

# U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board Meeting- 20240603\_140120-Meeting Recording

0:02

I want to welcome everybody particularly thank the committee chairs and everyone who participated in the various committees on today's recommendations.

0:13

I know everyone worked hard on that and I know it'll be good before summer kicks off to get these in the hands of the secretary and grant and staff to take a look at and ultimately we can discuss further come our fall meeting.

0:27

So I, I hope everyone is set for a good summer.

0:31

I was just moaning about how hot it is here in Las Vegas.

0:34

But I will tell you the good news is for travel, at least in our industry, particularly international, some things have been up.

0:42

And so we're encouraged by that.

0:43

Despite some softness, people are still traveling.

0:46

And so I, I don't know if you sense it in your business, but we do in ours that the magnitude and number of people are still traveling.

0:53

They may not be spending what they spent historically in the last couple of years, but we still see them, which was encouraging.

1:00

So I am gonna turn this over now to Grant.

1:03

I think.

1:04

Grant, you have a couple opening comments and then we'll get right into the letters.

1:07

So Grant, please.

1:09

Great.

1:10

Thanks so much.

1:11

I was hoping to give a quick update coming out of the Travel and and Tourism Leadership Summit in China.

1:17

And I wanted to just give some of the highlights of that for the benefit of the group.

1:20

And we're lucky to have some T tab members with us as well.

1:24

But first, Bill and Brad, as always, thank you very much for your continued leadership as Chair and Vice Chair.

1:31

We really derive a lot of benefit from the amount of time and energy that you invest into this very important body and we thank all the members for serving as well.

1:40

We know that it comes with an opportunity cost as any involved activity does, and we're really appreciative of your time and energy.

1:49

We are also very excited as we are on the cusp of the two year anniversary of the National Travel and Tourism Strategy and your partnership and council throughout this process in creating the strategy and also helping us to drive better outcomes for the American people, create jobs, better economic opportunities for communities across the country.

2:11

All of this work in advancing that strategy benefits from your ongoing recommendations and attention.

2:20

Our team in the National Travel and Tourism Office in particular has been very closely monitoring the numbers and the data and working closely with other departments and agencies across the US government through the Tourism Policy Council to make sure that we're implementing actions under the strategy.

2:38

And we are really delighted to say that currently we are on pace to surpass the 90 million visitor goal of the strategy a year earlier than projected.

2:49

This is a testament to the great work of a lot of people on this call and we want to keep going strong and make sure that that forecast comes true and that we really surpass our goal before the five year time horizon that we had scheduled or planned for in the strategy.

3:05

So Many thanks to the National Travel and Tourism Office, but also all of the colleagues and friends on this call and the Advisory Board in pushing us to achieve these results for the American people.

3:18

As we look at the next year of implementation, we're looking to continue to find ways to drive further results.

3:25

And one way to do this, as you all know, is to increase visitation from China in particular.

3:31

And I had the honor of leading the delegation to China just over one week ago for the Tourism Leadership Summit and wanted to provide a little bit more context and updates coming out of that important trip.

3:45

As many of you also know, Chinese visitors made-up the greatest percentage of visitation to the US prior to the pandemic.

3:53

And if we were to return to 2019 numbers for Chinese visitors that could support 50,000 direct American jobs.

4:03

And if you include the number of indirect jobs and students studying in the US, then that number would climb to Chinese spend supporting 400,000 American jobs.

4:17

This is an important economic contribution and one that we want to build on by getting back to the pre pandemic numbers and go beyond even that.

4:27

So to help advance that goal and to help achieve this return to visitation, Secretary Raimondo worked with her Chinese counterparts during her trip to China last year to relaunch the US China Tourism Leadership Summit.

4:43

And this annual summit brings together leaders from government and industry to discuss ways to strengthen and expand bilateral travel and tourism opportunities and also to increase people to people exchanges.

4:56

So as I mentioned last month, with the support of Brand USA, who did a fantastic job, I led the largest and most diverse American delegation to Xi'an, China for the first summit since the pandemic.

5:11

And this delegation had state, provincial and city level destination marketing organizations, industry association leaders, tour operators, online travel agents, attractions, transportation companies.

5:24

We also had our Deputy Assistant Secretary for commerce, Alex Lazri, and we had a deputy assistant secretary from the State Department who many of you know, Julie Stuffed, who's responsible for visa services.

5:38

And at the summit, I was able to meet with senior level Chinese national and provincial officials, including State Councillor Shen Yuchin, Minister of Culture and Tourism Sun Yi Li, Party Secretary of Shanxi Province Jiao Yudei, and the Governor of Shanxi Province Jiao Gong, and other officials.

