

**MEETING MINUTES  
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)  
SPECIAL TOURISM MARKETING DISTRICT COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026**

**SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM – 2427 MAIN STREET SANTA MONICA, CA 90405**

**Call to Order:** Vice Chair Juan Viramontes called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM.

**Roll Call & Self Introductions:** SMTT CEO Kerns called for self-introductions. Those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

**Present:** Vice Chair Juan Viramontes, Secretary/Treasurer Armando Camps, Member Simon Fricker, and Member Inessa Udovchenko.

**Also Present:** SMTT Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo, SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Executive Assistant Haylee Miller, The Eden General Manager Danielle Delcambre, Maison Twenty Seven General Manager Carl Jones, The Ambrose Hotel Manager Chance Reno, Regent Santa Monica Beach General Manager Adora Manalo, The Cottage Manager Juana Rosales, and Santa Monica Hotel Manager Andrea Melchor.

**Absent:** Chair Aileen Carreon, Member Shahid Kayani, Member Karina Sedigh, Member Daniel Gregory, and Member Sonia Metz were absent.

**Public Comment:** Vice Chair Viramontes called for public comment. There were no comments.

**Approval of the March 17, 2026, TMD Meeting Minutes:** Vice Chair Viramontes presented the March 17, 2026, meeting minutes. Member Fricker moved to approve the minutes, and Secretary/Treasurer Campos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Chair Carreon, Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Gregory, and Member Metz absent.

**Acceptance of the Year-to-Date Tourism Marketing District (TMD) Collections Memo:** Vice Chair Viramontes presented the Year-to-Date Tourism Marketing District (TMD) collections memo. Member Udovchenko moved to accept the memo and Secretary/Treasurer Campos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Chair Carreon, Member Kayani, Member Sedigh, Member Gregory, and Member Metz absent.

**SMTT Staff Updates:** SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo opened the meeting by announcing the upcoming 17th Annual Travel & Tourism Summit on June 4 at Casa del Mar and encouraged hotel partners, revenue managers, and hospitality teams to attend. The summit will feature presentations from Visit California President & CEO Caroline Beteta, appearing in her final SMTT summit before retiring in September, Tourism Economics representative Chuck Davison discussing domestic and international travel forecasts, and U.S. Travel Association representative Erik Hansen providing updates on federal tourism policy and advocacy efforts. Dowgwillo also announced a follow-up Zoom session focused specifically on Santa Monica tourism forecasts and economic outlooks for the next two years.

Dowgwillo previewed a Route 66 celebration “Santa Monica Welcome Texas to Route 66” taking place at the Santa Monica Pier, where a caravan will depart for Chicago as part of the anniversary festivities. The event will feature live entertainment, line dancing, and a 72-ounce steak challenge exhibition involving local Police and Fire Chiefs.

Dowgwillo announced the debut of the “End of the Trail Ale,” developed in partnership with Santa Monica Brew Works as part of the Route 66 Centennial campaign. The commemorative beer will launch during the pier event and receive limited distribution throughout the greater Los Angeles region.

Dowgwillo presented updates on the ongoing redesign of [santamonica.com](http://santamonica.com), including major renovations to hotel and business listing pages scheduled to launch during the first week of June. The redesigned pages will emphasize visual storytelling, neighborhood exploration, integrated business specials, and direct hotel booking search capabilities connected to hotel booking engines.

Dowgwillo highlighted the complimentary Threshold 360 virtual tour program available to hotel and business partners. The tours include interactive hotspots, meeting room information, and customizable experiences for leisure, meetings, and film production audiences. SMTT also emphasized the continued importance of updated photography and visual assets to support website content and broader destination marketing campaigns.

Additional updates included enhancements to SMTT's event calendar system, which now integrates more prominently across the website homepage, event pages, newsletters, outdoor kiosks, and media outreach initiatives. Staff encouraged businesses to continue submitting events and promotional activities, particularly Pride-related programming, to maximize exposure opportunities across destination marketing channels.

Dowgwillo also presented Route 66 merchandise opportunities available to hotels, restaurants, and local businesses. Participating partners may feature co-branded merchandise and themed offerings throughout the Centennial celebration period, which continues through November. SMTT noted that pricing information and merchandise decks would be distributed to partners following the meeting.

