Calculating whether the Distance between Two Locations Meets the Canonically Specified Travel Limit - 6 /Aug/ 2019

Say, someone travels from his hometown to another town, and the distance from his hometown to the outermost limits of the town that is his destination does not meet the canonically specified travel limit (masāfat sharʿī ,[1] but the distance to the particular point within the town that is his final destination does. Now, the question is this: Should this person calculate the distance to the outermost limits of the town (in which case he is not a traveler in the canonically defined sense) or to the particular point within the town that is his final destination (in which case he is a traveler in the canonically defined sense)?

A.| To determine whether the distance of one's travel meets the canonically specified travel limit (masāfat sharʿī), one must calculate the distance between the outermost limit of the town of one's origin at which point one departs the town to the outermost limit of the town of one's destination at which point one enters the town (not the particular point within the town to which one is headed). The only exception to this rule is if one's true destination is not actually a point within the town but a point outside and independent of yet near the town, such that in the common perception of the general public the town is not seen as one's true destination but an intermediate point through which one must pass to arrive at one's destination. Such is the case with regard to certain colleges, hospitals, and military bases that are situated outside of certain towns and are viewed as destinations independent of their adjacent towns or cities. In the latter case, the travel distance is calculated from the outermost limit of the town from which one departs to the particular point at which one's travel terminates.

[1] The canonically specified travel limit is 41 kilometers. This is the canonically specified distance for a two-way travel. In order to satisfy this travel limit, the outbound leg of the travel must constitute at least half of this distance, that is, 20.5 kilometers. Thus, if one intends to embark on a travel that spans at least 41 kilometers (20.5 km of which is in the outbound direction), one is deemed a traveler upon leaving the canonically designated area of proximity (ḥadd tarakhkhuṣ) of one's hometown or town of residence. A 'traveler' is prohibited from fasting (with a few exceptions) and his four-segment canonic prayers are reduced to two segments.