5:59

And in each of these meetings, I was able to raise how the United States and China can strengthen travel and tourism exchanges between the two countries.

6:09

And I also took the opportunity to advocate for US interests as we always do, supporting US destinations, pushing for greater market access and a level playing field for US industry in China.

6:22

And this pertained not only to travel and tourism industry, but other key sectors as well.

6:29

And during the summit, we were really pleased to see several US destinations, including California and New York and Los Angeles sign agreements with their Chinese partners as a signal of their readiness to re engage in travel and tourism with this critical market.

6:46

Overall, I believe that the Summit was a success.

6:50

I hope that it will help restore travel and tourism between China and the United States, as I mentioned, But it bears repeating.

6:57

If we could get Chinese visitation to 2019 levels, that supports 50,000 American jobs directly.

7:04

And if we get the numbers up for those visitors and students and think about direct and indirect jobs, it'll support over 400,000 American jobs.

7:13

There's an important economic impetus for this work, in addition to exposing the beauty and many amazing experiences that a traveler can have across the United States to Chinese and other travelers.

7:26

So it was about 3 million Chinese visitors before the pandemic.

7:30

They spent about \$33 billion experiencing our country.

7:34

And we hope to get that number back and even higher to infuse new economic opportunities in communities across the nation.

7:42

So just to conclude, I'm optimistic that our recent actions can help restore the bilateral travel and tourism ties, but we've got many next steps to take with your guidance.

7:55

We're going to continue to carry forward our implementation of the national travel and tourism strategy.

8:00

We're going to be seeking to surpass the visitation goals that we have outlined by a greater number and sooner than the travel strategy had set out.

8:10

And we can only do this if we continue to benefit from your recommendations and from your support.

8:17

Bill, before I turn it back over, I just wanted to mention two brief things.

8:23

First, I mentioned Brand USA and I wanted to extend a very heartfelt appreciation to Brand USA for their leadership and for their support of the US China Travel and Leadership Summit in particular.

8:36

We also sat at some T TAB members who attended, including Brad and Julie and Adam, and I want to thank them as well.

8:43

Without your efforts and your leadership and your presence there, but also day-to-day in this industry, we wouldn't be finding nearly as many of these successes as we're seeing and as we saw at the summit.

8:56

And then second, to all the Advisory Board members, again, thank you for the hard work and dedication.

9:03

All of the recommendations that you make go to the secretary, go to our colleagues across the US government.

9:09

We use them to drive our actions day in and day out.

9:13

And we're really appreciative of your ongoing work.

9:16

Bill, thank you again for leaving this body.

9:19

Thanks for the time just now and back over to you.

9:22

Thank you, Grant and appreciate the effort.

9:24

Appreciate the trip.

9:26

I was there the month before, so I know it's not a simple journey by any stretch.

9:30

Actually, you all look pretty good for a week later.

9:32

And I just returned from Macau like two days ago.

9:35

So I can appreciate the the lag and the, the time difference it has on everyone.

9:40

I would love if we can, Jennifer, in the fall session to maybe re agenda this subject, particularly China.

9:46

I do spend quite a bit of time there.

9:48

I had an opportunity to meet with President Xi the month before and I do have some thoughts that it's not for today's session, but it'd be great if we could potentially talk about that come October.

10:01

Having said that, I want to now introduce the three chairs for and to introduce their letters and I would ask that comments only come from T Tab members.

10:13

If there's any of the public on the phone, there'll be a moment of opportunity at the end of the session, but if we could keep any Q&A to T Tab members only.

10:21

Kilo Ream supported the group and the committee and ultimately shared the letter for data to support our informed shareholder decision making.

10:29

And so we're gonna hear from Carol in a moment.

10:31

Brad Dean did and tried to get his head around and hands around with his committee planning for the future of travel, a small simple subject and I ultimately chaired a group.

10:42

We were small but mighty in leveraging sports events to promote the United States and tourism destination in to total.

10:49

So if I could, Carol, turn to you and if you could give us a synopsis of your recommendations, that would be great.

11:00

Thank.

11:00

You're on mute, Carol.

11:01

You're muted.

11:06

Muted.

11:16

Sorry.

11:16

There we go.

11:17

Took me a minute to find the button.

11:19

Thank you.

11:20

Bill, I thank you to the subcommittee members and we were also a small but mighty group and really focused and dedicated to our topic.

11:31

For me personally, this is a topic that's very near and dear to my heart, so I really appreciate the opportunity to provide recommendations regarding NDTOS data programs.

11:42

More specifically, the charge had asked for recommendations around SIA, the Survey of International air travelers.

