

## Quarterly Travel Coordinator Meeting Q/A – August 4, 2022

### General Questions (anything not explicitly to do with MM21-07, UTCs, or Concur Advanced Features)

1. **Question** - With AB 1887, what does this mean if travel plans were already made before the latest update?
  - a. CalHR has issued guidance on this. Previously approved discretionary travel to these states must be cancelled. All mission critical travel to banned states must be resubmitted to Department Directors and Agency Secretaries (or their designees) to ensure they meet the exception criteria. New mission critical trips not already submitted within an approved out-of-state travel blanket will require final approval from the Governor's Office through the individual trip request process.
2. **Question** - Will the state reimburse for Real ID expenses?
  - a. No, the state does not reimburse for Real ID expenses.
3. **Question** - For the States listed is that for both business and hotel stay, or what if they aren't doing business in those States but rent a hotel in a bordering city, Tempe AZ?
  - a. AB 1887 states that travel to any of those states is prohibited, therefore, staying in a bordering city, Tempe AZ would be in violation of the law unless an exception has been approved. More info can be found here <https://oag.ca.gov/ab1887>.
4. **Question** – Can a layover be in any of the States prohibited in AB1887?
  - a. Yes
5. **Question** - Some employees are claiming bottled water purchase in TEC of travels in remote fields. Can we pay it in TEC as a "business expense", or do we direct employee to use CalCard (which is not available in our agency) or Petty cash reimbursement?
  - a. Would advise to check with CalHR if bottled water can be claim as a reimbursable item on the TEC. Unfortunately, we are not the SME when it comes to individual department policies on reimbursement.
6. **Question** - Who pays for vehicle violation tickets if renting or fleet vehicle?
  - a. Employees are generally responsible. If the employee feels they have a valid justification, that can be evaluated on its own terms. Contact STP if you have any specific scenario.
7. **Question** - For hotels we get reimbursed the state rate plus applicable taxes and fees. For Airbnb what is considered "applicable taxes & fees"?
  - a. For Airbnb, the cleaning fee needs to be worked into the nightly fee. All other occupancy taxes and fees are allowed.
8. **Question** - Is the law (AB 2777) allowing Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, etc., still in effect? If not, has another law or policy replaced it?

- a. This question is outside of our wheelhouse and should be directed to the CalHR Travel Manager. What we can stay is that AB 2777 (codified as GC 19822.4) was repealed but CalHR policy has not changed as it relates to this topic. CalHR has told us that they are still researching the potential impact to employee use of short-term rentals, such as Airbnb, since GC section 19822.4 was repealed. If there is a change to existing policy (as provided in the HR Manual), then CalHR will update the HR Manual and communicate with DGS and departments accordingly.

9. **Question** - Do you have any information for increasing lodging and meals?

- a. Not at this time. This is managed by CalHR and the bargaining units. When there is new information to share, we will gladly share it.

10. **Question** - How can we get access to grasp?

- a. Travel coordinators should already have access. If you do not, please contact STP to assist.

11. **Question** – Is the employee liable, not the Dept, for cancellation fees that may be incurred? (As in they would need to submit a personal check to cover that cancellation fee or would a TEC to cover that expense be created and marked Dept Paid)?

- a. The answer to this question depends on a broad range of circumstances. There are no one-size fits all approach. We expect Departments to employees accountable to cancelation policies, so taxpayers do not foot the bill for an employee's failure. However, there may be circumstances beyond an employee's control that cause them to not cancel timely and thus, cancelation penalties are incurred. Generally speaking, if the employee had a legitimate business reason for the late cancelation, then that is the cost of doing business, and the Department has to eat the fee. If you have a specific scenario, you are welcome to email us for guidance at [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov).

12. **Question** - If you have VCN and the department does get charged for the cancellation, would we request the funds to be paid by the employee?

- a. That depends on the reason for the cancellation. If there is a valid business reason, then the department may be responsible for the charge. If there no valid business reason, the department could come after the employees for the fees. Regardless of which situation, i would suggest contacting the hotel first to see if they can refund the cancellation fees and contact STP for further assistance. We will do what we can to get the refund but ultimately it will still be up to the hotel to refund or not.

13. **Question** - If the reason is that they didn't know to contact the hotel to ensure the cancellation? How do we treat reason provided "I didn't know"?

