

State Travel Office News



In the Spotlight

State Travel Office Fourth Anniversary

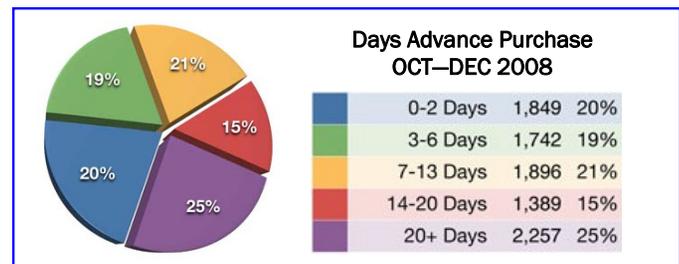
April 4, 2009, marks the four-year anniversary of the State Travel Office. The STO began by serving Department of Administration travelers, followed by a phased rollout to all the other Executive Branch departments. Each department brought a fresh point of view and many great ideas as they began using the STO. Process improvements and challenges are part of the daily routine. Ideas and suggestions come from a variety of sources including the monthly Process Improvement and [Travel Coordinator](#) meetings, [surveys](#), emails to the State staff at doa.dof.statetraveloffice@alaska.gov, and even from the [on-line complaint process](#).

The opening of the STO enabled the State to negotiate contracts with Alaska and Northwest Airlines, as well as with rural air carriers. These contracts bring savings to STO participants.

However, the most significant change due to the STO is the transparency it brings to managed travel. Alaska is one of the new leaders among states in managed travel because of the many best practices the State uses to manage travel such as the corporate credit card program, the use of the Travel Management Company, an on-line booking tool for inter-

ested departments and travelers, and the State travel contracts for air, hotel, and car reservations. The State is better informed now about travel expenditures, and as a result, is able to make better purchasing decisions using this knowledge.

This is exemplified in the chart below that demonstrates the departments' advance purchase policies that save the State significant dollars in travel spend. The greatest percentage of tickets is purchased 20+ days in advance. According to Alaska Airlines, this was not the case prior to the STO.



The STO has undergone many changes and improvements since it first opened. Read the [Customer Service Information and Standards](#) "STO optional for:" to see some of these changes. When the STO opened, all travel arrangements had to be done through the STO, but we listened to departments and worked with the contractor to make these changes.

Changes mean constant updates to the [Travel Request Process](#) and the [Customer Service Information and Standards](#), as well as the [Booking Request Form](#) and [Instructions](#).

Airline Schedule Changes

It's that time of year again when airlines make schedule changes.

When a carrier notifies the STO about a schedule change, the information is forwarded to email addresses in the traveler profile. Many profiles do not contain the traveler's personal email address.

It is always a good idea to reconfirm travel arrangements 48 hours in advance of departure by checking on line or calling the airline.

Don't be caught going to the airport too early, or even worse, too late only to find out the flight already departed.

Inside this Issue

- In the Spotlight—State Travel Office Fourth Anniversary
- Airline Schedule Changes
- Test Your STO Knowledge
- Travel Management Contract RFP
- ResX Upgrade
- Travel Fees

Test your STO Knowledge
\$25 Starbucks Card
March Winner

Susan Marie Ault
DOT Fairbanks



Upcoming Travel Desk Training

Date: April 23, 2009
From: 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

In Juneau

Sign up when posted at:
<http://fin.admin.state.ak.us/dof/training/index.jsp>

Out of Juneau
Conference line available,
but limited.

Sign up by Email:
kathy.adair@alaska.gov

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State Travel Manager
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Email:
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See us on the Web!
<http://fin.admin.state.ak.us/dof/sto/index.jsp>

To subscribe - sign up at:
<http://list.state.ak.us/guest/RemoteListSummary/travelofficeinfo>



Test Your STO Knowledge

There will be a random drawing for a prize from the answers submitted by April 15, 2009 to: doa.dof.statetraveloffice@alaska.gov

1. Which airline contracts have brought savings to the State since the opening of the STO?
2. When should travel arrangements be reconfirmed?
3. Name three ResX enhancements for booking air travel.
4. How much is ERA's fee to process a refund for refundable tickets?
5. Name one helpful guide in finding hotel parking fees.

Prize winnings from the contest are considered non-cash compensation, and will be included as W2 earnings.

Travel Management Contract RFP

The Department of Administration, Division of General Services, is conducting a procurement to award a new contract for providing travel management services to the State of Alaska.

The State's first statewide travel management service contract expires in November 2009. The contract term was five years, during which time the contractor, US-Travel, made travel arrangements for Executive Branch travelers, and Medicaid and

AlaskaCare beneficiaries. The Request for Proposal (RFP) to secure a new contractor is posted on the [Online Public Notice](#) web site.

Interested vendors have submitted proposals which are being reviewed by a proposal evaluation committee comprised of a department travel coordinator, and representatives from Medicaid and the Division of Finance. Two of the major components of the RFP are an en-

hanced booking tool and a travel expense management system that will integrate with the booking tool.

A Special Note of Interest
DOT/PF has web site with helpful information on [Anchorage](#), [Fairbanks](#), and [Rural airports](#), including arrival and departure schedules.

ResX Upgrade

On March 5, 2009, RESX upgraded to a new version. Upon login, users see changes to the air shopping interface immediately. Several changes have been made to enhance the user's experience within the tool. Travelers will notice the following changes when shopping for Air:

- Air Option Display—Equipment information is shown with a tool tip for decoding; seat icon and map located in the class/cabin column; penalty information located in the column with the "Add to Cart" button; all air icons

are displayed in the "Select" column.

- Complete Options—The tab for *Priced Air Itineraries* tab is now referred to as *Complete Options* and the *Flight Schedules* tab no longer exists.
- Option Builder—The addition of the *Option Builder* is to allow for a more customizable and consistent method to price and build a flight itinerary regardless of search type. The dedicated area for the new Option Builder replaces the previous "Current Option"

and "Currently Selected Flights" containers.

- Air Matrix—The Air Matrix is now available for both Complete Options and individual flight options (City Pair tabs) and located below the Option Builder container. The Air Matrix in the Complete Options tab has not changed.
- Multiple Fare Display—If multiple fares exist for a single itinerary, only one air option will be displayed, but all the fares will be available for viewing using a fare tab.

Travel Fees

ERA Refund Fee

Effective October 2008, ERA began charging a fee of \$10 to process refunds on refundable tickets.

The refund fee is per ticket and will be deducted from the ticket amount.

Airline Baggage Fees

Several US carriers charge additional fees for extra pieces of checked baggage for domestic travel.

USTravel has posted an updated [chart](#) effective March 18, 2009, showing carrier baggage rates.

Hotel Parking Fees

Many have asked how to find information as to which hotels charge for parking.

The STO [Preferred Hotel](#) list contains valuable information which includes parking charged by hotels.