

**Utah Office of Tourism  
Board Meeting  
Friday, June 10, 2022  
Red Sands Hotel – Torrey, UT**

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<b>Members Present:</b>	Lance Syrett, Sara Toliver, Shayne Wittwer, Jennifer Wesselhoff, Mike Taylor, Commissioner Brent Chamberlain, Jared Berrett, Lesha Coltharp, Kym Buttschardt, Brian Merrill, Glen Overton
<b>Members Excused:</b>	Greg Miller, Nathan Rafferty
<b>Staff:</b>	Vicki Varela, Julia Barnhouse, Dave Williams, Bianca Lyon, Becky Keeney, Flint Timmins, Celina Sinclair, Erin Smith, Denise Jordan, Lorraine Daly, Rosie Serago, Rachel Bremer
<b>Visitors:</b>	Sydney Furton, Jennifer Shakespear, Becky McRae, Nick Larson, Aedus Dorsey, Kelli Hansen, Superintendent Fritski, Jonathan Smithgall, Kylie Kullack, Tom Love, Elliot Clark, Stacie Boney, Natalie Randall

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**WELCOME**

Lance Syrett welcomed everyone to Red Sands Hotel in Torrey and introduced Kelli Hansen, Group Coordinator of Red Sands Hotel, and Superintendent Fritski of Capitol Reef National Park.

**MINUTES**

**MOTION: SHAYNE WITTEW MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MAY 6, 2022 MEETING THAT WAS HELD IN BEAVER. JENNIFER WESSELHOFF SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Vicki Varela, Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism (UOT), reported on the following items:

- Shoutout to Red Sands Hotel. Their remodel is beautiful, and they provide staff housing which shows great leadership for their area.
- Thanked Superintendent Fritski for attending the meeting and her partnership with UOT.
- Nan Anderson – launched the Main Street Program for Go Utah. That program has been transferred to another department.
- Austria/Germany – UOT celebrated the Lufthansa direct flight from Frankfurt. Our international partners were grateful for UOT’s engagement during 2020. We need to double down on our sustainability practices in the tourism industry. Thanked Rachel Bremer for her great work and engagement with our partners.
- UTIA Retreat – reminded of the volume of work that Natalie Randall and UTIA do for the industry. There were many takeaways from the retreat. One main one is to increase communication with county commissioners.

- Andrew Gillman Departure – thanked Dave Williams, Becky Keeney, Bianca Lyon and Rachel Bremer for taking on additional work while UOT is working to find a replacement for Andrew.
- Thanked the board for participation at the May planning retreat. One immediate change that came from the retreat is taking all reports to a higher level. Over that next several months, UOT will share a RACI analysis on roles, accountability, etc. to determine responsibilities. Another takeaway is working on unity of purpose and deeper engagement with the industry and region that each board member represents. We are still determining what the board could use from staff and will have direct communication with members to determine.

## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT EDA UPDATE

**Flint Timmins, Destination Development Lead, provided the following [presentation](#):**

- Destination and Partner Relations
  - Partnership Development
  - Partner Engagement
  - Destination Development & Management
    - Destination Development - Activities, investments, and decisions that increase and promote the quality of a destination.
    - Destination Management - The policies, practices, and professional proficiencies related to the administration of a destination and its resources
    - Together, this is often called Destination S
  - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access (EDIA)
- EDA Granted \$3.7M to Utah
  - To accelerate the recovery of the nation’s tourism sector, the Economic Development Administration developed the Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation grants, providing \$750 million to government and non-profit partners.
  - EDA awarded \$510 million in non-competitive grant funding directly to states and territories based on levels of economic injury, defined as employment loss and share of state GDP in the Leisure and Hospitality sectors (NAICS 71&72).
  - In September 2021 Utah was offered \$3,768,641, contingent upon an approved scope of work and grant administration plan.
  - Utah ranked in lowest quartile of awarded funds.
  - Governor Spencer Cox charged UOT with managing the grant.
  - Grant Requirements:
    - 1 – Increase industry resilience
    - 2 – Money must be obligated by May 2026
    - 3 – This is separate from our \$1M EDA grand awarded in 2020
  - Seven Intended Uses
    - External - Subgrants
      - Feasibility / Economic Impact Studies
        - Competitive grant to study the viability of new and existing regional tourism products
        - Maximum award size of \$100,000
        - Examples:
          - What is the economic impact of the Paiute Trail?
          - What is the feasibility of agritourism in Box Elder County?
      - Product Development Studios
        - Competitive grant program to provide training and consulting services to local partners

