

Army Mass Transportation Benefit Program Outside the National Capital Region Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Mass Transportation Benefit Program?

The MTBP provides a mass transportation fare subsidy that is offered to eligible Army employees (military, civilian, or NAF) who use public transportation for their work commute. The subsidy is a non-taxable personnel benefit, funded from the same appropriation that funds the participant's salary.

How did the Mass Transportation Benefit Program originate?

Executive Order 13150, "Federal Workforce Transportation", signed on 21 April 2000, requires Federal agencies to provide employee incentives to use public transportation in their commute to and from work, in order to reduce Federal employees' contribution to traffic congestion and air pollution and to expand their commuting alternatives.

Who is eligible to receive the mass transportation benefit?

Army Active Component (AC) military service members; Army Reserve Component (RC) military service members (including both Army Reserve and Army National Guard) who are currently serving on active duty; DA Federal civilian employees, including part-time Federal employees and interns; and DA Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) personnel employed by a duly constituted Army Non-Appropriated Funded Instrumentality (NAFI) are eligible to participate in the Army program.

I live in Germany. Am I eligible for a transit benefit?

No. The Mass Transportation Benefit Program applies only to the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

I am the only Army employee at my location. Can I apply for the program?

Yes, you have two options. You may choose to seek the closest and most convenient participating installation POC for program participation. Or, you may contact the DA Program Manager directly to apply for and participate in the MTBP. The Program Manager will act as "installation POC", and will assist you in applying for the program and contacting DOT. In this instance, DOT will mail fare media directly to the participant. If DOT cannot provide fare media, the employee may use the SF 1164 reimbursement process.

How do I apply for the MTBP?

You must complete the "MTBP Outside the National Capital Region Application Form" and submit it to your installation's MTBP Point of Contact (POC).

How do I determine my monthly commuting costs?

Multiply your daily public transportation commuting cost by the number of days worked per month. If another option is available, e.g. weekly passes or monthly vouchers, you are eligible for the lowest cost option.

What is the maximum amount I can receive?

As of 1 January 2013 the maximum allowable benefit amount is \$245 per month.

How do I receive my transit subsidy?

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is Executive Agent for the Army program and is responsible for purchase and distribution of fare media to Army program points of contact. Fare media is provided in the following forms:

- 1) Transit passes. A transit pass is any pass, token, fare card, voucher, or similar item (including an item exchangeable for fare media) that entitles a person to transportation (a) On mass transit facilities (whether or not publicly owned); or (b) In van pools owned and operated either by public transit authorities or by a person in the business of transporting persons for compensation or hire.*
- 2) Vouchers. A voucher is an item that may be exchanged for a transit pass, or serve as payment to a van pool owned and operated by a person in the business of transporting persons for compensation or hire. Vouchers are non-monetary in value and can only be exchanged for fare media.*
- 3) Electronic fare media. In many regions across the country, transit authorities are moving away from paper fare media and are implementing electronic fare media. For those locations, DOT is implementing a debit card distribution methodology that provides a single fare media delivery system, in order to tighten internal controls, support Green Government, and deter waste, fraud, and abuse.*
- 4) In those areas where DOT-issued fare media cannot be used, participants are authorized to request reimbursement for purchase of fare media using Standard Form 1164 procedures.*

Can I give or sell my unused fare media to someone?

No, fare media received from the Mass Transportation Benefit Program is to be used only for traveling to and from your work location. It is not to be used for other purposes, and is not transferable.

Are van pool riders authorized to receive transit benefits?

Yes, if the van pool meets the guidelines stated in Title 26, United States Code, Section 132(f). The vehicle must be owned and operated by either public transit authorities (commercial) or by a private vendor in the business of transporting persons for compensation or hire.

I ride in a van pool and have to pay to reserve my seat whether I ride or not.

Can I be reimbursed for this cost under the Mass Transportation Program?

No, reimbursement under the Mass Transportation Benefit Program is only for "actual commuting cost" up to the maximum allowable amounts. Other costs, such as a seat reservation, are the responsibility of the employee.

