

MEETING MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
REGULAR TOURISM MARKETING DISTRICT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025
COURTYARD SANTA MONICA – 425 Colorado Ave, Santa Monica, CA 90401

Call to Order: Chairman Atallah called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Chairman Atallah called for self-introductions. TMD Committee Members present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Tourism Marketing District Committee (TMD) Present: Member Younes Atallah, Member Aileen Carreon, Member Cameron Haseli, Member Juan Viramontes, Member Simon Fricker, Member Danielle Goller, Member Cara Stoffel and Member Sonia Metz Van Cott

Also Present: SMTT President & Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Director of Marketing John Lendman and SMTT Administrative Assistant Bella Cifuentes

Absent: Member Karina Sedigh

Public Comment: Chairman Atallah called for public comment; there was none.

Introduction of Brown Act and Executive Officer Committee (EOC) Voting Rules: SMTT President & Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns outlined the Brown Act and voting rules for the Executive Officer Committee. This was introduced to all newly appointed Members with Member Karina Sedigh absent.

Approval of the November 12, 2024, TMD Meeting Minutes: Secretary/Treasurer Carreon presented the November 12, 2024, meeting minutes. Member Danielle Goller moved to approve the minutes and Member Juan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Members Diego Ruiz de Porras and Karina Sedigh.

Acceptance of the TMD Collections Memo Financials: Secretary/Treasurer Carreon presented the TMD Collections Memo. Member Cameron Haseli moved to accept, and Member Danielle Goller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Karina Sedigh absent.

Vote on the Increase Start Date From 07/01/25 to 01/01/26 and Tier Collection Increase for 01/01/26: Secretary/Treasurer Carreon presented the TMD Collections Memo. Member Juan Viramontes moved to accept, and Member Danielle Goller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Member Karina Sedigh absent.

SMTT Staff Updates:

SMTT Director of Marketing John Lendman, updated the Board on SMTT's marketing initiatives, beginning with the successful "Extra Bedroom" Program (Nov 11, 2024 - Feb 10, 2025), in which 24 hotels participated in both 2023 and 2024 by offering discounted rates to residents hosting visitors.

Lendman then highlighted the Cirque du Soleil Dedicated Content Program (Oct 19, 2024 - Jan 5, 2025), which leveraged the "Kooza" show with hotel offers and business discounts. This effort featured 48 business specials and three e-blasts reaching 15,915 recipients at a 34% open rate. In addition, dedicated pages for Holiday and New Year's events on santamonica.com attracted 2,804 and 2,103 visitors, respectively.

Turning to media campaigns, Lendman reported that the Noble Studios campaign has driven 80,177 Partner Referrals year-to-date and 12,454 in December, primarily from CA, AZ, WA, NJ, and FL. Campaign performance is at 39% of its goal for Partner Referrals and 45% for Organic Search (July '24 - June '25).

Paid search conversions are up 14% year-over-year, with the nightlife campaign experiencing a 199% year-over-year increase in conversion rate.

SMTT's Fall Media Campaign with Datary (Aug 15 - Nov 30, 2024) achieved 4.8M impressions, 8,133 clicks, and an 88% video completion rate. Concurrently, the Fall Media Campaign with Noble Studios focused on increasing weekday occupancy and positioning Santa Monica as a luxury destination.

Shifting to community engagement, Lendman noted that Santa MoniCARES collected over 1,500 pairs of socks, 1,171 clothing items, and 183 food items during the Holiday Donation Drives.

Finally, Lendman reviewed the wildfire messaging strategy, which was implemented in three phases: Phase 1 – Initial Response (January 16-23, 2025), Phase 2 – Dine LA (January 24 – February 7, 2025), and Phase 3 – Santa Monica is Open for Business (February 8 – March 3, 2025). SMTT produced footage emphasizing that Santa Monica is open and partnered with Visit California on the “Calling All Californians” and “California Love” campaigns, targeting drive markets via digital, streaming audio, and digital out-of-home (OOH) channels.

SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, updated the Board on SMTT's recent communications efforts. Before the LA wildfires, SMTT secured substantial earned media coverage. In Escape, online coverage of Regent Santa Monica Beach achieved a Unique Visitor Metric (UVM) of 3,852,360 and an Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) of \$35,634.33. The print version resulted in a UVM of 2,494,000 and an AVE of \$23,069.50. Additionally, Travel Leisure named Santa Monica the Best Beach City Destination in North America, contributing a UVM of 14,373,068 with an AVE of \$132,950.88.

