

MS 681 TRANSIT BENEFITS PROGRAM

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Responsible Office: M/AS/T
New Manual Section

1.0 PURPOSE

This Manual Section establishes the policies for the Peace Corps Transit Benefits Program, which supports the U.S. Government's efforts to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion.

2.0 APPLICABILITY

Eligible Peace Corps employees in the United States who use public mass transportation, commuter rail, commuter highway vehicles such as vanpools and buses, ferries, and bicycles to commute to and/or from work and who are employed by the Peace Corps in the National Capital Region and the metropolitan areas of the Regional Recruitment Offices (RROs).

2.1 Qualified Employees

The following are eligible to participate in the Transit Benefit Program:

- (a) Domestic U.S. direct hire employees paid and employed by the Peace Corps whose duty station is in the National Capital Region or in the metropolitan areas of the RROs.
- (b) Experts and consultants.
- (c) Paid and unpaid interns.

2.2 Ineligible Participants

The following are ineligible to participate in the Transit Benefit Program:

- (a) Contractors.
- (b) Employees in the U.S. on temporary duty for periods of less than 12 weeks.
- (c) Employees from a temporary employment service.
- (d) Employees who have received a parking permit from Peace Corps.

3.0 POLICY

3.1 Transit Benefit

Qualified employees may receive a non-taxable transit subsidy in the form of tokens, individual fare cards, vouchers, or other "fare media" that can be used toward approved commuting transportation costs. This transit subsidy may not exceed the maximum amount permitted under the tax code for qualified transportation fringe benefits. The employee is responsible for any subsequent transit cost over the maximum subsidy authorized by Peace Corps.

Transit expenses are calculated based on the actual amount an employee spends on approved commuting transportation per month not to exceed the statutory and regulatory limits governing qualified transportation fringe benefits. Employees only qualify for the actual amount they spend. Subsidized fare media are not transferable.

3.2 Use of Benefit

Employees must use the transit benefit for their daily commute to and/or from work via an approved mode of commuting transportation. Only the approved transportation portion of an employee's commuting cost is subsidized. Indirect costs, such as gas, mileage, or an employee's payments for a personal or leased vehicle, are not included as part of the cost qualifying for the transit benefit. Parking fees are not covered by Peace Corps transit benefits.

Employees are not permitted to accumulate "fare media" in excess of their actual monthly commuting costs. If the employee's commuting costs change to less than what was previously claimed, the employee must report the change to the appropriate transit benefit coordinator.

Once "fare media" is issued, it remains in the personal possession of the Peace Corps employee who is responsible for its safekeeping. Lost, stolen, or damaged fare media will not be replaced.

Peace Corps employees who misuse transit subsidies are subject to appropriate administrative action including discipline and disqualification for future transit benefit.

Approving officials must confirm and verify the employee's transit benefits.

4.0 MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSIT BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Office of Administrative Services (M/AS) is responsible for management of the Transit Benefits Program, including the following responsibilities:

- (a) Distributing transit benefits, defining approved commuting transportation, maintaining agency transit benefit records, and developing internal control procedures.
- (b) Developing and implementing procedures to ensure that transit subsidy funds, property, and other program assets are properly accounted for and safeguarded against fraud, waste, and abuse.
- (c) Providing oversight to track the dollar amount of mass transit benefits issued to employees, and the funds expended in the program.

5.0 PROCEDURES

Procedures implementing this Manual Section will be adopted by M/AS after clearance by (i) the Office of Chief Financial Officer to assure that funding is available for the transit benefits; and (ii) the Office of the General Counsel to assure that the procedures comply with applicable laws and regulations.

6.0 EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date is the date of issuance.