

deployment. One Federal agency pointed out that the policy requirements in this section, which stated that this regulation applies to all Executive branch agencies, conflicted with the statement in the Summary of the proposed rule, which stated that the eTS will require all agencies subject to the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) to begin migration to the eTS as soon as possible. GSA appreciates and agrees with this comment. As a result, GSA has revised the section to clarify that this rule applies to all agencies as defined in section 301-1.1, with the exception of the Department of Defense and the Government of the District of Columbia.

One agency stated that because agencies may phase in the eTS at different times for its various organizational components, the requirement should be that an employee must use the eTS when the agency makes the service available to the employee. GSA agrees with this comment. The regulation's intent is that employees will begin using eTS when the service becomes available within an agency, unless an exception applies under section 301-50.4, 301-73.102 or 301-73.104, and the agency will make it available no later than September 30, 2006. As a result, section 301-50.3 has been modified.

Section 301-50.4 May I Be Granted an Exception to the Required Use of the eTravel Service?

The section heading in the proposed rule, "Who in my agency has the authority to waive the required use of a Travel Management Service or the eTravel Service," has been revised to read, "May I be granted an exception to the required use of the eTravel Service?"

Section 301-50.5 What Is My Liability If I Do Not Use My Agency's TMS or the eTravel Service and an Exception Has Not Been Approved?

Section 301-50.6 Are There Any Limits on the Travel Arrangements I May Make?

One agency stated that sections 301-50.5 and 301-50.6 should be reversed. GSA is not persuaded that this change is needed, and the order of these sections remains unchanged.

Section 301-50.6 Are There Any Limits on the Travel Arrangements I May Make?

Limitations On The Use of Travel Management Services. This section imposes certain requirements and limitations on arranging for travel services. One agency stated that GSA should clarify that there are other

regulations, contract provisions, etc., with which both travelers and TMS providers must comply when making common carrier, lodging, or car rental reservations. GSA has considered this change and has added a sentence to this section to acknowledge that there may be additional limits on the travel arrangements that a traveler makes.

Section 301-52.3 Am I Required To File a Travel Claim in a Specific Format and Must the Claim Be Signed?

This section describes the process for filing a travel claim. One agency questioned whether this section applies to infrequent Government travelers, Government employees traveling for an agency/bureau other than the employing agency, and invitational travelers. GSA's answer is yes. The use of eTS applies to all travelers subject to the FTR, with the exception of employees of the Department of Defense and the Government of the District of Columbia. However, an agency head or his/her designee may grant individual case-by-case exceptions to the use of eTS in accordance with sections 301-73.102 and 301-73.104 of this regulation. In addition, if a traveler is unable to use a portion of the eTS, (e.g., reservation services), the traveler is not exempt from the requirement to use the remaining eTS components.

Section 301-73.2 What Are Our Responsibilities as Participants in the Federal Travel Management Program?

This section defines what an agency must do under the Federal travel management program. One agency asked how would an agency support eTS in an "efficient" and "cost effective" manner and determine that support is "efficient" and "cost effective" other than through normal contracting procedures. GSA's response is that an agency can determine if its current TMS is cost effective by comparing its current service costs and benefits to the cost of services and benefits provided by the eTS contract. This will be accomplished through a competitive task order evaluation among the eTS contractors.

Section 301-73.100 Must We Require Employees To Use the eTravel Service?

This section sets the dates by which agencies must implement the eTS. eTS implementation is when an agency places a task order with an eTS vendor. It was unclear to one agency what GSA meant by the parenthetical "if applicable" in the note to this section. GSA agrees that the words "if applicable" may have been confusing to the reader and has therefore removed

the use of these words throughout this regulation.

Two agencies requested more clarification in regard to the statement "Agency-wide use of the eTS accommodating FedTrip through September 30, 2004, and agency-contracted TMC support * * *". GSA provides the following clarification: The Department of Transportation's Governmentwide contract with FedTrip will expire on September 30, 2004. Until that time, the eTS will accommodate agencies' use of FedTrip. Upon expiration of the FedTrip contract, the eTS-provided on-line booking engine(s) (OBEs) will become the designated OBE(s) for all agencies as defined in section 301-1.1 of this regulation, except for the Government of the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense. In addition, the note to this section has been revised to clarify that agencies may continue to use non-eTS government-contracted TMC services.

Section 307-73.101 How Must We Prepare To Implement the eTravel Service?

This section outlines the steps agencies should take to prepare for eTS migration. One agency stated that budgetary and personnel allocations should not be part of the FTR and that the eTS final rule should establish goals or targets for implementing eTS, but not direct agencies on budgetary or personnel matters. GSA agrees that normally the FTR would not address how an agency should arrange its travel related budget or personnel requirements. In this instance, however, GSA believes it is very important for agencies to prepare for the eTS migration/implementation by establishing their budget and personnel resources. GSA did, however, remove the provisions as a requirement under paragraph (c) and established it as a "Note" to provide guidance to agencies.

301-73.102 May We Grant an Employee an Exception From the Use of the eTravel Service?

301-73.104 May Further Exceptions to the Required Use of the eTravel Service Be Approved?

Section 301-73.102 governs agency approval of exceptions to the use of the eTS on an individual case-by-case basis; section 301-73.104 governs approval of exceptions on an agency-wide basis, or a sub-component thereof. Two agencies stated that the exceptions in the proposed rule were too limited and that an agency might have need for exceptions other than those listed. GSA