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# ADS Chapter 515

## Transit Benefits (SmartBenefits®) Program

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 ADS 515 - Transit Benefits (SmartBenefits®) Program  
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***This chapter has been revised in its entirety.***

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## ADS 515 - Transit Benefits (SmartBenefits®) Program

### 515.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

This ADS chapter outlines the policy, procedures, and responsibilities for USAID's Transit Benefits Program. This program only applies to Agency employees located in USAID/Washington (USAID/W). The transportation benefit program encourages Federal Government employees to choose mass transit and other commuting options that reduce air pollution and traffic congestion as opposed to using single-occupant vehicles.

### 515.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

- a. The **Division Chief, Bureau for Management, Office of Management Services, Headquarters Management Division (M/MS/HMD)**, or his or her designee, is responsible for the overall coordination of USAID's Transit Benefits Program including program enrollment, participant subsidy determinations, and program report generation and review.
- b. The **USAID Transit Benefit Program Manager** is the program liaison with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).
- c. **Administrative Management Staff (AMS) Officers** for each Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO) are responsible for verifying employee eligibility status and participation in the program.
- d. **Employees** are responsible for recertifying transit benefits at the end of each fiscal year, notifying the Transit Benefit Program Manager of any changes throughout the year, and using the program in accordance with the policies and procedures in this chapter.

### 515.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

USAID employees who participate in the transit benefit program must purchase a SmartBenefits® card that can be used to cover the cost of commuting to and/or from work on public transit (i.e.: metro rail/bus, MARC/VRE/Commuter Bus, and Transit Authority Van pool). The transit benefit will be deposited electronically onto the card on the first of each month.

#### 515.3.1 Transit Benefits Eligibility

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

The following USAID employees are eligible for the Transit Benefits Program:

- a. Direct-hires,

- b. Bureau-approved employees under Washington-based U.S. Personal Service Contracts (PSCs), and
- c. Paid and unpaid interns.

The Transit Benefit Program Manager will process all completed applications within 30 business days. Employees will receive a notification via email with the effective date.

The following applies to employees of other federal agencies working for USAID:

All federal agencies have a transit subsidy program. Therefore, employees detailed to USAID are NOT eligible to enroll in USAID's Transit Benefits Program; rather they should maintain their transit benefits from their parent agency.

In addition, employees who wish to enroll in the Transit Benefits Program must:

- a. Not participate in a subsidized carpool with USAID or any other Federal Government agency;
- b. Expect to regularly commute, i.e., at least 80 percent of regularly scheduled work days or an average of four to five days per week for full-time employees, via public transportation; and
- c. Be assigned to a USAID-approved work site. If a USAID employee is detailed to another agency that does not have a transit subsidy program, the employee can enroll in the USAID Transit Benefits Program.

### **515.3.2 Enrolling in the Transit Benefits Program**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

To apply for the program, employees will need to purchase and register a SmartBenefits® card at [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com). SmartBenefits® cards are also available at participating metro stations. Employees must complete an application for transit benefits using the [AID-515-1, Application for Transit Benefit form](#). Employees must submit the completed form to their Bureau/Independent Office AMS officer, who, when appropriate, approves and forwards the form to M/MS/HMD's Transit Benefit Program Manager within five business days.

#### **515.3.2.1 Employee Application**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

Eligible employees must complete an [AID-515-1, Application for Transit Benefit form](#). Employees are subject to disciplinary action for making false statements on the application. Instances where a supervisor, AMS Officer, or Transit Benefit Program Manager detects false statements or misuse of the transit benefit should be referred to the Office of Inspector General Hotline, 1-800-230-6539 or [ig.hotline@usaid.gov](mailto:ig.hotline@usaid.gov) for

investigation. Employees must notify M/MS/HMD, in writing, of any changes, i.e., address, name, reassignment within the Agency, etc. within five business days of the event.

