

**Public Written Comments Received on
Travel Oregon's Draft [10-Year Strategic Vision](#)**

*The public comment period was posted on industry.traveloregon.com
and was open from May 24, 2022, to June 7, 2022 at 5:00p.m.*



June 7, 2022

Oregon Tourism Commission
319 SW Washington, Suite 700
Portland, OR 97204

RE: 10-year Strategic Vision

Dear Commissioners,

Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory would like to thank the Oregon Tourism Commission and Travel Oregon staff for their efforts to receive and incorporate feedback in developing Travel Oregon's 10-year Strategic Vision and for the opportunity to provide comment.

The current draft addresses many of the concerns and challenges expressed in the first round of public comment. The vision acknowledges the need for Oregon's tourism industry to more directly tie its future to stewardship and shared economic vitality. It provides opportunity for stakeholders and partners to engage with Travel Oregon's vision. The true test of this vision will be in future collaborations, actions and accountability.

Oregon communities and operators are in different places with regards to how they prioritize and can act on the values upon which the vision is built. As the strategic vision states, Travel Oregon will need to gracefully "step into differing roles as needed: a leader, a convener, a collaborator and supporter". This starts with listening, engagement and getting buy-in from local industry partners and stakeholders. Meeting partners where they are is the only way to achieve meaningful changes to the opportunities and experiences Oregon provides to residents and visitors. True collaborations need to start from a position of understanding local needs and capacities and then be developed in coordination with local stakeholders.

It is understandable that many of the actions required to turn this vision into a reality are yet to be defined. However, there are significant critical needs left unspoken to in the identified strategies. Under the "Oregon delivers remarkable experiences" objective, the needs of urban and mature destinations are unaddressed. It is good that rural and tribal communities are called out but strategies and support are needed in all our communities. Urban challenges can't be ignored. Niche product development and care for Oregon's most iconic and popular sites are needed.

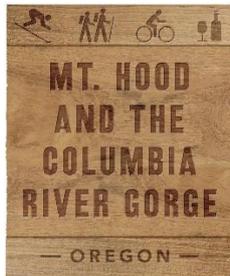
Key Performance indicators tied to the lenses and stakeholders holds Travel Oregon accountable to the desired outcomes from this vision. Resident and visitor perspectives are built into the accountability. A mechanism to monitor industry stakeholders' feedback would strength Travel Oregon's accountability to effective collaborations.

Again, we appreciate the Commission and Travel Oregon staff for their leadership in developing this roadmap for the industry. We look forward to taking actions that ensure visitors and residents experience the Oregon envisioned by those that gave generously of their time, wisdom and passion to create this document. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the process.

Sincerely,

Samara Phelps

Samara Phelps
Executive Director
Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory



Dear Travel Oregon Staff and Commissioners,

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in Travel Oregon's Transformational Planning process and for the chance to comment on the new Draft 10 Year Strategic Vision. I appreciate the time and attention you have all given to this 10 Year Strategic Vision in helping to make sure it meets the needs and the energy of where destinations in Oregon are today and where we would like to be in the next 10 years. It was clear reading this draft that many of the thematic concerns raised in public comments in the first round were recognized and incorporated.

On behalf of the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Region and our local DMOs, I would like to provide a few more key questions and comments for Travel Oregon staff and the Commission to consider with regard to this recent draft:

Why aren't we striving to be "Transformational" anymore?

It was disappointing to see the word "Transformational" removed from the entire document when that idea/concept has been the center of this document for almost two years now. The Destination Stewardship approach and the three lenses are a powerful direction for tourism for the state, but also feel very relevant to today, to this moment in time. But this is a 10 year vision, where transformation is possible and we should speak to some higher aspirations in the document.

Where did the alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals go?

Aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the UNWTO's tourism filter of them, was an exciting aspect of the first version of this document that did feel transformational. It was Oregon identifying itself as a player on the global tourism stage working locally to address global challenges with global solutions. This was incredibly inspirational for an RDMO like ours and we would suggest putting these back into the Vision to set higher goals for our work.

The Strategic Vision needs to do more to address the urban/rural divide in the state.

One topic that still feels missing from much of this Strategy is acknowledging the urban/rural divide and equity issues related to it in the state. Prosperity is a great example of the urban/rural divide experience in the state. We would suggest considering adding a question to the Prosperity Lens framework that is something like "how will this work support equitable prosperity/benefits for rural communities."

