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Subject: FLRA Use of Government Vehicles

Methodology: This internal review of the FLRA's Regional Offices (4) Use of Government Vehicles was conducted in compliance with Government auditing standards. The review commenced on September 3, 2003 and was completed on **November 30, 2003**. The Inspector General conducted preliminary research and review of Federal policies regarding the use of Government vehicles and other modes of transportation for job related travel and reviewed related documents, primarily provided by the subject related Regional Offices and the FLRA Administrative Services Division. This review also included a comparison of the FLRA's use of Government vehicles with that of the National Labor Relations Board, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Special Counsels. Interviews were conducted with Regional Directors from the Regional Offices currently using Government vehicles, office managers and employees who used Government vehicles to conduct their jobs. In addition, a review of the subject regional offices' travel vouchers was conducted to determine the use and cost of rental vehicles, personal vehicles and public transportation in addition to the Government vehicles.

References:

Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended

Interagency Fleet Management Systems (GSA Fleet 101-40)

Federal Property Management Regulation

Federal Requirements

Owned or leased Government vehicles must be used to perform the Agency's mission, as authorized.

Government vehicles may not be used for transportation between an employee's residence and place of employment unless authorized in writing that such use has been determined necessary.

Contractors working for the Agency may use Government vehicles when authorized for use for the performance of a contract.

Agencies must establish and enforce suitable penalties against employees who misuse or authorize the use of Government vehicles for unofficial purposes (employee would be subject to suspension for at least one month or up to and including removal by the Head of the Agency).

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Government vehicles used by an agency in the performance of investigative, law enforcement or intelligence duties, are only subject to compliance with Section C and I of the Federal Management Regulation if the Head of the agency determines that exclusive control is essential for the performance of these duties.

Government employees who use Government vehicles are responsible for protecting them. They must park or store the vehicle which reasonably protects it from theft or damage.

Unattended Government vehicles must be locked (exception is when fire regulations or other building directives prohibit locking vehicles,)

Government employees who use Government vehicles must comply with all state and local jurisdiction traffic laws. Payment for fines are a personal responsibility and will not be reimbursed.

Government employees who use Government vehicles must pay parking fees while operating the Government vehicle parking fees (are reimbursable.)

Government employees who use Government vehicles must use safety belts, and refrain from smoking and/or drinking alcoholic beverages in Government vehicles.

Government employees who drive Government vehicles must use and obtain self service fuel by using a Government issued fleet charge card (not a Government travel or purchase or personal charge card) or personal funds.

Data must be provided to GSA within 75 calendar days after the end of the fiscal year on Standard Form 82, Agency Report of Motor Vehicle Data.

The GSA and Federal agencies using Government vehicles must keep records of U.S. Government license plates which will be numbered serially for each executive agency beginning with 101 and preceded by a letter code that designates the owning agency (with the exception of those issued by the District of Columbia which usually issues license plates with US as a letter code as well as an Inspection verification sticker.

Agency heads can request exemption from displaying U.S. Government license plates if the Government Vehicle is used for investigations.

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Federal Property Management Regulation (FPMR)

The FPMR addresses topics such as:

The required size of leased vehicles is compact, maintenance and care of leased Government vehicles is the responsibility of the leasing agency. The use of a government vehicle 12,000 miles per year justifies the leasing of vehicles from GSA;

Civilian Government employees who operate a Government vehicle provided by the GSA must have a valid state, District of Columbia, or commonwealth operators license for the type of vehicle to be operated;

The reporting of accidents must be made to GSA S Fleet Management Center;

Agencies must develop adequate accounting and reporting procedures to ensure accurate reporting of inventory, cost and operational data; and

Agencies must submit Standard Form 82, Agency Report of Motor Vehicle Data within 75 days after the end of the fiscal year.

Background Information:

The FLRA Office of the General Counsel Regional Offices are all located in major cities and have unfair labor practice charge jurisdiction over specific areas in and outside their metropolitan areas and in other states which may require travel. The Atlanta Regional Office has jurisdiction over Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and the Virgin Islands. The Boston Regional Office has jurisdiction over Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island and Vermont. The Chicago Regional Office has jurisdiction over Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin. The Dallas Regional Office has jurisdiction over Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico Oklahoma, Texas and Panama (limited.) The Denver Regional Office has jurisdiction over Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. The San Francisco Regional Office has jurisdiction over Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and all land/water areas west of the continents of North and South America, longitude 90 degrees West (except coastal islands.) The Washington, D.C. Regional Office has jurisdiction over Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and all land/water areas east of the continents of North and South America to longitude 90 degrees east except the Virgin Islands and Panama (limited jurisdiction.)

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At the onset of this review, four of the seven FLRA regional offices, Boston, Denver, San Francisco and Washington DC, maintained Government vehicles for the use of mission related travel. Two of the subject Regional Office Directors stated that having Government vehicles was necessary to perform their case processing, representation hearings and training. The third Director stated that having a Government vehicle provided a convenience for the investigation agents and more timeliness for travel. The fourth Director realized that his staff rarely used the government vehicle and decided to cancel its use. Although the Office of the General Counsel Regional Offices conduct many unfair labor practice charge investigations by telephone, there are a significant amount of investigations that require the investigation agents to be on site. Most Federal agencies are located in major cities where there is public transportation, however, the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, the Department of Agriculture and several other Federal agencies have locations outside of the mainstream. Some areas (approximately within a 150 miles of the Regional Office) may be easier and more economical to drive to and less expensive and more timely than using public transportation.

Finding of Facts

- Three FLRA regional offices, Washington, Boston, and Denver currently have a GSA Government vehicles. At the start of this review, the San Francisco Regional Office also had a Government vehicle. The information requested from the subject regional offices by the Inspector General for this review prompted the San Francisco Regional Director to request the cancellation of the government vehicle at the end of FY 2004 because of its minimal use.
- The regional offices maintain their own Government vehicle use records which are not currently forwarded to the Office of General Counsel at Headquarters or to the Administrative Services Division. The government vehicle records differ for each of the subject matter regional offices and do not contain standardized information to enhance a management review. The Regional Offices submit mileage reports to GSA which then are provided by GSA to the FLRA Travel Officer of the FLRA Budget and Finance Division. The FLRA Budget and Finance Division then contacts the subject regional offices office manager for verification before payment is made to GSA. Although the Budget and Finance Division's Travel Officer provided the Inspector General copies of the reports he received from GSA, he could not explain the contents and stated did not review them for accuracy.
- A September 3, 2003 Inspector General Review of the subject regional offices position descriptions of Office of the General Counsel investigation agents (attorneys and labor relation specialists) revealed that a stated requirement of the positions (Factor 8 Physical Demand) was to be available for travel as required. Regional Office

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managers position descriptions stated that some travel is required. There was no stated requirement related to the use of the incumbents personal vehicle, the agency's provision of a vehicle for these employees nor was there a specific mode of transportation stated in any of the subject Regional Offices position descriptions.

Neither the FLRA, the Office of the General Counsel or any of the regional offices using Government vehicles have written policy for the use of Government vehicles and record keeping.

