

**Utah Office of Tourism  
Board Meeting  
Friday, October 8, 2021  
Uintah Conference Center – Ashley Board Room**

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**Members Present:** Lance Syrett, Kym Buttschardt, Mike Taylor, Shayne Wittwer, Glen Overton, Elaine Gizler, Sara Toliver, Brian Merrill

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**Members Excused:** Greg Miller, Nathan Rafferty

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**Staff:** Vicki Varela, Julia Barnhouse, Dave Williams, Celina Sinclair, Becky Keeney, Denise Jordan, Rachel Bremer

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**Visitors:** Mark Smoot, Todd Shaw, Sydnie Furton, Jonathan Smithgall, Chris Newton, Natalie Randall, Kylie Kullack, Jared Berrett, Brent Chamberlain, Representative Brad Last, Des Barker, Jessica Merrill, Leshia Coltharp, Carrie Cox, Dallas Miller, Lee Banov, Martin Stoll, Megan Griffin, Molly O’Niell, Rita Vigor, Tom Love

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**WELCOME**

Kym Buttschardt called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Uintah Conference Center .

**MINUTES**

Kym Buttschardt requested a revision to the Co-Op portion of the September minutes, and proposed that the following language be added: “The additional \$700,000 allowed us to fully fund all of the traditional applications that received a score of 80 or more and all of the Forever Mighty applications that scored 75 or higher.”

**MOTION: MIKE TAYLOR MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE REVISION AS OUTLINED AND APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2021 MEETING THAT WAS HELD IN BRYCE CANYON CITY. SARA TOLIVER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

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

- Legislative redistricting tour is happening at the same time as the Tourism Board meeting in the Uintah Conference Center. Representative Brad Last Is the Chair of the committee and offered to attend a portion of the board meeting.
- GoUtah technical cleanup bill – There is lack of clarity on certain seats and it creates an opportunity to respond to the Governor’s challenge on inclusiveness. Vicki proposed adding two additional seats to the Tourism Board, resulting in 15 total members. If the bill is approved, one seat will be representing culture and arts, and the other will represent outdoor recreation. If it is approved it will go into effect on July 1, 2022.

- One Utah Summit in Cedar City was a success. Vicki recognized Natalie’s representation of the tourism industry.
- Moab
  - Representative Albrecht shared his concern with Mighty 5® marketing at the One Utah Summit. UOT will follow with his concerns.
  - The Public Lands Policy Council established by Governor Herbert, led by Reg Johnson, sent a letter to UOT that provided a layout of the management of congestions in the park. One option included a timed entry system. We have submitted a response highlighting the challenges that come with timed entry.
- \$3.7M in EDA funding has been allocated to UOT. These funds will be dedicated to the destination development team. Celina Sinclair and Flint Timmins have created a plan to utilize the funds and this will be presented at a future board meeting.

## REVIEW OF VISITOR PROFILE REPORT

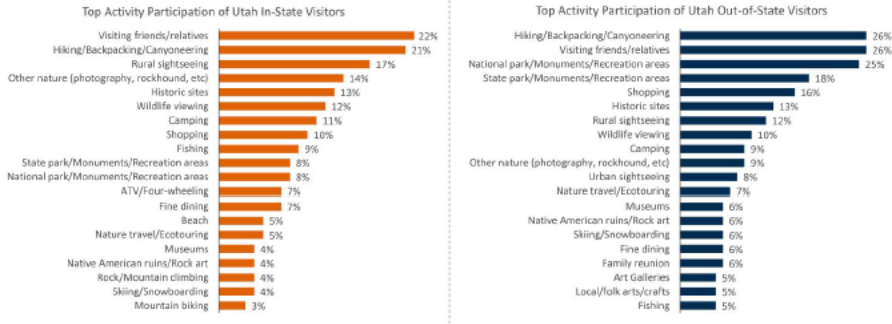
Denise Jordan, Marketing Analytics & Research Manager, Utah Office of Tourism, provided the following update:

- Highest Utah Market Share Reported by Omnitrak:



- Top origin state highlight Utah Visitors’ proximity preference
  - California
  - Nevada
  - Idaho
  - Colorado
  - Arizona