Regenerative Tourism is about creating net positives from tourism, not just minimizing consequences.

The first Regenerative Tourism Lens question is focused on what "consequences" does this work have and if we feel comfortable moving forward given those "consequences". But, the Regenerative concept is focused on delivering net-positive impacts from our work. Thus, the question should not be just identifying consequences, instead it should be about "How can this work leave net-positive impacts."

Developing new niche product provides no guarantee that it will reduce visitation at high-use areas.

Per our comments from the first public comment round, we appreciate the recognition that parts of Oregon are experiencing high visitation pressures that affect community livability. However, the strategy outlined in Strategy 4 of the Remarkable Experiences Objective

states that developing new niche product somewhere else is a solution to that issue. But there is no guarantee that it is going to reduce high visitation. It might help spread length of stay or support lesser-visited communities if the new product is developed there, but it won't necessarily divert visitation traffic. We are asking that resources and investments in better systems for visitation at our high use areas are also include in this strategy.

Disasters have short and long-term impacts on communities. Support for them should not be limited to the initial impact time period.

Per our comments from the first public comment round, we would ask that "recently" be removed from Strategy 5 under the Remarkable Experiences Objective. As we have seen from communities in the Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge region, four years after the Eagle Creek Fire the Gorge is still experiencing significant landslides and highway closures impacting nearby communities. Two years after the Riverside Fire, Hwy 224 only just opened, but is still not a thoroughfare through the area, just an out and back with only three water recreation put-ins. This has significantly impacted the tourism industry in Estacada and will continue to for many years to come. The need for support from Travel Oregon and local DMOs extends beyond the moment the crisis happens and recently thereafter.

We believe some of the strategies do not align with their assigned Objectives. We suggest moved the following strategies:

"Align and support communications across the tourism industry to improve visitors behaviors and experiences with timely information, responsible recreation practices and respects for all communities."

- This is currently listed under "Oregon's tourism economy is flourishing", but would make more sense under "Oregon delivers remarkable experiences."

"Expand opportunities for residents and tourism stakeholders to actively engage and collaborate in destination management processes; provide timely feedback loops."

- This is currently under "Oregon's tourism economy is flourishing," but this aligns significantly more to the "Oregon is striving to be a place of equity."

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on this important Vision for Oregon's tourism industry for the next 10 years.

Thank You,
Lizzie Keenan

Regional Lead
Mt. Hood and Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance
971-378-4006
lizzie@hood-gorge.com

June 7, 2022

Dear Todd Davidson, Travel Oregon staff and Commissioners –

Awesome work team!!!! It makes my heart sing to see the values that have been important to so many in this state for so long come so strongly to the forefront of the Travel Oregon 10-year strategic vision narrative.

I love that you've decided to embrace the destination stewardship terminology for your approach, and I especially appreciate the way you've articulated it on page five.

I like how you shifted from calling it a 'transformational plan' to a '10-Year Strategic Vision' as this feels more true to what it is. This plan feels like the articulation of solid next steps that have been building for a long time and are the result of many years of hard work by staff, communities and the industry.

Furthermore, I really like how you've incorporated the specific legislative underpinnings of the organization's charge as well as the history of its legislative path to its current funding environment.

I have a few suggestions for improvements:

- Pg. 9 – I wonder if there is another metric other than absolute change from 2003-2021 that would be more helpful in this moment. Could it be demonstrating the rapid recovery of the industry and a projection of where TO believes the industry might be in 10 years? Is there anything you can derive from the last 18 that informs the next 10?
- Pg. 11 – second paragraph in right-hand column: You highlight that better doesn't necessarily mean more, faster, but doesn't economic prosperity involve a lot more than heads in beds? I believe so. I would love to see Travel Oregon articulate its vision of what economic prosperity means to the organization, to the industry and Oregon communities beyond heads in beds.
- Pg. 13 – the "Regenerative Tourism Lens" questions could be strengthened to get at "how can tourism leave this place better and more whole?" What is the industry's role in actually creating a better Oregon? The first question/lens feels so big that I'm concerned it will be challenging to implement. The second question/lens seems a little too easy to check off – it's a yes/no question. What more than stakeholder involvement can we do? What is the quality of the involvement? What are the results of that engagement? Did it produce positive results? Were people invited into an environment where they could truly share power with the organizations that hold the resources to discuss what tourism should look like in their community?
- Pg. 17: Related to Objectives/Strategies: Oregon's tourism economy is flourishing - Consider adding a strategy speaking to the development/improvement of the Oregon experience and tie it in to your "Oregon delivers remarkable experiences." Developing a better Oregon experience equitably across the state is an economic development strategy.

