



Travel Coordinator Quarterly Meeting ~ August 13, 2014: Questions and Answers

The following provides a summary of the questions and answers addressed by the Statewide Travel Program staff and the panel of speakers: Michele Slape, California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), and Jamie St. Cloud, State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) on August 13, 2014. Bill Amaral, Department of General Services (DGS), was the panel moderator.

(Questions addressed to Statewide Travel Program)

1) What is the "pre-trip approval process" on Concur Travel?

The "pre-trip approval process" is an electronic option in Concur Travel. There are three options to consider, as follows: 1) a "hard approval" process which requires the employee's supervisor to approve or reject the travel itinerary. Once the supervisor approves or rejects the reservation, the traveler is notified of the supervisor's action. This type of approval requires training and specific set up, and is considered the strictest approval process; 2) a "soft or passive approval" process which sends an email notification to the traveler's supervisor and no response is required for approval; however, the manager can reject the trip. This process requires specific set up and is not as restrictive; and 3) a configuration which does not have a pre-trip approval option set up but itineraries can be dropped into a shared email box for review.

2) What is the course of action if vehicles are not available at Enterprise?

Contact CalTravelStore at 1 (877) 454-8785 for assistance.

3) When booking a vehicle on Concur Travel, is there a reason why there may be a restriction for dropping a vehicle off at a different location?

No, there is not a reason since the Enterprise contract allows for a "one-way drop" with no charge. If this occurs when you are booking a vehicle, proceed with your reservation. However, at the pick up location, be sure to inform the Enterprise staff that you will be dropping the vehicle off at a different location.

4) When shall we stop booking travel via SWABIZ?

Your department will continue to book travel through SWABIZ until your department's implementation, training and transition is complete. The Statewide Travel Program will set the date with your department to discontinue SWABIZ; this information will be communicated through your department Travel Coordinator. (Note: Concur has a direct connection to SWABIZ.) Although the SWABIZ site will be discontinued for booking travel, departments will still have access to the SWABIZ reports for approximately a year.

5) How will Fi\$Cal work for payments of vendor accounts, specifically American Express payments?

STP will be discussing the payment process with Fi\$Cal and provide an update regarding how vendor payments will be handled.

6) Is a justification required for booking air outside of the contracts?

For off-contract airline usage, a justification is not necessary; however a justification continues to be required for renting a vehicle larger than the intermediate/compact car. The airline usage is different because travelers book air to meet their business objective timelines.

7) Is there a rule for purchasing refundable versus non-refundable tickets?

There is no rule requiring the purchase of refundable tickets over non-refundable fares. The *Best Practices Guide* (Refer to Management Memo 14-03) has information on utilizing non-refundable flights for cost savings but is provided only as a resource. Non-refundable fares are 40% to 60% lower than the comparable refundable fares. The non-refundable fare option will provide a significant savings if they meet the business need of the department. The analysis of business need versus cost will still be conducted at the department/agency level and each department/agency will set the policy for the use of refundable versus non-refundable fares.

8) Will there be exceptions for hotel bookings not done through the authorized channel?

The STP staff will work with departments for health and safety exceptions and on a case-by-case basis for special circumstances. The one exception that will be in place for the near future, however, will be for reservations for conference hotel room blocks; travelers will continue to book their reservation outside of Concur using the process specified.

Exceptions will be addressed *once all departments are transitioned* and DGS has had an opportunity to meet and confer with the unions and to develop a process and guidelines with CalHR and SCO. There will be extensive communication regarding this policy between now and the end of the implementation period, December 31, 2015, and there will also be a grace period.

9) Does a department have to use CalATERS to implement the Concur mandate?

No, a department does not have to use CalATERS to implement the Concur mandate. There is no change to the reimbursement process.

10) Can a travel administrator set up policy pop-ups on the Concur Travel booking tool?

No, the travel administrator must work with CalTravelStore to make any modifications on the Concur Travel website.

11) Is the “Business Select” airfare allowable?

“Business Select” airfare is a non-reimbursable expense for state employees.

12) Why are some hotels in Concur Travel more expensive than on their hotel websites?