11:50

But we thought a little bit bigger about kind of the the broader mandate around thinking about data and how it can support industry making industry decision making.

12:04

And so we thought a little bit bigger, a little bit out-of-the-box.

12:07

And so we put together some pretty bold recommendations.

12:11

So our first recommendation is really thinking beyond CIAT and beyond some of the methodological limitations that that survey has to really try to leverage existing touch points with our visitors to gather information on a much larger scale.

12:29

So there are a number of communities to do that, the first one being I-94.

12:35

That is kind of When someone disembarks in the United States, they go to the kiosk typically to fill in information, and we view that as the primary opportunity to gather key bits of information, most importantly where the traveler intends to visit.

12:54

When we think about one of the biggest challenges our States and cities have across the country, it is the lack of accurate local visitation data that is probably our biggest handicap.

13:06

When we think about what we need to make effective international marketing decisions, we quite simply don't know how many people are visiting individual destinations from various countries, country.

13:18

So this is a critical piece of information that we're really focused on.

13:22

So the first opportunity and best opportunity being I-94.

13:26

Secondarily, there's another opportunity and another touch point for those visiting from Visa waiver countries as part of the Astro registration process, which is a web-based experience.

13:38

So we highlighted that as another key opportunity to capture that visitation data.

13:44

Additionally, there is more opportunity, I won't go into tons of detail around that, but I think another big area that is different in our approach compared to looking at how Europe handles visitation data, for example, is their usage and leverage of lodging base data.

14:03

So historically, the United States has relied a lot on air base data that is fundamentally limiting for individual destinations because there is such great, great freedom of movement across the country.

14:16

And so looking at examples from Europe and how they handle things, they build their local visitation data off of lodging data.

14:25

So we put together a recommendation on exploring how we might be able to leverage through public private partnerships the ability to collect the lodging data and aggregate it on on a broader scale.

14:42

In addition to those recommendations, we also did include specifics for the survey of international air travelers.

14:50

So I won't go through those in detail, but please do you provide any comments you if you have gotten through and have anything specific you'd like to share about that?

15:01

And then finally, our last recommendation is around analysis of being able to leverage the data that does exist to help better utilize that information.

15:12

So understanding, for example, from I-94, the repeat visitation patterns and other things we can tease out from information that already exists.

15:24

So that kind of wraps up the letter from our perspective.

15:27

Thank you.

15:29

Thanks, Carol.

15:30

Anyone have any questions or comments?

15:35

Bill, it's Adam Burke.

15:36

I have one quick question, Carol.

15:38

And obviously, you wanted the issues in terms of privacy, but to the extent the data would be aggregated in terms of amplifying the economic impact of our industry, I wonder if there's a way of working with American Express, a Visa and MasterCard to provide aggregate data based on the types of spend that are associated with travel.

15:57

Because they can certainly sell someone is in a market outside of their home market.

16:01

And I think that would give us a better quality of data in terms of spend than we're able to get from some of the existing industry sources.

16:08

Yes, absolutely.

16:10

A lot of the credit card companies do you offer data products to destinations and typically they are breaking up spending by origin country and merchant category.

16:22

One of our recommendations is to request that this data be categorized by merchant size instead.

16:31

So that would allow us to understand this spending on a merchant size basis.

16:37

In other words, understand more specifically, I think the thing that we're looking for is to understand tourism's impact on small businesses so that we can really understand on a location based perspective the impact that is being had on a localized level.

16:57

So for example, for LA, we in theory would be able to see this is how many visitors came from the UK, for example, this is how much they spent in LA and this is how much they spent in restaurants and hotels.

17:12

And this is how much they spent on merchant at merchants that earn less than \$100,000 in sales, for example, a year.

17:21

And that kind of data would be super powerful in our ability to understand the impact and also manage that and amplify that ultimately over time.

17:32

Thanks, Carol, I appreciate it.

17:33

In LA, one of the youth things we're doing is looking at it in terms of the impact on arts and culture.

17:38

So I think it's one of those areas that it isn't often associated with their industry, but we're finding a significant visitor spent on arts and culture and it's hard to aggravate that.

17:50

OK.

17:51

Are there any more questions or comments?

17:56

All right, if seeing none, if we could move on, Brad, I'll turn this over to you to talk about your recommendations and the committees on the future of travel.

18:05

Great.

18:05

Thank you.

18:05

Mr.

18:06

Chairman.

18:06

We had a large portion of the teach have involved in this and I want to thank all of the members who were very actively engaged of the course of six or seven meetings and and a number of discussions.