- Pg. 18: Objective: Oregon delivers remarkable experiences:
 - First bullet: consider shifting language away from “facilities and products” – that feels like insider jargon. How about “supporting the development of experiences and amenities” and then you could remove items in parenthesis.
 - I’m wondering if there is space under this objective to articulate Travel Oregon’s support for community planning, training, strategy and/or governance to manage tourism at the destination scale. I see the need for this more than ever in communities across Oregon right now. I feel like it is missing from this strategic vision.

Thank you for your hard work on this and your invitation to submit comment!

Best of luck with the last final tweaks and the creation of your next two-year strategic plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Dahl'. The signature is stylized with a large 'K' and 'D'.

Kristin Dahl
Crosscurrent
5300 York Hill Dr.
Hood River, OR 97031



June 7, 2022

Oregon Tourism Commission,

First, I would like to thank the commission and Travel Oregon for an additional opportunity to submit public comment on 10-year Strategic Vision. My name is Tori Middelstadt and I am the Executive Director for the Josephine County Visitors Association dba. Travel Grants Pass. Travel Grants Pass is one of the newest DMOs in the state, restabing in 2021, after a year of the community going without a DMO during the height COVID-19 pandemic.

While reading the strategic vision, it was clear the special committee worked hard to align a vision striving for a better Oregon with priorities that speak to Oregonians and our industry. As I review this plan, sitting in my seat, serving rural Oregon from a gateway community to world class assets such as the Oregon Caves National Monument and the Wild and Scenic sections for the Rogue and Illinois Rivers, I noticed one major gap. **How is rural Oregon going to be served and represented in this plan?**

The plan touches on the negative impacts from the pandemic but misses one major point that this also drove a larger wedge in the urban rural divide. The pandemic was also not a blanket negative impact on communities as my community felt record visitation due to its small population and expansive outdoor spaces. These visitation differences by the states varied geographies reflect the largest challenge for a statewide entity like Travel Oregon– most issues (and opportunities) are an incredible matrix, not felt equally across the state.

On page 13, when the vision discusses the various lenses, the organization will look through as they complete their work. It seems **a lens that recognizes the different needs between urban and rural communities should be added.** This amplified divide as part of the impact of the pandemic will take dedication lasting longer than the length of this vision to bridge.

Although I think an added lens is the best correction, there might be places to add recognition specific to the needs to rural Oregon.

- Page 17– Oregon’s tourism industry is flourishing– this objective indicates the goal to have the tour industry part of a flourishing and balanced economy. Many rural based communities hurt by the decrease in logging are still looking for places to recover this economy gap and the visitor can really help.

- Page 19– Oregon respects its natural environments– Add a fourth strategy to help elevate rural gateways to Oregon’s outdoor spaces who are still establishing a travel and recreational economy.

I appreciate the opportunity to advocate for my community’s perspective. I am available for questions, 541-916-9605 or tori@travelgrantspass.com.

Sincerely,

Tori Middelstadt

Tori Middelstadt
Executive Director
Josephine County Visitors Association
(dba Travel Grants Pass)



June 5, 2022

Oregon Tourism Commission,

Visit Central Oregon would like to thank Travel Oregon staff and the Oregon Tourism Commission for their work in revising the draft of the 2022-2031 Transformational Strategic Plan and the opportunity for stakeholders to provide continued feedback in this process.

We believe this revised plan has done an excellent job of incorporating stakeholder feedback that was provided after the first draft was released. One key element added to the revision is the value of tourism as an economic driver in our state which is clearly represented in this plan.

We also appreciate the clarification that this is a vision document and included a sub-committee with appropriate representation to give insight to industry feedback and questions. The plan is a helpful road map as stated, to aid RDMO's, DMO's and other tourism stakeholders to have defined lenses for prosperity, racial equity and regenerative tourism. Many of our partners are maneuvering through recovery, and the new expectations we are tasked with as we transition and evolve our roles to focus on destination management and stewardship.

