

Workplace Travel Guidance for Telecommuting Employees

June 2023

INTRODUCTION

Departments and agencies who manage employees working from remote workplaces will administer telecommuting arrangements in accordance with the County's [Telecommuting Policy](#). This document is intended to provide guidance to executive branch agencies on the County's workplace-to-workplace travel, day travel, transportation, and reimbursement policies as they relate to employees who telecommute.

DEFINITIONS

WHAT IS A COMMUTE?

A **Commute** is the trip from an employee's home to their first workplace prior to the start of their workday, or the trip departing from the employee's last workplace following the end of their workday. A commute trip is not for official King County business purposes, therefore, per county policy, reimbursement of personal vehicle mileage and parking expenses associated with commute trips is not allowed and time spent commuting is not compensable. *(See Example 2 on page seven for pay and reimbursement guidance for commute trips)*

WHAT IS A COUNTY WORKPLACE?

A **County Workplace** is any County-owned or operated building or site where county employees perform the duties of their position in person. County workplaces can also include sites regularly maintained or monitored by county employees for the purpose of providing a county service. Examples of county workplaces include, but are not limited to:

- County owned or operated offices, warehouses, public safety or corrections facilities, health clinics, parks and recreation facilities, transit facilities, etc.;
- Sites at or adjacent to county-maintained infrastructure such as roads, culverts, or bridges;
- Sites near county-monitored natural features such as rivers, wetlands, shorelines, etc.;
- Sites where employees interact with customers or community partners (property appraisals/inspections, in-home medical consultations, vendor/community meetings, etc.);
- Other sites employees may report to on a one-off or irregular basis to attend a job-related seminar, conference or training.

WHAT IS A REMOTE WORKPLACE?

A **Remote Workplace** is any workplace where an employee performs the duties of their position while telecommuting. In most cases, an employee's remote workplace is their home.

WHAT IS TELECOMMUTING?

Telecommuting is a work arrangement where an employee performs the duties of their position from a remote workplace and involves the use of county-provided communication/collaboration technology that enables the employee to work remotely.

WHAT IS TRAVEL FOR AN OFFICIAL KING COUNTY BUSINESS PURPOSE?

Travel for an Official King County Business Purpose includes **Workplace-to-Workplace Travel** or other **Day Travel**. Reimbursement for travel for official King County business purposes is governed by the county's [Authorized Travel, Meal and Expense Reimbursement for King County Employees](#) policy.

Workplace-to-Workplace Travel is any trip taken for official King County business purposes during the workday, either between an employee's remote workplace and a county workplace, or between two (or more) county workplaces . Travel expenses (parking, personal vehicle mileage) are reimbursable for workplace-to-workplace travel when a county provided transportation option is not readily available. Workplace-to-Workplace Travel is typically approved as part of an employee's Telecommuting Agreement, and if not covered in such agreement, must be approved in advance. *(See Examples 3-6 starting on page seven for pay and reimbursement guidance for workplace-to-workplace trips)*

Day Travel is any trip taken for official King County business purposes outside of King County that exceeds six hours but does not include an overnight stay. Travel outside of King County for six hours or less or travel within the County is not considered day travel. Day travel must be pre-approved in advance. *(See Example 7 on page eight for pay and reimbursement guidance for day travel trips)*

WORKPLACES

A workplace is any location where a county employee performs the duties of their position from, and can include remote workplaces and county workplaces. A summary of an employee's county and remote workplaces should be documented in their *Telecommuting Agreement*.

Telecommuting employees will typically have two regular workplaces, their home (a remote workplace) and a county workplace. Some telecommuting employees may have a remote workplace and multiple county workplaces based on their role, the responsibilities of their position, and the needs of their department. Employees may be required to begin their workday from any county workplace or travel to and from multiple workplaces during their workday.

TRAVEL TIME DURING THE WORKDAY

TRAVEL TIME POLICY

It is the county's policy that the time spent traveling to a county workplace before an employee's workday has started, and the time spent traveling from a county workplace after a workday has ended are both commutes and therefore not compensable. However, all time spent traveling for official King County business purposes during the workday is considered compensable time for hourly employees.