- Participants will create a vision, organization, and strategy to develop and market specific tourism products
- Maximum award size of \$100,000
- Examples:
  - Golden Spoke bike trail stakeholders
  - Southern Utah Wine Trail
- Implementation Grants
  - Competitive grant program that will provide funds to implement destination management and development activities
  - Actions found in planning documents related to tourism, travel, and outdoor recreation
  - Maximum award size of \$25,000
  - Examples:
    - Downtown street design
    - Sign fabrication
    - Trail cleanup
- External – Non-Grant
  - Certified Community Program
    - Establish criteria and standards for local communities based around specific tourism and recreation products
    - Upon completion of the criteria, a community would become a designated “[category] Town”
    - Designation can be used for marketing
    - Example:
      - Utah Arts Community
      - Utah Trail Town
- Internal – Non-Grant
  - Niche Audience Studies
    - UOT will conduct market research studies to identify niche travel audiences, including items like demographics, travel and spending habits, and opportunities for new tourism and recreation products
    - Examples:
      - Culinary travelers/foodies
      - Astrotourism
      - Cycling
  - Sentiment Survey Series
    - Regular visitor, industry, and resident sentiment surveys to establish baselines and track the improvement of tourism marketing strategies, community impacts, and visitor satisfaction over time
    - Continues the work begun by UOT resident sentiment survey
  - Grand Administration Contractor
    - Contracted help to administer grant reporting and contracting requirements
    - Will work with subrecipients on compliance and reporting

▪ Budget

Feasibility/Economic Impact Studies	\$800,000
Product Development Studios	\$700,000
Implementation Grants	\$1,018,641
Community Certification Program	\$150,000
Niche Audience Studies	\$300,000
Sentiment Survey Studies	\$500,000
Grant Administration Contractor	\$300,000
Total	\$3,768,641

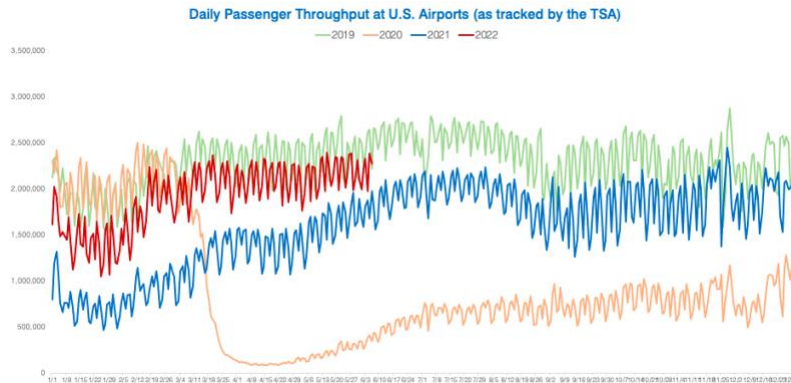
▪ Timeline

- Application period opens September 1, 2022, end October 31, 2022
- Utah Tourism Conference presentation September 2022
- Awards Announced December 2022-January 2023
- Grants will be awarded annually

**TRAVEL SENTIMENT UPDATE**

▪ **Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, provided the following presentation:**

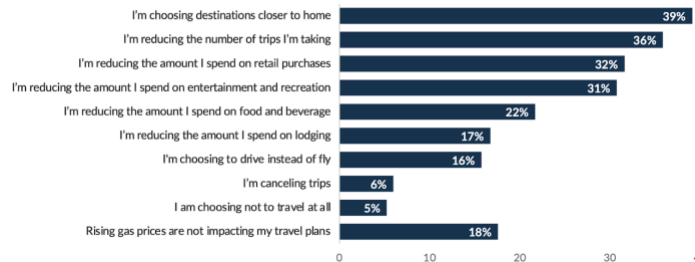
○ Current State of Travel



○ Reasons for Concern

- 81% of adults said they think the U.S. economy is likely to experience a recession in 2022.
- 30% of survey respondents stated that the recent inflation in consumer prices has led them to cancel an upcoming trip.
- Isolating Gas Prices Becoming Larger Concern
- Travel Plans Specifically Impacted