An employee's qualifying transportation round trip cost should be calculated using 22 days. Employees who are approved for regular telework should reduce the number of days to 18 if teleworking once a week or to 20 if teleworking once every other week. Employees on Alternate Work Schedules should reduce the number of days to 20. Employees can access the following transit link for help in determining their commuting costs: [http://www.wmata.com/rider\\_tools/tripplanner/tripplanner\\_form\\_solo.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/rider_tools/tripplanner/tripplanner_form_solo.cfm).

#### **515.3.2.2 AMS Officer Signature**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

Upon receipt of a completed application for enrollment in the Transit Benefits Program, AMS Officers must verify employee eligibility for participation in the program. If the employee is eligible, the AMS Officer must sign the bottom of the [AID-515-1, Application for Transit Benefit form](#).

#### **515.3.2.3 Transit Benefit Program Manager Application Processing**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

The Transit Benefit Program Manager has 30 days to review and approve new applications for completeness. This includes checking eligibility based on the information provided in the application by the employee and approved by the AMS Officer.

The Transit Benefit Program Manager will send a notification to the employee that their application has been approved. Once an employee receives this notification, their benefits will automatically load to their card when they go through the SmartBenefits® target (metro rail) or on the bus fare box.

#### **515.3.2.4 Re-Certification Criteria**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

All employees must recertify their transit benefits by notifying their supervisor and Transit Benefit Program Manager within five business days if employment changes occur that impact their transit benefits such as:

- Extended telework (30 days or more),
- Extended (30 days or more) sick leave (i.e.: maternity leave), and/or
- Extended (30 days or more) temporary duty travel (TDY).

Upon request, employees must recertify their transit benefits annually to continue the benefit.

**515.3.3 Reports and Certification**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

The Transit Benefit Program Manager will review the detailed monthly reports from WMATA to ensure that the information for all participating employees is updated and accurate.

Please note: Unused funds at the end of the month are automatically returned to the Agency.

**515.3.4 Required Procedures for Employees Separating from USAID or Transferring Overseas**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

The AMS Officer should submit a monthly listing of employee's departing that month to M/MS/HMD, in order to obtain the required exit clearance.

**515.3.5 When New Applications Are Required**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

An employee must submit a new application if:

- They move to a new residence, which results in a change in the employee's commute;
- They move to a different B/IO, which results in a change in the employee's commute; and/or
- They have a change in their commuting costs.

**515.3.6 Lost or Stolen SmartBenefits® Cards**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

Employees must immediately report lost or stolen SmartBenefits® cards to Metro by calling 1-888-762-7874 or by emailing [smartrip@wmata.com](mailto:smartrip@wmata.com). Employees must register and provide their new card number to the M/MS/HMD Transit Benefit Program Manager, who will update the system with the new card information within 10 business days.

**515.3.7 Subsidized Parking**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

Employees cannot receive federal subsidized parking (i.e.: carpool) and be enrolled in the Transit Benefits Program. Employees can only participate in one subsidized federal program.

**515.3.8 Employees Who Use MARC and VRE**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

Employees who use the MARC train or the VRE can complete an application for transit benefits ([AID-515-1](#)) and allocate their funds to Commuter Direct by setting up an electronic account at: [www.commuterdirect.com](http://www.commuterdirect.com). Employees who use the MARC train or the VRE are not required to purchase a SmartBenefits® card, however, it may be available for convenience. Once the employee has properly set-up their account, Commuter Direct will mail their monthly tickets to their place of residence. At this point, the employee is responsible for monitoring their account (for more information, please contact Commuter Direct at (703) 228-7433 or [www.commuterdirect.com](http://www.commuterdirect.com)).

**515.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES****515.4.1 External Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

- a. [5 U.S.C. 7905, Programs to encourage commuting by means other than single-occupancy motor vehicles \(part of the Federal Employees Clean Air Incentives Act\)](#)

**515.4.2 Internal Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

- a. [AID Form 515-1, Application for Transit Benefit](#)

**515.5 ADDITIONAL HELP**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

There are no Additional Help documents for this chapter.

**515.6 DEFINITIONS**

Effective Date: 03/23/2016

There are no definitions for this chapter.

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