

**MEETING MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
SPECIAL MEETING
ANNUAL JOINT BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND TOURISM MARKETING DISTRICT (TMD) MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2026
SANTA MONICA PROPER HOTEL – 700 WILSHIRE BLVD SANTA MONICA, CA
90401**

Call to Order: Chair Lopez-Quintana called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for self-introductions. Those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Board of Directors Present: Chair Lopez-Quintana, Vice Chair Jeff Klocke, Treasurer Simon Fricker, Secretary Karen Ginsberg, Member Darlene Evans and Member Jan Williamson.

Tourism Marketing District (TMD) Committee Present: Chair Aileen Carreon, Vice Chair Juan Viramontes, Secretary/Treasurer Armando Campos, Member Karina Sedigh, Member Simon Fricker, Member Daniel Gregory, Member Inessa Udovchenko.

Also Present: SMTT Chief Executive Officer Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo, SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Executive Assistant Haylee Jost, Santa Monica Daily Press Journalist Devan Sipher, The Ambrose Hotel General Manager Chance Reno, The Eden General Manager Danielle Delcambre, Hilton Santa Monica Hotel & Suites General Manager Althea Abdallah, Ocean Lodge Hotel Public Relations Sofia Gregory and Chamber Liaison Genevieve Morrill.

Absent: Board Member Tim Defuria, Board Member Neil Carrey, Board Member Lauralee Asch, City Manager Oliver Chi, TMD Member Shahid Kayani and TMD Member Sonia Metz.

Public Comment: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for public comment. There was none.

Pier-to-Pier Coastal Connector Presentation: A prerecorded presentation introduced a proposed Pier to-Pier Coastal Ferry concept connecting Santa Monica with neighboring coastal destinations, including Malibu, Marina del Rey, San Pedro and Long Beach. Although project representatives were not able to attend in person, SMTT leadership noted that the initiative has been in development for some time and has gained momentum following recent wildfire impacts north of the region, which reinforced interest in expanded coastal transportation and resilience planning.

The City has issued a letter of intent supporting continued exploration of the project, marking an important milestone in advancing feasibility discussions. The concept envisions a ferry system utilizing new docking technology to enable access across multiple coastal ports, with Santa Monica serving as a key hub. Early feedback from regulatory and municipal stakeholders, including safety agencies and the City Manager's office, has been positive, and a pilot demonstration was referenced as having taken place during a recent mayoral conference.

The project was highlighted as a potential mobility enhancement ahead of major events such as the Super Bowl and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as a longer-term improvement to regional connectivity and emergency evacuation capacity. Leadership noted that the project will continue to advance through regulatory review and will return with further updates at a future meeting.

Approval of the May 12, 2026 TMD Meeting Minutes: TMD Secretary/Treasurer Campos presented the May 12, 2026 TMD meeting minutes. TMD Vice Chair Viramontes moved to approve the minutes and TMD Chair Carreon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote,

with TMD Member Kayani and TMD Member Metz absent.

Acceptance of the TMD March Collections Memo: Secretary/Treasurer Campos presented the TMD March Collections Memo. TMD Chair Carreon moved to accept the TMD March Collections Memo and TMD Member Udovchenko seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote, with TMD Member Kayani and TMD Member Metz absent.

Approval of the March 18, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes: Secretary Ginsberg presented the March 18, 2026 Board meeting minutes. Member Williamson moved to approve the minutes and Treasurer Fricker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote, with Member Defuria, Member Carrey, Member Asch and City Manager Chi absent.

Acceptance of the February, March & April Financials: Treasurer Fricker presented the February, March and April Financials. Chair Lopez-Quintana moved to accept the financials and Secretary Ginsberg seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote, with Member Defuria, Member Carrey, Member Asch and City Manager Chi absent.

Approval of the Revised Bylaws: SMTT CEO Kerns presented the revised bylaws required by the city for final approval. Member Darlene Evans moved to accept the revised bylaws, and Vice Chair Klocke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote, with Member Defuria, Member Carrey, Member Asch and City Manager Chi absent.

City Manager Update: City Manager Chi was absent and there was no update.

SMTT Staff Updates: SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo opened the meeting by providing an overview of SMTT's recent marketing initiatives, highlighting the organization's fiscal year 2025–26 online travel agency (OTA) campaigns. The three campaigns, conducted with Expedia, Priceline, and Hotelbeds, generated approximately \$8.5 million in confirmed lodging revenue. Dowgwillo also thanked hotel partners for participating in the Spring Staycation Campaign, which generated nearly 180,000 email opens and more than 16,000 clicks. Based on the success of both initiatives, SMTT plans to continue the Expedia campaign and Spring Staycation promotion next year.