- While all of the subject regional offices are located in major cities, their geographical coverage involves some federal agencies which are located in areas where there is no direct public transportation other than taxicabs (this primarily pertains to Federal military installations.) Although a lot of cases are processed by telephone, some cases require on-site case processing.
- The Inspector General review of regional office Government vehicle use statistics indicated that the Washington Regional office used the Government vehicle the most. Even though the D.C. area has extensive public transportation, there are some areas such as Leesburg VA, Dahlgren, MD which can be reached in a timely way only by vehicle or taxi. Although the Denver Regional office has the most minimal public transportation nearby, it used the government vehicle the least.
- In addition to having/using a Government vehicle, the subject Regional offices also used rental vehicles and public transportation for the conduct of duties. Most users in all three subject Regional offices stated that they could use rental vehicles but commented that it would take more time and it would be a hassle. The Regional offices did not maintain specific statistics to analyze the use of rental vehicles (or private vehicles) in addition to the government vehicle.
- The subject regional offices directors stated they check driving licenses of potential investigation agents prior to hiring to make sure they are valid. They do not check official records for driving incidents or police tickets. The validity of licenses are not checked during employment. None of the current subject regional offices drivers were tested for drug use prior to being permitted to use the Government vehicle.
- The FLRA has no interagency agreement with GSA for Fleet Management to support GSA billing for the maintenance and care of leased vehicles. Virtually, all other Federal Agencies that use Government vehicles have interagency agreements. The FLRA is not listed on the GSA list of Federal agencies that lease Government vehicles. The subject regional offices send their maintenance bills to GSA who sends them to the FLRA Budget & Finance Division for payment.

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- The FLRA-UAE contract does not contain any information about employees use of government vehicles.
- Several subject Regional office employees have unknowingly misused their vehicles, however, the FLRA has not provided any guidance or specific requirements for its use. Some examples of questionable use include, taking the Government vehicle home overnight without documented permission revealed by this review, the use of the government vehicle to drive to and return from local airports (leaving the vehicle at the airport during the travel, the use of the government vehicle to drive to and return from attending local training, and dropping off children at school and grocery shopping on the way home from a trip.
- Not all gas stations accept the GSA credit card. When the card is rejected, users will use either their Government travel cards or personal credit cards/money to pay for gas and are reimbursed by their regional office.
- All Office of the General Counsel investigation agents were notified that travel is an essential part of the job during the job interview process. All of the investigation agents interviewed during this review stated that they did not smoke or drink alcohol while driving a government vehicle. All of them had current licenses. Two regional office investigation agents who were interviewed did not own a vehicle and were frequent users of their office's Government vehicle. Most regional investigation agents in Boston and Washington, D.C. preferred not to use their private vehicles for business purposes. In Denver, the majority of investigation agents preferred to use their own vehicles rather than their Government vehicle. The majority of investigation agents stated they would use rental vehicles or local transportation if they did not have a Government vehicle, but it would be inconvenient and much more time consuming.
- The Federal Travel Regulation Amendment 112, January 2003, has decreased the mileage reimbursement rates for the use of privately owned vehicles used on official government travel. These rates are now:
 - 36 cents per mile if no government owned vehicle is available,
 - 28.5 cents per mile if the government owned vehicle is not available, and
 - 10.5 cents per mile if the government owned vehicle is available.

A significant number of the subject investigation agents who used their own vehicles for local travel did not submit travel vouchers for reimbursement. All those who did file travel vouchers, adhered to the amended travel regulation noted above.

- The Government vehicle travel records maintained by the Boston, Denver and Washington Regional Offices were not standardized and were not routinely reviewed by the Regional Directors nor the Office of General Counsel or Budget and Finance

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Division to ensure proper use and payment to GSA and proper reimbursement rates for privately owned vehicles used for official travel.

- The Inspector General Review of the subject regional offices (including the San Francisco Regional office) travel vouchers obtained through the National Business Center in Denver, Co, did not reveal any improper claims or reimbursements for the use of private vehicles or rental vehicles.
- The subject regional office s building lease rates from GSA include the annual/monthly parking fee for the Government vehicle in their building location parking lots. The rate for Boston is approximately \$4,500 - 350.00 per month; for Denver \$960.00 per year/\$80,00 per month; and for Washington Regional Office, \$2460.00 per year/\$205per month.
- While there is no written policy, the subject regional offices have similar internal procedures regarding signing up for the government vehicle. If more than one investigation agent signs up for the Government vehicle for the same day , the agent with the farthest travel generally gets the vehicle. The other agent will either try to reschedule their travel or use a rental vehicle or their own vehicle.
- The Government vehicle costs are included in the Office of the General Counsel allocated regional office travel budget. The use of the government vehicles for travel, when correlated with case workload, is not significant. However, the fact that investigations are conducted via telephone as well as onsite is a factor that needs to be recognized. Also, during the past two years, the Denver and Boston Regional offices were given travel required cases by the Washington Regional Office because of their increased workload and the fact that they had no Regional Director. This caused more air travel to Washington and less peripheral travel for investigations (more telephone investigations) for the Boston and Denver Regional offices.

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TRAVEL BUDGETS

FY 2000-2003

BOSTON, DENVER, SAN FRANCISCO & WASHINGTON REGIONAL OFFICES

REGION	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
	FINAL OPERATING PLAN	FINAL OPERATING PLAN	FINAL OPERATING PLAN	FINAL OPERATING PLAN
BOSTON	\$74,000	\$61,000	\$59,000	\$56,000
DENVER	\$90,000	\$81,000	\$74,000	\$75,780
SAN FRANCISCO	\$70,500	\$83,700	\$50,000	\$57,000
WASHINGTON	\$35,000	\$36,300	\$21,000	\$16,012

The approximate rates for using a rental vehicle vice a Government vehicle are:

	Daily Rate (CC)	Weekly Rate(CC)	Daily Rate (MC)	Weekly Rate (MC)
San Francisco	\$30.00	\$183.00	\$38.00	\$203.00
Denver	\$44.00	\$239.00	\$46.00	\$270.00
Washington, D.C.	\$35.00	\$176.00	\$36.00	\$201.00
Boston	\$38.00 -56.00***	\$220.00	\$39.00 -56.00***	\$234.00-
*Atlanta	\$42.00	\$264.00	\$43.00	\$276.00
*Dallas	\$30.00	\$180.00	\$32.00	\$190.00
*Chicago	\$32.00	\$188.00	\$35.00	\$198.00

CC: Compact Vehicle
 MC: Mid-sized vehicle

** Denotes Regional offices w/o Government Leased Vehicles. This information was provided by the National Travel Service and rates are subject to change. Rental Vehicle rates depend on the time of the year the vehicle is utilized, the duration of the vehicle needed, and the type of vehicle needed. These rates also include the rental company's insurance and unlimited mileage. Fuel is not included in the prices.