If I am out of the office for an extended period will I be eligible to receive my normal fare media allotment?

You are only authorized to receive the benefit for actual commuting costs.

Participants on TDY, leave, or who use other means of transportation for more than 50% of the time period (e.g. month or quarter) for which they receive benefits will be entitled to a prorated benefit amount based on their actual commuting expenses.

Does the Mass Transit Benefit Program reimburse for parking costs or tolls?

No, costs for parking and tolls are not authorized for reimbursement.

If I am on Temporary Duty Travel (TDY) or in Long Term Training (LTT), am I eligible to receive Mass Transportation benefits at the TDY/LTT location?

No, personnel in a TDY or LTT status are not eligible to receive Mass Transportation benefits under the Mass Transportation Benefit Program. Personnel in a TDY or LTT status may be reimbursed for travel costs while on TDY or LTT, if authorized on their orders, by filing a travel voucher.

My installation receives quarterly vouchers from DOT. Can I opt to pay out of pocket and get reimbursed using SF 1164 for my commuting costs?

No, if DOT provides fare media, participants cannot receive reimbursement using SF 1164.

How long does it take to begin receiving the Mass Transportation benefit?

The application and approval process takes approximately 30 workdays. DOT accepts program applications from installation POCs only between the 20th and 25th of each month, for processing the following month (e.g., applications sent to DOT between April 20th – 25th will be processed and fare media will be shipped in late May for distribution beginning in June). Check with your installation POC to find out when to submit applications to the POC.

I just found out about the program but I've been taking mass transportation for some time. Can I be retroactively reimbursed for this expense?

No. The Mass Transportation Benefit is a personnel benefit, not an entitlement, and is not retroactive. Enrollment in the program, and receipt of the benefit, begins with approval of the employee's application.

What if my commuting circumstances change?

Participants must submit an updated application form when they are updating information ("Making a Change"). This includes changes to the amount claimed for reimbursement; type of mass transportation; personal information (e.g. home address); or military status (Active/Reserve).

How do I withdraw from the program?

Participants must submit a withdrawal application if they choose to withdraw from the program, or when they depart from their command. Departure includes

retirement, separation, dismissal and transfer. The participant must also return all unused fare media upon departure.

What if I change duty stations?

Employees who are transferring to a new duty location (new city/state) must withdraw from the program at their old location, and submit a new application at the new duty station.

We have Army Reserve and Army National Guard members temporarily serving on active duty. Are they eligible for the benefit?

Yes, members of the Army Reserve and Army National Guard are eligible for the program while they are serving on active duty. Reserve Component members who are on active duty for more than 30 workdays may apply to receive DOT-issued fare media. Members who are on active duty for less than 30 workdays may apply for reimbursement of commuting costs via use of SF 1164.

We have temporary employees coming on board. Are they eligible for the benefit?

Yes. Temporary employees on board for more than 30 workdays may apply to receive DOT-issued fare media. Employees on board for less than 30 workdays may apply for reimbursement of commuting costs via use of SF 1164.

Our office is updating our files. How long should we keep participant records?

POCs must maintain an internal tracking system of participants. Keep participants' original and updated application forms on file at the installation for as long as the individual remains enrolled in the program. When an individual withdraws from the program, his/her application files should be kept on file for one year after the date of withdrawal. These files must be properly secured, as they contain personal information. In addition, POCs must maintain up-to-date, concise records which provide a historical perspective of all participants' pick-up records along with the amount of fare media received. The POC should retain these records on file for at least one year from the distribution dates.

Employees at my activity pay out of pocket for their commuting costs and are reimbursed using an SF 1164. Should installation funds be used to reimburse employees from tenant activities?

The Mass Transportation Benefit is a personnel benefit which must be paid from the same appropriation that funds the participant's salary. This policy applies to military members, civilian employees, and non-appropriated fund employees. Program participants requesting reimbursement using SF 1164 must provide the accounting citation that funds their salary as part of the application process. The accounting citation will then be used on the SF 1164 in order to properly account for the expenditure.