

VIRGINIA PORT AUTHORITY
Background Paper
SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES IN STATE AND
PROPOSED VPA TRAVEL POLICIES
January 27, 2003

Note: The proposed VPA Travel Policies and Procedures were developed by utilizing the State Travel Policies and Procedures as a baseline. Policies on internet usage to make travel arrangements, commuting, lodging, meal allowances for employees and classes of air travel that are permitted are consistent with state regulations. Substantive differences are noted below.

State Policy: Temporary travel advances are required to be repaid within 30 days following submission of the travel reimbursement vouchers.

VPA Policy: Temporary travel advances are required to be repaid within 30 days following the conclusion of the travel.

Explanation: VPA policy is easier to monitor by the Department of Finance.

State Policy: Provides that air travel must be coach or economy class unless (1) business class is no more expensive than the lowest available coach or economy class; (2) the trip is to Western Europe and there is a business meeting scheduled within three hours of landing; (3) if a transoceanic intercontinental “trip” is more than eight (8) hours; or (4) the traveler pays the difference. In those cases, business class travel is allowed. Reimbursement for first class travel is prohibited under any circumstances. “Trip” is not defined.

VPA Policy: Identical to state policy but defines “trip” as each individual flight segment.

State Policy: Requires the approval of the Chief of Staff to use a charter aircraft, but does not require specific approvals for the use of state-owned aircraft.

VPA Policy: Requires the approval of both the Executive Director and the Secretary of Transportation for the use of both state-owned and charter aircraft.

Explanation: This is consistent with current VPA policy.

State Policy: Requires that the use of a state-owned aircraft, or charter aircraft when a state owned aircraft is unavailable, must always be “cost beneficial.”

VPA Policy: VPA requires that the use of such aircraft must be cost beneficial or preferable to commercial air travel.

Explanation: An example of when such use might be preferable and advantageous to VPA and the Commonwealth is for the transportation of potential or actual business associates. In any event, every use of state-owned or charter aircraft must be approved in advance by both the Executive Director and the Secretary of Transportation.

State Policy: State regulations make no provision for the entertainment of persons who have potential or actual business relationships with VPA or the Commonwealth other than reimbursement for “business meals” up to the maximum published amounts allowed for employees plus 50% if approved by the Agency Head.

VPA Policy: Actual reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Explanation: The entertainment of business associates or potential business associates is an important component of the port’s marketing efforts. VPA policy allows for such entertainment under a “reasonableness” test that meets the requirements of the IRS code as to business meals and entertainment expenses.

State Policy: State policy is vague on the personal use of frequent flier miles by employees.

VPA Policy: Explicitly permits the personal use of frequent flier miles.

Explanation: Because of the limited number of “frequent flier” seats available on each flight they are difficult, if not impossible, to utilize for business travel. VPA policy, as does that of federal government and other entities, explicitly permits the use of frequent flier miles for personal travel.

State Policy: Requires that rental cars must be the most economical type of vehicle available. Thus, in effect, this policy generally requires the rental of sub-compact vehicles.

VPA Policy: Permits the rental of mid-sized vehicles. Larger vehicles may be rented if special circumstances warrant.

Explanation: Mid-sized vehicles are far from extravagant, but are safer than sub-compacts. Larger vehicles may sometimes be warranted. Examples include when multiple passengers, whether employees or customers, are traveling together or when excess baggage must be transported. Whenever a larger than mid-sized vehicle is rented, the reason, including the name of each person transported, must be noted on the travel voucher in order for the traveler to be reimbursed for the incremental cost of the larger vehicle.

State Policy: Provides no guidance on foreign currency conversion.

VPA Policy: Provides guidance on the conversion of foreign currencies into base-point currency.

Explanation: VPA employees must deal with many more foreign currency issues than do other State agency employees.