

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



IN REPLY
REFER TO:

B-194013 (LLW)

FEB 27 1979

Robert E. Chandler, Director
Transportation Services Division (TTT)
General Services Administration

Dear Mr. Chandler:

By your letter of January 22, 1979, you requested comments on a recommendation to encourage carpooling by allowing reimbursement for the actual mileage incurred when an employee uses his privately owned vehicle (POV) to transport other employees from their residences or duty stations to a common carrier terminal, or back, when performing temporary duty travel together. Currently, Federal Travel Regulations (FPMR 101-7) para. 1-4.2c(1) permits reimbursement on the basis of the distance between the employee's own residence or place of business and the terminal.

We have recognized that it may be advantageous to the Government for two or more employees to travel together and to authorize reimbursement to the driving employee for the additional miles that he must travel to pick up and return his passengers. We are enclosing a copy of our decision B-158519, February 21, 1966, holding that an employee assigned to temporary duty who was administratively authorized to travel approximately 18 additional miles to pick up another employee could be reimbursed for the additional distance traveled. In that case it was in the interest of the Government to reimburse the driver for the additional mileage rather than to reimburse the passenger for his taxicab fare to an en route pick-up point. See also B-158046, January 11, 1966, and April 5, 1966, copies enclosed. Consistent with these decisions, our own regulations on travel provide that when adequate common carrier transportation is not available for travel between the employee's residence and a temporary audit site within the local travel area, he may be paid mileage for use of a POV as follows:

"* * *When an employee provides transportation to one or more additional employees traveling to the same general location, he may be reimbursed for mileage at the rate of 15 cents per mile for the total

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mileage traveled from his residence via the other employees' residences without a deduction for normal commuting costs. * * *

We believe that the cost considerations are essentially the same regardless of whether the employee is authorized to use his POV for travel to and from a temporary duty site or for travel to and from a common carrier terminal. Where it is in the interest of the Government, one employee may be authorized to pick up others for the purpose of transporting them to a common carrier terminal. The additional mileage traveled for the purpose of gathering together the carpool members may be regarded as attributable to an authorized deviation.

Although specific regulatory language has not been offered, we understand that the suggestion before you is that FTR para. 1-4.2c(1) be changed to permit reimbursement to an employee for additional mileage necessary to pick up or return employee passengers traveling with him to or from a common carrier point without specific authorization. Your letter forwarding the suggestion for our comments states that implementation and control should be at the agency level and that employee participation should be on a voluntary basis. We agree with the principle that employees should be allowed to decide whether or not to carpool to and from a common carrier terminal on a voluntary basis. However, we have some reservation regarding your view that implementation and control should be at the agency level. Currently, agencies may authorize additional mileage necessary for an employee to pick up one or more other employees for the purpose of driving together to a common carrier terminal. We question the necessity for a change in the regulations that would do little more than advise agencies that they have this discretion. On the other hand, we believe that a regulation which permits payment of additional mileage to pick up and drop off passengers without special authorization when two or more employees decide to carpool to or from a terminal is desirable, both from a cost and an administrative standpoint. By limiting mileage and parking reimbursement to aggregate constructive cost of the taxicab fares for the individual employees involved, a cost benefit to the Government would be assured. This, of course, would require a corresponding revision to FTR para. 1-4.2c(2).

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We believe that a similar revision to FTR para. 1-4.2c(2) would be appropriate. The same consideration of economy and administrative efficiency would appear to be involved when two or more employees carpool between their residences and a common office on the day of travel.

Sincerely yours,

Robert L. Higgins

Robert L. Higgins
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosures