLASS TRAVEL**

1) Purpose. This document provides Departmental policy and procedures to restrict the use of premium class travel by Department of Transportation (DOT) employees and outlines procedures for the exceptional circumstances in which approval for premium class travel may be granted at the sole discretion of the Deputy Secretary of Transportation (S-2).

2) References.

- a) Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) at 41 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Chapters 300, 301, 302, 303, 304
- b) 41 CFR § 301-10.121, "What classes of airline accommodations are available "
- c) 41 CFR § 301-10.122, "What class of airline accommodations must I use"
- d) 41 CFR § 301-10.123, "When may I use first-class airline accommodations"
- e) 41 CFR § 301-10.124, "When may I use business-class airline accommodations"
- f) 41 CFR § 301-10.161, "What class of train accommodations must I use"
- g) 41 CFR § 301-10.162, "When may I use first-class train accommodations"

3) Definitions.

- a) Coach Class – The basic class of accommodations offered to travelers regardless of fare paid, also referred to as "tourist" or "Economy Class".
- b) Business Class – A premium class of accommodation offered by the airlines/train that is higher than coach and lower than first class, in both cost and amenities.
- c) First Class – Generally, the highest class of accommodation offered by the airlines in terms of both cost and amenities and termed "first-class" by the airlines/train and any reservation system.
- d) City Pair – Government contract fare for airline travel negotiated by General Services Administration on behalf of Federal Agencies.

- e) Authorization – Authority for a traveler to travel on behalf of the Agency/Department. Authorization to travel is provided by the Operating Administration in accordance with their policies and procedures.
- f) Approval – Authority for a traveler to use premium class travel accommodations. Approval of premium class travel occurs after the Agency has granted an authorization to travel.

4) Background.

- a) 41 CFR § 300 to 304 implements statutory requirements and Executive branch policies for travel by Federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at Government expense.
- b) 41 CFR § 300 to 304 allows agencies to (a) have an interpretation of statutory and other policy requirements in a manner that balances the needs of agencies to assure that official travel is conducted in a responsible manner with the need to minimize administrative costs, and (b) communicate the resulting policies in a clear manner to Federal agencies and their employees.
- c) 41 CFR § 301-10 governs agencies payment of transportation expenses and outlines acceptable expenses, modes of transportation and levels of service eligible for reimbursement of travel expenditures.
- d) 41 CFR § 301-10.122 establishes the requirement for employees on official business travel to use coach-class accommodations except as provided in §§301-10.123 and 301-10.124.
- e) 41 CFR § 301-10.123 establishes the criteria for agencies to authorize expenditure for use of first-class airline accommodations.
- f) 41 CFR § 301-10.124 establishes the criteria for agencies to authorize expenditure for use of business-class airline accommodations.
- g) 41 CFR § 301-10.161 establishes the requirement for employees on official business travel to use coach-class accommodations except as provided in §301-10.162.
- h) 41 CFR § 301-10.162 establishes the criteria for agencies to authorize expenditure for use of first-class train accommodations.

5) Applicability. This Policy addresses the Department's authority to authorize and approve premium class travel accommodations for all Department of Transportation employees and other authorized parties:

- a) First-class airline and train accommodations must be specifically approved in writing only with the explicit approval of the Deputy Secretary of Transportation (S-2) as outlined in the responsibilities section of this policy. Specific authorization may or may not be approved even if the criteria outlined below are met.
- b) Business-class airline accommodations must be specifically approved in writing only with the explicit approval of the Deputy Secretary of Transportation (S-2). Specific approval may or may not be approved even if the criteria outlined below are met.

6) Delegation of Authority

- a) The authority to specifically approve premium class travel is reserved for the Deputy Secretary of Transportation (S-2), (or the Chief of Staff in the absence of the Deputy Secretary, or the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/CFO in the absence of both the Deputy Secretary and the Chief of Staff) and no other persons in the Department or its operating administrations have the authority to approve the use of premium class travel.

7) Responsibilities. (Listed in chronological order.)

- a) Employee Responsibility: An employees request for the use of premium class travel accommodations must meet the following criteria and be documented as outlined below. Employees requesting approval for premium class travel should provide the following information:
 - 1) A written and signed request,
 - 2) A detailed explanation outlining the requirement to use premium class travel as outlined below in (b), and,
 - 3) Analysis of the cost to the Agency for premium class travel vs. coach class fare and any other associated costs.
 - 4) An employee must receive written approval from the Deputy Secretary (S-2) specifically approving the use of premium class travel before reservations are made or tickets are purchased.
 - 5) When a voucher is filed for travel reimbursement, the specific approval for the use of premium class travel must be attached in order for an employee to receive reimbursement for the associated travel expenditures.

b) Operating Administration Responsibility: An employee's agency must review the employee's application before authorizing an exception to use premium class travel to ensure that the applicable conditions are met as outlined in section (8) of this document:

- 1) The Agency Head must verify that the request for premium class travel meets the applicable criteria for approval as required by the FTR and DOT policy,
- 2) If authorized the Agency Head concurs with the employee's request,
- 3) Upon review of the employees' request for exemption, it must be sent to the Deputy Secretary (S-2) for review and approval,
- 4) Under no circumstances shall an agency approve an employee's travel authorization or voucher until the request for premium class travel has been reviewed and approved by the Deputy Secretary (S-2),
- 5) Require employees to have specific approval for the use of premium class travel included as supporting documentation as a condition of approval for travel reimbursement requests and travel authorization approval,

c) Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary, Office of the Deputy Secretary responsibility:

- 1) Receiving employee request for the use of premium class travel authorization,
- 2) Processing approval or disapproval of employee's request(s).

