

UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

**April 29, 2019
2:00 pm – 3:00 EDT
Via Teleconference**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. I would like to inform all parties that today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I will now turn the conference over to Brian Beall. Thank you. You may begin.

Brian Beall: Hello, everyone and welcome to today's meeting of the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB). Before handing the meeting over to John Sprouls, our TTAB Chair, to lead us through today's discussion, I would like to start with roll for our TTAB members. (Denise), if you could please open the line, I will go down the list.

Coordinator: All lines are open for you.

Brian Beall: Thank you, (Denise). We have John Sprouls.

John Sprouls: I am here.

Brian Beall: And Kurt Ekert?

Kurt Ekert: I am here.

Brian Beall: Todd Davidson?

Todd Davidson: Here.

Brian Beall: Brad Dean?

Brad Dean: I'm present.

Brian Beall: And I know Derek DeCross is not able to join us today. Fred Dixon?

Fred Dixon: I'm here.

Brian Beall: Sean Donohue?

Sean Donohue: Here.

Brian Beall: Jim Hagen?

Jim Hagen: I'm here, Brian.

Brian Beall: Russ Hedge?

Russ Hedge: Here.

Brian Beall: Pam Inman?

Pam Inman: Here.

Brian Beall: Debbie Johnson? Tom Klein? Scott Lynn? Steve Morrissey?

Steve Morrissey: I'm here, thank you.

Brian Beall: Mary Motsenbocker?

Mary Motsenbocker: I am here.

Brian Beall: Sue Presby? Tricia Primrose?

Woman: Tricia's not able to join.

Brian Beall: Thanks. Olga Ramudo? Stephen Revetria?

Stephen Revetria: I'm here.

Brian Beall: Brian Rothery?

Brian Rothery: Here.

Brian Beall: Adam Sacks? Bryan Saltzburg?

Bryan Saltzburg: Here.

Brian Beall: Caryn Seidman-Becker?

(Howard Cass): (Howard Cass) is sitting in for her today.

Brian Beall: Bill Talbert? Denise Thevenot? Rob Torres?

Rob Torres: I'm here.

Brian Beall: And Ernest Wooden? Great, thank you, everybody. Operator, you can go ahead and close the lines and I will turn the call over now to TTAB Chair, John Sprouls.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Brian and I want to thank everybody for making the time to join us today. There's been a lot of work done by both of these subcommittees that I think is tremendous work and once again it never ceases to amaze me the work that comes-out of this committee.

Everybody thinks you get on a committee like this for some place in D.C. and you just hang-out and have cocktails three or four times a year. Unfortunately for everyone but fortunately for everyone, this is a board where we actually work and I thank you all for the work that's been put in against both of these letters.

What I'd like to do is move along. What we're going to do is present and deliberate each of the letters separately and then after an opportunity for public comment. If there is any, we will then take the board vote on each of the letters separately so with that I would like to turn it over now to the biometrics subcommittee chair Sean Donohue.

Sean Donohue: Hey, good afternoon, everybody. Thank you, John and before I start I just want to thank the members of our subcommittee for their help and their involvement. Most of them are on the call today and appreciate everyone's time and effort as we put together these recommendations so thank you.

And also want to especially thank Isabel, Bryan, and Jennifer for all of their work and assistance on this so our objective if you've got the document in front of you hopefully is outlined in Paragraph Number 1 and related to how the U.S. government can work with the private sector to accelerate the progress on implementing the biometric entry and exit for travelers.

And it might be a good idea for me to just give a little bit of background and context on where we stand today when it comes to biometrics for all of the TTAB members on the call that were not part of the subcommittee and many of you are aware of this so I'll try to keep it brief but I just want to make sure we have a foundation to have the discussion moving forward.

As I believe you all know, biometrics can take various aspects but for the purpose of this work, we especially focused-on facial and the reason for that is Customs and Border Patrol is already starting to go down the path of implementing facial biometrics and I do have to give credit to Customs and Border Patrol.

Over the last several years their commitment and embracing of technology to obviously secure and meet our security needs and meet their security needs is critical but it has also helped make the facilitation of inbound international arriving customers much better and much more efficient so we're using that as the foundation to work forward.

The other aspect of this that maybe some people are not aware of is there is actually a Congressional mandate that requires a biometric facial capture for all non-U.S. citizens exiting the U.S.

It's actually been something that was mandated several years ago but the can keeps getting kicked down the road but it is clear in the next couple of years it is going to be a mandate and obviously that's helping with the acceleration of the biometric implementation.