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***larger vehicle

- The GSA charge for Government vehicles is based on the size of the vehicle. All FLRA current Government vehicles are compact size. Government vehicle maintenance is done periodically in response to notices sent by the GSA. The Regional office bills are sent to GSA who then sends the bill to FLRA s Budget and Finance Division for payment. The office manager is in charge of the maintenance of the vehicle when notified by GSA. The office manager also submits the monthly mileage use of the Government vehicle directly to the GSA. The office manager also certifies the bills received by the FLRA Budget and Finance Division from GSA and is responsible for keeping records including checking travel vouchers for the use of personal vehicles. GSA provides the subject FLRA regional offices a new vehicle every 3-4 years. All subject regional office managers were performing their jobs well.

- The subject regional offices travelers use rental vehicles or public transportation following air travel and sometimes use rental vehicles for case processing travel requirements when the Government vehicle is not available. Some rental vehicle companies transport travelers to their service center to obtain a rental vehicle but they will not deliver vehicles to sites (regional office).

See Attachments for Regional Office destinations.

Regional Offices using Government Vehicles:

Based on information provided by the GSA, the following chart shows the actual expenses paid by the four FLRA Regional offices who leased Government vehicles during FY 2000 - 2003.

Total FY 2000-2003 \$\$\$ Used for Government Vehicles

Regional Office	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY2003**
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Boston	\$2,565.07	\$2,634.93	\$3,408.72	\$1,504.31
Denver	\$2,500.00	\$2,449.50	\$2,503.97	<u>\$1,535.25</u>
Washington	\$2,686.80	\$2,841.98	\$6,563.00	\$2,082.75
San Francisco	\$3,157.00	\$1,480.68	\$1,480.68	\$2,138.88
Total	\$10,908.87	\$9,417.09	\$14, 558.51*	\$7,261.19

*includes accident repairs
as of 1 August 2003

**

Travel, gas, and maintenance, and toll fees are included in the data.

FY 2002 Washington Regional Office Expenses include repairs and towing costs from incidents.

Boston Regional Office

The Boston Regional Office has had government vehicles (initially had 3) since the onset of FLRA. The Regional Director stated that the Government vehicle was used strictly for business and that his investigation agents preferred using the Government vehicle vice rental vehicles but did use rental vehicles or their own vehicles if the Government vehicle was already signed for. Discussions with Boston Regional Office investigation agents affirmed that the availability of the Government vehicle on site added quality to the investigation agents work life and that the majority preferred driving rather than flying to destinations outside of Boston in the New England area. Through information provided by National Travel, the Inspector General affirmed that there were a significant amount of New England destinations that could be reached by driving at much lower costs than by flying.

- The Boston Regional Office is located in downtown Boston within ½ mile of the Boston Subway, the MTA, and a commuter rail system. The cost for most subway rides is \$1.00 to \$2.00. The Boston Regional Office budgets \$3,000,000 for the government vehicle, however, based on actual use, the cost to maintain the Government vehicle is between \$2,400.00 and \$2,500.00 per year. The cost for maintaining a parking space is included in the monthly rent for the office space. The cost for parking the Government vehicle is estimated to be between \$300 and \$350.00 per month

- The Boston Regional Office Government vehicle is a 2001 compact Dodge Stratus Sedan and is in good condition. Only one Boston Regional Office investigation agent had a negative opinion about the vehicle (too small). All other users stated that the vehicle was large enough to hold all of the materials they needed to take with them for investigations, representation cases, hearings and training. A review of the vehicle by

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the Inspector General affirmed that appropriate information was retained in the glove compartment, including an accident reporting kit. The Boston Regional Office had no written policy for using the vehicle but did retain a log in which the travelers registered their request for the use of the Government vehicle. Neither the Regional Director or office manager checked the log unless a conflict arose (more than one person registering for the Government vehicle for the same time). All Boston Regional Office investigation agents signed in the log at least two weeks before usage. All Boston Regional Office investigation agents had current drivers licenses.

- For the past 3 years, according to statistics provided by the Boston Regional Office. the investigation agents have used their Government vehicle 70 times (35 trips) each year. With a few exceptions, most of the use of the Government vehicle has been for mission related work outside the Boston metropolitan area such as Lowell, MA, Groton CT, Pawtucket, RI, Portland ME, White River VT, Newport RI, Cape Cod MA. Virtually, all New England states are small and can be reached within one to three hours by driving. The increased airport check in time requirement and the small airplanes used for much of New England travel has diminished the use of air travel by the Boston Regional Office investigation agents and increased their desire to drive.

- Over the past three years, the Boston Regional Office has used its Government vehicle 54 times (27 trips) to drive to/from Gloucester MA, to/from Logan Airport. The individual involved in this stated that she sometimes left the vehicle at the airport. The Regional Director supported this usage if it did not interfere with another employee's need of a vehicle. There is no GSA policy supporting or restraining such use from home to airport but it is not a prudent way to justify the need for Government vehicle.

- While taxis are available, Boston Regional Office employees rarely use them because most downtown locations are within walking distance. If taxis are used for downtown travel, the fare is approximately \$5.00-\$10.00. Using a taxi to get to a surrounding area outside the downtown area would be anywhere between \$30.00 and \$60.00 one way. The taxi fare to the Logan Airport from the Boston Regional Office is approximately \$20.00 (5.1 miles). The MTA subway is located within ½ mile of the Boston Regional Office and most rides cost between \$1.00 and \$2.00. Bus routing is also available and is slightly higher than the subway costs. There is also a commuter rail system within ½ mile of the Boston Regional Office with the average round trip fare of \$17.00. The rail system is used by a significant number of Boston Regional Office employees for commuting to work. The average rental rate for a rental vehicle in Boston is anywhere from \$38.00 \$56.00 per day and includes a surcharge of \$10.00 for the first

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day.¹ Until this past year, there was a vehicle rental service across the street from the Boston Regional Office. It is no longer there and the nearest is now at Logan Airport which is 5 miles away.

- Boston Regional Office employees all stated that having a Government vehicle was convenient and saved time. If the Government travel vehicle was unavailable, Regional Office investigation agents used either a rental vehicle or their own vehicle for travel. In FY 2003 several Boston Regional Office employees did not use the Government vehicle. One individual used it 40 times, one other employee 5 times, and three employees 1 or 2 times. Three investigation agents and the new Regional Attorney have not yet used the Government vehicle this year. Part of this reduction in use this past year is related to the fact that 276 cases were transferred to the Boston Regional Office from the Washington D.C. Regional Office this past year and several Boston Regional Office investigation agents had to travel to Washington, D.C.
- The Boston Regional Office s use of Government vehicle documentation was incomplete and many forms, signed by users did not include the date of return and mileage used for all trips. This made it difficult to assess the need and actual use of the vehicle, the destination and date of return and the mileage involved. As a result of and during the Inspector General visit, the Regional Director and Office Manager expanded the statistics they will now be maintaining for the use of the Government vehicle.
- Boston Regional Office investigation agents were not aware of GSA policy for the use of Government vehicles and have received no training related to usage. Most investigation agents stated they had obtained most of the information from other more tenured investigation agents. The FLRA Inspector General provided Boston Regional Office employees with copies of GSA policy.
- The Boston Regional Office Manager submitted Boston Regional Office Government vehicle costs on a monthly basis. GSA then sent the related bill to the FLRA Budget and Finance Division Travel Officer. There was no indication that any FLRA Headquarters manager Administrative Services Division or Office of General Counsel conducted periodic reviews of Government vehicle spending.
- The \$3000 allocation to the Boston Regional Office for the Government vehicle would finance approximately 60 individual day vehicle rentals per year for required driving outside the metropolitan area (1-3 hours driving) .² 150 taxi rides from the Boston

¹All rental vehicle information has been provided by National Travel.

