

OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

December 3, 2025

Courtyard by Marriott Corvallis
400 SW 1st Street
Corvallis, Oregon, USA, 97333

[Meeting recording](#)

Tourism Commissioners present included: Chair Willitts, and Commissioners David Gremmels, Travis Hill, Lucinda DiNovo, Jenifer Roe, Heather Miller and Nick Pearson. Vice Chair Patel was unavailable.

Welcome and Introductions (18:00 mark on the recording)

Chair Willitts opens the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and welcomes everyone to the December 3, 2025, Oregon Tourism Commission meeting.

Chair Willitts thanks everyone for being in Corvallis, noting that the meeting materials, including the agenda and supplemental materials can be found on the Travel Oregon Industry website.

Chair Willitts states that in holding a meeting today, all Public Meeting notice requirements required by state law were met.

The Oregon Tourism Commissioners and Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon, introduce themselves. Commissioners DiNovo and Gremmels attend the meeting virtually. Vice Chair Patel was unable to attend due to a previous commitment.

Department of Justice representative Devon Thorson introduces herself.

Chair Willitts states that there will be an opportunity to hear comments from partners. Those who plan to share remarks shall use the sign-in sheet.

Chair Remarks (23:50 mark on the recording)

Chair Willitts acknowledges the Commission's intent to travel throughout the state for these in-person meetings and the value to connect directly with communities. It helps inform the Commission's work and perspectives so the whole state benefits.

Local Welcome (25:15 mark on the recording)

Chair Willitts welcomes Christina Rehklau, Executive Director at Visit Corvallis; Corvallis City Councilor Lewis; and Tori Middelstadt, Executive Director at the Willamette Valley Visitors Association (WVVA), to join the meeting.

Christina, Councilor Lewis, and Tori walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation for the local welcome (Exhibit A):

- Welcome to WVVA-land
- Welcome to Corvallis
- A Destination In Transition
- How We're Funded
- PAC-12 Realignment Impacts
- Osborn Aquatic Center
- Moving Forward
- Destination Experience Plan
- What's New in Corvallis
- Gordon Hotel – opening in 2027
- Corvallis-to-the-Sea Trail (C2C)
- New Mountain Bike Park
- Wheel the World Partnership
- Why Partnership Matters
- WVVA – Meet the Team
- 2025 Ornament Hunt
- Accessible Travel
- Wheel the World Campaign Co-op
- Wine & Culinary
- Strategic Investment Fund
- Albany Pickleball Courts
- Sports in the Valley

Chair Willitts thanks the presenters.

Commissioner Pearson asks if there is optimism with Oregon State University returning to a specific athletic conference and Corvallis' ability to return to past lodging demand. Christina answers that being in a conference (versus not having a conference) helps but it contains smaller universities with smaller budgets and smaller fan bases. OSU is committed to staying in the national picture but it is a different reality than two years ago.

Commissioner Hill asks about the total cost of the Osborn Aquatic Center. Christina answers \$5.9 million to get the facility reopened and they are currently about \$400,000 short of that budget number.

Commissioner DiNovo appreciates Christina outlining the split of TLT dollars and how they are split between communities.

Commissioner Gremmels appreciates the ornament hunt and adds to Councilor Lewis' sentiments about local food. He acknowledges Oregon State University's Food Sciences and Technology Department and how it provides expertise in sustainable agriculture.

Chair Willitts acknowledges Christina's optimism with what is to come to the community in 2027.

Partners and Public Statements (58:20 mark on the recording)

Chair Willitts states that on Tuesday, November 18, the Commission meeting notice was posted to the Commission Meetings webpage, notice was sent through Industry Communications and a link to the meeting agendas was posted.

Chair Willitts reminds the group that the public comment period is an invitation to the industry to inform the Commission of updates, information, and constructive thoughts about Oregon's tourism industry. He reminds attendees that a comment form lives continuously on the industry website.

The Commission received one comment in advance of the meeting from Mike Ripley at Mudslinger Events detailing their bike event and content offerings. The comment has been shared with the Brand Stewardship department for consideration.

Chair Willitts states that we have the opportunity for attendees to sign up in-person to speak with us. He requests that remarks remain respectful and professional and ask that comments be limited to 3 minutes.

Mike Ripley shares his expertise in building cycling and running events and welcomes his content and stories to update Travel Oregon information. He continues to encourage all to welcome our Canadian neighbors.