- a. That's not a valid reason. All hotel cancellation policies are listed clearly, and the travelers have to "agree" before finalizing the booking in Concur. So, they are responsible to ensure the cancellation are being done correctly to ensure the department doesn't incur any additional fees. The hotel can be contacted to see if they will refund the cancellation fee as a courtesy.

14. **Question** – Can non-employees use the 255c Excess Lodging form?
  - a. Yes, and they are required to if the state is paying/reimbursing for their lodging.
15. **Question** - Is it acceptable/best practice if EE provided a DIR Concur Justification Form because according to employee, hotel is offering state rate that is why reservation is booked outside concur?
  - a. No, this situation is not an exception to MM 14-03. When this happens, the employee should contact the hotel and request that they make the State rate available in Concur (GDS). If they are not successful in working directly with the hotel, they could email [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) so that our Lodging Specialist, Katy Harlow, can attempt to work with the hotel directly. Otherwise, they will need to find alternative lodging in Concur that meets the State rate. Again, this is defined in policy, specifically MM 14-03.
16. **Question** - Is there a Grasp or other report that lists cancelled flights?
  - a. Broadly, no. To a certain extent, the Unused Ticket Report will inform you of any cancellations, but that is not exactly the same. There may be some options, so let us know if you have a specific use case for something like this.
17. **Question** - When booking for a non-state employee guest, are there pre-travel requirements that apply to the individual (i.e. – completing the STD. 261, creating a CalATERS account, downloading the Conferma Pay app, etc.
  - a. We cannot speak to the requirements of SCO (CalATERS) or other control agencies. We can speak to best practices for internal controls and expectations related components of the Statewide Travel Program. Please email [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) so that we may send you our internal controls document.

## Management Memo 21-07

18. **Question** - Will the 'Air Activity Detail Report' be sent to travel managers/ coordinators?
  - a. It already should be. If you are not receiving it, please contact STP to assist.
19. **Question** - 'Must book 7 days prior' meaning it has to be more than 7 days prior to book a flight?
  - a. Correct
20. **Question** - In a situation where policy is violated but with reasonable justification, is there a form employee needs to submit for the justification?
  - a. There is not a form to be completed. A window within Concur will display where the employee will select or enter their justification for the policy violation.
21. **Question** – Can SME's can they be booked for refundable flights?
  - a. All flights should be booked with the best interest of the State in mind. Non-refundable are still eligible for fully reusable, therefore this should be your priority.

22. **Question** - Similar to the Std. 261 for personal use vehicles, is the state considering requiring a signed acknowledgement in regard to airfare/MM21-07?

- Not at this time. Std 261 is a standard form whereas MM 21-07 is a state policy that all employees are required to adhere to.

23. **Question** – I book travel for students who attend a residential school on a weekly basis, am I allowed then to book refundable fares for these students?

- No, this situation is not an exception from the policy.

24. **Question** - Regarding the note that refundable tickets are required for non-state employees traveling, would this include travel booked for board members?

- Not necessarily. If the board members travel more than one time a year, then they have the ability to use/apply ticket credits to future flights and a non-refundable fare should be considered.

25. **Question** - Can it be considered an exception to the airfare rule that the return flight is too late and wait time is 2+ so flight will land in Sac at midnight or after?).

- It may be appropriate, but it depends on which policy item this reasoning is intended to justify. For any specific scenario that is unclear please reach out to STP.

26. **Question** - If the justification provided by the employee doesn't meet the acceptable exception justifications what action should be taken?

- The trip should not be approved/booked.

27. **Question** - What actions must we do if the reason/justification is not provided on this report?

- We recommend if the travelers booked outside of policy and not provide a valid reason, that your team will need to contact the managers or travelers to make sure that they understand the policy and request for a reason why booking outside of policy. Note that reason on the report and save in the event of audit purposes. Also recommended to keep an eye out for repeat offenders for violations like this.

28. **Question** - Have we seen some significant savings after MM 21-07 was implemented?

- Good question. Yes! We are pleased to report that MM 21-07 has resulted in significant cost savings and ensuring that Departments are good stewards of public funds. For specific figures, please email [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov).

29. **Question** - Are we able to ask for previous month/year [Policy Violation] reports for our department?

- Yes, please email [david.f@caltravelstore.com](mailto:david.f@caltravelstore.com)

30. **Question** – [Do] we have to email employee's supervisor and ask for the justification and supporting documents for not booking in advance or for any other violation. And keep it in case of an audit?

- It is the employee's responsibility to document and keep record of all pertinent information justifying any reason for a policy exception.