²/ Does not include vehicle rentals related to air travel to different locations,

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Regional Office to or from Logan airport or about 14 week long trips out of town. Local travel can be walked or achieved by taking the subway (within 2 small blocks) or taxi.

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Major Boston Regional Office Travel

Destination	Approximate Mileage from BRO	Rental Vehicle	Taxi 1	Airfare	Driving Time
Lowell, MA	31 miles	\$45.00-\$55.00 per day	\$75.40	N/A	31 minutes
Groton, CT	104 miles		\$257.40		1 hour,43 minutes
Gloucester,MA	37 miles				41 minutes
Logan Airport	5.1 miles		\$15.00-25.00		10 minutes
Portland, ME	107 miles		\$275.60		1 hour, 49 minutes
Portsmouth, NH	65 miles		\$143.00		1 hour, 6 minutes
New Port, RI	70 miles		\$182.00		1 hour & 20 minutes
Montrose, NY & Castle Point	200 192 (Castle Point)			*\$515.50	
Cape Cod, MA	88 miles				
Jamaica Plain, MA	5 miles		\$15.00-20.00		11 minutes
Dorchester,MA	5 miles		\$15.00-20.00		9 minutes
Quincy, MA	8 miles		\$15.00-20.00		13 minutes
Concord, MA	21 miles		\$52.00		31 minutes
Kittery,ME	60 miles			\$302.00 1 hour from airport	1 hour, 4 minutes
Machias,ME	320.70			\$315.00 85 miles from airport	6 hours, 14 minutes
White River Jct, VT	127.63 miles			*\$699.00	

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Destination	Approximate Mileage from BRO	Rental Vehicle	Taxi 1	Airfare	Driving Time
New Haven, CT	136.41 miles			*\$992.50	2 hours, 14 minutes
Woods Hole, MA	74.66 miles			*\$279.76	1 hour, 30 minutes
**Hyde Park, NY	200.78			\$747.50 (two day trip)	3 hours, 45 minutes

Notes: The Boston Regional Office vehicle log does not provide the amount of time the user had the vehicle. Most of the cities that the attorneys visited did not offer the Government air fare contract. GSA determines if a contract should be awarded between cities.

Driving distance is based on driving @ 60mph.

If the Boston Regional Office converted its Government rental vehicle allocation to use of rental vehicles (\$3,000.) It would pay for approximately 50 days of rental vehicle travel.

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Denver Regional Office

- The Denver Regional Office has had Government vehicles since its creation. Denver Regional Office employees have not received specific training or FLRA guidance, however, some oral guidance has been provided by the Regional Director and the Office Manager.
- All of the Denver Regional Office employees felt that having a Government vehicle was convenient and supported time efficiency. The Denver Regional Office has had two accidents involving the Government vehicle many years ago but none lately. One of these accidents was the blowing out of a window by the wind and did not involve the driver.
- Public transportation in Denver, CO is not as well developed as in other regional areas. Mass transit is primarily designed for commuters to travel to downtown and involves a light rail transportation system that focuses on two main directions and parking areas (vice Federal or private sector businesses) in the suburbs. Travel to Federal locations by bus often involves transfers and requires a 3/4 mile walk from/to the Denver Regional Office. Denver Regional Office employees rarely use public transportation for metropolitan trips and prefer to use the Government rental vehicle or their own vehicle for such travel.³ The Government vehicle is not used by Denver Regional Office to drive to and from the airport.
- The Denver Regional Office s FY 2003 travel budget was \$82, 000.00 which includes \$2,500.00 for maintaining the Government vehicle and \$980.00 for parking in the GSA garage.

Taxi fares are \$1.80 per mile plus \$1.60 for using the taxi. Bus fares vary. Many ULP cases filed with the Denver Regional Office involve Federal agencies in the metropolitan Denver Area which could be reached by taxis or buses. Rental vehicles cost from \$21.00 to \$48.00 a day depending on the size and availability of the car.

- The Denver Regional Office s Government Vehicle is a 1999 Maroon Chrysler Breeze compact vehicle. Those Denver Investigation Agents who have used it over the past three years complained that it was always dirty both on the outside and inside. The Inspector General review of the vehicle affirmed that the vehicle was in good shape but that it did have sand all over the outside and inside floors and that the glove compartment did not contain the accident paperwork required by GSA.⁴ The Denver Regional Office Government vehicles parked in a GSA parking lot next to the building in

³Most Denver Regional Investigation Agents do not seek reimbursement when they use their own vehicle for local travel

^{3/} The Inspector General suggested that some vehicle cleaning material be kept in the vehicle so that users could clean the vehicle up upon return or before using. The GSA garage has open areas where wind/snow can blow in and make the vehicle dirty.

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which the Denver Regional Office is located. The charge for the Government vehicles \$80.00 per month while the parking charge for the Denver Regional Office personnel in the same parking garage location is \$60.00.

- The Denver Regional Office Manager has provided some guidance on the use of Government vehicles to the individuals who use the vehicle and provides each user with a records book which also contains information on accident reporting, The Office manager reviews all travel vouchers prior to submission and requires employees to fill out GSA assignment sheets. There has been no check on the currency of user's licenses. No drug testing for drivers has ever been done on Denver Regional Office Government vehicle users.
- The Denver Regional Office has allocated \$2,500.00 for its Government vehicle. According to data provided by the Denver Regional Office, during FY 2002, the Denver Regional Office used their Government vehicle 16 times for 8 trips. During FY 2003, the Denver Regional Office has used the Government vehicle 23 times (12 trips). During FY 2003, the Denver Regional Office had 49 unfair labor practice charges and 9 representative cases transferred from Washington D.C. and 3 unfair labor practice charges transferred from Atlanta which also required out of town travel.
- All the Denver Regional Office employees who have used the Government vehicle have, on occasion, taken the vehicle home overnight to start a trip or finish one and bring the vehicle back to the Denver Regional Office with oral permission from the Regional Director.⁵ There were two instances where the vehicle was taken home Friday PM and kept at home by the investigation agent for a Monday departure. Most of the Denver Government vehicle users fail to check the vehicle before beginning their trip. Most users make sure the gas tank is filled at least half way and some do have the vehicle washed prior to bringing it back to the office parking space.
- Most of the Denver Regional Office Investigation Agents used the Government vehicle one or two times a year. One Investigation Agent uses the Government vehicle quite often for local travel because she had no vehicle and takes a bus to work. Two Investigation Agents stated that they preferred to use their own vehicle for business travel whether it was local or within a 2 or 3 hour drive. One Denver Investigation Agent has never used the Government vehicle. The unpredictable, often severe weather and the fact that some of the locations requiring travel are obscure and/or have very small airports with small planes are also factors which motivate Denver Regional Office Investigation Agents to use their own vehicles.