18:18

Aside from that, the Secretary's charge, as the chairman alluded to, was broad and very forward-looking how travel and tourism might look 5 plus years from now and what the federal government can do to navigate that, particularly as it relates to data analysis, rather relevant info.

18:33

And then what can the federal government do specifically to ensure that small businesses and underserved populations do not get left behind?

18:41

Obviously, these topics lend themselves to complex discussions encompassing challenges that are not easily resolved and a number of issues that are ongoing in nature, not something seen today and solved of the Morrow.

18:53

So as a result, we're hopeful that these will lead to some contemplation by the NTTD team for near term action.

19:02

But also to note maybe that these could be useful in the next iteration of the national strategy and future T tab work because these are just not things that are going away anytime soon.

19:15

The first week touched on, and no surprise to anyone, that was actually touched on in the Secretary's charge specifically, and that is artificial intelligence.

19:23

Building from the President's executive order, which was released late 2023, we're encouraging the Department of Commerce to expand its ongoing evaluation of AI challenges and opportunities to include travel and tourism.

19:36

There's a lot of good work being done within the agency.

19:39

We'd like to see that brought into our industry.

19:42

Also to balance the need for privacy protection with recognition of the transformational impact today, I could deliver and then extend its listening and learning efforts to knowledgeable experts within our industry who are actively engaged in this on a day-to-day basis, as well as elevating AI and future planning and evaluation of our industry.

20:02

So I think this is very much in keeping with the Secretary's perspective as a leader within the federal government on this topic.

20:08

And we feel like this is the right time and right direction to expand into our industry.

20:13

Second topic that we touch on the letter is one that's come up in previous TTAP the meetings and we talked about it again in the subcommittee and that is the importance of Brand USA and encouraging the Secretary to work with Congress on the next reauthorization and in particular the.

20:28

Support increased funding for Brand USA, noting that, you know, the funding really has been increased in recent years, even though the source of funding has grown.

20:38

And naturally the secretary can't do that on her own.

20:40

That really would have to start with Congress.

20:42

But we think it's important for the administration to be working with Congress in that regard.

20:48

Direct preferencing, the second part of the secondary's charge to us it's evident that black-owned, Indigenous owned and and other people of color owned businesses are essential to the future success of our industry.

21:01

But also these businesses are challenged to maintain successful networks and inclusion in existing promotional networks and supplier network due in part to several reasons.

21:13

Capital acquisition, industry specific education and training and just a general lack of integration

within some of the promotional and revenue generating networks and platforms that are are a central part of the revenue stream in travel and tourism.

21:27

Likewise, the organization's leading promotion for our native nations and native communities are often not included in many of these same networks for various reasons such as not being included in accommodations tax generation as they don't fall within the local taxing authority like a city or county.

21:44

And because those tax dollars often drive some of the promotional network decision making, those entities could be ignored or marginalized or or just left out altogether.

21:54

So our letter recommends a couple of studies.

21:58

One is to explore the needs of underrepresented small scale BIPOC suppliers and underserved communities with the specific intent of helping to create a pathway forward for equitable opportunities.

22:10

And then also to evaluate how a national indigenous tourism marketing strategy could enhance the future impact of indigenous cultural tourism in the United States.

22:21

And we think there's different models that could be studied.

22:23

As a part of that.

22:24

We're also recommending that NTTO study the funding alternatives for such efforts.

22:29

We know and I think the staff at NTTO reminders oftentimes that commerce is not a Funding Agency, but because it does liaise with others such as SBAEDANBDA that there may be funding and alternatives that exist or could exist in the future that would make some of these opportunities viable or maybe advance and and accelerate some of the progress in those regards.

22:50

So we think that that could be a part of the overall effort, not necessarily delivering the funding, but identifying alternatives.

22:56

We also had a lot of discussion on five really important areas of opportunity.

23:02

We purposely did not duplicate prior recommendations as we recognize that the NTTO team is evaluating those and we expect I think to get an update from Alex Lazury later today on that.

23:14

So we didn't want to just duplicate the discussion of these previous topics, but we didn't feel we'd be doing our job if we didn't at least recognize those that would be a short sighted in our part to ignore them because they are part of the future travel and important.

23:30

So those topics in no particular order are accessible travel, sustainable travel, the facilitation of travel, workforce development and retention, and then digitalization of travel and tourism, whether that's 5G networks or moving towards the cashless society.

23:47

There's a lot of things that would impact businesses in our industry, particularly small businesses that we think fall under that umbrella of digitalization.

23:53

And so we're asking that the NTTO team bear this in mind, not only in terms of the next iteration of the strategy and future TTAP work, but the Secretary's role as the leader of the TPC, because some of these extend beyond commerce, but yet are very central to the needs and the future of our industry.