Impact of Rising Gas Prices on Travel Plans



▪ Impact of Rising Gas Prices on Travel Plans SWOT

- Reductions in spend on retail, entertainment and recreation as well as food and beverage during travel create potential THREATS to our goals of driving quality trips and our call to action for travelers to support local.
- Travel Proximity SWOT
  - COVID caused an expansion in the reach of our drive market the desire to stay closer to home is a possible THREAT, we should consider narrowing our “drive markets”.
  - Average domestic flight costs for summer travel are up about 34% compared to pre-pandemic 2019 levels.
  - While international travel is only up about 2% compared to 2019.
  - More than a quarter (29%) of American travelers are now planning international stays, which is a healthy 45% increase compared to this time last year.
- Americans International Travel SWOT
  - Our domestic audiences desire for international travel is recovering faster than inbound international travel is rebounding. This increase in competition for a shrinking domestic audience poses a THREAT.
- Reasons to be Optimistic
  - Conferences
  - Travel Intent Since 2019 SWOT
    - The trendline of 2022 is set to outpace 2019 hotel searches on TripAdvisor, this creates a new OPPORTUNITY to reach a larger audience.
    - 48% of travel intent on TripAdvisor is for last minute trips, within the next 2 weeks.
  - What Travel Experiences will you Prioritize in the next 12 Months?
    - STRENGTHS
      - Enjoying nature
      - Getting away from crowds
      - Budget travel
    - WEAKNESS
      - New places I haven’t visited before
  - Preferences for Active Vacations SWOT
    - COVID caused a trend for an increased desire for vacations focused on rest and relaxation this movement towards active time is an OPPORTUNITY for us to highlight different offerings of our destination.
  - 89% if American survey respondents have travel plans in the next six months.

## MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

### Ski+ FY2022 Report

- Dave Williams, Associate Managing Director, Utah Office of Tourism, Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing, and Media, Love Communications, and Becky Keeney, Director of Marketing, Utah Office of Tourism, provided the following presentation:
  - Campaign Strategy
    - Red Emerald Strategic Plan
    - Vision

- A state united in welcoming the world to experience soul awakening adventure
    - Mission
      - Our mission is to elevate life in Utah through responsible tourism stewardship
    - Position
      - Marketing
      - Stewardship
      - Development
  - Red Emerald Strategic Plan Imperatives
    - Continue Powerful Branding
    - Prioritize Quality Visitation, Not Simply Quantity of Visitors
    - Distribute Visitation
    - Enable Community-Led Visitor Readiness
    - Improve Organizational Effectiveness
  - Ski Campaign Goals
    - Responsibly drive travel to Utah's ski resorts and communities. (Quality Visitation, Distribute Visitation)
    - Grow Utah's winter brand awareness and consideration to ensure Utah remains a top-of-mind ski destination. (Continue Powerful Branding)
    - Increase the average length of stay and spend per trip (Quality Visitation)
- Advertising Effectiveness
  - Study
    - Independent analysis: SMARI
      - Southern Utah+/Northern Utah+
      - Ski+ campaign
    - Two components
      - Wave 1: Advertising awareness
      - Wave 2: ROI
  - Advertising Effectiveness, High Level Insights
    - Creative ratings strong
      - Top 10% industry benchmark range for communicating attributes desired
      - Impact indicators high
      - Outperforms Colorado, Montana, Wyoming video advertising in evaluative ratings
    - Advertising awareness
      - 44% of national target households reached
      - ~6.8M ad-aware target households
      - \$0.41 per household reached
    - Advertising ROI Report, High Level Insights
      - Why Winter Exists
        - More ad-influenced trips than any winter campaign
          - ~345K trips
          - ~\$900M visitor spending
      - Highest ROI of any winter campaign
      - Effective targeting
- Key Learnings / Recommendations
  - Deep library of assets will allow for continued iterations and assets to rotate in for upcoming year 2.
  - Emotional appeal performed well.