8) Criteria governing authorization for the use of premium class travel:

a) The FTR requires all employees and parties traveling on official Government business to use coach-class accommodations unless one more of the following criteria are met in order for an Agency to authorize **First-Class** Travel accommodations:

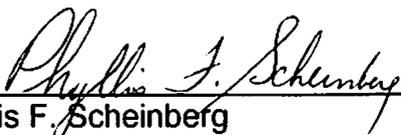
- 1) "No coach or business-class accommodations are reasonably available. 'Reasonably Available' means available on an airline that is scheduled to leave within 24 hours of your proposed departure time, or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of your proposed arrival time." The employee must document what the impact to the agency is by not making the proposed trip in the proposed window and document the facts of what actions were taken to make alternative arrangements and mitigate costs to the agency.

- 2) "When the use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or special need, [it] must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority [and must be renewed on an annual basis by a licensed medical professional]." Documentation that is greater than 12 months old will not be considered for an exception as outlined above.
 - 3) "When exceptional security circumstances require first-class travel." Exceptional security circumstances are determined by the agency and include but are not limited to:
 - (1) 'Use of other than first-class accommodations would endanger your life or government property';
 - (2) 'The traveler is an agent on protective detail and they are accompanying an individual authorized to use first-class accommodations';
 - (3) 'The Traveler is a courier or control officer accompanying controlled pouches or packages'.
 - 4) "When required by agency mission." In order to have an 'agency mission' justification, the employee and the agency must document the mission critical requirement that necessitates the use of premium class travel, the impact to the agency by delaying the travel until normal accommodations are available and the impact to the agency by not performing the mission as proposed.
- b) The FTR requires all employees and parties traveling on official Government business to use coach-class accommodations unless one or more of the following criteria are met in order for an Agency to authorize **Business-Class** Travel accommodations:
- 1) "Regularly Scheduled flights between origin/destination points (including connecting points) provide only first-class and business-class accommodations and you certify such on your authorization and voucher"
 - 2) "No space is available in coach-class accommodations in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed." The employee must document what the impact to the agency is by not making the proposed trip in the proposed window and document the facts of what actions were taken to make alternative arrangements and mitigate costs to the agency.
 - 3) "When the use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or special need, [it] must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority [and must be renewed on an annual basis by a licensed medical professional]." Documentation that is greater than 12 months old will not be considered for an exception as outlined above.

- 4) "Security purposes or exceptional circumstances as determined by the agency make business-class accommodations essential to the successful performance of the agencies mission":
 - 5) "Coach-class accommodations on an authorized/approved foreign air carrier do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards"
 - 6) "The use of business-class accommodations will result in the overall cost savings to the Government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time while awaiting coach-class accommodations." A detailed outline of the costs of both the proposed travel option and the alternative must be provided in order to demonstrate the cost savings to the government.
 - 7) "Where the origin and/or destination are outside the [continental United States], and the scheduled flight time including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours." In order for this provision to apply, a traveler is not eligible for a rest period en route or a rest period upon arrival at the duty station. That is, just because a flight is 14 hours or more in length a traveler is not entitled to this exception unless specific documentation is provided that requires the employee to report to duty less than 8 hours after arrival at the destination. In addition, a detailed cost benefit analysis of why it is beneficial to the Government to use premium class travel accommodations instead of providing the traveler a rest period prior to reporting to the duty station.
 - 8) "When required by agency mission." To have an 'agency mission' justification, the employee and the agency must document the mission critical requirement that necessitates the use of premium class travel, the impact to the agency by delaying the travel until normal accommodations are available and the impact to the agency by not performing the mission as proposed.
- c) Even though a traveler may meet one or more of the criteria outlined above, there will not be any presumed entitlement to the approval of premium class travel authorization. While the circumstances may exist that qualify a traveler to apply for an exception to the FTR requirement to use coach-class accommodations, each request for a written exception will be reviewed and approved/disapproved on an individual basis as dictated by the supporting facts provided with the request.
- 9) Exceptions to the premium class travel requirements:
- a) A traveler may upgrade to premium class (business-class/first class) at their personal expense, including through the redemption of frequent flier benefits. In this case the Government's liability to reimburse to the traveler will solely be limited to the cost of the coach-class accommodations as authorized by the agency.

10) Implementation: Where appropriate, Secretarial Offices and Operating Administrations shall develop additional guidance required to implement this policy and provide a copy of that guidance to the OST Office of Financial Management (B-30) within 6 months of the date of this policy.

FOR THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION:



Phyllis F. Scheinberg
Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs/
Chief Financial Officer

12/18/07
Date