State of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany 12224

David A. Paterson GOVERNOR	**Valerie Grey** Director of State Operations

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of State Agencies and Public Authorities

FROM: Valerie Grey, Director of State Operations
Office of Taxpayer Accountability

SUBJECT: Reducing Personal Travel Costs

DATE: August 10, 2009

This memorandum is the second installment in the continuing series of directives to agencies and public authorities regarding efforts to reduce wasteful spending, and focuses on employee travel practices. First and foremost, employees should travel only when essential to their agency's mission, and when no other means to participate in the activity is available. Conference calls, teleconferences and webinars should be used in lieu of travel whenever possible. Employees may not attend conferences for general educational or networking purposes during work hours, and will not be reimbursed for travel to those conferences. If travel to a meeting or a conference is required, it must be approved by the Deputy Commissioner for Administration or higher level agency official. In addition, employees must use best efforts to reduce or eliminate overnight travel. Further, agencies are reminded that travel to an out-of-state destination as well as in-state travel projected to cost more than $500 must receive the approval of the Division of the Budget (DOB) and State Operations as currently required under Bulletin B-1184.

If travel is approved, employees must use the most efficient mode of transportation available to them, as outlined in the new travel policies below. These policies are based on successful practices of the Office of Employee Relations (OER), the Federal Government, and other governmental entities – approaches proven to have reduced non-essential travel costs. Taxpayers have a right to expect that State employees are seeking the best travel deals available to them, just as families do at home. Accordingly, each agency and public authority is directed to reduce its travel costs this fiscal year by a minimum of 25 % from the total spent in FY 2008/2009. This requirement will only be modified if an agency demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Office of Taxpayer Accountability ("OTA") that these savings have been achieved beginning in FY2008/2009 by implementation of actions consistent with this memorandum.

Effective immediately, the following mandates must be incorporated into the travel policies and practices of each agency:

1. Mass transit must be the first choice of transportation mode, if available. Employees will not be reimbursed for any other mode of travel to destinations where mass transit is available, unless (i) due to exigent, unforeseen circumstances an employee must travel by car because mass transit isn't available at the time the employee has to travel, or (ii) airline travel is more efficient and cost effective. Travel by car or airline must be approved by the Deputy Commissioner for Administration or higher level agency official

2. Agencies are to expand the number of pool cars available by eliminating the practice of dedicating cars to specific individuals, except in extraordinary circumstances approved by the head of the agency. Employees not using mass transit must utilize agency pool cars, if available.

3. In circumstances where neither mass transit nor a pool car is available, employees may use the least expensive option of either a rental car suitable under the circumstances or their personal car. Employees must use a "trip calculator" to determine which mode is cheaper, and travel reimbursement will be limited to the transportation mode indicated, as described below. *Note: This mandate would not apply to an employee who has a physical disability and must use a specifically equipped personal vehicle.*

4. Employees that are approved for overnight travel must exhaust all reasonable measures to find a hotel that charges a rate at or below the federal lodging per diem rate for the travel location. If an employee is unable to find a rate at or below the federal lodging per diem rate, the employee must obtain prior approval to exceed the federal rate from the agency finance office.

5. Agencies that routinely use the railroad as a means of travel should purchase tickets in bulk to reduce travel agent service fees.

Trip Calculator

The "trip calculator" is a pre-programmed spreadsheet, which calculates and compares the price for traveling by rental car versus reimbursing an employee for personal car mileage (currently 55 cents per mile). An employee enters data for the distance to be traveled, the timeframe, the rental car gas mileage (MPG), and the cost of gasoline per gallon, and receives a recommendation. Employees may opt to use their personal cars in non-optimal situations, but will only be reimbursed for the value of the car rental. A second pre-programmed spreadsheet assists employees in calculating their allowable reimbursement in the form of mileage.

Copies of the pre-programmed spreadsheets may be found at:
http://www.goer.state.ny.us/employee/travel-info.html

Employees must include a copy of the relevant form when submitting their travel reimbursement request. Agencies are reminded to ensure that when employees travel together on the same trip in the same personal car, mileage reimbursement is paid to only one individual.

Best Practices

The "trip calculator" has been in use at OER for two years. Questions on OER's experience with this policy may be directed to Sheilah Brust at (518) 473-1078.

Assistance from the Office of General Services

OGS has a centralized contract in place that offers a low cost for rental cars. The terms of that contract and OGS contact information can be found at:

http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/purchase/snt/awardnotes/7200119536can.htm

Implementation

Agencies and public authorities must incorporate this new policy direction into their travel guidance for employees and provide an electronic copy of the revised guidelines to the appropriate Deputy Secretary and DOB by August 24, 2009. In addition, agencies and authorities are required to submit a plan by the same date which demonstrates either (i) that a 25% reduction in travel will be achieved by the end of FY 2009/2010, or (ii) that these savings have already been achieved commencing in FY 2008/2009 through the implementation of actions consistent with this memorandum. These savings plans must receive the approval of the Office of Taxpayer Accountability, after review and recommendation by the appropriate Deputy Secretary and DOB. Upon completion of this review and approval process, agency budgets will be reduced by the aforesaid 25% amount, unless modified by the OTA.

Please note that expenditures for personal car mileage will be monitored monthly by the Division of the Budget, and results made available to Deputy Secretaries for appropriate follow-up with agencies.

Please address your questions on this memorandum to Alan Lebowitz at (518) 408-2588.