MEETING MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2026
SANDBOURNE SANTA MONICA – 1740 OCEAN AVENUE 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:

Present: Chair Lopez-Quintana**,** Vice Chair Jeff Klocke, Secretary Karen Ginsberg, Member Neil Carrey, and Member Lauralee Asch.

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 Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero, SMTT Executive Assistant Haylee Jost, and Managing Director of Paris je'taime Corinne Menegeaux.

Absent: Treasurer Simon Fricker, Member Tim Defuria, Member Darlene Evans, and Member Jan Williamson, Member Karina Sedigh and City Manager Oliver Chi were absent.

Public Comment: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for public comment. There were no comments.

Q&A with Paris je'taime: Corinne Menegaux, Managing Director of the Paris Convention & Tourism Bureau, shared lessons from the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games and discussed implications for Los Angeles and Santa Monica as the region prepares for LA 2028. Menegaux emphasized that the tourism impact of the Olympics should be considered across the full period before, during and after the Games, noting that while the Olympics generate significant media coverage and visitation, some travelers may choose to avoid the destination because of the event. Paris experienced a decline in visitation beginning around the end of May and continuing through June and July, with visitation down approximately 9% in June and July and 14% in July. From July 29 through August 8, visitation increased 21%, followed by an 8% decline from August 9 through August 27. Paris recorded approximately 36.4 million visitors in 2024, representing a 1.5% decrease from 2023, while Greater Paris recorded 5% more arrivals in 2025 compared with 2024.

Menegaux noted that the Paris Games benefited from significant coordination between the Olympics and the City of Paris, a level of coordination that may not be replicated in Santa Monica. Paris also relied heavily on existing infrastructure rather than constructing new facilities specifically for the Games, which supported a more sustainable approach. The city also implemented efforts to reduce single-use plastics. Menegaux emphasized the importance of identifying the values a destination wants to showcase and consistently reinforcing those values throughout the Olympic period, noting that location can play an important role in conveying destination messaging. She also highlighted the significant scale of opportunity associated with the Games.

Menegaux provided an overview of Olympic visitation, noting that the Olympics attracted approximately 11.2 million visitors, with 85% from France and 15% international, while the Paralympics attracted approximately 3.9 million visitors, with 90% from France and 10% international. She noted that Paris' visitor mix differs from Los Angeles because approximately one-quarter of Paris visitors were day-trippers, facilitated in part by the city's extensive rail connectivity. Menegaux cautioned that the Paris experience should therefore be considered in the context of the different transportation and geographic characteristics of the Los Angeles region.

Visitor behavior during the Olympics also differed significantly from traditional tourism patterns. Visits to major attractions declined during the Games, including approximately 20% at the Louvre, 19% at the

Eiffel Tower, 29% at the Musée d'Orsay and 25% at the Château de Versailles, with traditional tourist activities declining approximately 20% overall. In contrast, nightlife increased approximately 43% and restaurant activity increased approximately 20%. Spending patterns also shifted, with clothing spending down 19%, experiences down 56%, housing down 40% and transportation down 53%. Menegaux noted that fan zones appeared to perform differently from traditional cultural attractions, benefiting from the competition and active energy surrounding the Games.

Looking ahead to LA 2028, Menegaux emphasized the importance of not minimizing the displacement effect before the Games and encouraged destinations to work with the travel trade and MICE market well in advance. She advised against holding too much hotel inventory for potential leisure demand and noted that many Paris hotels waited to determine whether they could secure full buyouts. Hotels that held inventory experienced challenges when room blocks were later released, and not all properties were able to recoup the lost business. Menegaux recommended that hotels consider nonrefundable deposits and carefully negotiate room-block release timelines. She also noted that leisure travel represents a particular risk because travelers may be able to cancel shortly before arrival.

Menegaux discussed significant pricing increases during the Paris Games, noting that hotel prices increased approximately 118%, although hotels were not necessarily full. Home-share and furnished accommodation increased approximately 103%, while Airbnb inventory reportedly increased approximately 30–40%. Hotel rates also declined significantly after the Games, creating additional challenges for properties that had increased rates or held inventory in anticipation of sustained Olympic demand. Menegaux recommended beginning Olympic-related pricing discussions approximately two years before the Games, when programming is typically being booked. She noted that approximately 30% of advance room blocks were ultimately released and that room rates in some cases were multiplied by approximately five to seven times. Menegaux cautioned that the Olympic environment can create an expectation of significant spending, while many businesses actually maintain relatively small budgets for the Games. Organizations willing to pay premium rates typically book far in advance or establish hospitality houses.