Dowgwillo shared updates on paid media efforts, including campaigns promoting Santa Monica as a leisure destination, messaging reinforcing accessibility during the Santa Monica Pier construction project, and targeted FIFA World Cup advertising. She noted that new Route 66 Centennial banners have been installed throughout the city and are expected to remain through 2027. Looking ahead, SMTT plans to expand its focus on brand partnerships and sponsorships, highlighting recent collaborations — including the United States Golf Association, which supported the Rick Crocker 5K and Santa Monica Pier Locals' Night. She also spotlighted the inaugural Hollywood on the Coast Food & Wine Festival.

Dowgwillo highlighted enhancements to SMTT's digital marketing platforms. She introduced new digital banner images promoting Santa Monica as the hub for upcoming global sporting events and encouraged partners to participate in the complimentary Threshold 360 virtual tour program. She announced that the partner portal will soon automate the submission and scheduling of business specials, allowing partners to manage promotional offers more efficiently across the [santamonica.com](https://www.santamonica.com) website.

Dowgwillo reminded stakeholders that advertising reservations for the upcoming Visitor Guide are due July 15th and encouraged participation in SMTT's advertorial program for partners seeking creative support.

Dowgwillo concluded by discussing preparations for major upcoming events, including the Super Bowl, FIFA World Cup, Olympic and Paralympic Games. SMTT will continue collaborating with hotel revenue managers and sales teams to develop promotional strategies, maximize occupancy and position Santa Monica as the preferred destination for visitors attending these global events in Los Angeles.

SMTT Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury shared communications and public relations updates, reporting that the Route 66 Centennial continues to be SMTT's strongest media narrative. To date, SMTT has secured 60 feature stories centered on the Centennial, generating an estimated media

reach of more than 641 million impressions. Recent broadcast coverage included television filming on the Santa Monica Pier, with additional stories scheduled to air during the Route 66 Centennial anniversary.

Salisbury noted that destination events continue to generate valuable media attention, citing the recent Route 66 caravan kickoff and steak eating challenge featuring members of the Los Angeles Rams alongside Santa Monica Police and Fire personnel. Additional press coverage has focused on Santa Monica's hotels, wellness experiences, culinary offerings and FIFA World Cup travel planning. Year-to-date earned media value has reached over \$9 million.

Salisbury highlighted SMTT's continued work hosting domestic and international journalists and influencers through familiarization tours, thanking hotel partners for their collaboration. She reminded stakeholders that SMTT is available to assist properties hosting media by providing destination itineraries, amenities and additional promotional support.

Salisbury also reported on SMTT's participation in California Travel Association Tourism Advocacy Days in Sacramento, where tourism leaders met with state legislators to discuss issues affecting California's visitor economy. She noted strong legislative support for tourism and its continued importance to the state's economy.

Concluding her report, Salisbury shared that SMTT plans to increase social media output by at least 50 percent next year while expanding partnerships with influencers and user-generated content creators. She encouraged stakeholders to submit business updates and announcements for inclusion in SMTT's upcoming "What's New in Santa Monica" media campaign and social media series.

SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano reported that SMTT's three Visitor Information Centers welcomed approximately 1,200 visitors during April and May. She also highlighted the Visitor Services team's participation in numerous community events, including Santa Monica Fire Service Day, the Santa Monica International Jazz Festival, Pier Locals' Night, the Santa Monica Police Substation ribbon cutting, Summer SOULstice celebrations, Make Music Day and Pier 360. These outreach efforts continue to strengthen visitor engagement while promoting Santa Monica's events and attractions throughout the community.

SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards provided an update on Film Santa Monica, reporting that the program has exceeded expectations during its first 10 months managing film permitting for the City of Santa Monica. Film Santa Monica has generated more than \$860,000 in revenue for the City while approving more than 180 film permits, significantly surpassing initial first-year projections.

Edwards highlighted several high-profile productions filmed in Santa Monica over the past year, including global advertising campaigns for H&M and Anne Klein, the return of the Baywatch television series and an upcoming \$100 million feature film. She noted that the City's improved permitting process has dramatically enhanced Santa Monica's reputation within the entertainment industry, resulting in increased interest from studios, producers, and location managers.

Edwards encouraged local hotels and businesses to create complimentary listings on FilmSantaMonica.com to better position themselves for production-related business opportunities. SMTT offers free photography and profile development services to participating businesses and plans to significantly expand marketing efforts to the film industry over the coming year.

SMTT Chief Executive Officer Kerns added the growing influence of "set-jetting," the trend of travelers visiting destinations featured in film and television productions. She noted that destinations highlighted by popular productions have experienced significant increases in tourism and expressed optimism that Baywatch and other projects filmed in Santa Monica will similarly contribute to future visitation and economic impact for the destination.

SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero provided an update on SMTT's global leisure and group sales initiatives on behalf of Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus. Otero highlighted

recent sales missions and industry events, including a familiarization trip in partnership with Brand USA, British Airways and American Airlines that brought tour operators and travel advisors to Santa Monica to showcase new itineraries and destination experiences. SMTT also participated in Travel Leaders EDGE and IPW, the country's largest international inbound travel trade show, where the organization hosted its annual client appreciation event to strengthen relationships with tour operators, wholesalers and travel advisors.

Otero also reported on SMTT's participation in additional leisure travel events, including the Arrive Conference by Global Travel Collection, which connected the organization with high-producing luxury travel advisors. He highlighted the success of a cooperative campaign with Visit California that generated more than \$250,000 in year-over-year revenue growth while achieving an average daily hotel rate (ADR) of \$527. Upcoming international initiatives include participation in ILTM Asia Pacific, trade and media missions in Australia and New Zealand, sales missions in Mexico and Brand USA Travel Week in Amsterdam, all designed to strengthen visitation from key international markets.

Otero shared updates on SMTT's international market representation, noting continued engagement across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom and Ireland. Recent efforts included cooperative marketing campaigns, trade events and educational webinars for travel advisors. He also announced that SMTT will begin working with Rocket Travel Marketing as its new United Kingdom and Ireland representation agency beginning July 1, citing the firm's strong California expertise and established travel trade and media relationships as reasons why they were awarded the RFP.

On the group sales side, Otero reviewed SMTT's participation in several meetings and conventions industry events, including HelmsBriscoe, Tour Connection, Visit California's PME Roadshow and IMEX Frankfurt. These efforts focused on promoting Santa Monica to meeting planners, corporate clients, and entertainment industry professionals while highlighting opportunities tied to Film Santa Monica and future destination events. He also previewed upcoming sales missions in Nashville, Phoenix and Scottsdale, participation in IMEX America and additional sales networking opportunities for hotel partners interested in expanding group business.

Otero concluded with an overview of major events expected to drive visitation over the coming years. He shared updates on the anticipated Goldenvoice Music Festival, Super Bowl activities, the Genesis Invitational, Frieze Los Angeles and the Laver Cup, noting SMTT's ongoing coordination with hotels and event organizers to maximize economic impact. He also highlighted confirmed Olympic activations, including Nations Village at Pacific Palisades, Club France at the Annenberg Community Beach House, and House of Switzerland at Camera Obscura, with discussions continuing with additional international delegations interested in establishing hospitality houses in Santa Monica during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond.

Otero emphasized that SMTT will continue working closely with partners to leverage these global events, strengthen hotel occupancy and position Santa Monica as a premier destination for leisure, meetings and international visitation in the years leading up to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CEO Update: SMTT CEO Misti Kerns reviewed the Santa Monica Pier Bridge replacement project timeline and confirmed that construction remains underway. She emphasized that the Santa Monica Pier is fully open and operational despite ongoing work and encouraged hotel partners to communicate this clearly to guests, noting that all businesses remain accessible. Kerns directed attendees to project newsletters and updates available through the City's QR code resources. She also noted that the iconic Pier sign will remain in place until approximately early August, when it will be temporarily removed for restoration and relocation as part of the bridge project, with a replica sign available on the Pier for visitor photo opportunities during construction.

Kerns encouraged stakeholders to utilize the tourism research and forecasting resources distributed at the Tourism Summit, including economic reports and visitor data designed to support hotel ownership groups, revenue managers and sales teams in planning efforts. She also provided an update on the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) renewal process and SMTT's city contract negotiations, noting that stakeholder

feedback is being gathered through surveys and that discussions regarding future funding formulas will continue with the TMD committee.

Kerns shared national tourism advocacy updates from her work with the U.S. Travel Association and CalTravel boards. She outlined ongoing industry efforts to support inbound international travel, protect destination marketing funding, strengthen airport security investments and oppose policies that could create additional barriers for international visitors. While acknowledging continued challenges at the federal level, she emphasized the industry's ongoing advocacy for policies that support travel and visitation to the United States.

Kerns also reviewed current economic and tourism trends, noting that consumer confidence and discretionary spending remain below historical norms despite sustained demand for travel. She reported that while visitation continues to recover, visitor spending has not returned at the same pace, resulting in softer overall tourism expenditures. Preliminary forecasts indicate modest growth ahead, though uncertainty remains around booking patterns and broader economic conditions.

Kerns concluded by encouraging continued stakeholder engagement in SMTT's education efforts and requested that partners share any local or state legislative issues impacting the tourism industry. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a coordinated industry voice on behalf of Santa Monica's hospitality community and thanked attendees for their continued partnership and participation.

For the Good of the Order: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for Good of the Order comments. There were none.

Adjournment: Chair Lopez-Quintana adjourned the meeting at 6:18PM.