PAID TRAVEL TIME FOR HOURLY EMPLOYEES

Hourly employees are paid for the time spent traveling between workplaces during the workday. Therefore, if an hourly employee starts their workday telecommuting, then later in the workday they travel to a county workplace, the time spent traveling during the workday is considered workplace-to-workplace travel and will be counted as hours worked.

On a day when an hourly employee is assigned to begin their workday at a county workplace, the time spent traveling to the county workplace before the workday has started is unpaid commuting time.

To support the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals of the [2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#), the County encourages employees to use transit, carpools, walking, biking, or rolling methods of transportation for both commuting and workplace-to-workplace travel. Federal law (the FLSA) requires the County to compensate hourly employees for the time spent traveling from workplace to workplace during the workday. Therefore, before traveling between workplaces, employees should discuss their intended mode of transportation with their supervisor to ensure a balance between the emissions saved or incurred, total cost of travel (including parking), and the impact to the completion of tasks and productivity.

TIMEKEEPING

As an employer, King County is required to comply with all timekeeping and overtime regulations pursuant to state and federal law, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and county policy.

Hourly employees, whether they work from a county workplace or remotely, are responsible for receiving prior approval from their supervisor before working overtime or outside their normal work hours. FLSA-exempt employees, whether they work from a county workplace or remotely, work the hours necessary to satisfactorily perform their jobs.

SUPERVISOR TIPS:

Supervisors of hourly telecommuting employees should:

- Communicate with their employees regarding which of their tasks require in-person interaction or a physical presence, and when they are expected to report for in-person business;
- If possible, provide at least one day's (24 hours) notice when directing an employee, who would otherwise telecommute, to begin their workday at a county workplace;
- If possible, schedule in-person workdays, or tasks that require an in-person presence, in full-day increments to minimize paid travel time, miles driven, and the reimbursement of personal vehicle mileage and/or parking expenses; and
- Ensure that standards and expectations around workday start/end times, remote work, in-person work, and workplace-to-workplace travel are applied consistently across all employees in the work unit.

TRAVEL EXPENSE GUIDANCE

USE OF PERSONAL VEHICLES FOR COUNTY BUSINESS

On occasion, telecommuting employees may be required to travel between workplaces. When the use of a county-owned vehicle is impractical or inefficient, employees may use their personal vehicle, provided they obtain pre-approval from their immediate supervisor or have blanket pre-approval documented in their *Telecommuting Agreement*. The County's [Use of Vehicles for County Business](#) policy includes the following guidance:

Any authorized King County employee acting in good faith, with no reasonable cause to believe the conduct was unlawful, and within the course and scope of their employment with King County, is covered by the County's self-insured program while driving or riding in a non-revenue county vehicle or an employee-provided vehicle.

Vehicle parking citations and moving violation citations are the responsibility of the vehicle operator. Citation fines must be paid promptly. Employees must report to their supervisor or manager when cited while driving a non-revenue county vehicle or an employee-provided vehicle on county business.

SUPERVISOR TIP:

When approving workplace-to-workplace travel or day travel trips, supervisors should encourage the use of public transportation, county-owned fleet vehicles and/or carpools whenever possible.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR MILEAGE

If an employee uses a personal vehicle for official King County business purposes, the employee will be reimbursed for mileage and in most circumstances the reimbursement will be excluded from their income taxes. However, when an employee travels to a county workplace prior to the start of the workday, or travels to their home following the end of the workday, the trip is considered a commute, and thus mileage is not reimbursable, even if the employee regularly telecommutes.

SUPERVISOR TIP:

Whenever possible, supervisors should coordinate the tasks and schedules of the employees in their work unit to minimize the use of personal vehicles to make workplace-to-workplace trips during a workday.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR PARKING EXPENSES

Parking expenses associated with official King County business travel may be reimbursable per the County's [Authorized Travel, Meal and Expense Reimbursement for King County Employees](#) policy. Parking expenses incurred during a commute trip, or any other instance of parking for non-business purposes (for example, parking at an employee's home or parking during a stop for a meal or personal errand) are not reimbursable. Exceptions may be considered if an employee is required to perform county work within a trip that would normally be considered a commute if it results in a benefit to the county (meaning it saves the County money or time).

The examples below help employees and supervisors determine when parking expenses may be reimbursable.