24:12

So that in a nutshell is a wrap up of the future of Travel subcommittee Lever.

24:17

Happy to answer any questions the the committee members may have.

24:26

Any other comments or questions?

24:30

Here we go, Fred.

24:34

Yes, thank you very much.

24:35

Fred Feldman with the Port of Seattle.

24:37

I was just really appreciative of your ability to make a call for funding even though commerce is not necessarily the source.

24:45

I know I was trying to do the same, but was told that perhaps this isn't the right venue.

24:50

But I do think it's very important that for all of our recommendations that we identify ways in which they can be implemented and didn't know if you had any sense of challenges associated with making such a recommendation.

25:07

You know, but generally speaking, my experience on T Tab has taught me that we're better.

25:12

We are best at identifying what we want to accomplish and leave the how to the team at NTT and commerce because when you get into the funding, it's just there's layers of complexity that most of us don't deal with.

25:25

So even in the case of like brand USA, we kind of debated, you know, where does this fit into it?

25:32

And so I think the tone of our letter is really intended to say, we think these are important.

25:38

We think that this needs to be addressed.

25:39

And in the case that I mentioned, we said it may be an opportunity to help the industry better understand what funding exists, But we tried to make it really clear that we're not advising the secretary to find funding or seek funding because it's really beyond, you know, our our role, I think as AT TAB.

25:55

So I hope that that comes through in the letter.

25:57

And just in general, that's always been my view of T tab is to focus on the what we want to accomplish and leave the how to the experts in government that understand that far better than some of us.

26:08

Thank you for the clarity.

26:12

Any other comments or questions?

26:17

OK, hurry now.

26:17

Thank you, Brad.

26:19

I'll kick off the last one.

26:22

We were asked and I helped chair a group.

26:24

So I want to again thank all our committee members on leveraging sports events to promote the United States is a tourism destination of interest.

26:33

There are 10 major events, if you count with inevitably I think will be the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake in 2034.

26:41

Over the next 10 years that hit the United States.

26:45

Economic value of those events is well in excess of about \$3 billion.

26:49

And what we found in trying to get our head around this and try to wrestle the the idea of this down is much like travel in general as it relates and emanates from commerce.

27:00

The reality is nobody owns this specific subject in the federal government.

27:05

That's just the reality of it.

27:07

And so we had two simple, straightforward recommendations.

27:11

One is under the Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism to put together a sports Policy Council which could help advise.

27:19

And I think what we found last year when we brought everyone together, the idea and the notion of bringing people together, whether it's state, Homeland Security, obviously commerce, which is under their complete remit, is the best way to go forward.

27:34

And so the idea and the structure in the letter recommending an establishment of sports focused Advisory Council at the Sports Policy Council that's made-up of government officials.

27:44

And then it is ultimately just like this process.

27:47

There's a sports advisory committee made-up of some folks maybe on this call or others who are familiar with work around and work with some of these various events.

27:58

You know, whether it's in this jurisdiction or others.

28:00

Obviously LA Salt Lake, there's quite a bit of activity again over the next decade that's going to hit us.

28:06

We did find it interesting that every, not every, most agencies have somebody tucked away somewhere working on this.

28:13

We found a gentleman named Dan Mickelson within state who's a one man band.

28:17

If you, if you don't know Dan, he's a great guy, but he's literally A1 man band.

28:21

And so the idea of getting everyone together, putting a policy council around it and ultimately an advisory committee, we thought would be productive and helpful because as you all know, a great deal at stake.

28:33

And then the second recommendation followed basically along that lines is putting together an event playbook.

28:40

We couldn't find anything like that, whether it would be online or otherwise, that took various experiences from whether it's hosting Formula One, hosting FIFA, hosting the Olympics.

28:52

But there's no legacy to these programs and how things are done and accomplished that we could find.

28:56

That's coordinated.

28:57

And so the idea of helping to put together an event playbook for such things we thought would be productive use of manpower for people to be able to leverage on as future events came up.

29:09

And so pretty straightforward.

29:11

Those are the two ideas because again, I think the whole of government working together on some of these events because they're massive, particularly when you think about the 28 Olympics in LA.

29:22

We need to get advisory committee together in a sports policy council working within commerce and for commerce on trying to drive some of this coordination and then ultimately basically leave behind a playbook that can be used for other events as you think about the next decade that follows.

29:39

And so those were the two recommendations and I'd open it up for any questions or thoughts.

29:45

Anyone from our committee that I might not have covered would be great seeing none.

29:56

That's great.

29:57

Let's we'll see now let's move forward.

30:00

We want to open up for before we take a vote to public comment.