Menegaux also emphasized the need to reassure the MICE market and broader travel market about availability and pricing during and after the Games. Paris experienced pricing challenges for conventions, roadshows and other business activity during August and September, as well as challenges following the Olympics. These experiences reinforced the importance of maintaining a balanced approach to Olympic-related demand while continuing to serve traditional business and leisure markets.

For Santa Monica specifically, Menegaux noted that the Marathon and Cycling events will move through the city relatively quickly. She encouraged Santa Monica to consider how it can capture the broader opportunity associated with these events despite the limited amount of time the competitions will physically take place in the city. This could include developing experiences and programming that encourage visitors to spend additional time in Santa Monica before or after the events and using the city's location and destination identity to reinforce the values it wants associated with LA 2028.

SMTT Staff Updates: SMTT Vice President of Marketing Ashley Dowgwillo provided updates on marketing initiatives including a paid media campaign promoting the September Dining Specials page, which highlights Santa Monica’s dining scene and September events including the Kaskade concert, Tongva Twilight series and Americana in the Park. The campaign includes an email to approximately 75,000 Los Angeles County residents, with additional promotion through SMTT’s consumer and community newsletters, which reach approximately 15,000 subscribers. The email will also direct users to SMTT’s hotel landing page on SantaMonica.com to encourage hotel stays.

Dowgwillo also provided an update on the “I Wish I Had an Extra Bedroom” program, which encourages Los Angeles County residents to take a local hotel stay and experience Santa Monica. She also showed the finalized cover of the 2026/2027 Visitor Guide and announced that the publication will be mailed to approximately 27,000 Condé Nast Traveler readers.

Vice President of Communications Lauren Salisbury provided updates on recent communications and public relations activity. Salisbury recently participated in the Visit California Public Relations Committee meeting and was selected to speak at U.S. Travel Association's ESTO 2026 conference on crisis communications. The communications team continues to provide partner and consumer resources through its newsletters, including Sea the Good, the community newsletter, the consumer newsletter and Hotel Buzz. Recent media coverage included features in LA Magazine, Forbes, Travel + Leisure and Sunset Magazine, with Route 66 continuing to generate significant interest.

The communications team also continues to host familiarization trips for journalists and influencers from international markets including the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Germany, India and Canada. The Route 66 Centennial remains a key media focus as the anniversary approaches its conclusion in November, with SMTT continuing to pursue coverage and related content opportunities. The team also recently concluded its Route 66 song contest, receiving more than 100 entries, with a November event planned to recognize the winner. Social media efforts continue to emphasize authentic, video-driven content, with partners encouraged to use analytics, prioritize consistency, and focus on content that generates saves and shares.

SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards provided an update on Film Santa Monica following the program's first-year anniversary on September 1. During its first year, Film Santa Monica generated more than $1.6 million in revenue for the City of Santa Monica, exceeding the initial projection of approximately $300,000, and processed more than 230 film permits. Major productions included a $100 million Warner Bros. production at the Fairmont Miramar Santa Monica, Baywatch, H&M, Netflix's The Lincoln Lawyer, Nike and The Morning Show. Edwards credited the City, SMTT staff and local partners for helping strengthen Santa Monica's reputation as a filming destination and improve the permitting experience.

Looking ahead, Film Santa Monica will focus on "vacation on location" or "set-jetting" opportunities, using film and television productions to encourage visitation to Santa Monica. The team will continue building relationships with location managers through organizations such as the Location Managers Guild International and will participate in upcoming industry events, including the American Film Market and California on Location Awards. Film Santa Monica is also pursuing larger studio and international productions, location familiarization tours and opportunities related to California's film and post-production incentives. Hotels and businesses were encouraged to maintain updated listings on FilmSantaMonica.com and provide information about productions filmed at their properties.