The last piece I would offer to everybody is we all are very, very aware of the projected growth in tourism and projected growth in international arrivals and it is clear to all of us in the industry including our federal partners that mean

that future growth with purely staffing or new facilities is going to be wholly inadequate.

And if we don't use technology, we're going to be going backwards in terms of how we welcome international arrivals to the U.S. and how quickly we facilitate that process so there is a burning platform here for all of us in the industry to get this right from a technology standpoint so given that background and the current state of affairs, our team focused-in on five recommendations.

The first one really is outlined on Page 3 of the document and it's I guess not surprising but when you look at what platforms are being used for biometric technology, it's probably not a surprise that there are multiple platforms being used and Customs and Border Patrol uses the traveler verification system for their photogallery to validate travelers.

TSA is working off of some different technology. It's a credential authentication technology and our first recommendation is effectively how can we create a one-government perspective for the use of technology and funding and data sharing so that we're not being inefficient by having multiple platforms being used by our federal partners.

The other aspect of this recommendation is a little bit more indirect I would say but I believe all of you are aware that when it comes to the use of technology, Customs and Border Patrol is quite a bit further along than TSA and to the extent we can get to one platform we can have you know, an interagency lead coordinating.

We believe there's real opportunities to get TSA further down the road with the use of biometrics and while it is not directly to our objective of biometrics

entry and exit, it certainly would have a facilitation benefit if we could see more technology being used by TSA.

The second recommendation again goes to alignment on a global stage. We would recommend that again we have some type of interagency lead to coordinate with global stakeholders because it's not just the U.S. that is looking at introducing and implementing biometric technology.

It's being done by many countries and working to get alignment around standards especially privacy, technical requirements and the use of platforms we think is critical. Having said that, that is a very aspirational objective and one that we recommend strongly.

But I would also point-out we shouldn't wait for that global standardization because that as you can all imagine could take years and we need to, you know, keep going down the path within the U.S. so that might sound a little contradictory but my point is what we're trying to say here is we should aspire for global standards but we can't afford to wait for them and we've got to keep moving forward.

Recommendation Number 3 goes to again another I would say facilitation type benefit and that is finding a solution for a unique ID or sovereign ID for each traveler that creates a trusted ID that could be used across travel journey, (Iotta) is actually doing some work around that with one ID.

Again the key components of this recommendation would be you know, if there's standardization from a global perspective that would benefit all of us but it's also important to know in the recommendations we highlighted the entire travel journey and all of us on the call recognize that there is

opportunities with technology and biometrics outside of the airports and outside of the ports of entry.

And how could we ensure we're giving all of our members and all of our industries within travel and tourism the ability to benefit from improved technology around biometrics?

Recommendation Number 4 goes to documenting minimum standards on recognition parameters, government validation, and again it highlights the importance of making sure we're trying to use as many of the similar platforms - technology platforms - as we can.

The other aspect of this one that is probably equally critical, if you go back to our objective of how the government can work with the private sector, I think everyone would agree one of the most important aspects of getting the private sector engaged is making sure there are clear standards.

There's minimum standard. Everyone knows the rules of the game. The goalposts don't change. That's what's frustrating for the private sector when that happens so this is a critical recommendation so that it enables the private sector to hit the ground and not waste time and resources and being a partner.

And then to kind of wrap everything together on what we've discussed, we are recommending there is an interagency private sector task force to look at the operating plan and timetable. It would drive the engagement of the government teams as well as the private sector.

It would create a process that could evaluate ongoing progress. It could hopefully set some timetables and some standards and some checkpoints to

ensure progress is being made so that there is oversight in trying to achieve these objectives.

So I will shut up here for a few minutes and see if there's questions or comments and I know Pam, Steve, Mary, (Howard) and Rob are on. I don't know if they'd like to add anything to the discussion as well.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Sean. Operator, if we could open-up the lines to see if there's any questions and if anybody on the subcommittee had anything they wanted to add, thank you.

Coordinator: All right, one moment, I'll get the lines open.

Brian Beall: And this is Brian, just one point to clarify. This portion of the agenda is only for TTAB members for discussion. We will have the public comment portion later in the agenda. Thank you.

((Crosstalk))

Coordinator: All lines are now open for you.

John Sprouls: Okay, any comments, either from the subcommittee or any comments or questions from other members of the board? Hearing none, Sean, I think you nailed it.

Man: Nailed it.

Sean Donohue: Well, I either put everyone to sleep or I nailed it. We'll see, John.