We appreciate that Travel Oregon states that RDMOs can use this as a tool and travel along the main arteries of their vision – segue down another road for their own initiatives, then circle back onto the main “road”. Due to the need for high levels of stakeholder engagement, how will stakeholders be encouraged to participate and stay engaged throughout the state? For regions that struggle with stakeholder involvement, is there a plan to improve this?

Some further comments /questions on the plan are provided for your consideration in this process.

1. We would be curious to understand the insight to remove the land acknowledgment language from the document.

2. Workforce Development - as stated, many jobs were lost in the tourism industry due to COVID and have only recovered by 66% but are there specific strategies to support the workforce challenge. With workforce challenges now one of the biggest facing the industry, it would be helpful to state specific ways that the state can lead regions in workforce development to achieve the stated goals including *Oregon's tourism economy is flourishing and Remarkable Experiences*. Without a strong hospitality workforce, these goals will not be achievable.
3. In reference to Remarkable Experiences - could this be further defined towards inclusion, intersectionality and stewardship.

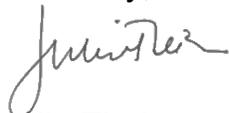
Lastly, while we understand and appreciate that this is a vision document and specific metrics and KPIs may be further defined in the plans developed for the biennium(s), we would like to address how some of these goals will be addressed and measured.

- For Oregon's reputation - we would like to better understand how data will be gathered and measured for the resident sentiment and visitor satisfaction score to meet this goal.

- How will success be measured for the Equity objective? Specifically, the success and effectiveness of investing and supporting BIPOC businesses and communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on the plan and we appreciate the Commission and Travel staff for their work and leadership in the development of a 10-year strategic plan.

Sincerely,



Julia Theisen
President and CEO

Darlene, Oregon Coast

Include affordable housing in your plan. It is nowhere mentioned. I say this as a hospitality host for a decade in Maui. As an absentee owner of an oceanfront property, I was totally dependent on maids, trades, and local businesses to keep our vacation rental full and earning for us. Housing and food prices were a challenge for the people we hired and depended upon. We paid them well, treated them respectfully and let them know we valued their services and who they were as people. Tourism can be a lucrative business and it is more successful when the entire industry treats their workers well and looks out for interests including essential human needs like food and water. Tourism is basically a people business. Being kind to workers as well as our customers made the decade of renting our property pay off with dividends. We also made a lot of friends who continue to enrich our lives.

Lynda Colter-Bergh, Self-Employed, Oregon Coast

I was disappointed to see a ten-year plan not address, in ANY way, the lack of affordable housing for the workers expected to support businesses that cater to tourists.

Until communities are both supported and pressured into dealing with this problem, we are going to face more homelessness, lack of employees, and businesses closing because they can't afford help.

I don't believe, when your entire industry relies on low paying, seasonal jobs, that you get a pass on addressing this critical issue that affects everyone. Shame on you.

Tiffany Lee Brown, RDMO/DMO, Central Oregon

Hi there. I grew up in Oregon, spent many years in Portland, and have been in Central Oregon for six years. Years ago, I even wrote a big piece for The Oregonian newspaper extolling the virtues of creative economies and tourist economies.

My fear is that we've overdone it. Our state is saturated with visitors and newcomers, and we seem to have a shockingly unrealistic view of the effects on our environment and our infrastructure. Locals can no longer take hikes on "our" mountains without happening to score the right permit at the right moment.

Golf courses suck up water. Aggregate mining operations ruin delicate springs (no, I can't really prove that one, but I watched it happen). Traveling cars spew carbon.

We need to seriously examine the long-term sustainability -- in all respects -- of our voracious appetite for tourism. My income and the success of many projects I'm involved with, including nonprofits, depends to some degree on tourism. Can we strategically employ a throttle on some of this tourism and development?

Thanks for listening/reading...

Kari Westlund, RDMO/DMO, Willamette Valley

The revision is excellent. The staff team and leadership committee did a great job. Thank you for this strong strategic document that will serve the industry and agency very well in the decade ahead.

Jeffrey Kee, Managing Partner, Blue Mountain Ranchlands LLC, President of Paunina Investments Inc, President of Oregon Paleo Lands Institute, Vice President Mid John Day Watershed Council, Fourth Generation Oregonian

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this huge investment of public resources.

First, I will again comment that the plan is lacking in its definition and support of Equity. Financial Equity needs to be acknowledged and added into this vision.

