Board of Commissioners Travel Policy

Contents

1. **Purpose** 1
2. **Applicability** 1
3. **Policy** 1
4. **Policy Non-Compliance** 3
5. **Audit** 3
6. **Definitions** 3
7. **Approval and Revision History** 3

1. **Purpose**

   The purpose of this policy is to establish standardized guidelines for travel by Buncombe County Commissioners that align with the business objectives of Buncombe County Government. The policy provides direction for incurring and reimbursing reasonable expenses associated with travel for official County purposes, including training, conferences, and other approved events.

2. **Applicability**

   This policy applies to all Buncombe County Board Commissioners.

3. **Policy**

   3.1. Travel Planning and Booking

   3.1.1. All travel-related expenses must represent a reasonable and prudent use of public funds and should balance the needs of the traveler with fiscal responsibility to the County.

   3.1.2. Travel and associated expenses will be authorized only in circumstances that are clearly consistent with the mission of Buncombe County.

   3.1.3. Event registration, lodging and air travel should be booked using a County procurement card (P-Card) whenever possible by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or authorized County employee. Exceptions may be permitted in instances when a P-Card is not available.

   3.1.4. Booking non-refundable rates is discouraged unless cost savings clearly outweigh the associated risks.

   3.1.5. Buncombe County does not pay for or reimburse a traveler for the transportation, lodging, meals, or other expenses of a traveler's family or traveling companion(s).

   3.1.6. All transportation expenses should be based on the most economical mode of transportation that reasonably meets the official travel needs while taking safety, accessibility, and schedule constraints into consideration.

   3.2. Travel Authorization

   3.2.1. Commissioners should prioritize training and conference opportunities based on the allocated fiscal year budget for the Governing Board Department.

   3.2.2. Out-of-state and foreign travel must receive written approval in advance from the Commission Chair or the Vice Chair. If the Chair or Vice Chair denies the request, but the travel is considered necessary or directly related to a Commissioner's duties, the request may be brought before the full Board in an open session for further consideration.

   3.3. Travel Penalties, Charges, and Cancellations

3.3.1. The Governing Board Department is responsible for all penalties and charges resulting from changes or cancellations to travel reservations. This includes airfare, hotel expenses, conference registration, and any other travel reservations planned for County business.
3.3.2. If a change or cancellation is made by or for the personal benefit of the Commissioner, it will be the Commissioner's obligation to pay any resulting penalties and charges.
3.3.3. In the event of critical circumstances beyond the Commissioner's control (which may include accidents, serious illness, or death within the employee's immediate family) the department may opt to pay the penalties and charges associated with a travel change or cancellation.

3.4. Travel Exceptions

3.4.1. Exceptions to this policy may be granted when necessary to serve the County's business interests, mitigate undue hardship, comply with protocol expectations, or respond to emergencies.
3.4.2. Any travel expenses falling outside the scope of this policy must be approved by the Commission Chair or the Vice-Chair. If the Chair or Vice Chair denies the request, but the travel is considered necessary or directly related to a Commissioner's duties, the request may be brought before the full Board in an open session for further consideration.
3.4.3. The exceptions described above should be clearly explained and documented and should be submitted for approval at the earliest opportunity.

3.5. Lodging

3.5.1. Lodging must be selected in accordance with 3.1.1 of this policy, representing a responsible use of County dollars.
3.5.2. The County will cover lodging expenses when travel exceeds one hour, travel requires overnight stay, or when an overnight stay is in the best interest of the County.
3.5.3. Every effort should be made to consider the entire cost of travel when selecting lodging, including additional costs that could be incurred from a selected lodging establishment such as parking, additional travel time and distance, etc.
3.5.4. If travel expenses must be reimbursed, it will only be made in the amount that is documented on an itemized receipt from the establishment.

3.6. Meals, Mileage, & Incidental Expenses

3.6.1. Per diem and approved mileage should be requested in advance of travel when possible. Per diem will be paid according to GSA rates for reasonable expenses related to a trip outside the County. Reasonable expenses include meals not provided by an event, mileage essential to the business function of the trip, and incidental expenses (M&IE). Incidental expenses include laundry, room service, tolls, parking, tips for service and other fees.
3.6.2. The per diem rate is based upon the city/county where travel is located. If neither the city nor county is listed on the GSA web site, then the standard rate for that state applies. Rates are subject to change and will be posted on the GSA website.
3.6.3. Commissioners are expected to utilize complimentary meals provided during events. Per diem will be adjusted accordingly and will not be provided for meals included in registration or event fees.
3.6.4. Commuting mileage is not reimbursable.
3.6.5. All other approved mileage for reasons including, but not limited to, conferences, education/training, or other professional development will be reimbursed at a rate established in the County Travel Policy for employees.

This is a controlled document for internal use only. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be verified with the electronic file version prior to use. For support related to this policy and procedures, contact the Finance Department.

4. **Policy Non-Compliance**
   Commissioners who knowingly violate this policy may be required to reimburse the County for unauthorized expenses and may be subject to further action as deemed appropriate by the Board.

5. **Audit**
   This policy is subject to review or audit in accordance with the procedures established by the County's Internal Auditor.

6. **Definitions**
   - **6.1.** M&IE - Meals and incidental expenses such as laundry and room service, tips for services and other fees that may be associated with travel.
   - **6.2.** GSA - US General Service Administration. Refer to GSA web site for Per Diem rates.
   - **6.3.** Mileage – Actual miles traveled for County business.
   - **6.4.** Local Mileage – Generally, mileage related to a day trip or business trip from one County location to another or to a location within Buncombe County.
   - **6.5.** Official County Business - Any Buncombe County sanctioned activity performed within the scope of an individual's assigned duties.
   - **6.6.** Per Diem - Daily allowance for Meals & Incidental Expenses.

7. **Approval and Revision History**

Policy Origination Date:	October 21, 2025
Requires Board Approval:	Yes
Board Approval Dates:	October 21, 2025
Policy Exceptions	Exceptions made with Chair approval
Revision History:	This Board of Commissioners Policy is adapted from the Employee Travel Policy (amended on October 21, 2025) and tailored to meet the specific needs of the Board.

This is a controlled document for internal use only. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be verified with the electronic file version prior to use. For support related to this policy and procedures, contact the Finance Department.