October 1, 2001

FISCAL MEMORANDUM 02-03

TO: Administration
Information and Technology Exchange Center
Divisions/Centers

SUBJECT: Internet Bookings of Airline Fares and
Use of Corporate Travel Charge Card

The General Services Commission’s (GSC) State Travel Management Program (STMP) has introduced changes effective September 1, 2001 that allows employees of higher education to use the Internet to book airline fares. While the STMP will allow the use of the Internet to book airline fares, contract airfares are not accessible on the Internet. Therefore, a valid exception must exist for the non-use of the contract airline fare. The valid exceptions are:

1. Lower total cost to the State – Use of a non-contract travel vendor is less than the contract fare or rate which is offered to the general public, and/or when all trip expenses are evaluated, including ground transportation, insurance fees, parking fees, taxes, and travel time, the use results in a lower total overall cost to the State. If the contract travel vendor offers the same lower fare, the contract travel vendor must be used unless exception #2 or #3 below exists.

2. Efficient use of services – Use of a non-contract travel vendor is necessary because the contract travel vendor is sold out, is not able to provide services at the time or location necessary to accomplish the purpose of the trip, has a real or anticipated labor disruption, or is providing negotiated rates for group travel.

3. Health and safety issues – Use of a non-contract travel vendor may be allowed when a state traveler finds that the accommodations provided by the vendor may reasonably present a risk to the state traveler in the following circumstances:
   A. Accommodations may lack a reasonable amount of security or safety, and/or may present a health risk based on the state traveler’s individual needs;
   B. Accommodations fail to provide an adequate amount of services required for a person with disabilities; or
   C. Accommodations have limited availability of medical emergency facilities or equipment that may be required by a state traveler.
Please be aware that airfares booked on the Internet are non-refundable and may contain other restrictions. If a change is made to an Internet airline reservation, a $50 to $75 change fee may be charged and the overall cost could exceed the corresponding contract airfare. The Internet should only be used when the traveler is reasonably sure that the trip will not be cancelled or changed. Check the contract airfare first in order to do a comparison with non-contract rates.

For travel reimbursements, the same documentation that was required in the past for air travel will be required for Internet bookings. The ticket or other documentation must show the name of the employee and airline, the ticket number, the class of transportation, the fare basis code, the travel dates, the amount of the airfare, and the origin and destination of each flight.

As a reminder, all airfares (including Internet bookings) must be charged to the employee’s Bank of America Individual Corporate Card or the Business Office’s Central Billing Account (CBA). The only exception allowed is in the instance where an airline ticket charged to a personal card provides the traveler with more accident insurance coverage than the agency’s CBA or an employee’s Bank of America Individual Corporate Card. (However, state contract airfare must be charged to the agency’s CBA or an employee’s Bank of America Corporate Card.) Both the agency’s CBA and the individual’s Corporate Card provide 24-hour, $500,000 accident insurance.

If you have any questions, please contact Marie Ethridge at 845-9595.

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