



## **Town of Hubbardston**

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### **VEHICLE USE AND REIMBURSEMENT**

#### **I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the guidelines for reimbursement or compensation for employee use of personal vehicles; the guidelines under which Town vehicles will be authorized to Town personnel; and the guidelines under which Town vehicles may be used.

#### **II. APPLICABILITY**

The provisions of this policy, which relate to expense reimbursement, apply to all employees in Town service with the exception of those employees who have separate contracts or collective bargaining agreements with Hubbardston. Employees whose employment is regulated by a collective bargaining agreement are subject only to those provisions of the policy not specifically regulated by the collective bargaining agreement.

#### **III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Expense Reimbursement – that payment for approved expenses relating to personal automobile use upon receipt of written documentation. Expense reimbursement is not considered to be a salary item.
- B. Municipal Vehicle – those automobiles, trucks, vans, or other self-propelled equipment owned, rented, or leased by Hubbardston and licensed for travel on the public way.
- C. Personal Automobile – that automobile owned or available for private use by the employees.

#### **IV. POLICY**

A. Municipal Vehicles. It is the policy of the Town that certain positions require employee access to municipal vehicles, either during the work shift or on a 24-hour on-call basis. Town vehicles are not personal vehicles and are not for personal use. Town vehicles should be viewed as belonging to the citizens of Hubbardston and are assigned solely for purposes consistent with providing services to those citizens.

B. Expense Reimbursement. It is the policy of the Town to reimburse employees for reasonable expenses, which they incur as a result of personal automobile use on behalf of the Town. Receipts and a personal automobile travel expense report must be submitted in order for an employee to be reimbursed for such expenses.

The Town Administrator shall determine the rate of reimbursement per mile after receiving appropriate information from the Auditor. Such information shall include, but not be limited to, cost of vehicle operation and survey of other government agencies.

#### **V. PROCEDURES**

##### A. Expense Reimbursement – Personal Vehicles

When an employee is authorized to use a personal automobile for work-related travel, she/he shall be reimbursed at a rate established by the Town Administrator.

1. The mileage rate is intended to include the costs of gasoline, repairs, insurance and general wear and tear on the automobile.
2. In addition to the mileage rate, Hubbardston will reimburse employees authorized to travel for tolls and reasonable parking expenses, when receipts are provided. Employees will not be reimbursed for tolls which would normally be paid by the employee during his or her normal commute to work.
3. An employee who uses her/his personal automobile to travel from home to a temporary assignment, rather than his or her regularly assigned work location, shall be allowed personal automobile expense between home and the temporary assignment, or between the temporary assignment and the regular work location, whichever is less.

##### B. Assignment of Municipal Vehicles

The assignment of municipal vehicles during work time use is based upon job description. Appointing authorities that have municipal vehicles available for this purpose may assign such vehicles in a manner consistent with departmental workload and employee function. The Town

Administrator or appointing authority/department head may rescind the assignment of vehicles at any time.

1. Assignment of Municipal Vehicles for 24 Hour Use (Vehicles Use for Commuting Purposes)
  - a. The Town Administrator will make the assignment of vehicles for 24-hour use annually.
  - b. The Town Administrator shall make this determination after receiving and reviewing the following criteria:
    1. Officially designated on-call status
    2. Requirement for emergency availability
    3. Issuance of a pager or other communication device
    4. Emergency or other equipment contained in the vehicle
  - c. Vehicle use is limited to travel to and from the residence and place of work. The vehicle should be driven over the most direct route taking into account road and traffic conditions. The vehicle should not be utilized for travel outside a direct commuting route for personal reasons.
  - d. Whenever a position becomes vacant, the authorization for 24-hour use shall be reevaluated. This evaluation will employ the same process as the original determination under the provision of this section.
  - e. Employees assigned vehicles for 24-hour use residing in a community of more than 25 miles one way shall reimburse the Town for the additional fuel cost as determined by the Auditor.
  - f. Employees assigned municipal vehicles on a 24-hour basis will be given a copy of this policy and will be required to sign a confirmation receipt.
  - g. Imputed Income Taxation
    1. Employees who are assigned marked and unmarked police or fire vehicles, and/or marked municipal vehicles carrying tolls and meeting certain other eligibility criteria will not be subject to imputed income taxation as a result of the vehicle assignment.
    2. Other employees authorized to commute in a Town vehicle may be subject to imputed income regulations as set forth by the Internal Revenue Service, which considers a certain portion of the vehicle use (namely the commute) to be income for the purposes of income taxation. The Auditor shall be responsible for determining any tax liability and will be provided with the names of all employees authorized to use Town vehicles for commuting purposes, and the normal one-way commuting distance on each December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **VI. GENERAL RULES GOVERNING MUNICIPAL VEHICLE USE**

- A. Municipal vehicles may only be used for legitimate municipal business.
- B. Municipal vehicles will not be used to transport any individual who is not directly or indirectly related to municipal business. Passengers shall be limited to Town employees and individuals

who are directly associated with Town work activity (committee members, consultants, contractors). Family members shall not be transported in Town vehicles.

C. Vehicles should contain only those items for which the vehicle is designed. Hubbardston shall not be liable for the loss or damage of any personal property transported in the vehicle.

D. Employees are expected to keep municipal vehicles clean and to report any malfunction or damage to Town Administrator immediately.

E. Employees assigned vehicles for commuting purpose are expected to park such vehicles in safe locations.

F. Employees must wear seatbelts in vehicles so equipped, during operation of the vehicle.

G. Employees may not operate municipal vehicles under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or prescription drugs or medications, which may interfere with effective and safe operation.

H. Employees who operate municipal vehicles must have a valid Massachusetts motor vehicle license and may be required to provide proof of valid motor vehicle license once every six (6) months.

I. Employees driving municipal vehicles shall obey all applicable traffic and parking regulations, ordinances and laws.

1. Employees who incur parking or other fines in municipal vehicles will generally be personally responsible for payment of such fines unless the Town Administrator approves the payment of such fines by the Town.

2. Employees who are issued citations for any offense while using a municipal vehicle must notify her/his supervisor immediately when practicable, but in no case later than 24 hours. Failure to provide such notice will be grounds for disciplinary action.

J. An employee who is assigned a municipal vehicle and who is arrested for or charged with a motor vehicle offense for which the punishment includes suspension or revocation of the motor vehicle license, whether in her/his personal vehicle or in a municipal vehicle must notify her/his supervisor immediately when practicable, but in no case later than 24 hours. Conviction for such an offense may be grounds for loss of vehicle privileges and/or further disciplinary action.

1. No employee may use a municipal vehicle for out of state use without advance approval of the Town Administrator.
2. Employees whose vehicles are equipped with cellular phones are expected reimburse to the Town for any personal use of those phones.

K. Special Circumstances

This policy is intended to provide a basic framework governing the use of personal and municipal vehicles in Hubbardston and as such, cannot contain procedures governing every situation that might arise. Employees seeking clarification of or exemption from the provisions of this policy should contact the Town Administrator who will provide such clarification and may authorize exceptions to the policy under mitigating circumstances.

L. Sanctions

Failure to comply with any and all provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal of Town vehicle privileges, suspension, and/or termination.