- Featuring more diverse groups of people emphasized value of inclusivity.
- Continue to understand the role of off-mountain/lifestyle imagery in banner ads.
- Bright, breathtaking ski photos perform well (skier from a distance, bright blues and whites, mountain in background).
- Consider including “Start planning today at visitutah.com” in video ad voiceover.
- Consider a down-funnel ad—or work with partners to develop creative in other channels—with our differentiating “access” message that SMARI found was not communicated clearly in this campaign (work to understand, does it matter to travelers?).
- Continue to understand the role of families in top-funnel travel advertising—and how we convey “realistic aspiration.”
- Continue to build our “The Greatest Snow on Earth” product brand and powder differentiator.
- Media Performance
  - Digital Summary
    - The Ski+ campaign (pre-roll/display/native) generated over 869k post impressions, for a total PIR of .68%.
    - Our CTV campaign generated an additional 693k pageviews for VisitUtah.com. This reflects a lift in pageviews of 237% or an additional 488k pageviews.
    - When retargeted by Ski Utah creative we monitored an additional 37k pageviews for skiutah.com, a conversion lift 246%.
    - There were over 3.4M hotel searches, resulting in a total estimated revenue of \$52.46M.
    - ADR \$174.77, up \$2/night since our February report.
  - TripAdvisor
    - Total Economic Impact of partnering with TripAdvisor: \$7.7M
      - ADR: \$197
    - Ad exposed audiences visited more pages and spent more time planning out their trip’s vs non-ad exposed audiences.
      - Viewed 50% more Utah Content
      - Viewed 40% more Utah Points of Interest
      - Viewed 30% more Utah Accommodations
      - Viewed 50% more Utah Attraction Content
      - Viewed 70% more Utah Restaurant Content
    - Custom Email:
      - 1,000,000 Sends
      - 421,332 Opens
      - 9,900 Link Clicks
- VisitUtah.com
  - Key Learnings (SEO + PPC)
    - Search Engine Optimization
      - Ski+ continues to be the second most competitive search landscape (following national parks)
      - New content creation and resort page overhauls led to improvements in rankings and organic traffic.
      - Next year, we’ll be focusing on maintaining “content freshness”, evaluating the need for new content.
    - Paid Search
      - Focusing on ad enhancements (images, sitelinks, improving ad copy) led to substantial efficiency improvements.

- Next year, we'll be focusing on regaining impression share and strategically retargeting in-state skiers
    - Key Learnings (Content Strategy)
      - Consider having more channels driving traffic to our Plan Your Ski Trip page and Evan Thayer's Forever Mighty article next year, especially given good time on page metrics.
      - No indicators that we need any new content or storytelling unless it meets an SEO-specific need.
      - Unsure to what extent a campaign landing page is a useful or meaningful resource for travelers based on low time on page or engagement with how it's currently being used. Should look to freshly define role of /winter in next campaign.
    - KPI Analysis
      - Click Through Rate: 14.45%
        - Up 24% since last season
        - Largely impacted by ad enhancements like image extensions and sitelinks
      - Average Cost Per Click: \$0.31
        - Costs increased by 16% this season
      - Absolute Top Impression Share: 32%
        - Decreased by 20% since last season
    - Paid Search
      - This Season's Focus
        - Improve ad presence
        - Serve in-state skiers with ads about off-mountain experiences
      - Next Season's Focus
        - Continue with campaign organization and "retargeting" in-state skiers' strategy
        - Focus on gaining impression share without applying pressure to local partners
  - Newsletter
    - Key Insights
      - 7 Emails delivered to a total on 617,129 subscribers
      - 222,116 (36%) subscribers opened the emails
      - 2.6% above running average and 14% above baseline goal
  - Public Relations
    - Highlights
      - Pitch to Placement → Monthly PR Headlines
        - February: Utah - Winter Olympic Capital of the World
          - USA Today | Inspired by the Winter Olympics? These US Family Ski Resorts Are Perfect for Beginners
      - Media Visits
        - Hosted three individual media visits:
          - Condé Nast Traveler
          - Texas Lifestyle Magazine
          - Austin Travels Magazine / Fox7
          - Boston Herald
    - KPI Messages That Resonated with Media
      - Winter Love
      - Ski & Snow Quality
      - Activity Variety



- Forever Mighty
- KPI Messages That Did Not Resonate with Media
  - Welcoming Culture
- Social Media
  - Key Learnings
    - Across 4 micro audiences, 11 ads per audience, and 18 different placements per ad, by far the most engaging piece of content came in the form of an article on Visit Utah with macro photography tips.
    - In addition to having the most engagements, the ad generated more than 50% of all Landing Page View's during the campaign, and almost 5 million impressions.
    - Looking ahead to Ski 2022/23, and our shift in optimizations to landing page views (from Link Clicks in FY22), we expect to see increased web traffic from social measured in additional LPVs and increased session durations.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Kym Buttschardt – June 22, 2022 is the deadline for Co-op grant applications.
- Jennifer Wesselhoff – Acknowledged and thanked the UOT team and partners for revising presentations to a higher level.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**