



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT MEMORANDUM 2012-001 (Vol. X.H.)

OCT 11 2011

To: Bureau Assistant Directors for Administration
Bureau Chief Financial Officers

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Deputy Chief Financial Officer and Director
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Subject: Guidance on the Use of GovTrip and SATO

The bureaus should not be using tools outside of GovTrip and SATO for booking travel. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 301-50.3 mandates the use of an Electronic Travel System (ETS) and Travel Management Center (TMC) by executive agencies. Interior policy Financial Management Memorandum (FMM) 2009-044 mandates the use of a TMC to arrange for travel, and only grants waivers from using it in instances related to booking lodging.

In limited instances, the Department of the Interior (DOI) may waive on an individual basis, the use of GovTrip or SATO to make reservations. The Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management and Budget provides the waiver based on CFR 301-50.4, which states that:

The agency head or his/her designee may grant an individual case exception to required use of your agency's current Travel Management Services (TMS) or to required use of ETS once your agency has fully deployed ETS, but only when your travel meets one of the following conditions:

- a. Such use would result in an unreasonable burden on mission accomplishment (e.g., emergency travel is involved and TMS/ETS is not accessible; you are performing invitational travel; or you have special needs or require disability accommodations under part 301-13 of this chapter).
- b. Such use would compromise a national security interest.
- c. Such use might endanger your life (e.g., you are traveling under the Federal witness protection program, or you are a threatened law enforcement/investigative officer traveling under part 301-13 of this chapter).

There are management reasons for using GovTrip and SATO, which are as follows:

- By booking travel in one system, information on Department travelers is easily available to agency management. As an example of this capability, within one hour of requesting a report on all employees who were currently in Japan after the earthquake and tsunami that occurred there, we were able to supply names to include locations, dates of travel, bureau, and who was scheduled to travel to Japan. To try to achieve those same report results in a travel management process that allowed for use of online systems for travel reservations would be costly and nearly impossible to achieve.

- There is no way to measure Green House Gas (GHG) emissions for airline trips booked through airline websites, or online reservations systems. DOI is mandated by Executive Order 13514, to report on Scope 3 GHG emissions that are attributable to business travel. SATO currently reports to the General Services Administration travel management information system “Travel Trax” data on all DOI travel that is booked through it. This reporting would be seriously compromised if bureau offices booked travel through other means.
- Internal Controls – SATO and GovTrip are configured with edits to control the types of reservations that are booked. These edits are often seen in GovTrip as the Pre Audit Flags that are on the authorization and voucher. The use of external providers would eliminate many of these controls and could possibly lead to non compliance with Interior and Federal Travel Regulations requirements concerning travel. It may also lead to unforeseen cost incurrence that would be negated by use of GovTrip and SATO.

We have heard complaints from users concerning the use of GovTrip and SATO for air fare reservations. We have often found that the complaints stem from lack of knowledge of how to research and book non-refundable air fares in GovTrip. These fares can often be found in GovTrip but they require that the approving official approve the authorization immediately as the fares require same day purchase. GovTrip will not purchase a fare unless it recognizes the government’s commitment to pay for their purchase by having an approved authorization. There are some instances where travelers do find fares that are “web specials” offered on airline websites only. These fares are not advertised in the Global Distribution System, which GovTrip and many online reservations systems (Orbitz, Expedia) use to book fares. This means these fares can only be purchased from the airlines. While there is an immediate cost savings benefit that can be realized with these fares, we lose all of the travel management controls mentioned above.

If you have any questions concerning this guidance, please contact Robert Smith via e-mail at Robert_Smith@ios.doi.gov.

Cancelled FMMs: N/A

Additional FMMs on the Subject: 2009-044