Over the last 3 years, travel related to case processing has become less and the use of telephone investigations has increased.

⁵The Inspector General advised the Regional Director and investigation agents that this permission should be documented.

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Major Denver Regional Office Travel

Destination	Approximate Mileage from DRO	Rental Vehicle (see notes)	Taxi 1 ** (one-way)	Airfare (round trip)	Dr Tim
Rocky Flats Golden, CO	14.61 miles	\$21.00-\$48.00 per day w/unlimited mileage	\$27.89	N/A	22
SEC Denver, CO	1.29 miles		\$3.92	N/A	4 m
Ft. Carson, CO	79.66 miles		\$144.98		1 h min
HUD Denver, CO	1.07 miles		\$3.52	N/A	3 m
Sheridian, WY	423.85 miles		\$764.53	\$262.00	6 h min
Aurora, CO	16.07 miles		\$30.52	N/A	22
Bennett, CO	35.72 miles		\$65.89	N/A	39
Lakewood, Denver	7.0 miles		\$14.20	N/A	12
Pueblo, CO	114.12 miles		\$207.10	\$202.00	1 h min
Greeley, CO	62.97 miles		\$114.94	N/A	1 h min
Colorado Springs, CO	70.50 miles		\$128.50	\$662.50	1 h min
* Florence, CO	108.37 miles		\$200.06	\$202.00	2 h min
Cheyenne, WY	100.81 miles		\$183.05	\$202.00	1 h min

Notes:

** Taxi Cab companies in Denver, CO does not offer a flat rate for traveling outside of the city. The companies charge \$1.80 per mile plus \$1.60 for entering the taxi.

Rental Vehicle Companies prices vary depending on day of the week, availability, etc. Price does not include 12.95% applicable state and local tax, \$5.00 per day Government surcharge or 11.1% tax for airport pick-up. (Airport pick-up charges an additional fee for location).

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The Denver Regional Office leased vehicle was the least used Regional vehicle. 5 out of 18 locations were in Denver, CO.

*There is not an airport in Florence, CO, therefore the traveler would fly into Pueblo, CO and rent a vehicle to reach Florence. The air fares are approximate amounts. The prices reflect fares that are reserved two weeks prior to travel. These are not Government contract fees.

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San Francisco Regional Office

- While providing requested information to the FLRA Inspector General, the San Francisco Regional Office Director affirmed that there are only a few Federal agencies in the San Francisco regional area and that the majority of San Francisco Regional Office travel is by air. Rather than waiting for the outcome of this report, the San Francisco Regional Director stated that the San Francisco Regional Office no longer needed a Government vehicle and he requested that GSA be so informed and that the vehicle be removed effective October 1, 2004. Although the Government vehicle was used 28 times in FY 2000, 18 times in FY 2001, 23 times in FY 2002 it was only used 8 times in FY 2003. The San Francisco Regional Office Director felt the \$2,500.00 allocated for the use of the Government Vehicle would be better used as an addition to the Regional offices travel funds for air and public transportation.

- This review affirmed that there are various modes of public transportation available in San Francisco including buses and light rail service within the city, rail service throughout the Bay Area, San Mateo County, Palo Alto, and San Jose, bus service within Marin, Sonoma, Contra Costa and Alameda counties connecting to San Francisco and ferry service between Larkspur, Sausalito and San Francisco. There are also several rental vehicle agencies within 5-6 blocks of the Regional office.

- Bus and light rail service within the city of San Francisco costs \$1.25. Rail service throughout the Bay Area begins at \$1.15. Transit service throughout San Mateo County connecting to San Francisco begins at \$1.25. Bus service throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties connecting to San Francisco begins at \$1.50. Bus service within Marin, Sonoma, San Francisco and Contra Costa counties is at a minimum of \$2.00; Ferry service between Larkspur or Sausalito and San Francisco is \$5.50 one way. Taxi service is \$2.85 for the first 1/6th mile and \$.45 for each additional 1/5 mile. \$.45 is charged for each minute of waiting or time delay. There is also a \$2.00 Airport exit surcharge.

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Washington Regional Office

- Although the Washington Regional Office is located downtown, Washington, D.C. and has access to public transportation and Washington D.C. Federal Agency locations, a significant amount of cases (mostly Department of Defense) require onsite processing at locations which are not easily accessible by public transportation other than taxi cabs. Some specific examples are are, Dahlgren, Maryland, Federal Aviation Administration, Leesburg, Virginia, Quantico Virginia, Martinsburg and Falling Waters, West Virginia, Cherry Point and Camp Legume, and North Carolina locations. These are examples of areas where it is more time and cost effective to drive rather than use public transportation or airlines when available.

- At least 75% of the Washington Regional Office s caseload is within the DC metropolitan area and the Washington Regional Office employees commute to work via Metro or buses. The Federal travel subsidy, D.C. traffic and high parking fees have eliminated most driving to work. Several Washington Regional Office Investigation Agents stated that if they drove to work, they would use their own vehicles for local travel even though it was not required to do so.

- Metro transportation is available to the Washington Regional Office employees within 2 blocks of the office. The Metro Subways minimum fare is \$1.40 and maximum fare is----. The minimum Metro bus fare is \$1.20 and the maximum fare can run to -----. Washington D.C. Taxicabs charge \$5.00 per zone. Two rental vehicle facilities, Thrifty and Hertz are within a block of the Washington Regional Office.

- The Washington Regional Office Government vehicle is a moss green 2000 Dodge Stratus. The FY 2003 expenditure allocation for this Government vehicle was \$6000.00. Maintenance costs were increased during FY 2002 because of three accidents. Actually, the Washington Regional Office has had four Government vehicle accidents on March 20, 2003, August 15, 2002, May 30, 2002 and November 27, 2002 which cost the FLRA \$3165.85 for repairs and related costs. The annual rate for parking the Washington Regional Office s Government vehicle is \$2460 per year with \$205.00 due monthly. A specific parking space was not assigned for the Washington Regional Office s Government vehicle. No reason was known other than the price would be higher.

- The Washington Regional Office Government vehicle is parked in its building s parking area. The Washington Regional Office does not have a specific space which means that the Government vehicle is not always in the same location and users must find the vehicle in different locations every time. All other Federal Agencies in the building have designated parking spaces. The Inspector General review of the vehicle revealed that there were unreported scratches on the trunk and no accident reporting material in the glove compartment (probably not replaced after the last accident). Otherwise, the vehicle appeared to be in good condition.