There are numerous County's and small towns in Oregon that lack the financial and human resources to respond to out of area visitors. For example Wheeler County and Fossil Oregon are home to the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute. Being one of the most resource deficient areas in the State. However, there are destinations that the State and Federal Governments continue market. The local strain on restroom facilities and emergency services are becoming overwhelming.

The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute was not eligible to apply for COVID relief funds in 2019 because their budget was under 100k. We have been doing Travel Oregon's job for the last few summers. But this year we will not be open to the public. A million dollar public investment that could go back to Wheeler County to use for a sheriffs office. Who is going to serve the thousands of more visitors coming to Wheeler County when we add Sutton Mountain as a National Monument?

I would suggest the creation of new grant program to provide emergency support for organizations that are doing good work. A grant that could be applied for at any time of year, is easy to complete and is distributed within 90 days.

The John Day Fossil Beds National Monument has experienced hundreds of thousands of visitors due to Oregon designating the Painted Hills as one of the states seven wonders. Travel Oregon should share in the burden to provide additional support to the sheriffs office and the volunteer ambulance drivers in Mitchell and Fossil?

Private landowners in the region of the Painted Hills are picking up toilet paper out from under sagebrush on their ranches every week. Oregon needs to think about equity through the lens of a volunteer EMT in remote, resource poor regions of the state.

Health care and housing for local service providers should also be acknowledged. Restaurant owners can not find staff to stay open for all the times Travel Oregon wants visitors to enjoy our great state.

I would suggest the immediate short term strategy that should be included in this vision is for every dollar spent in developing a destination as defined by Travel Oregon, a dollar be spent on supporting local community resiliency. Additional support is needed for health care, emergency services and housing in many resource poor communities.

How about we close a couple of of the foreign offices of Travel Oregon and beef up support systems for local Oregon communities? Then when we are more able to effectively support thousands of visitors we can open those foreign offices up again.

These are my opinions only.

Nan Devlin, RDMO/DMO, Oregon Coast

The plan captures the Why and What - I'd like to see the HOW. That will help DMOs align with Travel Oregon where we can.

Josh Vlach, Entomologist, Oregon Department of Agriculture – Insect Pest Prevention and Management

To whom it may concern,

I am an entomologist with the Oregon Department of Agriculture that focuses on invasive species issues that affect Oregon agriculture, forests, and environment. It doesn't look like the strategic plan addresses invasive species issues that are driven by the actions of visitors, let alone the damage done by invasive species introduced by other means to the attractiveness of our natural environments and our crops.

Tourism is a known pathway for new pests. One example is by the movement of firewood. Invasive woodboring pests and diseases of trees are moved this way. For example, Emerald ash borer, a pest of ash that is established in the eastern US, is expected to wipe out Oregon ash trees in a decade when it arrives. It will most likely arrive in firewood. The invasive species community wants to reach visitors to discourage them from bringing wood products to Oregon. Another example is invasive earthworms, such as the crazy snake worms, that are brought by anglers. These worms will permanently alter the ecosystems where they are introduced. Another example is exotic crayfish, such as recently occurred in the Rogue river basin:

<https://www.ijpr.org/environment-energy-and-transportation/2022-06-07/invasive-northern-crayfish-already-spreading-to-bear-creek-rogue-river>

Invasive species that are brought by other means will also impact the attractiveness of Oregon as a destination. The recent introduction of vine mealybug will increase the use of pesticides and shorten the lives of grapevines by transmitting leafcurl disease. If spotted lanternfly is introduced, vineyards may become unattractive to visitors (a random selection <https://www.winemag.com/2022/03/21/spotted-lanternfly-vineyard-infestation/>). There are many woodboring pests moving around that threaten forests, and while they may not all kill trees, they can make them look less attractive and vector plant diseases. There is an endless supply of new invasive species that can permanently alter the livability and attractiveness of Oregon. I'd like Travel Oregon to be a partner to help protect Oregon from new pests.

Invasive pest problems should be of concern to all Oregonians. Once they arrive and establish. They will be here forever.

Thank you for your time and feel free to contact me if you have additional questions.

Kassandra Rippee, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Coquille Indian Tribe

Note, the Coquille Indian Tribe, as well as the other federally recognized tribes in Oregon are not stakeholders but are instead partners. The relationship between the Tribes and "stakeholders" is quite different, both logistically and legally. I recommend updating on page 5 and on page 27.

We look forward to engaging on the future actions and opportunities associated with this and other Travel Oregon projects.