



**Comptroller General
of the United States**

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Chris B. White

File: B-261779

Date: April 12, 1996

DIGEST

An employee who was authorized to return home for the weekend from a temporary duty assignment rented a car to drive from the airport to his home on Friday and kept the car over the weekend to use to return to the airport on Sunday. The employee may be reimbursed for rental costs incurred on Saturday, even though the car was not used that day for official business, because the overall cost to the government was less than any other available mode of transportation. See 41 C.F.R. § 301-2.2(b) (1995).

DECISION

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) asks the proper amount to reimburse an employee who was authorized to return home for the weekend from a temporary duty assignment (TDY) and who rented a car to drive from the airport to his home on Friday, which he kept over the weekend and used to return to the airport on Sunday. Specifically, the agency asks whether the employee may be reimbursed for each of the 3 days he rented the car or only for the 2 days he actually used the car for official travel. The answer is that he may be reimbursed for all 3 days.

BACKGROUND

Mr. White is an FAA employee permanently assigned to the Des Plaines, Illinois, duty station who lives in McHenry, Illinois, about 52 miles away. When assigned to TDY at Oberlin, Ohio, about 400 miles from his duty station, Mr. White requested and was authorized to drive his privately owned vehicle (POV) to the TDY site. The agency also authorized voluntary weekend return trips to his residence. See Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) 41 C.F.R. § 301-7.15(b)(3) (1995). For these trips, Mr. White left his POV at the TDY site and flew home, using the Milwaukee airport, which is about 65 miles from his residence. According to the record, the cost of using a rental car to return home on Friday and to the airport the following Sunday, including keeping the car on Saturday, was less expensive than one-way taxi or limo fares for each trip. Apparently, there is no car rental return lot near McHenry, making it impractical--and more expensive--to try to return the car on Friday and

complete the trip by taxi and then take a taxi to pick up a rental car again on Sunday for the return trip to the airport. Thus, from a strictly financial perspective, the least expensive method of getting Mr. White from the airport to his residence on Friday and back to the airport on Sunday was by having him keep the rental car over the weekend.

The FAA's finance section questions whether earlier decisions of this Office limit their authority to reimburse Mr. White only for the days the rental car actually was used for official business, which in this case was on Friday and Sunday. (These decisions are discussed below.) The agency's travel section, however, notes the FTR's requirement to use the mode of transportation most advantageous to the government and supports reimbursement for all 3 days because the overall cost to the government is less than any other authorized mode of transportation. See FTR § 301-2.2(b).

OPINION

The authority to reimburse transportation expenses for travel between an employee's residence and an airport is found in the FTR at section 301-2.3(c), which states, "Reimbursement shall be allowed for the usual taxicab and airport limousine fares, plus tip, between a common carrier or other terminal and either the employee's home or place of business at the official duty station or place of business and lodging at a temporary duty point, or between the airport and airport limousine terminal." Although this regulation does not refer to rental cars, our Office has allowed reimbursement for the cost of a rental car for travel between an airport and a residence not to exceed the usual taxicab or limousine cost. Ernest D. Ellsworth, B-196196, Aug. 19, 1980.

The decisions cited by the agency involve employees who combined personal travel with official travel. See Marty J. Dama, B-235070, Oct. 6, 1989, and Vincent L. DiMare, B-212087, Feb. 7, 1984. In Dama, the employee used a rental car for part of indirect travel to a TDY location. We held that the employee may be reimbursed only for the basic rental fee (and fuel and other charges) for the days necessary to travel to and from the TDY location. The issue in DiMare, which also involved an employee who used a rental car to perform indirect travel to a TDY site, was the method of calculating the reimbursement due the employee. Although the employee had rented the vehicle at a weekly rate, we held that he should be reimbursed at the daily rate instead of prorating the weekly rate, since, had he rented the vehicle only for the days he actually traveled on official business, he would have been charged the daily rate.

We do not believe these cases apply here, since Mr. White rented the vehicle only for transportation to and from the airport, and not for local travel during the weekend. Because the total cost of keeping the rental car all 3 days was more

advantageous to the government than any other available mode of transportation, the agency may reimburse the employee for all 3 days. See FTR § 301-2.2(b).

/s/Seymour Efros
for Robert P. Murphy
General Counsel