Commission Business (1:06:00 mark on the recording)

Review of Commission Packet

Chair Willitts asks if all Commissioners have received and had a chance to review their Commission packet – including the financials. All commissioners answer affirmatively.

Financial Update

Chair Willitts thanks Vice Chair Patel, Todd Davidson, Edward Van Buren, Junho Chang, and Commissioners Hill and Roe for reviewing the financials prior to this meeting.

Commissioner Roe shares the financials including the October and November TLT deposits of \$411,156 and \$11,705,972 respectively. With the November deposit, we have received \$22.62M in TLT revenue, which represents 52.85% of the budgeted \$42.8M. Fiscal year-to-date TLT is down 1% compared to FY25, as FY25's November deposit was unusually high compared to the two previous years. We continue to closely monitor TLT revenue and expect the December deposit to be informative as the end of the quarter. The Director of Finance and Accounting is actively forecasting budgets to keep our programs, partners and Commissioners informed.

Commissioner Gremmels appreciates the financial report.

CEO Search Update

Chair Willitts shares that the CEO search process continues to move forward. The November 14th CEO Search Subcommittee and Oregon Tourism Commission Meeting included the motion to direct staff to

contract with Heidrick and Struggles executive search firm for purposes of engaging in the CEO search and hiring process. Negotiations are ongoing at the moment and we will keep the industry informed as we progress. Also happening simultaneously is a CEO compensation study via a third-party firm. The results are expected before the Holidays and will be shared with the search firm. Once we have a full plan and timeline from the search firm, we will communicate the timeline, job description and opportunities for engagement.

Commission Action (1:10:05 mark on the recording)

Approval of Minutes (September, October and November 2025)

Chair Willitts shares that Commissioners were sent the draft September, October and November 2025 Commission meeting minutes via email on November 18 and asks if there are any questions or comments regarding these documents.

Chair Willitts takes a motion for approval.

- Commissioner DiNovo moves to approve and Commissioner Gremmels seconds the motion.
- Chair Willitts asks that all in favor say 'aye'. Commissioners Hill, Roe, Gremmels, Miller and Pearson, DiNovo and Chair Willitts say 'aye'.
- Chair Willitts asks for any opposition.
- Hearing none, the motion carries.

The September, October and November 2025 Commission meeting minutes are approved and will be posted to the Commission Section of the Travel Oregon Industry website.

2024 International Market and Forecast Update (1:11:40 mark on the recording)

Todd states that today's first presentation comes from Michael Sturdevant, Brand Stewardship Strategist, Lorna Davis, Global Sales Manager, and Aran Ryan of Tourism Economics.

Michael, Lorna and Aran walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding updates of international visitors (Exhibit B) including:

- Oregon's International Tourism Outlook
- 1. Overview – the US International Market
 - International visitors to US spent \$142 billion in 2024
 - International visitors real spending still 15% below 2019
 - International tourism fell the furthest, but is recovering
 - Overseas visits have declined through much of 2025
 - Weaker inbound across most global regions
 - Canadian visitor pull-back is stabilizing
 - Overseas arrivals in July declined 3.1% year-over-year
 - Recovery across Asian countries has slowed
 - US is still the largest global long-haul destination
 - US outbound has recovered ahead of inbound
 - Travel is still prioritized within spending
- 2. Oregon's International Market: Visits
 - Near term setback to international visits in Oregon
 - Many key origins were still below 2019 levels last year

- Oregon's market share of overseas visits has slightly exceeded 2019, but its market share of Canada visits has been lower
- 3. Oregon's International Market: Spending
 - Overseas real visitor spending expected to near full recovery by 2029
 - Asia Pacific is on track to be the most important origin by 2029 in terms of spending
 - Canada accounts for 30% of all international visitor spending
 - Strong spending growth expected among certain countries by 2029
 - Oregon's market share of overseas spending remains strong, but the state has lost Canada market share
- 4. Trends for 2025 and Beyond
 - The world economy is slowing
 - Businesses cite geopolitical tensions as the top risk
 - The dollar has declined from its recent peak
 - The market of travel-ready households is expanding
 - Takeaways

Todd asks if there are any questions.