30:04

I know Chris Thompson, President, CEO, Brand USA.

30:07

I would like to make a comment.

30:09

So I'll start with him and then open it up to the general public.

30:12

Chris, do you want to comment?

30:14

I think Chris was actually unable to join in the end, Bill.

30:18

So right now we don't have any plan, but or Erin, do you have something I see Erin's.

30:25

Yeah, just just interpreting the role of Chris here for a minute this afternoon to part of what Grant said earlier.

30:34

Really appreciate everybody joining with us as we try to get the Chinese market back on track.

30:40

We have a almost a fiduciary duty to our industry, to our constituents to bring that most lucrative market back online.

30:45

So tremendous gratitude and TTO for helping facilitate that event last week.

30:50

And for those of you who joined.

30:51

And just thanks as always to the committees for your diligent work to put forward the best recommendations, the Secretary, some of which intersect with Brand USA's work.

31:00

And so we always appreciate that partnership and kudos to everybody.

31:06

And yeah, Chris obviously is in his hopefully we'll get an audience with this group over the next couple of months.

31:12

But but obviously a big moment of transition for us.

31:14

And and I know this is a a group that is near and dear to his heart.

31:18

A1 time member and obviously a frequent guest on these calls since taking over as CEO.

31:23

So we appreciate the partnership, the opportunity and everybody's great work and support.

31:30

Other than that, Jen, back to you guys.

31:33

Thanks.

31:33

Thanks, Erin.

31:34

So then if we could just move along, I'd like to go letter by letter and just simply take a vote on these recommendations and then we'll make them official for submission.

31:43

So if we could go back on the 1st letter that Carol helped team on data, could I get a motion presumably from you, Carol, and then we'll take a vote.

31:57

Sorry, I don't know what I'm supposed to say it just if we could take a motion to put the letter forward and adopt the recommendations that would be great.

32:09

So moved I I'd second it all in favor.

32:14

Aye aye aye aye aye.

32:18

Any opposed.

32:21

OK, so letters adopted.

32:23

Thank you again, Carol and the committee on to the second letter.

32:28

Brad, if you could make a motion on planning for the future of travel.

32:31

Thank you.

32:31

Mr.

32:32

Chairman, please to on behalf of the subcommittee to make a motion to accept and submit the letter on the future of travel issued by the subcommittee.

32:43

I'll make a second again.

32:44

And all in favor, aye.

32:49

Any opposed or comment?

32:53

OK, seeing none that letters adopted as well.

32:56

And then the final one is our letter on sports events planning and promotion.

33:02

And I'd make that recommendation to pass the letter on as drafted and to the secretary for submission.

33:08

I oh, I was going to 2nd it for you, Bill.

33:11

Thank you all in favor.

33:18

Any opposed or any comments?

33:21

OK, motion carries.

33:23

So all three letters go forward.

33:27

I think we're now going to turn this from previous recommendations over to Alex to hear about where we are with the recommendations we had made last year and just get a general update.

33:38

So, Alex, if I could give you the floor, that'd be great.

33:40

Awesome.

33:41

Thanks so much, Bill.

33:42

I really appreciate the opportunity to provide some highlights of the work that NTTO has been doing in response to all of your recommendations.

33:52

Before I get started, I just kind of wanna echo what Grant said about the China Summit.

33:56

It was really an amazing summit.

33:59

I just want to thank in particular Brian and Jen for all of their heroic work and not to mention the people on grand staff, Andrew, Tanya, Marco, if any of you are ever planning a trip abroad, steal them because they they, they plan an incredible trip.

34:20

So I think this was one of our best events and hopefully we'll, you know, be a great leaping off point for for future summits going forward.

34:32

You know, I just also wanna just tell you guys how, how seriously we take these recommendations, how important they are to the secretary, to, to Grant and to us and NTTO.

34:44

We're working within our office and with all the other agencies, especially of the tourist of the Tourism Policy Council to see if and how the recommendations can be, can be implemented.

34:55

I think Brad kind of said it best.

34:58

We want to know from you guys what your best thoughts are and what your best recommendations are.

35:03

And then it's up to us to try to figure out how feasible, possible and doable they are and then to work with you guys on if we need to make any changes or, or modifications or anything.

35:15

But these recommendations are are are incredibly influential and important and they've really been able to set the tone for how we have gotten to where we are with the national strategy today.

35:29

So what I'm going to share with you guys is it's not by any means an exhaustive list, but I think it's a good summary of all of our efforts and I'm happy to share more information with any of you individually or during another T tab meeting if you guys have any questions.

