United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT MEMORANDUM 2011- 020 (Vol. X.C.)

To: Bureau Assistant Directors for Administration
Bureau Chief Financial Officers

From: Douglas A. Glenn D. A. Glenn
Deputy Chief Financial Officer and Director
Office of Financial Management

Subject: Clarification on the Use of Non-Refundable Air Transportation Tickets

Currently, Interior Travel Management Policy allows agency employees to use non-refundable air transportation tickets to perform official travel, when one of the exceptions is met by using the GSA Contract City Pair Fares listed in the Federal Travel Regulations Chapter 301-10.107.

- Space on a scheduled contract flight will not be available in time to accomplish the purpose of your travel, or use of contract service would require you to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip;
- The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of your Federal department or agency with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours;
- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that, if used, will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government (the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses considered);
- Cost effective rail service is available and is consistent with mission requirements; or
- Smoking is permitted on the contract air carrier and the nonsmoking section of the contract aircraft is not acceptable to you.

Due to the significant fees that occur when changing or cancelling a non-refundable fare, it is recommended that travelers take care when using non-refundable fares. Travelers should use the Contract City Pair fare unless the following questions can be answered positively with a yes, and then they may use a non-refundable fare:

- Is it guaranteed that my official business trip will occur?
- Am I a frequent traveler?
- Do the times of my scheduled flights stay the same (I don't change flights)?
- Will the purchase of a non-refundable ticket result in measurable savings when compared to the cost of a GSA Contract City Pair ticket, or the cheaper GSA Capacity Controlled City Pair ticket?

It is important to remember that the cost of non-refundable tickets cannot be refunded to an employee's official charge card. If a trip is cancelled or rescheduled, the airline will issue a

voucher for the price of the non-refundable ticket in the name of the traveler for a future flight which cannot be transferred to another person. The voucher will remain valid for a period of 12 months, after which time the voucher will be voided if not used. Airlines will charge a penalty fee, usually the amount of $150, to process the non-refundable ticket change.

In all instances, when reserving and purchasing transportation for official travel to include non-refundable fares or GSA Contract City Pair fares, the contracted provider of these services for the Department of the Interior should be used. This means that all transportation should be reserved and ticketed through the GovTrip electronic travel system or by calling SATO travel management services.

If you have questions on this guidance please contact Robert Smith, at Robert_smith@ios.doi.gov or by phone at (202) 208-5684.

cc: Finance Officers Partnership