Commissioner DiNovo appreciates the frank outlook and asks what leads to the optimism in 2029. Aran notes the wealth growth in countries and how their spending capability will grow accordingly.

Commissioner Miller asks if Canadians are traveling to competing countries. Aran answers that many traveled within Canada but further investigation is needed to identify where they traveled.

Commissioner Gremmels appreciates the sentiment to reach out to Canadian visitors. He acknowledges the work of the Global Sales team in foreign markets to encourage visits. Michael acknowledges that Travel Oregon has returned to social media presence in Canada back in July but continue to see some negative comments but there are some comments with a hopeful future.

Commissioner Hill asks about the adjustment for inflation and whether it was based on a set number. Aran answers that a CPI index, or similar, is being used.

Commissioner Roe asks what work will be done to welcome those international visitors, especially in 2029. Lorna answers that the team is always looking ahead and acknowledges the work currently done. Travel Oregon's partnership with Brand USA provides education that gets passed on to partners and hoteliers.

Commissioner Roe notes that the Asian market spend is higher with fewer people and asks how the Travel Oregon team decides if they are more important than a market with less spend with more people. Lorna answers that the in-market representatives review the data and the team remains nimble to secure visitation. Todd answers that the reliance on Canada has to do with proximity and available drive markets.

Commissioner DiNovo acknowledges that Canadian visitors have greater volume so overall their spend is less. Todd acknowledges that overseas visitors spend more over more visitation days given the length of travel. Lorna acknowledges that resources are dedicated to the places with direct air services and

overseas flight partners have shared positive passenger numbers so we are well positioned against our competitors. Michael acknowledges that he has worked on a weighted index to judge various factors to ensure resources are dedicated to the correct markets.

Commissioner Pearson asks about the April inbound bump in arrivals. Aran shares that timing of the Easter holiday affected the numbers. Lorna shares that the booking windows from the past year saw arrival growth in 2025.

Commissioner Pearson acknowledges the forecast of the UK's anticipated visitors will be 42% down from 2019 numbers. Aran answers that the strength of the market in 2019 was impressive but does not expect to lose more UK visitors from 2025. Lorna acknowledges the trade and familiarization tour work is ongoing and bookings are strong. Travelers want to see value and thankfully it has been favorable for UK travelers at the moment.

Chair Willitts asks about the US' market share of tourism dollars, its percentage shift and the declining revenue value. Aran answers that there are some depressing graphs. Aran will follow up.

Chair Willitts asks how Oregon is faring against the economic outlook shared in April 2025 and adopted in June 2025. Aran answers that he is not prepared to answer the question. Aran will follow up.

Commissioner DiNovo asks that the answers be shared with all Commissioners.

Commissioner Roe asks if we know the spend needed to attract international visitors to Oregon. Lorna answers that the Global Sales team's fiscal year budget is \$1.6 million. Commissioner Roe asks for the team budget to be broken out and shared with the Commission.

Commissioner DiNovo acknowledges the team's work to maintain international relationships and encourage visitation to Oregon.

Todd acknowledges the challenges in forecasting budgets without knowing the full quarter's TLT deposits.

Chair Willitts recesses the meeting at 10:41 a.m.

Chair Willitts reconvenes the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Competitive Grant Update (2:14:22 mark on the recording)

Todd states that the next presentation comes from Michelle Woodard, Director of Stewardship Investments, and Deb Vaughn, Grants Manager.

Michelle and Deb walk the Commission through a PowerPoint presentation regarding updates to the Competitive Grants programs (Exhibit C) including:

- Introduction
- 2024-2025 Projects in Progress (3 slides)
- 2026-2028 Cycle Timeline
- 2026-2028 Engagement Points

- 2026-2028 Opportunity
- 2026-2028 Cycle Outcome
- The Value Proposition
- 2026-2028 Parameters
- 2026-2028 Projects to Extend the Visitor Season
- Request Amount

Todd thanks the presenters.

Chair Willitts asks what has shifted from a past grant cycle focus on adding capacity to organizations. Michelle answers that capacity is still a need according to survey data and talking with partners. Some adaptations in the proposed framework could go to capacity and administrative roles.

Chair Willitts asks for more information about the coaching period. Deb answers that the team provides information and education sessions (broad overview of the program), topic specific webinars (budgeting, for example), and open office hours. Questions are answered via email and one on one question times before the Letter of Intent (LOI) process is available.

