



UNITED STATES
CIVILIAN BOARD OF CONTRACT APPEALS

November 21, 2025

CBCA 8709-TRAV

In the Matter of JESSICA B.

Jessica B., Claimant.

Brandy J. Wooten, Travel Processing and Policy Team, Comptroller Group, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Department of the Navy, Patuxent River, MD, appearing for Department of the Navy.

GOODMAN, Board Judge.

Claimant is a civilian employee of the Department of Defense. She has asked this Board to review the agency's denial of reimbursement of a portion of the cost that she incurred for airfare during temporary duty (TDY) travel.

Background

Claimant received TDY travel orders to Australia, which included authorization for two flights within Australia. Claimant first attempted to book the two flights as required through the Travel Management Company (TMC), SATO Travel, using the Defense Travel System (DTS). Claimant booked the flights twice through the DTS using her government travel charge card (GTCC), but the charges were declined both times when the TMC attempted to ticket the travel. After the credit card issues were resolved, she then received approval from her authorizing official (AO) to book the flights outside of the DTS using her GTCC, and not directly through the TMC, because of the short time remaining before her departure and time constraints for ticketing the flights.

The agency reimbursed claimant for the amount that she would have paid had she booked the two flights through the TMC, which was \$463.86 less than the amount she paid

by booking with her GTCC outside of the DTS and not through the TMC. The agency denied reimbursement for this \$463.86 difference.

Discussion

The agency official who denied reimbursement for the amount that exceeded the cost that would have been paid had claimant booked the flights through the TMC stated, “There was ample time to rebook the flights through the TMC via DTS.” Agency Response at 3. Claimant’s AO, who authorized claimant to book the flights outside the DTS without using the TMC, replied as follows:

I disagree . . . that there was “ample time” to rebook the flights. We were within 48 hour[s] of her departure for a mission critical evolution with a major ally. My experience is that is anything but “ample.” The approval process typically takes far longer than that and I could not risk [claimant], who is the [position], missing the trip. . . . This is a result of a number of cumbersome processes (DTS Approvals, GTCC processes) that were endangering a mission critical event.

Id. at 26.

Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) 020207 (Aug. 2025), Reimbursement for Commercial Transportation, reads in relevant part:

E. Reimbursement When a TMC Is Available but Not Used. When a TMC is available but not used by a traveler, reimbursement for transportation costs is limited to the amount that the Government would have paid if the arrangements had been made directly through a TMC. Transaction fees are not reimbursable, as it should be extremely rare that a TMC is not available.

....

G. Reimbursement When a TMC cannot be reached. When the AO certifies that a traveler was unable to make arrangements for official travel through the TMC in a timely manner, the TMC is considered not available. The traveler may receive reimbursement for the actual authorized transportation costs, including the transaction fee. The total transportation reimbursement must not exceed the policy-constructed fare that meets mission requirements. The AO must certify on an individual basis that the authority to self-procure

transportation is authorized and TMC unavailability would result [as one of three outcomes] in . . . [a]n unreasonable burden on mission accomplishment.

The agency official who denied the claim relied on paragraph E of the regulation above, which applies when a TMC is available but not used. The AO who authorized the booking arrangement taken by claimant was concerned with the issue of timeliness, citing typical delays caused by “cumbersome” processes that he perceived would “endanger[] a mission critical event.” The AO’s authorization of a “policy-constructed fare that meets mission requirements”¹ complies with paragraph G of the regulation above, which allows reimbursement of the actual authorized costs when “a traveler was unable to make arrangements for official travel through the TMC in a timely manner,” resulting in “[a]n unreasonable burden on mission accomplishment.”

Claimant is therefore entitled to reimbursement of the actual authorized transportation costs, including \$463.86 not previously reimbursed.

Decision

The claim is granted.

Allan H. Goodman

ALLAN H. GOODMAN
Board Judge

¹ We interpret “policy-constructed fare that meets mission requirements” in paragraph G to include the portion of the “actual authorized transportation costs” that would exceed the amount authorized in paragraph E, which limits reimbursement to the “amount that the Government would have paid if arrangements had been made directly through a TMC.”