Salisbury highlighted several successful FAM trips and media visits with influencers and media representatives, including Melissa Male (US), Christine Roberti (Offshore Magazine, Canada), Arushi Sakhuja (The Style List, India), Kristie Kellahan (Traveller, Australia), Edmund Vallance (Freelance, US), and Jamie Aranoff (SKI Magazine, US).

The Visit California ILTM Cannes/Paris media track resulted in 20 appointments with key global luxury media. SMTT also hosted a media dinner and networking events in Paris with 25 media representatives, in addition to a bespoke influencer event highlighting Santa Monica beach experiences. Content from these initiatives will be shared on social media, including an activation with Regent Santa Monica Beach.

Salisbury announced that Santa Monica's Brand Refresh won an HSMAI Bronze Adrian Award for Best Brand Campaign. She noted that Santa Monica Travel & Tourism earned 18 prestigious industry awards and accolades for the destination in 2024.

In response to the recent LA wildfires, Salisbury detailed SMTT's communications strategy, which included activating a crisis banner on santamonica.com, sending daily community newsletters, engaging on social media, issuing a press release about Santa MoniCARES, and publishing a blog post with specials for first responders and evacuees.

To rebuild a positive media narrative, SMTT launched a paid social media campaign featuring influencers The Goosby Twins (29.5K followers), Your Bucket List Guide (36.3K followers), and Megan Snedden (67.1K followers). Looking ahead, Salisbury outlined upcoming FAM trips and media visits, including Unzela Kahn from the Daily Express (UK) and a France Group FAM involving various outlets.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, updated the Board on key activities, starting with Signature Travel Week (Nov 11-14, 2024), where SMTT engaged with advisors to promote new hotel offerings. Sigalus additionally noted the Cook Islands FAM (Dec 2-3, 2024) hosted travel managers from Europe, followed by participation in the Virtuoso Continental Europe Forum (Dec 1-2, 2024) and ILTM Cannes (Dec 2-6, 2024).

Looking ahead, Sigalus announced the VCA Canada Reverse Sales Mission (Feb 10-12, 2025), the Dnata Roadshow Middle East (Feb 16-20, 2025), Connections Luxury Middle East (Feb 21-26, 2025), the UK

Sales and Media Mission (March 17-21, 2025), and the Brand USA Route 66 European Roadshow (March 23-28, 2025).

Sigalus reported the Hotelbeds Marketing Campaign (Sept 2024 – March 2025) saw a notable 49% booking increase and added that Bonotel 2025 has early confirmed bookings.

Regarding group sales, Sigalus highlighted the Client Advisory Board (Nov 7-9, 2024), which hosted meeting professionals, followed by participation in the VCA PME Roadshow (Nov 12, 2024), ConferenceDirect Forum (Nov 13-15, 2024), and SITE SoCal Holiday Event (Dec 12-13, 2024). SMTT will attend the C&IT Agency Forum (Feb 6-7, 2025) in London, Sigalus concluded.

CEO Update:

SMTT President and CEO Misti Kerns discussed the future outlook for the Santa Monica hotel market. She indicated that room revenue is expected to decline by 5.4% in 2024, with a rebound of 3.8% projected for 2025. This growth will result from a balanced increase in demand (1.8%) and Average Daily Rate (ADR) (1.9%).

However, Kerns warned that the annual occupancy rate is forecasted to decline by 1.4% in 2025, as supply growth is expected to outpace demand. She noted that the travel sector will benefit from a strong economy in 2025, with GDP growth projected at 2.8% in 2024 and 2.6% in 2025.

Kerns attributed the occupancy dip primarily to an increase in supply, particularly from the opening of the 167-room Regent Santa Monica Beach in October 2024, which underwent a \$150 million renovation.

In summary, while there are positive growth indicators for the Santa Monica market, Kerns emphasized the need to monitor challenges related to increased supply in the coming years.

For the Good of the Order:

President and CEO of SMTT Misti Kerns, encouraged committee members to maintain a consistent messaging strategy, emphasizing that Santa Monica is an ideal destination for recharging.

Misti Kerns, President and CEO of SMTT, assured the committee that they will distribute the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) formulas and research, which will provide insights into past programs and the percentage allocations associated with committee members.

Adjournment: Chairman Atallah adjourned the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

Next Tourism Marketing District Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Santa Monica Travel & Tourism works to strengthen our local economy by enhancing and promoting our community as a distinctive, compelling and welcoming travel destination.

OUR VISION

To ensure Santa Monica is recognized as the premier beach-city destination in the world.

OUR BRAND PROMISE

Santa Monica... an unforgettable beach city experience filled with eye-catching people, cutting edge culture and bold innovations. It's the essence of the California lifestyle.