Commissioner Pearson asks about the rationale for opening the large grant cycle. Chair Willitts shares the success of the past Large Grant cycle for the World Athletics Championships Oregon22. Many statewide opportunities have been shared that could benefit from a larger investment and the opportunity exists to get positive outcomes.

Commissioner DiNovo asks about the matching criteria and how Commissioners can provide feedback. Michelle answers that there is still room for conversation before the guidelines are finalized. The matching criteria was developed by staff after hearing from the Commission in general, but it was staff that are proposing it as a 1:1 match to achieve greatest impact. Deb adds that \$500,000 minimum aligns with other funding partner guidelines and the likelihood of return on investment is more likely at funding at this scale. The adaptations for smaller entities were very intentional.

Commissioner DiNovo asks Todd to clarify how the funding was delivered in the past Large Grant cycle. Todd answers that \$2.5 million was awarded each year for four years, which encumbered the next three yearly grant cycle allotments.

Michelle shares that the LOI process is intentional to show the Commission where the funding need is and how larger investment opportunities could lead to large impacts.

Todd answers that this proposed framework will drive development of the guidelines, which will be reviewed by the Commission at a later date. Todd adds that the Letter of Intent (LOI) process and Commission input will greatly streamline the full process and project success.

[Always On Marketing \(2:54:06 mark on the recording\)](#)

Todd states that the final update will come from Katy Clair, Brand Services Director; Kelda Schmidt, Marketing Services Manager; Wade McCarthy, Paid Media Manager; and Amy Garay, Content Editor.

Katy, Kelda, Wade and Amy provide the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Always On Marketing approach (Exhibit D) including:

- Introductions – Always On Campaign Managers
- What Do We Mean by “Always On”
- Strategies at a Glance
- Brand Campaign in February through May to drive impact during the peak trip planning window
- Process
- Integration with Owned Channels
- How it all Connects
- What Promoted Content Looks Like
- Always On Social – Nimble Program
- Always On Social – Choosing Content
- Always On Social – Development Niches
- Where All This Content Goes
- Always On Social – FY26 Strategy
- Always On Search – FY26 Strategy
- Always On Native – FY26 Strategy
- Online Travel Agency (OTA) Always On campaigns
- Always On – FY26 Results to Date

Todd thanks the presenters and asks if there are any questions.

Commissioner DiNovo appreciates how content ties back to the 10-Year Strategic Vision and serves underrepresented communities.

Commissioner Pearson asks how quickly the content creator network can provide content. Amy answers that our social media agency handles a lot of the logistics and one to two weeks turnaround timeframes are normal. The strength of the network and the editorial calendar (predictive schedule) drive quick turnarounds. All content from the Nimble Content Creation program is owned by Travel Oregon so it eases future use.

Commissioner Miller asks how the program will continue to grow. Amy answers that she works to increase the size and diversity of content creators. Katy answers that as new markets and niches grow, the program will adapt.

Commissioner Hill appreciates the program’s objectives and nimbleness.

Chair Willitts asks the statistics of a micro-influencer. Amy answers that this person has less than 10,000 followers. Travel Oregon has the paid media dollars to increase exposure and increase reach to certain audiences with voices of authority.

Commissioner Miller asks how much guidance is provided to the content creators. Amy answers that the team collaborates to share ideas, gathers ideas with RDMO partners, and give loose itineraries to the

creators. Amy can also vet ideas directly from the creators. The Brand Style guide is shared with them but we want the creators to use their voice.

Commissioner Roe asks how comments are responded to. Amy answers that the creator is tagged in the post and Travel Oregon does the community management. No artificial intelligence (AI) is used.

Commissioner DiNovo asks about the TripAdvisor investment and what drove that decision. Wade answers that we want to be where the audience is and inject content into the ecosystems. Travel Oregon's presence on the Oregon page helps increase the authority of the page.

Todd thanks the presenters.

Other Business (3:33:57 mark on the recording)

Chair Willitts thanks the local hosts for their hospitality.

Chair Willitts asks if there is any additional business.

Chair Willitts states that additional virtual meetings are likely to keep the CEO search process moving forward.

The next in-person Oregon Tourism Commission meeting will be March 9, 2026, in Portland. More information will be posted to the industry website as soon as it's available.

Chair Willitts adjourns the meeting at 12:17 p.m.