Dowgwillo concluded with updates on the launch of the 2026 Visitor Guide sales cycle and ongoing marketing campaigns. SMTT encouraged participation in the visitor guide and highlighted new advertorial opportunities that include on-site photography sessions and expanded digital exposure through LA Magazine partnerships. Staff also reviewed the success of current Expedia, Tripadvisor, and Spring Staycation campaigns, noting strong engagement metrics and continued emphasis on event-driven marketing initiatives throughout the summer season.

In the absence of SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, Dowgwillo presented communications updates, including participation in U.S. Travel Association advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., attended by SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano.

Dowgwillo highlighted continued global media coverage surrounding the Route 66 Centennial, including broadcast features with NBC Los Angeles and a collaborative Today Show satellite cities segment. Additional coverage placements included Glamour UK, Lux City Guides, Newstalk ZB in Australia and New Zealand, and NEWS18 in India. SMTT noted that many placements were generated through hosted media familiarization trips and proactive pitching efforts.

Social media performance over the previous two-month period showed strong engagement growth driven primarily by event-related content, beach imagery, and messaging positioning Santa Monica as a central base for exploring greater Los Angeles, with impressions up 27.6% from the previous period.

SMTT CPO Rachel Lozano reported that the SMTT Visitor Services team welcomed more than 1,500 guests across the three Visitor Information Centers during March and April, while also selling 286 pieces of branded merchandise.

Lozano highlighted participation in community events including Santa Monica Pier Locals' Night activations, Sustainable Quality Awards programming, and "Burgers with the Police" community engagement events alongside the Santa Monica Police Department. SMTT encouraged hotel participation in future community outreach events and National Night Out programming.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus presented updates on recent international sales missions and familiarization tours. Sigalus recently completed combined France and

United Kingdom sales missions, conducting luxury travel advisor appointments and hosting travel trade and media receptions in Paris and London. Sigalus also attended the Visit California Luxury Forum alongside two hotel partners for three days of one-on-one appointments with top luxury travel advisers.

Sigalus also reviewed successful familiarization tours hosted in partnership with Air New Zealand/United Airlines, and Brand USA, bringing international travel advisors and tour operators from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Ireland to Santa Monica and Southern California.

Upcoming initiatives include participation in IPW in Fort Lauderdale, ILTM Asia Pacific, ILTM North America, LUSSO Travel and ILTM Cannes. SMTT will also host additional luxury familiarization tours and domestic sales missions focused on key feeder markets.

SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero presented updates on recent meetings and events industry outreach efforts, including participation in the HelmsBriscoe Conference in Los Angeles and entertainment-focused sales meetings in New York related to upcoming concerts, productions, and major sporting events.

Otero also previewed SMTT's participation in IMEX Frankfurt alongside Visit California, marking SMTT's return to the international trade show since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional upcoming initiatives include conference-direct familiarization tours, a Phoenix/Scottsdale sales mission, IMEX America in Las Vegas, and SITE Southern California networking events.

Otero noted that while no official announcement has been made regarding the anticipated Goldenvoice beachfront festival, SMTT continues coordinating closely with organizers, hospitality partners, and the City of Santa Monica regarding major event planning and hotel opportunities.

**CEO Update:** SMTT CEO Kerns facilitated a stakeholder discussion regarding potential regional tourism sales collaboration efforts proposed by Los Angeles Tourism under a "One Los Angeles" approach. Kerns shared concerns regarding preserving Santa Monica's independent brand identity while recognizing opportunities for increased collaboration around convention and group sales efforts.

Committee discussion focused on balancing regional cooperation with protecting Santa Monica's positioning as a distinct luxury beach destination separate from broader Los Angeles perceptions. Members expressed concerns regarding brand dilution, visitor expectations, and the importance of maintaining Santa Monica's differentiated market identity.

Kerns encouraged stakeholders to continue sharing feedback as discussions with Los Angeles Tourism evolve and emphasized SMTT's commitment to representing stakeholder interests throughout the process.

Kerns concluded by requesting continued participation in the ongoing TMD renewal survey process and facilitated discussion regarding the possibility of extending summer marketing campaigns through July and August depending on booking pace and market conditions. Members generally expressed cautious optimism regarding summer performance while remaining attentive to short-term booking trends and major event impacts.

**For the Good of the Order:** Vice Chair Viramontes called for Good of the Order comments. There were none.

**Adjournment:** Vice Chair Viramontes adjourned the meeting at 11:27 AM.