

**FDA STAFF MANUAL GUIDES, VOLUME III - GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**TRAVEL**

**USE OF FREQUENT TRAVEL BENEFITS AND MANDATORY USE OF THE CITY PAIR PROGRAM**

Effective Date: 07/20/2016

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**1. PURPOSE.**

This guide establishes the policy for (1) the optional use of frequent travel benefits earned while on official government travel and (2) the mandatory use of the General Services Administration (GSA) City Pair Program for all Food and Drug Administration (FDA) employees booking official government travel.

**2. BACKGROUND.**

FDA policy is consistent with S. 1438, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002. Section 11161 of this law, enacted on December 28, 2001, allows employees to retain promotional benefits for personal use that they earned on official government travel, including frequent travel miles.

**3. REFERENCE/AUTHORITY.**

FDA policy is consistent with guidance set forth in the policies listed below regarding the Use of Frequent Travel Benefits and Mandatory Use of Contract City Pair Fares while on official business.

- A. Department of Health and Human Services Travel Policy Manual, revised November 2014, Section 3.4.2 (<http://www.psc.gov/transportation-services/travel/travel-policy/index.html>)

- B. General Services Administration, City Pair Program (CPP)  
(<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/27075>)
- C. Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), 41 CFR 301-53 Parts 301-10, 301-71, 301-73  
(<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/public/site/FTR/file/FTR301TOC.html/category/21868/hostUri/portal>)
- D. S.1438, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002  
(<https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ107/PLAW-107publ107.pdf>)
- E. 31 U.S.C. 1353 (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title31/pdf/USCODE-2011-title31-subtitleII-chap13-subchapIII-sec1353.pdf>)

#### **4. DEFINITIONS.**

- A. City Pair Program (CPP) – The GSA Office of Travel and Transportation awards contracts annually to several airlines via the City Pair Program. The CPP provides discounted air transportation services for Federal travelers Government-wide. These discounted airfares are commonly referred to as City Pair fares. City Pair fares are unrestricted, have no advance purchase requirement, require no minimum length of stay, and are fully refundable tickets with no airline cancellation or change fees.
- B. Frequent Travel Benefits – Any promotional benefits or materials received by employees of the FDA from a travel service provider for official government domestic and international travel.
- C. Travel Authorization (Order) – Written permission to travel on official business. There are three basic types of travel authorizations (orders) specified in DHHS Travel Policy Manual, Section 3.1.4: Unlimited-open; Limited-open; and Trip-by-trip.
- D. Travel Claim (Voucher) – A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel.

#### **5. POLICY.**

- A. General Policy on Frequent Travel Benefits

An FDA traveler who receives a frequent travel benefit as a result of using travel or transportation services at Federal Government expense, or accepted under 31 U.S.C. 1353 (HHS-348 Sponsored Travel), may retain

the benefit for personal use if the benefit is obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at no additional cost to the Federal Government. Frequent travel benefits can include frequent travel miles, upgrades, or access to carrier clubs. All Federal travelers, either for domestic or international travel, should be aware that the frequent travel program is an incentive program operated by travel or transportation providers to reward customers for their continued loyalty. It is the responsibility of the employee, not of the FDA, to establish and manage his/her frequent travel promotional benefits account(s), as applicable. In addition, any associated costs of maintaining these accounts are to be paid by the employee and are not reimbursable by the FDA.

#### 1. Redeeming Frequent Travel Benefits

Employees may use frequent travel benefits earned on official travel to (1) obtain travel services for subsequent official travel or (2) retain such benefits for personal use, including upgrading to a higher class of service. When booking official travel, employees may not select or choose a common carrier or lodging (e.g., airline, train, vessel, hotel) based on whether it provides frequent travel benefits or to gain frequent travel benefits for personal use. The employee's Center/Office Delegated Approving Official may not authorize the purchase of a higher cost ticket for the purpose of enabling an employee to apply their frequent travel miles for upgraded seating. When redeeming frequent travel benefits for subsequent official travel, the employee must comply with the policies that govern all booking of official travel.

#### B. Mandatory Use of the City Pair Program

If the GSA City Pair fare for passenger transportation services is available to an employee for official travel, the employee must use the City Pair fare unless one or more of the exceptions listed in FTR 301-10.107 applies. The GSA's City Pair Program (CPP) offers fares considerably lower than comparable refundable commercial fares. A listing of City Pair fares is available at [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov). The employee is personally liable for any additional costs or penalties incurred resulting from unauthorized use of non-contract service for official travel.

#### 1. Limited Exceptions from the City Pair Fares Mandatory Booking

All travelers must use a City Pair fare for scheduled air passenger transportation service unless one of the limited exceptions listed below is met:

- a. Space on a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel, or use of contract service would require the traveler to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip;
- b. The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of the FDA with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours;
- c. A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that, if used, will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government (the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses considered). It is FDA policy that travel-authorizing officials may not approve use of a non-contract fare under this exception unless the cost saving on the non-contract fare ticket will be at least 40 percent of the total cost of the contract fare for domestic travel or 15 percent of the total cost of the contract fare for international travel (i.e., the ticket price is 60 percent of the contract fare or less for domestic travel, or 85 percent of the contract fare or less for international travel). The cost savings computation must be indicated on the travel authorization;
- d. Cost effective rail service is available and is consistent with mission requirements;
- e. Or smoking is permitted on the contract air carrier and the nonsmoking section of the contract aircraft is not acceptable to you.

More information on these regulations can be found in FTR 301-10. Exceptions to these regulations may be found in FTR 301-73.102, FTR 301-10.107 and 301-10.108.

Note that if an employee is redeeming a free round-trip frequent-traveler ticket for use on official business travel, at no cost to the Government, an exemption permits use of a non-contract City Pair carrier.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

The primary roles and responsibilities for the policy directives and required procedures within this chapter are as follows:

- A. Responsibilities of the Employee's Center/Office Delegated Approving Official
  - 1. Review and approve the travel authorization and travel voucher

- a. Verify that the employee is not purchasing a higher-cost ticket for the purpose of applying their frequent flyer traveler miles for upgraded seating
- b. Verify that City Pair fare(s) are used
- c. Verify that if a non-contract carrier offering a lower fare to the general public is used that it will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government

**B. Responsibilities of the Employee**

- 1. Establish and manage the frequent travel promotional benefits account(s)
- 2. Use City Pair fares when booking official travel unless an exception applies

**7. PROCEDURES.**

This SMG has no procedures.

**8. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

The guide was signed by Peter Kelchner, Acting Director - Office of Financial Management, effective June 20, 2016.

**9. DOCUMENT HISTORY – SMG 2343.3, “Use of Frequent Travel Benefits and Mandatory Use of the City Pair Fare Program”**

<b>STATUS (I, R, C)</b>	<b>DATE APPROVED</b>	<b>LOCATION OF CHANGE HISTORY</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>	<b>APPROVING OFFICIAL</b>
Initial	08/03/2009	N/a	OC/OO/ OMO/OFM	William Collinson, Acting Director, OFM
Revision	07/20/2016	N/a	OO/OFBA/OFM	Peter Kelchner, Acting Director, OFM

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