

# Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting May 18, 2023

Virtual Meeting -  
Broadcasted via YouTube Live

**Tourism Commissioners virtually present included:** Chair Boyles, Vice-Chair DiNovo, and Commissioners David Gremmels, David Penilton, Maria Ponzi, Greg Willitts and Scott Youngblood.

## Welcome and Introductions

Chair Boyles opens the meeting at 3:30 p.m. and welcomes everyone to the May 18, 2023, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair Boyles thanks everyone that is in attendance virtually and welcomes those joining through Travel Oregon's Industry YouTube channel. Chair Boyles states that today's meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental material can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website if you'd like to follow along.

The Oregon Tourism Commissioners and Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, introduce themselves.

## Chair Remarks

Chair Boyles expresses his gratitude to Vice-Chair DiNovo for filling in for him during the April 3 Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair Boyles also thanks the Commission for their review and input on the Travel Oregon 2023-25 draft Strategic Plan prior to it being shared out for industry comment.

Chair Boyles acknowledges that several comments on the plan have been received – which Todd will speak to – and that he believes the recommendations provided are generally in support of the major themes included in the draft and that only modest modifications may need to be made.

Chair Boyles asks if the Commissioners have anything further to add. They do not.

## Review of draft Travel Oregon 2023-25 Strategic Plan & Budget

Chair Boyles states that the purpose of today's meeting is to hold a public hearing and receive and review comments on the plan. In advance of that he invites Todd to review Travel Oregon's 2023-25 draft Strategic Plan and budget.

Todd walks the Oregon Tourism Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding the steps taken in drafting the Travel Oregon 2023-25 draft strategic plan and budget.

Chair Boyles thanks Todd and indicates that he'd like to hold questions until after the Public Hearing.

### **Public Hearing on draft Travel Oregon 2023-25 Strategic Plan & Budget**

Chair Boyles acknowledges that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements were met through:

On Monday, May 1, the Commission meeting notice for today's public comment was posted to the Commission Meetings webpage. Notice was sent through our Industry Communications, and the agenda was posted along with a link to this Livestream.

On Wednesday, May 10, the Travel Oregon 2023-25 draft Strategic Plan and budget were posted to the industry site, and in compliance with ORS 284.114, the draft plan was sent to Governor Kotek, the Director of Business Oregon and tourism industry associations – the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association along with Oregon Destinations Association.

Chair Boyles acknowledges that staff went above and beyond that requirement by sending the plan to all Legislative leadership, the seven Regional Destination organizations, 24 additional agency and industry partners and our federally recognized tribal contacts.

Chair Boyles opens the public hearing on Travel Oregon's 2023-25 draft Strategic Plan and Budget.

Chair Boyles acknowledges that there were no requests made to join the Commission today to provide virtual in-person public comments on the draft plan. He acknowledges that 5 comments have been submitted so far, that those have been distributed to the Commission for consideration and will be posted to the Commission meeting page as part of the public record.

Chair Boyles indicates that the public comment period remains open until May 31, and any additional comments received will be forwarded to the Commission and considered when staff draft the final 2023-25 Strategic Plan and budget that will come before the Commission at our June 13 Commission meeting for approval.

Chair Boyles closes the public hearing.

Chair Boyles asks if the Commissioners have comments or questions about the draft plan.

Commissioner Ponzi asks if people who wanted to testify had to request that ahead of time. Chair Boyles confirms that is the case.

Chair Boyles confirms that the Public Comment on the plan and budget remains open until May 31, 2023, and that there will be additional opportunity to consider those comments ahead of the June 12-13 Commission meeting where the plan will be considered for approval.

Commissioner Ponzi asks about the Outcome Based Budgeting and if the noted \$34M is included in the larger budget. Todd explains that the \$34M is a subset of the \$94M budget, which is tied to specific objectives.

Commissioner Penilton states that when he first had the opportunity to review the draft plan, we indicated that he wanted to include more information on economic impacts. The Travel Oregon team was responsive and included additional information in the draft plan that is before us today. He states that he'd like for Travel Oregon to continue prioritizing regenerative tourism. Commissioner Penilton states that he's also excited to see what will come before the Commission this fall with action plan and budgets associated with it.

Commissioner Youngblood notes that in being a part of this process a few years, he's encouraged to see the extra steps that staff take to ensure transparency in sharing the plan out more broadly than is required. It truly shows the character of the agency. The staff are always responsive to our suggestions and changes. The level of responsibility that goes into the plan and ownership to carry out this work is not merely a process but a commitment that the entire Travel Oregon team takes seriously. He thanks the staff for their hard work.

Vice Chair DiNovo states how thoughtful the plan is and states her appreciation for being able to see the plan ahead of it being released, and for how responsive staff were to her suggested changes. Those changes were made very quickly in order to provide us with this plan today.

Commissioner Willitts thanks the Travel Oregon team and the Commission for being responsive in their thoughts and comments. He states that he is a huge fan of the strategies in the plan that address workforce and advancement of educational opportunities. This is in line with work that Oregon's colleges are making in supporting tourism hospitality programs. Having KPIs in place is a good way to see the successful

nature of supporting all types of communities. Commissioner Willitts asks about with increase of international travels, if there may be a KPI related to international travels that could be shared out quarterly, and states support for the addition of regional based flights to support small airports and communities to connect to and through Portland.

Todd states that with the assistance of Port of Portland we can track international arrival data, and can provide that to the Commission. We will have Europe flights restored along with Canadian and Mexico flights, but Asia flights are still pending.

Chair Boyles states that the influence that the Commission has to help bring back intra-Oregon flights may be hard, given the shortage of pilots.

Todd states that in attending U.S. Travel's recent Destination Capitol Hill, one main topic was advocating for investing in the training and the addition of pilots at the national level.

Commissioner Willitts gives a shout out to the local high school program in Sisters that are graduating pilots ahead of them receiving their degree.

Commissioner Stephenson states appreciation of staff for their responsiveness to the comments received by the Commission. She states her excitement to see in initial wave of priority strategies, livability and workforce. Commissioner Stephenson asks how the strategies were created – if by staff or created with input and partnership with industry partners.

Todd states that in creating the 10-Year Vision – there were over 2000 touchpoints on what the industry believed should be the priorities for Oregon's tourism industry. Those were then vetted and have become the Objectives and 19 Strategies identified in the 10-Year Vision. Todd discusses the opportunities being considered in collaboration with the Oregon Hospitality Foundation for workforce development, specifically reaching out to state agencies to ensure we are tracking industry employees. It is a collaborative effort and there will be work that is Travel Oregon led, and some work that we will be coming alongside to support the efforts of our partners.

Commissioner Gremmels thanks the work of staff and appreciates the comments received so far. States his appreciation for the focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and serving those underserved and under-resourced communities. Also states his appreciation for the focus on regenerative tourism and the highlighting experiential aspects and impacts along with economic impacts.

Chair Boyles reiterates appreciation of Travel Oregon's learnings of past effort; specifically having Commissioner have opportunity to review and provide comments to the plan ahead of time ahead of it being released more broadly. Chair Boyles also acknowledges that the work called out in biennial plan flows directly from 10-year Strategic Vision and appreciates the inclusion of the KPIs to evaluate the work. Chair Boyles states that the public comment remains open through May 31, and he looks forward to receiving more feedback on the plan.

Commissioner Ponzi thanks those people who have already submitted comments.

### **Other Business**

Chair Boyles asks if the Commission has any other business to share.

The next Commission Meeting will be held June 12-13, 2023, in Lakeview.

Chair Boyles thanks everyone for the input and time today and adjourns the meeting at 4:37 p.m.