35:42

So when it came to recommendations for ensuring diverse tourism products, you guys first provided recommendations for ensuring these diverse, inclusive and accessible tourism, as you guys all know, is a main pillar under the national Travel and Tourism strategy.

35:59

And we've strategically partnered with organizations focused on this topic.

36:03

For example, we recently signed a strategic partnership agreement with Travel Unity and we also renewed an agreement with a Octa.

36:10

So we're continuing to look for other opportunities as well.

36:15

Umm, and we have also, umm, uh, made sure that we're gonna be, uh, dedicating staff within NTTU to this topic.

36:22

Umm, uh, right away.

36:24

We're also working to develop and hold an educational webinar that will highlight the assistance available from the Small Business Administration, the Economic Development Administration, and the Minority Business Development Administration for travel and tourism organizations.

36:39

We're going to make sure that we invite diverse and travel tourism organizations to listen, ask questions of these government agencies.

36:46

And as a follow up, we're also exploring efforts with the global travel and tourism team to ask Commercial Services offices across the country to host similar virtual or in person meetings in their communities.

36:58

So a lot going on on on those recommendations.

37:00

And again, a lot of those wouldn't have been able to come to fruition without without your guy's initial push when it comes to recommendations on communicating the welcome.

37:12

You know, we know how important this initiative it is.

37:15

This is one of the first things visitors see and experience when they come to the US so we understand how important this is and we have to make sure that this is a great experience.

37:24

That's why our entire team has toured a number of airports.

37:28

We've worked with Custom and Border Patrol with DHS, where we're talking with the State Department and Brand USA on how we can improve this experience.

37:37

Additionally, we're working to complete a competitiveness study, which will provide insight into where the United States stands among other countries regarding its competitiveness as a travel destination.

37:49

So we'll have results that we can share with you all later this summer.

37:53

NTTO is also in discussions with industry partners on the topic of readiness programs for smaller businesses and destinations to determine what's already being done in this area and how the federal government can add value.

38:06

Furthermore, NTTO is leveraging initiatives in key markets to amplify messages that the United States wants to welcome more international visitors.

38:15

You know, just as an example, NTTO in Commercial Services are leading an initiative at US embassies in the top international markets to coordinate U.S.

38:24

government efforts to promote travel in to the United States from other countries.

38:29

Another example is the fact that we've got the US Japan tourism year this year.

38:35

So we're working with Commercial Services, our Commercial Services team in Japan in collaboration with Brand USA to lead activities under the tourism year to really accelerate the recovery in these key markets by celebrating our long standing friendship and encouraging more travel between the two countries.

38:55

I know we'll be going with Brand USA on a sales mission to Japan to kind of further this tourism year.

39:02

A third example, as you just heard, you know, we're focused on regrowing travel from China to the US

And so that travel tourism summit that that the that Grant just LED is, is really the jumping off point for that.

39:16

And we think that'll lead to a a ton of other a ton of growth in that market.

39:22

When it comes to recommendations for accessibility.

39:27

On accessibility in particular, we're planning a round table or symposium on accessibility and travel and tourism later this year.

39:34

We'll make sure that grant, you know, this is something that grant will be leading.

39:38

So we hope to that your recommendation to develop adequate benchmarking tools that can be used for evaluating accessible travel status and progress can be part of that discussion.

39:47

We'll have more details to come a little later this summer as we start to build that out.

39:54

You know, one thing we've also been in discussions on is with OMB and GSA to review travel procurement policies and we're working to make progress on on that recommendation when it comes to infrastructure with regards to that, we all know how important this is.

40:12

You know, that's why we're here.

40:13

Extremely proud of the administration's work in achieving what you know many administrations have really only talked about.

40:19

Which is an actual infrastructure law.

40:21

We don't just talk about Infrastructure week, we actually pass an infrastructure law.

40:26

And as a result of that, the Department of Transportation has released its National Travel and Tourism Infrastructure Strategic Plan.

40:34

And so this is something that NTTO provided input into and we're going to continue to work closely with the Department of Transportation to monitor the implementation of this plan.

40:43

And this directly correlates with the national Travel and Tourism strategy.

40:46

So a lot of great things going on in infrastructure and, and as a result of your recommendations, we were able to have really significant input in in the Department of Transportation's infrastructure plan.

41:01

When it comes to sustainability, NTTO is in the process of developing a sustainability toolkit for our website.

41:08

So this will contain all the best practices and other information.

41:11

We'll have more information on that over the summer as well.

41:14

Regarding the maintenance of our country's natural resources, the Secretary is a signatory to the America the Beautiful initiative, which is working to conserve and restore 30% of the federal lands and waters by 20-30.