31. **Question** - Would rebooking a return flight to an earlier time (reason- trial ended earlier than expected) be a valid or justified reason?
  - a. Yes, this is a valid business-related reason to the policy.
32. **Question** - Should the backup docs justifying the policy violation be kept with this report or with their TEC's?
  - a. You will want to reference your department's Records Retention Schedule for keeping backup documents for reports. Your department's internal travel policy would state if a traveler is required to submit or keep any backup documentation with their TEC's.
33. **Question** - If the [MM21-07] violation justification is stated on the report, Do you still need to contact their supervisor for the supporting documents?
  - a. Yes. The Travel Unit is responsible for ensuring the named traveler is 1) aware they are required to retain Supporting Documentation to justify violating any policy. 2) the Travel Unit must follow the departments document retention period. Please reference those guidelines to determine if the traveler should retain a copy of those Supporting Documents and/or the Travel Unit must also retain them. NOTE! Per MM 21-07, the department Director will receive the same Air Detail Report for a 6-month period. The Directors version will highlight how many flights followed or violated each policy so it's critical your Travel Unit is prepared to provide feedback if/when the Director seeks that information.

### Unused Ticket Credits (UTC)

34. **Question** - Do we know effective when the Southwest ticket credits won't expire?
  - a. The effective date was July 28, 2022.
35. **Question** - Does [the announcement that credits will no longer expire] include the current Unused Airfare Credits for Southwest?
  - a. No. Only ticket credits booked after July 28th are eligible for no expiration date. Tickets purchased before July 28, 2022, will not be eligible.
36. **Question** - Can credits be used by anyone in the Department Agency?
  - a. UTC's (travel funds) for Southwest Airlines may only be used by the original ticketed passenger. Southwest UATP credits may be used by any passenger in your Department. Under our contract, United Airlines offers no cost name changes on UTCs in most cases.
37. **Question** - Will UTC that expire before 7/28/22 be transferred to the UATP or would we follow the old policy of reminding employees to use the UTC and requesting a LUV Voucher before they expire?
  - a. The UTC will need to be used by the named traveler. Transferring to a UATP is not an option at this time. Southwest no longer provides LUV vouchers. If you have an employee who will not be able to use a ticket credit by the expiration date, please email [unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com](mailto:unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com) to find out your available options for reusing that ticket credit, if possible.

38. **Question** - How do we determine that ticket credits were used for State/business flights?

- As long as the flight was booked with STP (online in Concur or with a travel agent), the ticket credit can only be applied through those two approved business channels. Southwest will not allow a traveler to apply a ticket credit that originated in a business channel and apply it to a trip on Southwest.com. This is one of the reasons we made changes in Sept 2021 on how Southwest flights are ticketed/changed/cancelled.

39. **Question** - How do we report Southwest UTCs that are forfeited since they no longer can be exchanged for LUV vouchers? For those tickets prior to July 28 date.

- Please email [letty.santana@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:letty.santana@dgs.ca.gov) for assistance.

40. **Question** - For Guest Booking, if we have a UATP balance, do we still need to contact the CalTravelStore to pay for airfare using the UATP?

- The only way to apply UATP or a UTC is by calling CalTravelStore. This cannot be done in Concur. This was done as an internal control measure to prevent abuse of these valuable resources.

41. **Question** - How do we convert the ticket credits for United Airlines?

- The ticket credit may be eligible for a no cost name change. Please email [unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com](mailto:unusedtickets@caltravelstore.com) to request available options.

42. **Question** - After employee made reservation via Concur Travel for airfare, is the amount provided on the confirmation email the final amount charged to State?

- Not necessarily. We have seen instances where the confirmation email did not reflect when UATP or a UTC was applied. This is why Grasp is an essential tool when reconciling. If you need Grasp training, please email your request to [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov).

43. **Question** – If tickets are going to expire (employee left department, etc.), should we still contact CalTravelStore?

- Yes, you should in the event we will be granted additional "waivers and favors" by the airline. It also helps us keep track of forfeited funds. Please email CalTravelStore and copy Letty Santana.

44. **Question** - Can you refresh on the difference between the UTC and UATP?

- UATP was set up to consolidate Southwest travel funds from cancelled flights due to covid. The funds on a UATP can be used for any future Southwest flight for any traveler in the department. These expire 12/31/22. UTC are travel funds in a specific traveler's name to be used by a specific date, unless that UTC was issued after July 28th. UTCs are ongoing as needed. UATP will conclude when there are no more funds in that account or 12/31/22.