PARKING EXAMPLE #1

An employee begins their day by traveling to a county workplace prior to the start of the workday. The employee pays for parking their personal vehicle. The employee completes their workday and then travels home.

The trip to the county workplace was a commute, therefore the parking expense was not reimbursable.

PARKING EXAMPLE #2

An employee begins their workday telecommuting from their remote workplace, then later in the day, they travel to an inspection site (a county workplace), where they are required to pay for parking.

Because the employee began their workday telecommuting from their remote workplace, the trip to the inspection site was considered workplace-to-workplace travel and the parking expense was reimbursable.

PARKING EXAMPLE #3

An employee begins their day by traveling to a county workplace prior to the start of the workday. Later in the day, the employee travels to a community meeting where they are required to pay for parking.

The trip to the meeting was workplace-to-workplace travel, therefore the parking expense was reimbursable.

PARKING EXAMPLE #4

An employee begins their workday by taking a day travel trip to attend a conference outside of King County. The employee is required to pay to park their vehicle at the conference location.

The trip to the conference was for official King County business. Therefore, the parking expense was reimbursable.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

Employees may request mileage and/or parking expense reimbursement when using a personal vehicle for approved travel. Mileage and/or parking expenses will be reimbursed according to the County's [Authorized Travel, Meal and Expense Reimbursement for King County Employees](#) policy. Employees and their supervisors should use existing departmental procedures for requesting and administering mileage and/or parking expense reimbursement.

PAY AND TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT - EXAMPLES AND GUIDANCE

When considering whether travel is for an official King County business purpose or for a commute, it is important to consider the answer to this key question: *“Where and when does an employee’s workday start and end?”* In general, the answer to this question will help determine whether the time spent traveling is compensable (for hourly employees) and whether personal vehicle mileage and parking expenses are reimbursable.

The examples below help employees and supervisors in answering this key question.

EXAMPLE #1

An employee spends their entire workday telecommuting from their remote workplace.

Pay: Hourly employees are paid regularly for the hours they telecommute during their workday. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: There was no workplace-to-workplace travel, therefore there were no travel expenses.

EXAMPLE #2

An employee travels to a county workplace before their workday begins, finishes their workday at the county workplace, and travels home.

Pay: The time spent traveling to the county workplace was before the employee's workday started. The time spent traveling home was after their workday ended. Therefore, both trips were commutes and not compensable. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: The employee's trips were both commutes, therefore not reimbursable.

EXAMPLE #3

An employee begins their workday telecommuting from their remote workplace. Later in the day, they travel to a county workplace in their personal vehicle. The employee completes their workday in person, then travels home.

Pay: An hourly employee is paid for all time worked during their workday: the time spent telecommuting from their remote workplace, the time spent traveling from their remote workplace to their county workplace, and the time spent working at their county workplace. The time spent commuting after their workday was not compensable. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: The employee's first trip (from their remote workplace to their county workplace) was not a commute, and therefore travel expenses (mileage/parking) associated with that trip were reimbursable. The trip home after their workday was a commute and thus not reimbursable.

EXAMPLE #4

An employee travels to a county workplace prior to the start of their workday, travels to a second county workplace in their personal vehicle during the workday, completes their workday at the second site, and then travels home.

Pay: An hourly employee is paid for all time worked during their workday, including the time spent traveling from their first county workplace to their second county workplace. The time spent traveling before and after their workday was commuting time and therefore not compensable. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: The first and last trips were commutes, therefore not reimbursable. Travel expenses (mileage and/or parking) associated with traveling from the first county workplace to the second were reimbursable.

EXAMPLE #5

An employee travels to a county workplace prior to the start of their workday, and works a portion of their workday in person. After completing their in-person work, they travel to their remote workplace during their workday to complete their workday telecommuting from a remote workplace.

Pay: An hourly employee would be paid from the time their workday started in person until the time their workday ended remotely, including the time spent traveling from their county workplace back to their remote workplace (their home) since the travel took place during their workday. The time spent traveling before their workday was a commute, therefore not compensable. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: The employee's trip to their first workplace was a commute, therefore was not reimbursable. The second trip from the county workplace to their remote workplace was workplace-to-workplace travel during the workday, therefore the mileage was reimbursable. However, since the second trip ended at the employee's home, any parking expenses incurred to park at the employee's home were not reimbursable.