41:28

We're also going to feature this on the NTTO Sustainability page to highlight the Department of Commerce's support.

41:35

Additionally, the Department of Interior recently announced nearly \$200 million investment in climate restoration and resilience projects to protect America's national parks.

41:46

And finally, this funding will be used across the US to prepare for the impacts of climate change, protect species, restore ecosystems and investing can conservation jobs, while also supporting small and rural communities by bringing investment and jobs to all those local economies.

42:02

And finally, with recommendations with regards to workforce, NTTO is looking into the possibility of some sort of jobs meeting this fall.

42:14

You know, we'd love to be able to invite universities, labor unions, travel and tourism companies, government officials.

42:21

So we'll keep you posted on that effort if we're able to put that together.

42:26

We're also working with it, with industry to see how the government can add value to initiatives that are already underway to attract workers, including youth to the sector.

42:36

We've, you know, done a number of, you know, traveling across the country to kind of do these round tables with industry to kind of hear from their concerns about the labor market.

42:48

And so hopefully we can add value to initiatives that are already being underway by other members of the Touristy Policy Council.

42:56

So, you know, these are just, you know, really a few highlights of of the work that we're doing to implement your recommendations.

43:05

We know how much your expertise can really guide us in making government more efficient and allowing us to reach our goals set forth in the national strategy.

43:13

When you really think about where we were in January 2021 when the president first took office to where we are today, you know, I think it's pretty clear that travel and tourism is one of this administration's greatest successes.

43:25

And that's in large part due to your efforts and recommendations.

43:28

So I know how much the secretary values your counsel.

43:32

I know Grant and I value it.

43:34

And, and it's why we want to make sure that we take all of these recommendations very seriously and why we're so appreciative of you guys continuing to make recommendations to us so that we can continue to do to do better work.

43:47

So thank you guys for all this.

43:49

We're going to do what we can to advance these ideas to the best of our ability.

43:53

And we're looking forward to our continue collaboration with you all in these areas.

43:59

Thank you, Alex, you know, a couple of comments generally on the good side, infrastructure.

44:08

I'm sure you all heard that the Transportation Department granted \$3 billion for high speed train between this destination in Laa, Big deal.

44:16

And so I know commerce leaned in on that like with many.

44:19

So thank you for your help on that.

44:20

That'll go a long way.

44:22

And it's, it's a big sign for what tourism can bring to a region.

44:25

And so we look forward to seeing that project developed out.

44:29

I'm also going to be curious maybe come fall to hear about the survey.

44:33

You know, USTA just did one.

44:34

I'm sure you saw that one where we were 17 out of 18 countries, 17 out of 18 countries surveyed.

44:40

So I know there's we all know the work to do, but I'd be curious what your survey brought forward and how we can focus our efforts and our energies.

44:49

Appreciate again all of the updates.

44:50

I think it's critical for the committee to hear their work doesn't go unfounded or unspoken to.

44:56

So we appreciate that very much.

44:58

With that said, that concludes, I think Jennifer, unless there's anything I'm missing today's business.

45:04

And again, I just want to thank obviously the committee chairs, everyone on the various committees for their input.

45:09

It is valued and valuable.

45:12

And so we'll get these letters submitted to the secretary pronto.

45:15

Bill, if I could just give some, if I could just give some next steps, if that's also also OK, please.

45:22

Awesome.

45:23

So just kind of as a formal point of business now that these letters are final, I just want you to know our team is going to move forward as we move them forward to the secretary for her review.

45:33

And then we'll get to work and seeing where we can make further progress.

45:39

Just want you guys all to know we're still working to schedule an in person T tab meeting this fall.

45:43

We'll get back to you guys as soon as we get more information.

45:48

I know calendars can fill up quickly.

45:49

So trust me, we're working as as diligently as possible with all of your schedules and with the secretary's schedule to try to get something in person in the fall.

46:00

But you know, until then, obviously, if you guys ever need anything, don't hesitate to reach out.

46:05

We're here.

46:06

We will share that competitiveness study with you all the 2nd we get it and we're able to make that public.

46:12

But in the meantime, I hope everyone does have a great summer.

46:15

Bill, stay cool and we really appreciate everything.

46:20

And seriously, anything you guys need, don't hesitate to reach out.

46:24

Just because we're not meeting doesn't mean we're not here to help.

46:27

Thanks, Alex.

46:30

All right, so I close the meeting and I appreciate everyone's attendance today.

46:34

Thank you all.

46:36

Thanks everyone here.

46:37

Thank you.

46:38

Thank you.

46:38

Bye.

46:39

Thanks, Bill.

46:40

Thanks everyone.