

**DECISION**

11304 PL M-1  
**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES**  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

**FILE:** B-194267**DATE:** September 6, 1979**MATTER OF:** Richard A. Chalmers - [Reimbursement of  
Cost of Shipping Privately Owned Vehicle by  
Auto-Train]

**DIGEST:** An employee was transferred from Florida to Connecticut and was authorized use of his automobile. He drove from Miami to Sanford, Florida, took Auto-Train to Lorton, Virginia, and drove from there to Danbury. Since the cost of travel as performed by employee and dependents was less than if they had driven the entire distance, and since they could not have used Auto-Train without the automobile, he was properly reimbursed total cost of the Auto-Train. 58 Comp. Gen. 249 (1979) and B-186115, February 4, 1977, distinguished.

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The Honorable Kevin D. Rooney, Assistant Attorney General for Administration, has requested a decision as to whether it was proper to reimburse an employee for the cost of using the Auto-Train service between Florida and Virginia in connection with a permanent change of station.

Mr. Richard A. Chalmers, an employee of the Bureau of Prisons, was authorized to transfer from the Federal Correctional Institution, Miami, Florida, to the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, Connecticut. Authorization was given for the employee, his wife, and child to travel by privately owned automobile. Mileage was estimated at 1,360 miles at a rate of 12 cents per mile. In addition, per diem not to exceed 4-1/2 days was authorized for each family member.

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Instead of driving the entire distance, Mr. Chalmers drove to Sanford, Florida, a distance of 283 miles; took the Auto-Train from there to Lorton, Virginia; then drove from there to Danbury, Connecticut, an additional 285 miles. Auto-Train is a passenger train service which also transports the passenger's car as part of the service. For the Auto-Train trip Mr. Chalmers paid a total of \$269, made up of a charge of \$159 for his automobile and \$110 for transportation of himself, his spouse, and his 8-year-old child. Reimbursement of the total cost was made to.

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*freight transportation  
operations  
Transportation  
costs  
Travel costs  
Railroad transportation  
operations  
Relocation Expense claims*

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Mr. Chalmers by the Bureau of Prisons on the basis of savings to the Government since the Auto-Train fare plus reduced mileage and per diem amounted to less than what would have been incurred by driving the entire distance.

Mr. Rooney states that no authority can be located to permit transportation of a privately owned motor vehicle within the United States. He asks, however:

"Since the use of the Auto-Train permitted the employee to report to his new official duty station approximately three days earlier and resulted in a net savings to the Government, may the reimbursement be considered legitimate or will the cost of transporting the vehicle have to be recovered?"

We have been advised that the transportation of Mr. Chalmers' car was a necessary part of his travel by Auto-Train, that is, he could not travel by Auto-Train unless his automobile was also transported thereon. In the circumstances, therefore, we do not view 5 U.S.C. § 5727(a), which prohibits the shipment of automobiles under an authorization to ship household goods, as a bar to payment for the Auto-Train expense. The automobile in this case was not being transported under an authorization to ship Mr. Chalmers' household goods, but rather the transportation of the automobile was a necessary incident of the travel of Mr. Chalmers and his dependents to his new duty station.

In B-176512, October 25, 1972, an employee was sent from Virginia to Florida on temporary duty, and he chose to take the Auto-Train with his wife and automobile rather than fly. The total Auto-Train fare was \$380 for the round-trip transportation, while the airfare for the employee alone would have been \$180. Had he traveled alone by Auto-Train the fare would not have been reduced. Even though the travel of his wife and the transportation of his automobile were personal, we held that the Auto-Train fare need not be prorated. The employee was still entitled to reimbursement of his actual cost, not to exceed the airfare. Hence, he was entitled to the full \$180.

In the instant case, however, the Auto-Train fare is broken down into separate charges for transporting Mr. Chalmers'

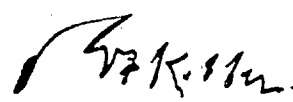
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dependents. We do not regard this difference as significant because the Auto-Train fare is still a package fare for the passenger and his car. Hence, the total Auto-Train fare may be considered a travel cost of the employee and his family since the automobile transportation cost had to be incurred in order for them to travel on the Auto-Train. See 54 Comp. Gen. 268 (1974).

We have recently held that, in light of 5 U.S.C. § 5727(a) and the lack of a specific statute authorizing the shipment of a privately owned vehicle (POV), an employee who was transferred from San Diego, California, to Denver, Colorado, and who was authorized the use of two POVs could not be reimbursed the cost of shipping one of the POVs by common carrier because his wife, who was to have driven the POV, traveled by airplane instead. 58 Comp. Gen. 249 (1979). A similar result was reached in B-186115, February 4, 1977. Our holdings were made although the cost of such travel and transportation was less than the constructive cost by the mode authorized. In those decisions, however, the shipment of the automobile was unconnected with the travel by airplane of the employees or their families; that is, the individuals' transportation and the shipment of their automobiles were separately arranged and purchased.

In the case at hand, we consider the \$159 charge for shipping Mr. Chalmers' automobile to be an allowable additional travel cost. The \$159 charge, a requirement of the package fare on Auto-Train, may be allowed in full since the total charge for the Auto-Train travel does not exceed the constructive cost of the authorized mode of travel.

Accordingly, reimbursement to Mr. Chalmers of the total Auto-Train fare, including the payment of \$159 attributable to transporting Mr. Chalmers' automobile, was proper.

  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States