FAQ’s for using Trip Optimizer or requesting Mileage Reimbursements

Q - When do I need to use the Trip Optimizer?
   A - Anytime you are using ground transportation for business travel you will need to use the trip optimizer to determine the most cost effective form of travel.

Q – I am only driving a short distance, is there a minimum number of miles required for completing the Trip Optimizer?
   A - Yes, if there are less than 115 miles in the total trip, the Trip Optimizer is not required.

Q - If the Trip Optimizer indicates reimbursement is less than a rental, can I still use a rental car?
   A. Yes, employees may utilize a rental car vs driving their personal car for business purposes.

Q - Is a copy of the Trip Optimizer report required to be submitted as documentation when a rental car is being utilized?
   A - No. If a rental car is used, the Trip Optimizer report is not needed.

Q - If the Trip Optimizer indicates a rental car costs less than the reimbursement rate for a personal vehicle, can I still drive a personal vehicle and be reimbursed?
   A - Yes, however the rate of reimbursement will be equal to the cost of a rental car.

Q - Is there a requirement to document the reason for driving a personal vehicle when seeking reimbursement?
   A - The Trip Optimizer report should always be attached to expense account reimbursements. If the cost of a rental vehicle was the lower costs, expense reimbursements for personal mileage should include a statement explaining why a personal vehicle was selected.

Q - What information should be input into the Trip Optimizer form?

Distance traveled: Enter the total number of miles to be driven during the trip
Total days in Trip: Enter the number of days you will be traveling
Car Rental Daily Rate: Enter the cost of the rental vehicle that you will be requesting, using the chart on the left side of the form.
Cost of Fuel: Enter the approximate cost of fuel per gallon
Reimbursement Rate: Enter 0.37 cents per mile
Rental Car Fuel Usage: Enter the approximate MPG usage of the vehicle you will be requesting using the chart on the left side of the form.

Q - How do I calculate other travel expenses, such as one-way drop fees, airport parking, etc?
   A - All expenses should be considered when making a decision on the most cost effective method of travel.

Q - How should an expense report be adjusted when requesting reimbursement for personal mileage when the cost of a rental is the lower cost option?
   A - The employee or their delegate would enter the miles driven with their personal vehicle on the expense reimbursement using the University's mileage rate. Then a second line would be added to the expense report using a new expense type created for the Trip Optimizer which is a negative amount used to reduce the total costs being requested for reimbursement.
Q – What if you do not know the mileage of the local trips you will need to take once you get to your destination? Example: Driving from Columbia to Ohio is x number of miles; but once in Ohio, the local miles to drive from the hotel to the various study sites each day or to a restaurant, etc. will not be known until after the trip.

A – If possible, estimate the # of local miles you think it might be; then enter notes on the ER explaining that the info entered on the Trip Optimizer was just an estimate and the actual local miles are included on the ER.

Q – I do not have a One Card, how do I rent a vehicle from Enterprise?

A - If you do not have a One Card, you may have someone (Travel Arranger) with a One Card create a billing account and make reservations on your behalf. You can find more information on the rental process on the Enterprise rental website.