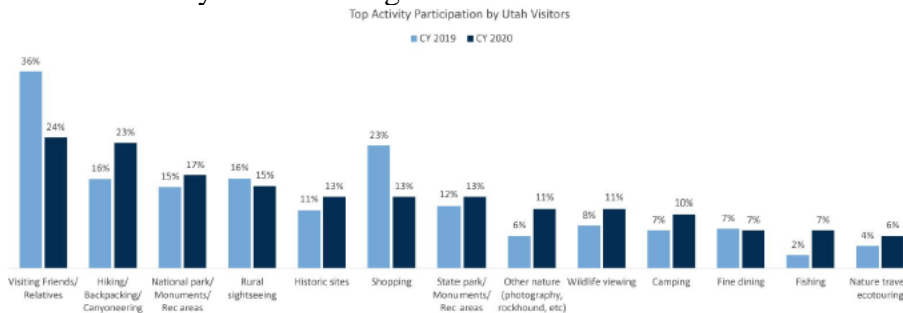
• Top Activities for In-State and Out-of-State travelers:



Note: activity percentages reflect any participation and not the activity as a motivation their trip

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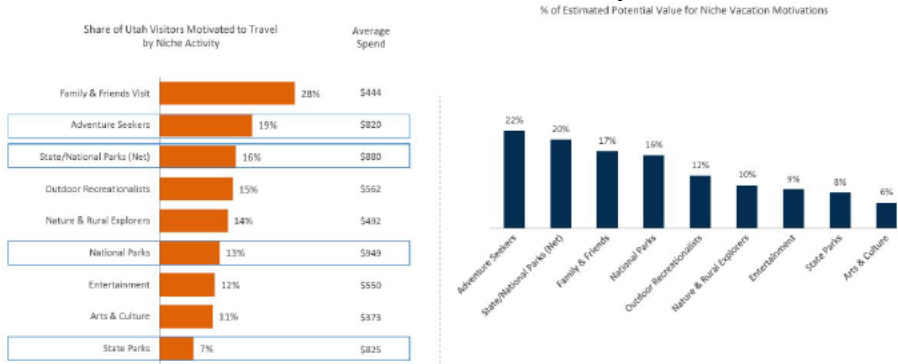
• Outdoor Activity Focus Throughout 2020:



Note: activity percentages reflect any participation and not the activity as a motivation their trip

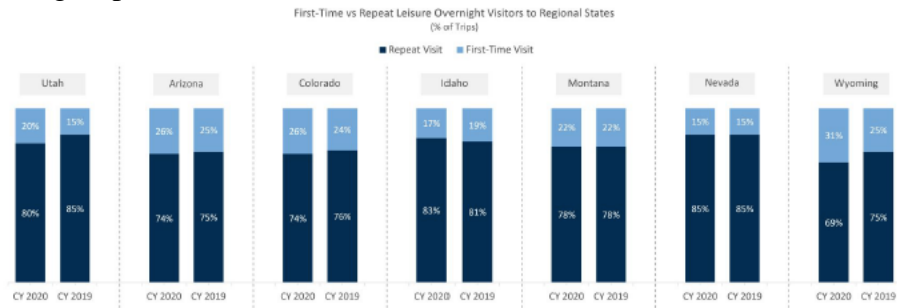
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• Niche Activities Motivate Travel and Generate Spend:



Note: niche activity figures reflect Utah visitors who said an activity within a niche category was a primary/secondary reason for their visit (see glossary for niche definitions); since it is possible an activity as a primary reason and secondary reason for visiting to fall within different niches, some overlap will exist

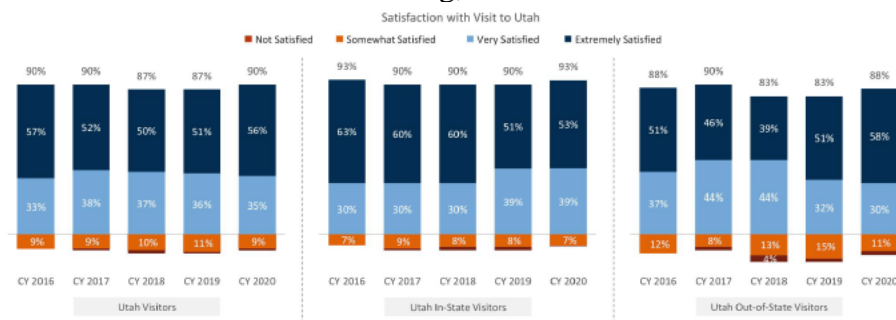
- Strong Repeat Visitation; First Time Visitation Increases:



Note: only respondents who stayed overnight in a state are asked about first-time and repeat visit state visits

