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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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ADS 515 - Transit Benefits (SmartBenefits®) Program

515.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 03/26/2016

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: 11/04/2021

- a. The **Supervisory Management and Program Analyst, in the Bureau for Management, Office of Management Services, Office of the Director (M/MS/OD)**, or their 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) verify 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: 11/04/2021

USAID employees who participate in the transit benefit program must purchase a SmarTrip® 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 Vanpool). **The card will also be used to cover the cost of Metro parking for the employees who select that option on the application. The transit and parking benefit will be deposited electronically onto the card on the first of each month.**

515.3.1 Transit Benefits Eligibility

Effective Date: 11/04/2021

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.

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:

1. Not participate in a subsidized carpool with USAID or any other Federal Government agency;
2. Expect to commute a maximum of 22 days per month or a reduced number of days approved for teleworking; and
3. Be assigned to a USAID-approved work site. If a USAID employee is detailed to another agency outside of USAID that does not offer 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: 11/04/2021

To apply for the program, employees will need to purchase and register a SmarTrip® card at www.wmata.com. SmarTrip® 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 B/IO AMS officer, who, when appropriate, approves and forwards the form to M/MS/OD's Transit Benefit Program Manager within five business days.

515.3.2.1 Employee Application

Effective Date: 11/04/2021

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 for investigation. Employees must notify M/MS/OD, 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 and employees on Alternate Work Schedules should reduce the number of days to the days they are in the office. Employees can access [this transit link](#) for help in determining their commuting costs.

An employee can also request Metro Parking Benefits by selecting the option on the application. Employees must indicate the Metro station they intend to park and ride from on the WMATA.com parking fee page. The monthly benefit will be calculated using the maximum of 22 days or the reduced number of days provided on the application.

Note: Metro parking benefits are only available for use when the SmarTrip® cardholder exits that Metro station. Parking in the Metro parking lot and not riding the Metro will be at the personal cost of the employee. The SmartBenefits® system is set up for parking to be directly linked to utilizing the Metro train for commuting.

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: 11/04/2021

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.

Note: WMATA locks the SmartBenefits® system for all agencies on the 21st of each month to complete their monthly system maintenance. Completed applications received on or after the 21st of the month will be processed when the system re-opens on the 1st of the next month.

515.3.2.4 Re-Certification Criteria

Effective Date: 11/04/2021

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),
- Extended (30 days or more) temporary duty travel (TDY), and/or
- Circumstances that would result in a reduction in the number of days in the office lasting more than one month).

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: 11/04/2021

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

Employees who have allocated their benefits via CommuterDirect or a third-party vendor must contact that vendor directly to cancel their accounts upon separating from the Agency.

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: 11/04/2021

Employees must immediately report lost or stolen SmartBenefits® cards to Metro by calling 1-888-762-7874 or by emailing smartrip@wmata.com. Employees must register and provide their new card number to the M/MS/OD 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: 11/04/2021

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. Employees who use the MARC train or the VRE **must** purchase a SmarTrip® card **to receive SmartBenefits®**. 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).

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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