UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice FI-2401

For: FSA Employees

Using Lowest Government Contract City-Pair Airfares

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management

David C. Hall

1 Overview

A Background

Employees are reminded that Federal Travel Regulation, Section 301-10.107, requires Government travelers to use contract city-pair airfares for official travel when these fares are available. These fares are negotiated by GSA with commercial U.S. air carriers for Government employees to travel between specified cities and airports at a fare that is generally lower than that offered to the general public.

B Purpose

This notice:

- reminds employees of their obligation to use contract city-pair airfares when available for official travel
- provides Approving Officials with criteria to use when selecting alternative airports with higher city-pair airfares for official travel.

C Contact

If there are questions about this notice, contact FMD Travel Unit at 703-305-1408.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2000	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

2 Selecting Alternative Airports With Higher City-Pair Airfares

A Approving Higher Cost Alternative Airports

In approving travel authorizations, the Approving Official must remember that the airport that offers the lowest contract fare available must be used, unless the Agency determines that using 1 of the higher cost alternative airports is more advantageous to the Government.

Example: In the Washington, DC area, 3 airports may offer contract city-pair airfares at different fare amounts for a particular trip. The Approving Official, in this case, would be responsible for ensuring that the airport and city-pair airfare, most advantageous to the Government, was used for that trip. These determinations should be made on a case-by-case basis. In cases where higher cost alternative airports are selected, the "Remarks" section of the travel authorization must contain the following statements:

- the lowest fare airport (name of airport) fare amount is $
- the alternate airport (name of airport) fare amount is $
- the alternate airport is authorized as more advantageous to the Government.

Rules for the use on noncontract carriers remain the same.

B Approving Official Responsibility

It is incumbent upon the Approving Official to document this determination. The traveler must request that the Travel Management Center make the reservation for the higher fare airport only after the Approving Official has signed the travel authorization authorizing the higher fare airport.

Approving officials will be held accountable for their actions and decisions in these matters.

For Washington, DC-based employees, FMD Travel Unit is no longer required to contact the Travel Management Center to verify that the use of alternate airports with higher city-pair airfares is documented on the travel authorization.

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2 Selecting Alternative Airports With Higher City-Pair Airfares (Continued)

C When Alternate Airport Is Advantageous to the Government

The following general guidance is provided to assist the Approving Official and employee in making the determination whether a higher cost alternative airport is more advantageous to the Government. The alternate airport is considered advantageous to the Government when the:

- difference in cost between 2 airports is less than $100 after consideration of ground transportation costs
- departure time affects the performance of necessary work at the office before departure or planned work at the destination
- departure and/or arrival times unreasonably infringe on the employee's nonduty hours
- Approving Official determines that other factors make the higher cost airport more advantageous.

Note: Personal preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler is not sufficient justification for approval of higher fares.