25

- Visitor Satisfaction Remains Strong, More Details Needed:



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- Visitor Volume: Q2 2021 Relative to Q2 2019
  - Utah: +15%
  - Mountain West: -0.3%
  - West: -9.8%
  - U.S.: -3%

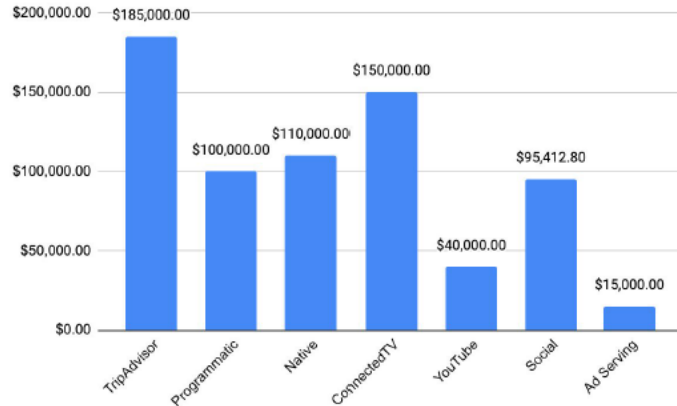
## MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

- Traveler Sentiment Reporting Update
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - 44.4% of travelers state that recent news about increasing “Delta” cases makes them less interested in traveling right now. This number is down from 59.4% in early September.
    - 66% of respondents have stated that they expect the COVID-19 issue will be with us for the longer-term.
    - 26.6% of respondents have postponed an upcoming trip specifically due to the Delta variant, while 23.1% have cancelled an upcoming trip.
    - 69.1% of respondents said that if they thought a destination was not welcoming to people like themselves, they would be unlikely to visit.
    - 55.7% of residents would support an indoor vaccine mandate program in their home community.

- International Trends
  - 75% of consumers intending to travel internationally are in the early planning stages.
  - Only 17% of travelers plan to return to a previously visited destination.
- Southern Utah+ FY2021 Winter Integrated Marketing Campaign Update and \$895,413 Media Buy Approval
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications, Kylie Kullack, Head of Client Engagement, Struck, and Andrew Gillman, Tourism Creative and Content Director, Utah Office of Tourism, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - Looking back:
      - So far, this campaign has driven over 199k post impressions, this is an increase compared to last year by more than 43k.
      - We have tracked 201k hotel searches which resulted in 9,289 hotel bookings for a total hotel revenue of \$2.52M in hotel revenue which is a 25% increase from the 2019/2020 Southern Utah Winter campaign. This reflects an estimated 128k hotel bookings for a total estimated revenue of \$34.8M.
        - This is an increase year-over-year of roughly \$690k.
      - Search and Website Summary
        - Paid Search
          - Winter in Southern Utah:
            - 9.34% CTR
            - 53% Abs. Top Impression Share
          - Southern Utah+ National Parks:
            - 11.98% CTR
            - 44% Abs. Top Impression Share
        - Website
          - New content additions last season:
            - Winter in \_\_\_\_ National Park pages
            - Winter in Moab
            - Winter Hiking
            - Winter Camping
            - Averaged 10th position organic ranking across Winter in Southern Utah pages
          - Last year showed that there are two search strategies in the WiSU space:
            - “Destination + seasonality” terms
            - “Destination only” terms
    - FY 21/22 Campaign Plan
      - The Goals:
        - Increase the accessibility in target consumers’ minds of Southern Utah as a winter destination.

- Grow room nights in those areas during the winter months (November -February).
- Promote Red Emerald trips with longer length of stay, higher ADR, guided activities, and support of local businesses.
- Educate visitors about traveling thoughtfully and responsibly.
- The Challenges:
  - COVID uncertainties
  - Diversity of destinations/climate
    - Bryce National Park in winter (better for more advanced outdoor travelers) vs. St. George golf vacation
  - Short booking windows, short stays
  - Conditions, Closings, Preparedness
    - Cold, snowy conditions can make things not only dangerous—but also not very fun, even for adventurous visitors. Conditions may prevent trails or roads from being used.
    - Fewer hotels, restaurants, and other amenities are open in southern Utah in the winter, so we'll need to find ways to inform travelers about what to know before they go.
- The Audiences:
  - Regional drive markets
  - Wasatch front residents
  - Exclude all audiences targeted with our Ski+ campaign.
- The Message:
  - Come experience Utah in a new, quieter, otherworldly way
  - How to see Southern Utah in the winter - responsible travel, preparedness, Forever Mighty.
- Advertising Creative
  - Approach:
    - Leverage existing banner and video assets
    - Develop 1-2 additional banner assets that speak more directly to the Forever Mighty messaging.
- Paid Media
  - Media Plan
    - Flight Dates: October 15, 2021 – January 30, 2022
    - Target Markets
      - Regional: 15% In-State, Seattle, Wyoming, Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, California, New Mexico, Texas
      - Connected TV Advertising
      - Increased focus in competitive targeting
    - Increase SOV from 12/26/2020 – 1/4/2021
    - Emphasis on repeat visitors