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- During FY 2000, the Washington Regional Office used their Government vehicle on 121 days (49 trips). During FY 2001, the Government vehicle was used for 91 days for 39 trips and several maintenance checks. During FY 2002, the Government vehicle was used for 70 days for 28 trips. During FY 2003, the Washington Regional Office used the Government vehicle 46 times for 23 trips. Travel to North Carolina and West Virginia sites for representation elections is usually by vehicle vice airplanes because of the equipment (voting booths, voting materials) required. The representation cases generally involve three days and usually more than one regional investigation agent. It is also easier to enter a military base with a Government vehicle than with a personal or rental vehicle.
- The Washington Regional Office has an extensive caseload of unfair labor practice charges and a larger representation caseload than the other regional offices even though its geographic jurisdiction is smaller than the other regional offices. Because there has been no Washington Regional Office Director (or General Counsel) for 1 ½ years until recently, there is more of a continuing professional employee turnover (currently 3 vacancies), a significant amount of cases have been transferred from the Washington Regional Office to other regional offices. This has reduced the Washington Regional Office travel over the past 3 years. Nevertheless, available statistics show that the Washington Regional Office still used its government vehicle more than the Denver and Boston Regional Offices.⁶
- Virtually all Washington Regional Office investigation agents stated that if the Government vehicle was eliminated, the morale of employees would definitely be negatively affected and planning and executing travel would be more cumbersome. A majority of them also stated that it would increase the amount of time required for investigations and thus increase travel costs. Washington Regional Office tenured investigation agents stated that when they are traveling out of town they usually inform the other agents and are willing to address cases in that area. Also, several senior Washington Regional Office investigation agents said that they expected an increase in Representation and Alternative Dispute Resolution cases which will require more Washington Regional Office travel.⁷
- The Washington Regional Office has no written guidance or procedures for the use of Government vehicles. The investigation agents stated they took the Government vehicle home the night before a trip without seeking Regional Director approval. The Inspector General advised the Director and investigation agents that this was a GSA requirement.

⁶Both the Boston Regional Office and Denver Regional Office handled a significant amount of the Washington Regional Office cases over the last year but these involved travel to Washington's geographical areas of jurisdiction which primarily involved airlines and rental vehicles or local public transportation.

⁷Would be difficult to use public transportation because workshop materials will be necessary and are too much and too heavy to carry.

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While onsite, the FLRA Inspector General provided GSA guidance relating to the proper use of Government vehicles which has not been previously provided by the Office of the General Counsel or FLRA Travel Officer.

- According to the new Director and Washington Regional Office staff, their productivity and positive morale depends heavily on the fact that they have a Government vehicle. They felt it is especially important for travel to military facilities and parking at non military facilities which provide parking for Government vehicles. The Washington Regional Office uses its Government vehicle for travel to West Virginia, and western areas of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware, as well as areas on the outskirts of Metropolitan D.C.

- During the past 5 years, the Washington Regional Office Regional Attorney was responsible for managing the use of Government vehicles. The current Washington Regional Attorney has a significant amount of management experience and will oversee travel and the use of the Government vehicle and its related statistics more closely.

- The Washington Regional Office's Government vehicle was stolen from the front of an employee's residence in the District of Columbia. The employee had reserved and taken the vehicle home on November 27, 2001 for an early morning appointment in Baltimore, Maryland. When the employee saw that the vehicle was gone, he notified the metropolitan police and Washington Regional Office which contacted the Federal Protective Service. On December 5, 2001 Takoma Park Maryland Police found the Washington Regional Office's Government vehicle in Takoma Park, Maryland, the GSA Fleet Management retrieved and towed the vehicle. The vehicle was serviced and repaired by the GSA Fleet Management and returned to the Washington Regional Office. The fees incurred totaled \$1124.85 (includes towing and storage fees). In addition to this, the Washington Regional Office's Government vehicle was involved in an accident on August 15, 2002. The repairs to the Government vehicle for this accident totaled \$1059.20. During the first 6 months of FY 2002, the Washington Regional Office also had additional fuel surcharges totaling _____ added to their monthly billings.

- The Washington Regional Office has one employee who does not own a vehicle and must rely on public transportation and the Government vehicle. While the Government vehicle is not used every day, or even every week, the Washington Regional Office supervisors and employees felt having this vehicle available for locations which were not easily accessible through public transportation was necessary. Most employees interviewed stated that using a rental vehicle for these locations would be just as helpful if it was not difficult to obtain. Three new Washington Regional Office employees, who have not yet traveled beyond the Washington, D.C. area stated that it would make no difference to them using a rental vehicle vice a Government vehicle as long as it was not inconvenient to obtain it. The Inspector General affirmed that there were two rental vehicle facilities within a block of the Washington Regional Office.

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- During FY 2003, the Washington Regional Office used its Government vehicle for 23 trips. The Government vehicle was taken home over the weekend (to start the trip or after trip ended) 9 times. There were 28 trips made in FY 2002 and no indication of the Government vehicle being taken home over the weekend as in FY 2003. In FY 2001, 39 trips were made with the Government vehicle which was taken home over the weekend 4 times. Two Washington Regional Office investigation agents were unaware that they needed permission to take the government vehicle home. Some investigation agents stated that they would use their own vehicle if the government vehicle was not available or obtain a rental vehicle through National Travel. Current Government vehicle users had no policy or guidance provided to them relating to the use of Government vehicles.

- As previously mentioned because of the large load of representation cases filed with the Washington Regional Office, it is usual for two investigation agents to travel together in the Government vehicle to the subject location. There were no statistics to indicate this saving of travel money. The Washington Regional Office Manager will ensure that these statistics will be maintained from this point forward.

- Three current Washington Regional Office investigation agents stated they preferred to drive rather than fly to some of the jurisdiction locations that were within approximately 250 miles of the Washington Regional Office (such as Norfolk, Virginia, Dover Delaware; Martinsburg, West Virginia) because of the increased time needed to fly (for airport security checks), the smallness of airplanes which fly to these locations) and the limited public transportation in some of these areas. The Washington Regional Office Government vehicle records indicated that there are times when the investigation agents use the Government vehicle instead of the Metro in the Washington D,C. area but most investigation agents use the Metro or taxis for metropolitan travel. There are also occasions when FLRA Headquarters Office of the General Counsel employees use the Washington Regional Office Government vehicle. There were no statistics indicating that Washington Regional Office employees used the Government vehicle to drive to or from Washington area airports.

