

What You Need to Know: Commute Programs & Excess Lodging



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Introductions: Policy Oversight & Management Team



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Agenda

- Commute Programs
 - Bicycle Commuter Program
 - Mass Transit & Vanpool Incentives
- Excess Lodging
- Q&A

CalHR Benefits Division

- The Benefits Division is responsible for the design, acquisition, and oversight of the various statewide benefit programs administered by the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) offered to state employees, retirees and dependents.
- Our goal is to ensure access to competitive, quality and affordable benefits. Successful delivery of these responsibilities enables the state, as an employer, to offer optimal benefits packages for recruiting and maintaining a top-performing workforce.



Commute Programs

CalHR administers the Commute Programs as a benefit providing **bicycle, mass transit and vanpool incentives** to all eligible state employees.

- The goal is to reduce the number of vehicles on the road by encouraging employees to explore and use alternate means of transportation to commute to and from work.
- Fewer vehicles on the road means an improvement in air quality and less traffic congestion.
 - *Please note* – for bargaining units with an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), if the MOU contains language that is in conflict with this policy, the MOU language shall be controlling.

Commute Programs Support Wellbeing

- **Financial:** Employees can save money while participating in the programs.
- **Physical:** Riding a bike to work can improve health.
- **Social:** Meet others while riding in a vanpool or using mass transit.
- **Community:** Join like-minded people who share an interest in using alternate means of commuting to work.
- **Career:** You might increase your networking prospects by meeting new people.

Eligibility & Enrollment

- Any active State employee whose salary is paid directly by the State of California is eligible to participate.
- There is no enrollment period. Employees may change their participation in these programs monthly.
- Participation is voluntary.
- There is no cost for eligible employees to participate.

Bicycle Commuter Program



Bicycle Commuter Program (1/2)

- The Program provides a taxable benefit to eligible employees who use bicycles as a primary means of commuting.
- A bicyclist is any person riding a bicycle or tricycle, including Class I and II e-bikes, cargo bikes, recumbent bikes, bikes with trailers, handcycles, or other variations.
- Motorized scooters or mopeds are not considered bicycles.

Bicycle Commuter Program (2/2)

- Promotes health and wellness.
- Provides \$20 per month (taxable) when an employee uses a bicycle to commute to work at least 50% of the scheduled workdays in a calendar month, up to a maximum of \$240 per calendar year.
- Employees should submit their claims on a quarterly basis.
- Employees are required to submit claims by the end of the next quarter as provided in HR Manual Section 1425.
 - For example, claims for January – March must be submitted by June 30.

Mass Transit & Vanpool Incentives



Mass Transit & Vanpool Incentives (1/3)

Effective Oct. 1, 2025, all employees are eligible for Mass Transit and Vanpool incentives.

- **Mass transit** includes rail, bus or other commercial transportation or licensed public conveyance, unless superseded by MOU language.
- A **vanpool** must, at a minimum, meet the definition of a “commuter highway vehicle” in Internal Revenue Code (IRC) section 132(f), including seating capacity requirements, unless superseded by MOU language.
 - For example, there should be:
 - A minimum of four people (including the driver) in a seven-seat vehicle.
 - A minimum of eight people (including the driver) in a 14-seat vehicle.

Mass Transit & Vanpool Incentives (2/3)

- Monthly reimbursement of 100% up to the monthly exclusion amount provided by the Internal Revenue Service. For 2025, the monthly exclusion amount is up to \$325.
- The combined maximum allowable monthly exclusion amount for employees who are eligible to claim both mass transit and vanpool shall not exceed the combined IRS maximum monthly exclusion amount.

Mass Transit & Vanpool Incentives (3/3)

- Reimbursements are not taxable if the reimbursement plan satisfies the Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit (QTFB) requirements under Internal Revenue Code section 132(f).
- For more information on QTFB, please see SCO's Payroll Procedures Manual Section N 161 – Transportation Subsidies.