This depends on what rates the hotels load on the Global Distribution System (GDS) which is accessed via Concur Travel. If your travelers have a relationship with specific hotels that offer them lower rates, forward the hotels’ information to the STP staff. The staff will contact the hotels to discuss options regarding loading the state rates into the GDS which will also be visible to all travelers.

13) Although the GPS tracking device is not an allowable expense, can a department authorize the reimbursement of the expense? Is it possible to book a GPS via Concur Travel?

No, the rental of a GPS tracking device for a rental vehicle cannot be authorized by a department and is not an allowable expense.

(Note: Departments have purchased GPS tracking devices and implemented an internal “check out” process for using the device.)

14) Is a GPS tracking device allowable in a rental vehicle?

From a policy perspective, there is no provision or regulations to allow the reservation. At this point, no departmental justification for this type of expense has been approved.

15) Is it possible to add in the American Express Corporate Card terms and conditions that an employee must return the Amex card once the employee leaves the department?

The STP staff will work with American Express on either adding this language or issuing it in a separate policy.

16) What is the status of the Travel Management Services Request for Proposal (RFP)?

Update: A notice of intent has been posted. The current contract will expire April 5, 2015.

(Questions addressed to CalSTRS and SWCB)

17) What is the most important step in managing travel?

The most important step in managing travel is having management's buy-in to implement and enforce policy throughout the organization. This applies to the entire chain of command – all the way up to the CEO. Without full leadership buy-in/support, program management and policy enforcement efforts are highly ineffective.

Also, it is important for you and your staff to know where to seek and find answers (both internal and external sources). Be familiar with Department of Human Resources (CalHR), State Controller's Office (SCO), and DGS as well as your department's travel policies.

18) What are your department's best practices for reviewing Travel Expense Claims?

A couple of best practices for reviewing Travel Expense Claims include: 1) spend time to train the staff who are auditing the claims received, and 2) review CalATERS to assure your departmental policies are current.

19) With SAP, are receipts reviewed prior to data being entered into CalATERS?

Yes, the CalSTRS Accounting office reviews all required receipts per State Controller's Office requirements before data is entered into CalATERS. Note: File attachments consisting of support docs or receipts are required in SAP for both pre-approval requests and expense reimbursement claims. Employees have access to a document outlining these requirements. Also, the iBank reporting system is used by Travel Admin and Accounting for reconciliation purposes.

20) How do you create your distribution list for all travel-related information?

CalSTRS: The original travel distribution list was created based on the list of travelers CalSTRS had when they first switched to Concur and Southwest Direct Connect. This is an ongoing list given the continual addition of the names of new travelers (travelers who directly contact the Travel Services unit or from the Administration unit) who will need travel services. Also, when the Travel Services unit receives a request from Administration unit to add an employee to the list, the Travel unit adds the names of the group the employee is associated with since it is most likely that the coworkers will be traveling as well.

SWRCB: The SWRCB does not have a traveler specific distribution list. Certain travel news is distributed statewide to all employees; and certain travel policies and updates are sent to management. The SWRCB anticipates adding a “subscribe” button on their department intranet for travelers who want to receive the most updated information.

21) How do you manage the American Express Corporate card?

The CalSTRS has policy that outlines who may request a card for business travel and how to submit a card request. For a copy of the policy, contact Michele Slape at Travel@CalSTRS.com.

22) What benefits did you experience from moving SWABIZ into Concur Travel?

The benefits of a direct connection to SWABIZ in Concur Travel include having access to all the airline fares in one place, as well as eliminating the redundancy in managing data and expense reconciliation, which has saved time and money. Moving SWABIZ into Concur Travel made it easier to restrict employee access to SWABIZ (only used by Travel Admin and Accounting for program/account administration/reconciliation activities), thereby reducing the risk of policy noncompliant flight bookings.

23) What kind of improvements did you see with the implementation of the new travel policy?

The improvements included having a uniform travel policy throughout the department resulting in increased transparency, control and compliance.

24) Are your travelers considering baggage fees when selecting airfare?

Yes, travelers consider baggage fees when selecting airfare. CalSTRS advises travelers to include baggage fees as part of their cost comparison. Note: On Concur, after you entered your flight search, there is a “suitcase” icon on the screen which provides you airline baggage fee policies.