SMTT Director of Global Business Development Aleksandr Sigalus highlighted recent international and domestic sales activity. Recent initiatives included sales missions in Australia and New Zealand, participation in ILTM Asia Pacific, a Mexico familiarization trip with Visit California, and engagement with luxury travel advisors through Virtuoso. Upcoming international efforts include Brand USA Travel Week in Amsterdam, additional activity in Mexico and continued engagement with key markets including Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. SMTT also recently completed a cooperative campaign with eDreams in Germany that generated more than 650,000 impressions, approximately 400 click-throughs and approximately 1,900 room nights at the time of the meeting.

On the domestic side, SMTT Director of Sales Ozzie Otero highlighted a recent group sales mission to Phoenix and Scottsdale that included ten hotel partners and meetings with corporate and meeting-planner clients. SMTT anticipates another domestic group sales mission in early 2027 and is planning a Texas roadshow with hotel partners. The team will also participate in IMEX in Las Vegas with several Santa Monica hotels, attractions and experience partners. Otero also announced a potential Visit California reverse sales mission in December that would bring approximately 20–26 international buyers from Australia, the United Kingdom, Mexico and Canada to Santa Monica and the region.

Approval of the August 6, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes: Secretary Ginsberg presented the August 6, 2026, meeting minutes for review. Member Carrey moved to approve the minutes, and Chair Lopez-Quintana seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote with Treasurer Fricker, Member Defuria, Member Evans, and Member Williamson, Member Sedigh and City Manager Chi were absent.

Acceptance of the May & June Financial: SMTT COO Edwards presented the May and June financials. Chair Lopez-Quintana moved to accept the memo, and Member Carrey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously through a roll call vote, with Treasurer Fricker, Member Defuria, Member Evans, and Member Williamson, Member Sedigh and City Manager Chi were absent.

CEO Update: SMTT President/CEO Kerns shared a recent Tourism Economics presentation that provided an important overview of the current economic and travel environment. While inflation, higher gas prices, pressure on household savings, and softer consumer sentiment continue to present challenges, consumer spending and the desire to travel remain resilient. Travel continues to be a priority for consumers, while meetings and group travel are also showing renewed momentum as businesses recognize the value of face-to-face experiences. California and Santa Monica continue to perform well across key hotel indicators, with strong room demand, rate, and revenue. Looking ahead, continued economic growth, productivity gains, and sustained demand for experiences provide encouraging signs for the travel industry, even as we remain mindful of ongoing pricing and labor pressures.

A significant focus remains preparing Santa Monica for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and maximizing the opportunities surrounding them. Several hospitality houses have already been confirmed, with additional properties and activations in development. We are also seeing growing interest from corporate brands looking to create unique hospitality experiences, including room blocks, events, restaurant takeovers, and longer-term activations. As we move closer to the Games, it will be important for properties to communicate available inventory, need periods, potential buyout opportunities, and rate expectations so that we can respond quickly and strategically to incoming business. The lessons from Paris also reinforce the importance of being proactive with inventory and pricing rather than waiting until the last minute.

Beyond the Games, the team continues to strengthen Santa Monica's visibility and sales opportunities through in country partners, tourism organizations such as the Paris Tourism Bureau, site inspections, corporate and international outreach, and partnerships with the City and regional organizations. We are also exploring opportunities around the Fourth of July, hospitality activations, and travel extending beyond the Olympic and Paralympic period. The City's Rose Parade float provides another opportunity for local businesses to participate and gain visibility, while upcoming community and industry events, including New Heroes and the Volley-ween tournament, continue to support engagement throughout the year. Continued collaboration, timely communication, and coordination among our hospitality partners will be critical as we move toward 2027 and 2028 and work to capture both immediate and long-term opportunities for Santa Monica.

For the Good of the Order: Chair Lopez-Quintana called for Good of the Order comments. SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns reminded the Board that the Santa Monica Pier Benefit will take place on Saturday, September 19, with tickets still available for the event. Kerns also highlighted items included in the Board packet, including a presentation from the City of Santa Monica regarding the proposed ballot measure to amend Transient Occupancy Tax Chapter 6.68. She also referenced a recent Santa Monica Daily Press article regarding AEG and its Goldenvoice subsidiary's study of whether the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium could be converted into a live event venue. Kerns noted the significance of Goldenvoice's continued interest in Santa Monica and its stated commitment to maintaining a long-term presence in the community.

Adjournment: Chair Lopez-Quintana adjourned the meeting at 6:54 PM.