



The Comptroller General  
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

## Decision

Matter of:      Alpheus L. Bonde - Extended Temporary Duty -  
                     Authorized Return Travel

File:             B-237567

Date:             April 13, 1990

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### DIGEST

A construction employee who is required to perform long periods of temporary duty away from his official station and does not maintain a permanent residence at his official station may be reimbursed for the expenses of periodic, authorized return travel for nonworkdays to his permanent residence, not to exceed the constructive cost of travel to his official station.

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### DECISION

A decision is requested on the propriety of paying a claim for authorized return travel during extended temporary duty to a "voting/family" residence which is not within commuting distance of the employee's official station.<sup>1/</sup> We conclude that the claim may be paid on a constructive cost basis.

### BACKGROUND

A division of the Federal Highway Administration has a number of engineering employees who are on extended temporary duty on a continuing basis for most of the year. Since they rarely report for duty at their official station in Vancouver, Washington, most of them do not maintain a residence within the commuting distance of Vancouver. Instead, these employees maintain their residences throughout the region, in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, or Alaska. One of these employees, Mr. Alpheus L. Bonde, while on extended temporary duty in

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<sup>1/</sup> The request was made by the certifying officer, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, Western Direct Federal Division, Vancouver, Washington, reference HAD-17.42; File: 100 #5145L.

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Alaska, traveled to visit his family at the family residence in Calder, Idaho, and claimed reimbursement for per diem en route and travel expenses.

We are urged to authorize payment, generally, on the basis of our decision, 55 Comp. Gen. 1291 (1976) (B-130082), where we held that it would be proper, under prescribed circumstances, to pay for authorized or required return travel to an official station or place of abode for weekends and other nonworkdays. Diana J. Bell, B-200856, Aug. 13, 1981.

#### OPINION

We have held in a line of cases that it would be improper to pay for travel on weekends and other nonworkdays to places other than the employee's official station or place of abode.<sup>2/</sup> Under the Federal Travel Regulations, Calder, Idaho, was not Mr. Bonde's "place of abode," that is, "the place from which the employee commutes daily to the official station."<sup>3/</sup> Mr. Bonde's case however, is materially different from most employees in that he is an itinerant employee on substantial and continuous temporary duty, and he does not have a need to commute daily to his official station. Mr. Bonde's circumstances, therefore, are analogous to those in John D. Rotz, B-186266, Aug. 10, 1976, where we construed "place of abode" as including an itinerant employee's residence even though it was not located within normal commuting distance of the official station.

In Rotz, the employee performed travel away from his official station on a substantial and continuous basis and routinely returned to spend nonworkdays with his family, located at his permanent residence roughly 200 miles from his official station. In that case, we authorized reimbursement of transportation and en route per diem expenses, not to exceed the expenses of remaining at the temporary duty station, under the "voluntary" return regulation, now Federal Travel Regulations, para. 1-7.11b(4). Although that regulation is controlled by the restrictive definition of place of abode, we concluded, based on a consideration of the regulation's development and our

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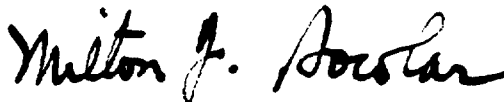
<sup>2/</sup> See e.g. Michael K. Vessey, B-214886, July 3, 1984; James R. Curry, B-208791, Jan. 24, 1983; Jeffrey Israel, B-209763, Mar. 21, 1983; Sara S. Ivey, B-200262, Jan. 6, 1982; Diana J. Bell, B-200856, Aug. 3, 1981.

<sup>3/</sup> Federal Travel Regulations, para. 1-7.11, incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1988).

decisions, 53 Comp. Gen. 313 (1973) and 29 Comp. Gen. 533 (1950), that the definition could be construed as including an itinerant employee's residence, even though it was not located within normal commuting distance of the official station. We reasoned that the principal consideration for authorizing voluntary return travel at no additional cost to the government was the objective of minimizing disruption of the employee's family life, under circumstances where the employee, from a practical standpoint, did not have an opportunity to establish a residence within commuting distance of the official station.

The same objective clearly would be served by reimbursing Mr. Bonde's travel expenses to the extent of the constructive cost of returning to his official station. Such reimbursement would not result in any additional cost to the government since the agency may authorize return travel to the official station.

Under the circumstances and conditions described by the agency here, we will not object to the payment of Mr. Bonde's claim or similar claims, if otherwise proper, for a temporary period, provided the agency conducts a cost analysis complying with FTR, para. 1-7.11(b)(3) and 55 Comp. Gen. 1291, supra. See Thomas Anderson, B-200601, July 31, 1981, and Federal Home Loan Bank Board, B-202544, Aug. 31, 1981.



Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States