45. **Question** - Since TravelStore sends the 30,60,90 day emails do Travel department also need to send these follow up emails?

- a. Yes, travel coordinators should be contacting the employee in addition to the employee receiving the notifications to ensure the credits get used.

46. **Question** - Which Grasp report is run to confirm that UTC was used to purchase future flight?

- a. Grasp does not offer a report for this. Per the 5-page UTC User Guide, you must compare and contrast the previous months UTC report with the current month. If a UTC is missing, you must track it by checking that named passengers Concur account.

47. **Question** - If the UTC purchase after 7/28 has no expire date, do we still need to send the reminder to the EE?

- a. Yes, because the employee may continue to book new flights and not apply the ticket credit. Then the employee may leave the department and then you've lost the entire ticket amount. Regardless of the expiration date, employees need to be reminded that they have ticket credits.

## Concur Advanced Features

48. **Question** - How do we enable 'Book for a Guest?'

- a. If you are a travel admin/travel coordinator, you can email directly at [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) to request the access. We will verify your role and submit the request to CalTravelStore on your behalf.

49. **Question** - Currently we must use our legacy coding when setting up new Concur accounts, how can we update our account records to utilize the Fi\$cal reporting structures

- a. CalTravelStore Client Services Manager, David Fitzpatrick, can assist you with making changes to the coding being captured in Concur and with agent-assisted reservations. Please reach out to David at [david.f@caltravelstore.com](mailto:david.f@caltravelstore.com) to request an update to change from legacy coding to Fi\$cal reporting structure coding.

50. **Question** - Do we need to request to activate the Pre-Trip Approval for our department?

- a. Yes. Your department will need to request to activate the pre-trip approval. Please contact us directly at [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) and we can assist you in working with CTS to get the pre-trip approval set up.

51. **Question** - For Concur, is there a report that shows which travelers need trip approval?

- a. Yes, Concur offers reporting to travel admins to view "Trips Needing Approval". The approval can be sent to the traveler's manager, OR to a shared/centralized mailbox. Only one email is allowed for the pre-trip approval process.

52. **Question** - What happens after 24 hrs and the manager still hasn't approved the trip in concur? Does the booking automatically go through?

- a. If a Passive Approval system is in place, the booking will automatically go through. If a Hard Stop Approval system is in place, the booking will automatically be cancelled (though hotels should still be contacted to ensure cancellation).

53. **Question** - "So there is a way to set up in Concur for ALL bookings to get their unit's supervisor or manager's approval before being able to proceed?

- a. Yes. This would be considered the 'hard stop approval' process. You can contact us at [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) if you'd like more information or would like to have this setup.

54. **Question** - When you say that the manager must approve the trip. Does that mean employee's supervisor or is it the Travel coordinator of the department has to approve or deny the trip?

- a. It can be either but not both. The approval email can go to the employee's supervisor, or it can go to a travel coordinator or centralized mailbox for travel/accounting. Generally, manager is best because they would have more direct knowledge of why that employee needs to travel.

55. **Question** – How do we add automatic notification of travel bookings to our Concur site?

- a. Contact STP

56. **Question** - Is Pre-Approval in Concur new?

- a. No, it is just a feature that can be implemented if your department feels it would be helpful.

57. **Question** – Will Concur allow two or more approvers?

- a. No. Only one approver can be added to someone's profile. If more eyes are needed, having all reservations forwarded to a centralized inbox can also be helpful.

58. **Question** – Is there a guide for supervisors to learn how to handle approval processes?

- a. Yes. Step by step instructions are available on our website under the Concur Resources tab. You can also email us at [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov) and we would be happy to send you a pdf of the instructions.

59. **Question** – Is it possible for Concur to not allow a booking above state rate if they do not have a 255c signed?

- a. No, Concur itself would not be able to do this. Your department can of course enforce this as policy.

60. **Question** - If the amount on Concur reservation for airfare is different from the report provided by Travel Store, should we update the amount on employee's TEC to reflect the correct amount? Or is it adjusted automatically?

- a. Concur data should NEVER be used to reconcile. You should only use Grasp data to reconcile charges. If you need training on how to use Grasp, please email [statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov](mailto:statewidetravelprogram@dgs.ca.gov). David from CalTravelStore will be happy to provide you with this training.