

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 4, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #82: TAKE HOME VEHICLES

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Smedberg's request for data on the number of take-home vehicles and how far these take-home vehicles are permitted to travel outside of the City.

There are currently 188 authorized take-home vehicles assigned to City employees including: Police - 152; Fire - 16; Sheriff - 10; T&ES - 7; and Recreation - 1; Planning and Zoning - 1, and Commonwealth's Attorney - 1.

Take-home vehicles are largely assigned to public safety personnel, or other employees who have emergency response or 24 x 7 types of City responsibilities. Of the public safety take-home vehicles, 35 are marked cruisers assigned to the Police Department's In-City Take Home Program. This program was initiated in the early 1990's and allows police officers with marked vehicles, who live in the City, to use the vehicles for errands and in-City trips to provide a visible police presence, as well as to serve as a crime deterrent. Positive feedback about this program from residents and elected officials led to the expansion of the program in FY 1996 through the retention of existing police vehicles.

An additional 35 marked take-home cruisers are currently assigned to police officers regardless in what jurisdiction the officer resides. These officers include those assigned to the K-9 Unit, Special Operations, School Resource Officers, the Motorcycle Unit and on-call Crime Scene Investigation officers. Take-home vehicles are assigned to this group of officers to provide rapid response times to emergencies within the City. The remaining take-homes are unmarked cruisers assigned to command staff and detectives, who also respond back to the City for emergencies.

City Administrative Regulation (A.R.) 7-3 provides guidelines which must be followed by operators of take-home vehicles (with the exception of marked Police cruisers included in In-City Take-Home Program) including:

1. City vehicles are to be used to conduct City business only;
2. Take-home vehicles (except unmarked Police vehicles) are to be marked with the City seal and include "public use only" language in the appropriate

location on the vehicle;

3. When in use in the field or during a City business trip, pool cars or take-home vehicles may be taken to restaurants for meals and to other non-City facilities for meetings and similar City-business related activities or events. City vehicles are not to be used for routine personal errands; and
4. When commuting with a take-home vehicle, the driver must take a direct route between home and work, however the driver is permitted to make brief “convenience” stops in route.

Officers participating in the In-City Take Home Program are permitted to use their assigned vehicles for personal use within the City limits.

We do not have regulations or guidelines that pertain to the distance or number of miles outside the City a take-home or other City vehicle is permitted to be driven. Staff are permitted to take City vehicles to conference and meetings. Sometimes these are in Tidewater, Richmond or Roanoke or in other nearby states. With respect to take-home vehicles we know that the average daily commuting distance for the Police Department, as the largest user of take-home vehicles, is approximately 18 miles each way for those officers assigned take-home vehicles who live outside of the City limits. At this time, no other neighboring jurisdiction imposes a mileage restriction on take-home vehicles because the driving factor of assigning an employee a take-home is based on operational needs or the benefit to the jurisdiction, not on where the employee resides.

It should be noted that City vehicles are permitted to be used to take departmental clients, such as those residing in City group homes, to the movies or other social events.

The City Manager’s Fleet Management Improvement Team is currently reviewing all A.R.s related to the City’s fleet and the use of City vehicles and will make recommendations to the City Manager to update and revise the current A.R.s as they are written.