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Washington Regional Office Travel

Destination	Approximate Mileage from WRO	Rental Vehicle	Taxi 1	Amtrak (one way)	Airfare (round-trip)
Indian Head, MD	29.59 miles	\$33-47 per day	\$73.00	N/A	N/A
Annapolis, MD	31.09 miles		\$31.09	N/A	N/A
Rockville, MD	23.37 miles		\$25.05	N/A	N/A
Norfolk, VA	193.78 miles		N/A	\$96.00	\$350.00
Baltimore, MD	43.16 miles		N/A	\$28.00	N/A
Durham, NC	258.17 miles		N/A	N/A	206.50
Quantico, VA	36.36 miles		N/A	\$44-50.00	N/A
*Morgantown, WV	210.92		N/A	\$60-118.00	N/A
*Atlantic City, NJ	179.45 miles		N/A	\$98.00	412.00
Bolling AFB, DC	7.79 miles		\$10.30	N/A	N/A
Ft. Belvoir, VA	20.41 miles		\$35.00*	N/A	N/A
College Park, MD	11.65 miles		\$17.05	N/A	N/A
*Goldsboro, NC	278.81 miles		N/A	N/A	206.50
Washington DC (Walter Reed)	5.56 miles		\$10.30	N/A	N/A
Ft. Meyer, VA	3.97 miles		\$12.00*	N/A	N/A
Ft. Detrick	54.50 miles		N/A	N/A	N/A

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Destination	Approximate Mileage from WRO	Rental Vehicle	Taxi 1	Amtrak (one way)	Airfare (round-trip)
Aberdeen, MD	68.46 miles		N/A	\$62.00	N/A
Leesburg, VA	40.94 miles		\$70.00	\$9.00-21.00	N/A

* Amtrak does not offer a direct route to Morgantown, WV. The closet station is Connellsville,PA which is 40 miles from Morgantown, WV.

* Amtrak does not offer a direct route to Atlantic City, NJ. The closet station in Philadelphia, PA. The commuter would have to travel on a commuter train which costs \$4.00 one way.

* Amtrak does not offer a direct route to Goldsboro, NC. Train arrives in Rocky Mount, NC which is 60 miles from Goldsboro.

* Amtrak does not offer a direct route to Leesburg, VA. Traveler has two options: 1) Travel to Harpers Ferry, WV or 2) Travel to Manassas, VA .; Traveler must catch a taxi from either Ferry, WV or Manassas to get to Leesburg, VA.

Cities in red represent locations in Virginia; VA taxi cab companies were called to obtain prices. Metered cabs were cheaper compared to DC cabs where the traveler is charged according to zones and interstate prices.

All data was collected from National Travel, Inc. Driving time is based on driving 60 mph and was collected from www.mapquest.com.

Rental vehicle price does not include \$5 per day surcharge or gasoline. There in an unlimited mileage limited for the vehicles.

Washington Regional Office Rental Vehicle Details

Three rental vehicle companies with facilities close to the Washington Regional Office were contacted for specific comparisons with those provided by National Travel, Inc. National Travel, Inc. prices varied according to time of year and availability. The same is true for the contacted Washington D.C. rental vehicle companies. The following prices reflect a two day travel agenda on or about December 3-5, 2003.

Thrifty Vehicle Rental: \$41.99 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Mid-Sized vehicle) \$36.99 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Compact vehicle)

Thrifty Vehicle Rental offers pick-up from train stations and hotels.

Hertz Vehicle Rental: \$53.00 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Mid-sized vehicle) \$48/00 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Compact vehicle)

Enterprise Vehicle Rental: \$45.00 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Mid-sized vehicle) \$43.00 per day w/unlimited mileage and insurance. (Compact insurance)

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Enterprise Vehicle Rental will match the lowest rate for other vehicle rental companies. The contract number for Enterprise Vehicle Rental Government Office is G16Y055.

Information From FLRA Regional Offices that do not have Government Vehicles;

Atlanta Regional Office

The Atlanta Regional Office has never had a Government vehicle and its employees generally use their own vehicles for local travel. Although the Atlanta Regional Office is located near a subway station and bus line, these are rarely used because the sites to which the employees need to go are not obtainable by these travel methods in Atlanta. The total trips for case processing for FY 2000 - 2003 was 183. 121 of these trips were made with rental vehicles while the other 52 were made by air transportation and rental vehicles. During FY 2003, the Atlanta Regional Office was allocated \$62,000.00 for travel and spent only \$28,004. In FY 2002, the allocation was \$62,000.00 and the travel expenditure was \$52,711.00. In FY 2001, \$65,000.00 was allocated and \$50,122.00 was spent. The allocation for FY 2000 was \$55,000.00 and the expenditures for travel were \$52,604.00.

Chicago Regional Office

The Chicago Regional Office has never had a Government vehicle. Public transportation has always been available in all jurisdiction areas and is readily accessible. Sometimes public transportation is not timely in the suburbs and the Chicago Regional Office investigation agents prefer to use their own vehicles. There are 9 employees at the Chicago Regional Office who use their private vehicles for local travel. Rental vehicles are used approximately 10 times a year, 6 of which are generally used by the Cleveland Office employees.

Dallas Regional Office

The Dallas Regional Office has never had a Government vehicle. The Dallas Regional Office location and many of its peripheral travel places in Texas and most of its jurisdiction areas have limited public transportation. There are even some travel areas which have no airline flights. Virtually all of the Dallas Regional Office investigation agents use their own vehicles for local travel in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The Dallas Regional Office also rents vehicles and has found that even a day rental is less expensive than taking taxis because of the large distances between areas in the southwest.

COMPARISON WITH SIMILAR FEDERAL AGENCIES

National Labor Relations Board

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) currently has 60 leased Government vehicles (one at Headquarters and 59 at the NLRB field offices which cost approximately \$200,000.00 (approximately \$165 a month for each field office and 10 cents per mile for each leased vehicle) in FY 2002. Field Office vehicles are leased through a cost reimbursable interagency agreement with the General Services Administration Fleet Management System. Like the FLRA, the NLRB uses its Government vehicles for case processing travel. Daily management of the vehicles is performed by the Office Manager under the supervision of either the Assistant to the Regional Director or Regional Attorney who reports to the Regional Director. The NLRB does not require its employees to have a vehicle as a condition of employment.

According to the NLRB Inspector General, 2/3 of the 60 NLRB Government vehicles were driven less than the minimum miles and the Agency overpaid 100 of the 211 POV mileage reimbursements.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

The EEOC has approximately 2000 employees in its 52 field locations and does use Government vehicles for case processing travel. The EEOC currently leases 61 Government vehicles from GSA. 59 of these vehicles are at the field offices and 2 are at Headquarters. During the 1990s, the EEOC conducted regular administrative reviews including the review of mileage logs, compliance with applicable regulations, cost of leasing vs. use analysis which resulted in an overall reduction of Government vehicles in the field. Several investigations were performed over the last few years by the EEOC Office of the Inspector General pertaining to issues related to inappropriate use of Government vehicles by staff.

The Office of Special Counsel (OSC)

The OSC is a small Federal adjudicatory agency with approximately 106 FTEs. For the past three years, the OSC has not leased Government vehicles. When mission requirements require travel by a vehicle, the OSC investigators either rent vehicles or use their own vehicles. Otherwise, they use public transportation, depending on the location.

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Conclusion

Over the past three years, the four regional offices that used Government vehicles cost the Office of General Counsel over \$42,000.00. On a yearly basis, from FY 2000 to August, FY 2003, these regional offices spent the individual amounts listed on page _____. All of the subject Regional Offices felt their travel budget was sufficient but would need to be increased if telephone investigations were eliminated.