Excess Lodging



Excess Lodging

- The Excess Lodging Rate Request process applies to in-state, out-of-state, and out of-country travel for employees on authorized travel status who cannot obtain lodging at or below the State rate (applicable federal standard or non-standard lodging rate) for their location of travel.
- HR Manual Section 2203 provides the current state nightly room rates (before taxes and fees) for all excluded and represented employees.

Excess Lodging – STD 255C (1/3)

- Excess Lodging Rate Request/Approval Form (STD 255C) must be submitted for any lodging that exceeds the state rate.
- The STD 255C should be for the least expensive, moderately-priced lodging that is within a reasonable distance of the employee's location of business.
- CalHR has delegated authority to departments to make determinations regarding Excess Lodging Rate Requests up to \$350 per night.
- The STD 255C must be submitted to CalHR for review and approval if the room rate exceeds \$350 per night.




Excess Lodging – STD 255C (2/3)

Required substantiation for the request:

- Three “good faith” lodging quotes from the State’s authorized booking tool for the requested travel dates
- Justification for all after-the-fact submissions
- Justification for lodging other than the least expensive, moderately-priced hotel
- Agenda (*if applicable*)
- Registration (*if applicable*)

Excess Lodging – STD 255C (3/3)



Example of three “good faith” lodging quotes from the State’s authorized online booking tool:

	11. The Citizen Hotel, Autograph Collection 926 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 Map it 0.81 miles ★★★★★	\$263 View Rooms
Preferred Hotel for Department of Human Resources		Hotel details
	12. Holiday Inn Sacramento Downtown - Arena 300 J St, Sacramento, CA 95814 Map it 0.82 miles ★★★★★	\$129 View Rooms
Most Preferred Hotel for Department of Human Resources		Hotel details
	7. Howard Johnson by Wyndham Sacramento Dow 200 Jibboom St, Sacramento, CA 95811 Map it 0.72 miles ★★★★★	\$79 View Rooms
Most Preferred Hotel for Department of Human Resources		Hotel details

Excess Lodging – RTS

- Effective July 1, 2025, Excess Lodging Rate Requests needing CalHR approval (over \$350) shall be submitted to CalHR through the Request Tracking System (RTS).
- This RTS is an online ticketing platform that streamlines the submission, tracking, and resolution of Excess Lodging Requests requiring CalHR approval.
- The requirements to submit Excess Lodging Rate Requests (including dollar threshold and approvals) **remain the same.**
- The STD 255C must be complete and signed prior to submission to CalHR.
- If possible, submit the STD 255C at least ten days prior to the trip.

Excess Lodging – RTS Dashboard



CALHR
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

CalHR Request Portal

Need Help? View the [Quick Reference Guide](#).

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Excess Lodging Request

Requests for Excess Lodging Rate above the delegated amount of \$350.

Benefits

Start Request I→

Excess Lodging - Annual Reports

- CalHR will notify departments to compile and submit their Annual Excess Lodging Rate Reports.
- Departments shall include **all** approved Excess Lodging Rate Requests (approved under the departments delegated authority as well as those submitted to and approved by CalHR).
- Departments are to submit their reports to TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov.
Do not submit through RTS.
- Departments must respond even if they do not have any approved excess lodging rate requests.

Additional Resources



Commute Programs

- [CalHR Manual section 1425](#) – Bicycle Commuter Program
- [CalHR Manual Section 1602](#) – Mass Transit Commute Program
- [CalHR Manual Section 1603](#) – Vanpool Commute Program

- [Bicycle Commuter Program Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [CalHR's Commute Programs](#)
- [Mass Transit and Vanpool Commute Program Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Mass Transit and Vanpool Flyer](#)

Excess Lodging

- CalHR Manual section 2201 – Travel and Relocation Policy
- CalHR Manual section 2203 – Allowances and Travel Reimbursements
- Excess Lodging Rate Request/Approval – STD 255C



Thank you!

For Commute and/or Travel related inquiries, please contact:
TravelManager@calhr.ca.gov

Q&A