EXAMPLE #6

An employee begins their workday telecommuting from their remote workplace, then travels to a county workplace in their personal vehicle, then travels to a second county workplace in a personal vehicle, then travels back to their remote workplace during their workday and completes their workday telecommuting.

Pay: An hourly employee would be paid for all time traveling and working since all the trips were workplace-to-workplace travel during their workday. FLSA-exempt employees receive their regular salary.

Travel Reimbursement: All three of these trips were considered workplace-to-workplace travel, therefore the mileage associated with these trips was reimbursable. Parking expenses during the first two trips were reimbursable. However, the employee's last trip ended at their home, therefore any parking expenses incurred to park at the employee's home were not reimbursable.

EXAMPLE #7

An employee starts their workday taking a pre-approved day travel trip in their personal vehicle to a conference outside of King County. The conference ends and the employee travels home, where their workday ends.

Pay: An hourly employee would be paid for time worked during their workday: the time spent traveling to the conference, the time spent attending the conference and the time spent traveling home from the conference. An FLSA-exempt employee would be paid regularly for the workday.

Travel Reimbursement: The trips to and from the conference are day travel trips and were taken during the workday. Therefore the mileage associated with these trips was reimbursable. Appropriate parking expenses incurred at the conference were reimbursable.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Consult the table below to determine when hourly employees are paid to travel and when trips are eligible for travel reimbursement.

#	Employee trips	First Trip		Other Trip(s), if necessary	Last Trip		
		Travel expenses reimbursable?	Paid travel time?	Travel expenses reimbursable ?	Mileage reimbursable ?	Parking reimbursable?	Paid travel time?
1	Employee telecommutes all day.	N/A (No travel required; Hourly employees are paid for hours worked. FLSA-exempt (salaried) employees paid regularly.)					
2	Employee travels to county workplace prior to the start of their workday, completes workday in person, then travels home.	No, this first trip is a commute		N/A	No, this last trip is a commute		
3	Employee travels to a county workplace prior to the start of the workday, works a portion of their shift, travels to different workplace(s), completes workday, then travels home.	No, this first trip is a commute		Yes, mileage and/or parking reimbursable	No, this last trip is a commute		
4	Employee travels to county workplace prior to the start of the workday, works a portion of their shift in person, travels back home during workday, completes shift telecommuting from remote workplace.	No, this first trip is a commute		N/A	Yes, mileage is reimbursable	No, any parking would be for personal reasons, parking not reimbursable	Yes, workplace-to-workplace travel during the workday is paid time
5	Employee begins workday telecommuting, later during workday travels to a county workplace, then travels to other county workplace(s), travels home, completes workday telecommuting from remote workplace.	Yes, mileage and/or parking reimbursable	Yes, for a KC business purpose so paid time	Yes, mileage and/or parking reimbursable	Yes, mileage is reimbursable	No, any parking would be for personal reasons, parking not reimbursable	Yes, workplace-to-workplace travel during the workday is paid time
6	Employee begins workday telecommuting, later during workday travels to a county workplace, completes workday in person, then travels home.	Yes, mileage and/or parking reimbursable	Yes, for a KC business purpose so paid time	N/A	No, this last trip is a commute		
7	Employee begins workday by taking day travel trip for an official King County business purpose. They travel home, and upon arriving at home, their workday ends.	Yes, mileage and/or parking reimbursable	Yes, for a KC business purpose so paid time	N/A	Yes, mileage is reimbursable	No, any parking would be for personal reasons, parking not reimbursable	Yes, workplace-to-workplace travel during the workday is paid time

For more information on these topics please refer to the policies and documents below:

- King County's [Telecommuting Policy](#)
- King County's [FLSA-related Policy](#)
- Executive Policy PER 17-1-4 [Authorized Travel, Meal and Expense Reimbursement for King County Employees](#)
- Executive Policy FES 12-1-3 [Use of Vehicles for County Business](#)
- Executive Policy FES 12-2-3 [Take-Home Policy for County-Owned Vehicles](#)
- FBOD/Procurement & Payables [Travel Guide](#)

For questions or comments on these topics please refer to your department's [Human Resources Manager](#) or the Department of Human Resources.