Although all of the subject regional offices maintained some statistics on the use of Government vehicles, they were not standardized or detailed enough to provide a reliable basis for cost effectiveness. Data related to the use of rental and privately owned vehicles by investigation agents needs to be available to properly compare Government vehicle costs to the use of public (and private) transportation. The information obtained by the Inspector General from the subject regional offices, National Travel, National Business Center and local rental, taxi, bus and train companies can only be considered approximate.

The basis of the final decision on whether to continue the use of Government vehicles at the Boston, Denver, and Washington D.C. Regional Offices or decide to use public transportation or rental vehicles should be based on the lowest cost to Government. However, it is very important for management to acknowledge that the statistics of the last three years may be lower than what they will be the next few years because of the fact that the Washington Regional Office had to transfer a significant amount of cases because of the absence of a Regional Director and Senior Regional Attorney. The Boston Regional Office and Denver Regional Office also had Washington Regional Office cases, which required travel to the Washington geographical jurisdiction area, transferred to them. These facts have reduced the usage of the government vehicles in all three Regional Offices. Another factor which should be considered is the fact that all three Regional Office s employees felt that having a government vehicle supported timeliness in case processing, cost benefits in holding hearings⁸ and dealing with representation cases. Having a government vehicle also provided convenience to employees which is a human capital asset.

While most subject Regional Office investigation agents stated that having a Government vehicle was a convenience and supported the timeliness of their case processing and associated travel, most of these individuals stated that they could adjust to using rental vehicles if the processing of getting such a vehicle was not time consuming or difficult.

⁸Representation case hearings require the transport of a significant amount of material and often involve more than one investigation agent traveling to the designated area.

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Although management and employees from the Denver Regional Office expressed the strong need of a Government vehicle to conduct their mission, the fact that the Government vehicle was used for only 8 trips during FY 2002 and 8 trips during FY 2003 does not support the need. However, the fact that there was no General Counsel and 25 Regional Office vacancies in FY2002 and part of FY 2003, the DHS moratorium and reactions to the proposed Collins Bill had an influence on case investigations filed and processed. The use of Government vehicles for local and reasonable driving to and from jurisdictional locations at the Boston, Denver, and Washington Regional Office provides a convenience and supports timeliness for case processing hearings and training by the Regional Offices. The Boston and Denver Regional Office statistics and Inspector General interviews indicated a reduction in the use of Government vehicles over the last three years and the preference and/or willingness of several employees to use their own vehicles rather than the government vehicle or a rental vehicle. While the Washington Regional Office used their Government vehicles the most, it has the best source of public transportation and proximity of rental vehicles. The cost of having, maintaining and facility parking is more at the Washington Regional Office than at the other two subject regional offices. The cost for maintaining the Government vehicle at the Washington Regional Office was exceeding high in FY 2002 because of 3 accidents and the need to repair the vehicle after each accident.⁹ Also, at each subject Regional Office there were one or two employee who used the government vehicle much more than others.

Management must also consider the facts that the Atlanta, Dallas and Chicago Regional Offices do not and have not had Government vehicles and handle their travel requirements without a negative effect. Also, the San Francisco Office, having reviewed their statistics of the use of Government vehicle, eliminated its use. It is also important to consider that similar adjudicatory agencies (EEO and the NLRB) are using government vehicles for their investigations but the Office of General Counsel uses rental vehicles instead. Another consideration is the fact that the FLRA Office of General Counsel uses telephone investigations as well as on-site unfair labor practice charge investigations which has and can considerably affect the need and cost of Regional Office employee travel if these telephone investigations are eliminated.

The current data maintained by the Boston, Denver and Washington Regional Offices regarding the use of Government vehicles does not support the expressed need for continuing the leasing of these vehicles. Although maintaining Government vehicles at the subject Regional Office locations provides convenience and saves some travel time, the use of rental vehicles, taxis or public transportation is a viable alternative. The money spent for the leasing, parking and maintenance of government vehicles, could be used for additional subject Regional Office travel and, perhaps, provide the chance for more onsite investigations.

The majority of unfair labor practice charges for which government vehicles are used by the Denver and Washington Regional Office are associated with military organizations. Since the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 2004 was just approved by Congress and provides the Department of Defense the

⁹If there is an accident while using a rental vehicle, if insurance is paid for, the rental vehicle company, not the FLRA, would be responsible for fixing damaged vehicles,

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authority to establish a new labor relations and appeals process, this will probably affect (reduce) the Department of Defense related unfair labor practice charge workload of the FLRA Regional Offices in the future.

Irregardless of the management decision of whether Government vehicles should be retained or eliminated, the Office of the General Counsel management should require standardized and more detailed data for the Regional Office s travel expenses use of Government vehicles as well as other modes of travel transportation (rental vehicles, taxies and other types of transportation including personal vehicles) for case processing and other mission related activities so that future decisions can be based on valid, standardized, cost statistics. If management decides to keep government vehicles, policy should be provided to eliminate misuse and standardize appropriate data for decision making.

: The use of Government vehicles by the Boston, Denver and Washington D.C. regional offices provides a convenience and supports the timeliness of traveling to processes cases, hold hearings and provide training. It is definitely considered a human capital asset by the employees. Over the last two years the use of the Government vehicle by the subject offices has diminished significantly. The Boston Regional Office has out of state jurisdiction areas which are easier and take less time to drive to than take public or air transportation. The Denver Regional Office is located about a mile from public transportation, has restricted train and bus service and had the least amount of usage of the government vehicle (majority of employees preferred to drive their own vehicles which they routinely drove to work.) While the Washington Regional Office has the most usage of the Government vehicle to get to customer locations that are difficult or expensive to reach by public transportation and/or taxis. and are easier to get to by vehicle driving, it has two rental vehicle locations within one block of the office. Because of 4 accidents involving the Washington Regional Office Government vehicle in FY 2002 -2003. Their travel cost was excessive because of maintenance and repair charges and an expensive parking space charge.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Finding 1. The use of the Government vehicles by the Boston, Denver, and Washington Regional Office has diminished over the last three years for various reasons and cost effectiveness is questionable. Public transportation and/or rental cars are available to all offices .

Recommendation 1. Management should consider eliminating government vehicles from the three subject regional offices at the end of FY 2004. The subject Regional Office travel budgets should retain the money and use it for rental vehicles when driving is necessary and/or other modes of public transportation or air travel. If there are future changes which increase these offices caseload significantly in the future and management can support the need of a Government vehicle, it could be reinstated.

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Finding 2. The FLRA does not have internal travel policy and guidance for employees nor does it maintain standardized statistics to allow the proper budget allocations and monitoring of travel costs for all modes of transportation in its components and subcomponents..

Recommendation 2a.. Because of the significant amount of travel by some Agency component and subcomponent employees, appropriate Agency internal travel policy and statistics need to be defined and maintained by all three components of the Agency to properly assess travel costs and budget travel allocations.

2b. FLRA Budget and Finance Division Travel Officer should semiannually monitor travel transportation mileage logs and related costs, travel safety and security incidents and related costs and provide internal semi-annual reports to the Chairman, FLRA, General Counsel, Chairman of FISIP: and Director of Administrative Law Judges