- Leverage long-form videos in native articles and YouTube
- WISU Custom Audiences
  - National Park Visitors: 11/1 – 3/20
  - Southern Utah Visitors: 11/1 – 3/30
  - Southern Utah National Park Visitors: 11/1 – 3/30
- Media Plan Budget Total: \$695,413



- Southern Utah 2022 Media Blitz
  - Flight Dates: December 26, 2021 – January 10, 2022
  - Target Markets:
    - Nation Wide:
    - CTV advertising targeting people higher in the funnel, looking to inspire them to choose Utah as their next vacation destination.
    - Custom audiences will be built off of past travel behaviors to competitive destinations.
    - Last year’s campaign generated 41,512-page views during the week it was live.
    - Total Budget: \$200,000
- VisitUtah.com
  - New Content
    - We are primarily working with existing content this year.
      - Escape Crowds on a Quiet Winter Visit to East Zion
      - Escape Tourist Hotspots on a Quiet Winter Getaway to Kanab
    - New Editorial Production:
      - How to Visit Southern Utah in Winter
      - Winter in Southern Utah photo essay using existing assets
      - New SEO-centric pieces:
        - Winter in St. George, Utah
        - Winter at Monument Valley, Utah
        - Utah's Best Winter Mountain Biking
        - Winter at Lake Powell
    - New Photography Production:

- Will review inventory and capture range of Southern Utah + (Winter) products from alpine and snow-dusted red rock to sunny recreation in St. George.
- SEO Optimization and Outreach
  - SEO-centric content will be focused around winter themes in specific Southern Utah destinations and winter-based activities for which there is search volume and intent.
  - Content Optimizations:
    - Bryce Canyon Winter — Snow Hiking Gear
    - Escape Crowds on a Quiet Winter Visit to East Zion
    - Ice and Rock, Snow and Splendor
    - Winter Vacation Ideas — Winter Road Trip
    - Utah Winter Activities & Things To Do in Winter
  - Outreach:
    - Destination-specific content offering helpful backlink opportunities.
    - Winter Camping/Hiking in Utah in Utah (tips, gear, trails)
    - Winter in \_\_\_ National Park
    - Places to Ski in Southern Utah
  - Paid Search
    - Last season we learned that the majority of search activity for Winter in Southern Utah activities/destination is not seasonally tagged. PPC ads will lead with seasonal messaging so that travelers can immediately confirm the landing page is a relevant resource.
    - To-Dos:
      - Review and improve ad copy across all ad groups
      - Introduce new ad groups and landing pages
      - Build new site audiences for SoUT+ and WiSU campaigns, use for retargeting between each
    - New Ad Groups:
      - Winter in St. George
      - Winter Mountain Biking
      - Escape Crowds on a Quiet Winter Visit to East Zion
      - Ice and Rock, Snow and Splendor
  - Social Media
    - Flight Dates:
      - Paid Media: Nov. 1, 2021 to Feb. 28, 2022
      - Influencers in market: December 2021



- In addition to provided content and creative from UOT and other vendors, Sparkloft will execute the following:
  - Social-first ads
  - Influencer trips to Southern Utah with Forever Mighty messaging
  - Ambassador highlights of Southern Utah
  - Layer inclusive audiences from LGBTQ+ and BIPOC
- Influencers:
  - Lean into the travel cycle. Root the program in existing data to build awareness in advance of peak visitation times and about places to go that are lesser known.
- Ambassadors:
  - Tyler Fontes (@fontes\_four\_pack) in partnership with Melody Forsyth (@downwithadventure)
    - Learn to ski takeover on Visit Utah's Instagram
    - Branded content post from each ambassador in tandem with the takeover
  - Or send Melody to Southern Utah solo for the day
- Public Relations
  - Monthly headline pitch: Create Your Own (Winter) Adventure
  - KPI Messaging Focus & Key Storylines supporting Southern Utah+ overall strategy (Red Emerald, Forever Mighty, SheTravels, etc.)
  - Target In-person media hosting for first-hand experiences in Southern Utah in the Winter (IMVs):
    - Katherine LaGrave, AFAR
    - Jessica Hartshorn, Parents Magazine
    - Erin Riley, Outside Magazine
    - Craig Outhier, Phoenix Magazine
    - Stacey Leasca, Travel + Leisure
  - Audiences:
    - Budget friendly
    - Bespoke adventure
    - Drive market
- Southern Utah+ (Winter) Key Storylines:

- “How to” Winter in Southern Utah: Preparedness, limited amenities, support local businesses, etc.
- Winter Activities: Southern Utah provides access to affordable, high quality downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing.
- National Parks: With a little extra planning, Southern Utah’s National Parks are an exciting time to visit over the winter months with fewer crowds and a different perspective.
- Winter Love: Utah’s love for winter extends beyond the mountains...to the people who recreate on them; the traditions created to celebrate the season and the cycle of adventure and exploration in Utah that renews again with the first snowfall of the season.
- Dark Skies: One of Utah's best locally kept secrets is the winter months are the best time to view its expansive, starry sky fields such as Kodachrome Basin in Southern Utah.

**MOTION: SHAYNE WITWER MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE SOUTHERN UTAH+ FY2022 WINTER INTEGRATED MEDIA BUY OF \$895,413 AS OUTLINED. MIKE TAYLOR SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- Northern Utah+ FY2022 and FY2023 Integrated Marketing Plan Strategy
  - Jonathan Smithgall, Vice President Digital Marketing and Media, Love Communications; Andrew Gillman, Tourism Creative and Content Director, Utah Office of Tourism; Becky Keeney, Tourism Director of Marketing and Operations, gave the following update ([presentation](#)):
    - Looking Back
      - A Native drive strategy:
        - Off-site Native content
        - On-site Native content
        - Longform YouTube
      - Audience Focus:
        - Geographic Targeting: Regional Markets (Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, California, Texas, Idaho, Nevada)
        - Behavioral Targeting: Travelers actively planning similar trips, activity-based tactics.
        - Contextual Targeting: Alignment of promoted native content alongside contextual relevant articles.
      - Statewide Campaign Summary:
        - Twelve native articles and five longform videos generated over 44.8 million impressions, resulting in 265k statewide pageviews.
        - Monitored a 7% lift in intent to vacation in Utah after being exposed to our longform video More than Ashley. We tracked hotel searches which resulted in 73k hotel

bookings for a total estimated hotel revenue of \$20.4M in hotel revenue.

- Urban Strategy:
  - Off-site Native content
  - On-site Native content (different network)
  - Display Retargeting (keeping Utah top of mind post native content exposure)
  - Longform YouTube
  - Audience Focus:
    - Geographic Targeting: Los Angeles, Phoenix, Boise, Bozeman, Denver, Boulder, San Diego, Santa Fe, Reno, Dallas, Houston, Austin, San Francisco
    - Behavioral Targeting: Travelers who are drawn to cities of similar sizes and who might be enticed by Utah's outdoor adventures nearby. Travelers from nearby drive markets who see the Wasatch front as their best option for urban offerings.
    - Contextual Targeting: Alignment of promoted native content alongside contextual relevant articles.
  - Summary:
    - Twelve native articles and eight longform videos generated over 45.7 million impressions, resulting in 193k urban pageviews.
    - We tracked hotel searches which resulted in 41k hotel bookings for a total estimated hotel revenue of \$13.1M in hotel revenue.
      - Average ADR: \$148
      - Average Length of Stay: 2.4 Days
- Current Story
  - Key Landing Pages:
    - Northern Utah
    - Urban Experiences
  - Videos:
    - More Than Just Forests videos: Fishlake, Ashley, UWC
    - A Table for All
  - New Storytelling:
    - Good Roots: The Faces of Utah's Food Culture
    - Shoshone Storytelling
  - Organic Search:
    - Last year, we saw an increase in traffic and new rankings for monitored keywords.
    - We will put the focus on regionally relevant destinations and activities that show search intent for new content and optimizations.
  - Paid Search:

- Urban showing highest CTR (Southern Utah more impressions with budget)
  - Opportunity to grow urban budget, better define Northern Utah
- Regionally relevant search terms and page optimizations
- Unique PPC structure allows better control over geographic targeting and budget allocation.
- Public Relations:
  - Recent coverage
    - Good Morning America: Exploring Utah as it Reopens Amid the Pandemic
    - Texas Lifestyle Magazine: A Monumental Road Trip From Salt Lake City
    - Fall Foliage:
      - Pursuitist.com — Heber Valley (Wasatch Mountain State Park)
      - Fodors.com — Guardsman Pass
    - Current pitches and virtual deskside
      - Love for winter extends beyond mountains
      - Home base for adventure
      - Unexpected culinary & personalities
    - Spring In-market Utah U media FAM planning
    - Influencer Collab with Visit Ogden & Tiffany Nguyen
      - Return trip at end of Sept (previously visited Feb 2021)
      - Showcased metro-to-mountain experience in Ogden, fall colors and direct flight to Ogden via Avelo airlines
      - Co-planned trip with Visit Ogden
    - Let's Talk Utah Season 2
      - Series goal:
        - Promote dialogue and shared enthusiasm among a wide community of those who love living in and traveling to Utah
      - Season 2 episodes all filmed in Northern Utah:
        - Food Diversity in Salt Lake
        - Adventuring Responsibly
        - Arts and Culture in Utah
        - Debunking Myths of Utah's Liquor Laws
        - Accessibility to the Outdoors
        - Indigenous Culture in Utah
      - Changes from Season 1:

- Sparkloft lead producer; scaled back to 6 episodes
- Vetted talent via Instagram who have known on-screen experience
- Distributed both on Instagram + Facebook on same day
- Selected topics based on common misconceptions about Utah
- Increased focus on Forever Mighty
- Roadmap
  - Questions, Challenges and Opportunities
    - Do people know what northern Utah has to offer and choose to visit competitive destinations, or is there a lack of awareness about the offering itself?
    - What is different northern Utah DMOs currently doing for marketing efforts? How can we complement their work, not duplicate it?
    - What are some of Northern Utah DMOs' biggest challenges
    - Community readiness
    - How does seasonality impact the region?
    - “Northern Utah” encompasses a wide range of places and available experiences, so we’ll need to find something to tie them all together.
  - Discovery
    - Review previous Urban and Statewide efforts—what have we learned, what do we want to continue, what do we want to change?
    - Audit of current content that supports the Northern Utah region.
    - Review any available research addressing Northern Utah travel patterns, audiences, and other insights to inform our marketing strategy—what research gaps exist that we might need to address?

- Research
  - UOT interviews with key stakeholders to uncover challenges, opportunities, goals, insights, and ideas.
  - Potential primary research to better understand Northern Utah travelers and travel patterns, answering questions like:
    - How will we define “Northern Utah”?
    - Who is our target audience?
    - What activities should we promote?
    - What’s the right balance of arts/culture, urban, and outdoor offerings?
    - When do we market?
- Strategy
  - Translate discovery and research into key takeaways and develop a high-level strategic approach, informing how we support Northern Utah.

## UTIA UPDATE

Natalie Randall, Executive Director of the Utah Tourism Industry Association (UTIA) provided the following update:

- The UTIA Board will try to travel with the UOT Board to increase collaboration. Thanked Vicki and UOT team for their partnership.
- Discussion with county-wide TRT challenges continue. The primary goal is to identify needs and address with local organizations and government.
- Conversations surrounding alcohol are also in progress.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Representative Brad Last

- Visitor Management is the largest tourism challenge in his district. They just had the Iron Man race and that exposed the need for an evaluation of the current infrastructure. This is where the state should assist the local governments.
- Concerns with the airport development. Has heard negative feedback regarding the long walking distances and lack of signage/direction. Is looking forward to seeing the next phases of development take place in the airport.

Sara Toliver – SnowBasin Resort announced development plans and part of that will be Club Med. This will make Snowbasin Utah’s first all-inclusive resort. This will change the number of visitors, TRT and more. The anticipated opening is December 2024.

Shayne Wittwer – Zion Forever has commissioned a study to evaluate a visitor use plan. Washington County will now be the host of an additional championship, the Iron Man world championship. This will be the first time that the race will not be in Kona, Hawaii.

Commissioner Brent Chamberlain – The East Zion Visitors Center opening ceremony will take place in December.

Jared Berrett – President Biden has restored Bears Ears National Monument and Jared asked how we will be allowed to market the monument in the future, or if we will.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**