

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Workforce Policy and Service Delivery Branch
Technical Assistance Bulletin 178, Change 2

Keyword: All Programs

Subject: Transportation Services—Update

Date: September 15, 2009

This Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with:

- **updated** information on the use of funds for transportation and transportation-related expenses;
- lists of allowable transportation services;
- best practice recommendations for transportation policies; and
- examples of Board transportation policies and other transportation strategies.

CHANGES TO TA BULLETIN 178, CHANGE 1:

New information in this TA Bulletin is indicated by:

- A ~~strike through~~ of the original language, which indicates that language has been deleted; and
- **Bold** typeface, which indicates new or clarifying language.

Program funds allocated to Boards to provide transportation or other support services for eligible customers in workforce programs include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Choices;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T);
- Project Reintegration of Offenders (Project RIO); and
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult, dislocated worker, and youth.

Effective September 1, 2009, the Texas Workforce Commission will no longer receive funds from the Texas Department of Transportation to provide transportation services to Choices and SNAP E&T customers.

~~In addition, nonprogram funds from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are allocated for transportation services for eligible Choices and SNAP E&T customers.~~

TANF/Choices ~~and TxDOT~~ funds for transportation services:

- are allowable for post-employment/job retention services for former TANF recipients; and
- can be provided to:
 - foster career advancement;

- assist in preventing former recipients from returning to TANF cash assistance; and
- **enable Choices individuals to work, attend, and participate in required Choices services.**

~~Attachment B, §1.1.4, of the Program Grant/Cooperative Agreement for transportation services between Boards and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) states that “to the extent that TxDOT transportation funds are available, Boards must use these funds, instead of program funds, for allowable transportation support services costs for eligible TANF/Choices & FSE&T participants.”~~

~~Additionally, as set forth in §1.1.2, TxDOT funds cannot be used for administrative costs related to transportation services.~~

Allowable Transportation Services for Eligible Customers

The SNAP E&T Federal Fiscal Year 2009 State Plan of Operations, approved by the U. S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, includes the addition of three transportation services previously not allowed for SNAP E&T. The following transportation services can be provided to SNAP recipients if they are reasonable, necessary, and directly related to participation in SNAP E&T.

Allowable for All Eligible Workforce Customers

- Bus passes/tokens/tickets (issued daily, weekly, or monthly)
- Basic cash allowance
- Prepaid gas cards
- Toll road charges
- Mileage reimbursement (personal vehicles only)
- Car pools
- Minor car repairs
- Taxicab services
- Contracts with private entities, such as transit providers that provide shuttle or van services
- Car insurance
- Driver license fees (includes renewals)
- Vehicle inspection fees
- Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) projects*

Effective September 1, 2009, SNAP E&T participants who enter full- or part-time employment are eligible for the transportation services listed above to help them retain employment.

*** WD Letter 34-09, issued September 15, 2009, and entitled “Transportation Services and Job Access and Reverse Commute Projects” includes detailed information regarding JARC projects.**

Allowable for All Eligible Workforce Customers (Except SNAP E&T Mandatory or Exempt Recipients)

- One-time short-term assistance
- Contracting with private organizations or services to refurbish previously owned cars
- Financial support (loans or grants) that enables customers to purchase a vehicle

Allowable for All Eligible Workforce Customers (Except SNAP E&T Exempt Recipients)

- Purchase of tires or automobile batteries

Additionally, it is important to remember the following:

- Basic cash allowances issued for transportation services to *unemployed* TANF recipients and SNAP E&T customers count as unearned income unless the cash allowance provided is specifically for reimbursement for past or anticipated future transportation expenses.
- Transportation services must be entered into the appropriate *Support Services* tab in The Workforce Information Systems of Texas (TWIST).

Best Practice Recommendations for Transportation Policies

- When developing or reviewing transportation policies, consider current economic circumstances, such as:
 - fluctuating gas prices;
 - higher costs to repair vehicles or purchase tires;
 - increases in bus fares; and
 - increases in travel costs for customers who travel longer distances for work activities and longer distances to and from job sites and child care facilities.
- When developing transportation policies, remember to provide funding for transportation services that are reasonable, necessary, and directly related to participation in work-based services, education and training services, and post-employment services (with the exception of SNAP E&T), and access to child care services. In addition, consider:
 - not specifying limitations on the dollar amount per customer for a set time frame based on the type of transportation (e.g., limiting customers to \$20 for a bus pass in a 12-month period);
 - special circumstances that may be encountered or changes to the local economy—rather than setting specific expenditure limitations that apply to all customers; and
 - determining time frame limitations for eligible customers on a case-by-case basis.
- With the exception of funds availability for transportation services, placing unnecessary restrictions on the use of funds for transportation services may:
 - cause undue hardships for customers who do not receive transportation assistance until after they have met certain participation requirements;
 - place additional administrative burdens on Texas Workforce Center staff, who are required to verify whether public transportation is a more beneficial or economical mode of transportation than the use of a personal vehicle; and

- require Texas Workforce Center staff to collect unnecessary documentation to prove that the customer used the funds as intended.

Examples of Board Transportation Policies and Other Transportation Strategies

- Setting a maximum amount per customer without being specific regarding the type of transportation service funded (e.g., customers may be eligible to receive up to \$75 per week, which may be issued in the form of prepaid gas cards, bus fares, mileage reimbursement, taxicab services, car pool expenses, or any other costs related to public transportation. The maximum amount may be adjusted to reflect the local economy and fund limitations). Gas receipts are not necessary if prepaid gas cards are issued, and customers may submit a weekly job search log as verification when receiving mileage reimbursements for personal vehicles. Employed individuals—or those receiving training services—may submit a map from Web sites such as Google Maps or MapQuest that automatically map the routes and show the amount of mileage the customer travels to and from employment, the training site, and/or the child care facility to receive reimbursement for mileage.
- Providing up-front transportation stipends in the form of prepaid gas cards, bus fares, etc., to customers beginning work-related activities.
- Setting limitations on car repairs or other expenses related to car maintenance, but providing the option to approve additional car repair costs if needed and if justified from documentation. (E.g., Customers may receive up to \$500 for car repairs or other expenses related to car maintenance with approved documentation. The maximum amount may be adjusted if the customer provides justifiable proof of need.)
- Requiring customers to sign an assurance that funds provided for transportation services will be used as they are intended. Customers should be notified that they are to use the most economical or best mode of transportation that fits their needs, thus eliminating the need for Texas Workforce Center staff to investigate the various transportation services available for customers in the area.
- Ensuring that the issuance of transportation funds reflects and accounts for any trips to and from child care facilities.
- Entering into contracts with urban or rural transit providers or shuttle services for new or expanded transportation services benefiting eligible customers, provided that such costs are necessary and reasonable. (Funds cannot be used to upgrade or maintain transit vehicles.)
- Identifying customers with reliable personal vehicles who live in various locales and paying them to pick up other people in their area who are going to the same child care facility or employment or training site. Participating riders pay a fare, or customers using their personal vehicles are paid a set monthly amount.

- Partnering with other agencies or nonprofit organizations through a vehicle resource cost-sharing agreement to provide transportation services based on fixed routes that connect individuals to:
 - job and training sites;
 - outpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment centers; and
 - services for individuals with disabilities.

Please distribute this information to appropriate staff. Direct inquiries regarding this TA Bulletin to wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us.

RESCISSIONS:

TA Bulletin 178, Change 1