John Sprouls: I'm definitely going with the latter. Great, well thank you, thank you, everybody. Let's now move-on to the second letter presentation and discussion. Brian, if you could take us through the workforce development subcommittee work?

Brian Rothery: Thank you, John. Brian Rothery here from Enterprise Holdings. First, I wanted to thank the commerce team in particular Jennifer Aguinaga, Brian Beall, Curt Cottle, Isabel Hill, the entire team. They provided a fantastic level of support for our committee, kept the train on track and we really appreciate their effort so thank you for your help in getting us this far.

I'd also like just to acknowledge my fellow committee members, our committee consisted of Brad Dean from Puerto Rico Destination Marketing organization, Derek DeCross of IHG, Russ Hedge of Hostelling International, Debbie Johnson, Arizona Office of Tourism, Sue Presby from Mt. Washington Cog Railway, Olga Ramudo of Express Travel, Stephen Revetria of San Francisco Giants, and Denise Thevenot from Louisiana, we all contributed to this.

We assembled ourselves into a couple of committees to really answer the very specific question the Secretary had for us. He wanted us to develop a set of recommendations on workforce development as it relates to our industry and he wanted us to focus-on best practices in both the state, local and private sector tours and market workforce development.

And in particular he wanted us to take a close look at how changes in technology were affecting our industry so what we decided was that we would assemble ourselves into two different committees to sort of look, one, you know, what are we doing today in terms of best practices and then separately looking toward the future as technology continues to develop, what sort of

things should we be looking-out for and what ways in which technology is going to be impacting our industry?

So we decided to divide ourselves up into two different groups and I particularly wanted to call-out Russ Hedge and Derek DeCross. They volunteered to be leaders of those two groups.

So we had a subcommittee structure within our committee and Russ and Derek took the lead there and their staffs helped considerably in moving the ball forward so I'm grateful to their leadership and just want to call them out and their organizations out specifically because they really helped us put forth this document that you have here.

In addition to the great work from our committee, we saw this as a great opportunity to avail ourselves to resources even outside of the TTAB. For example we spoke and invited to our conference calls the National Restaurant Association, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, the U.S. Travel Association and also the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

We felt like these groups had a unique perspective in trying to wrap our arms around a diverse workforce. There are 34 different NAICS codes that represent the travel and tourism industry.

And so when you want to talk about workforce issues for such a diverse group of organizations, it can really be helpful to, you know, get as much input as you can particularly from trade associations with having the resources to throw their arms and such around such a broad topic so we were very grateful for the input we had from each of those groups and they were helpful in making some key (finding) for us.

So with that introduction and that background, I will now turn myself to the letter which you all have before you, Brian Beall distributed it. If it's okay and I mentioned this to the chair, I did receive a number of edits that I'd like to walk through just at the outset so that we can compare what I believe should be the final version of the document and so I'm going to walk through those edits.

If you have the document in front of you, I'll just do so, try to not belabor this but walk through sequentially so and a number of the edits actually relate to the footnoting that we used as a committee to keep track of our input and the various levels of input -- some of which from the organizations I just mentioned from external sources, wanted to make sure we had an itemized list to sort of where some of the inputs were being received and we used the footnote process to accommodate that.

It doesn't really make sense to keep some of these footnotes in a final document that goes to the Secretary so some of this I just would like to clean-up. I'm glad it was contained in the version for you all to see so you can see where some of this input came but with your permission I'd like to strike some of this from our final document so that we put something clean to the Secretary because some of this is sort of internal focusing.

So on Page 1, Footnote 1 is I'd like struck. That's just sort of a restatement of the Secretary's charge. Footnote 2, I'd like to actually just eliminate the section up into the hyperlink so we just sort of eliminate the context description and then just keep the hyperlink which is the footnote itself and then no other suggested edits on Page 1.

On Page 2, again just categorizing Footnotes 3, 4, 5 were all sort of to keep track of who offered that suggestion. I think that doesn't make sense to put it

in the final document so eliminate 3, 4 and 5 from the footnote and then also 6 was sort of an internal note for discussion purposes so all the footnotes on Page 2 would be eliminated.

A quick addition on the recommendation that begins with the first whole bullet on the top of the page which ends with and employer adoption. I have a suggested edit to that because the so that's the two, three, the fourth recommendation which begins we recommend Secretary Ross support the enactment.

It doesn't quite feel right to incorporate it there since the subject matter actually relates to the recommendation at the top of the page with the first bullet so we'd like to incorporate this bullet into that one and so I have an edit which I will read aloud and this came from a recommendation after it was published so I want to read this out.

Such successes could be enhanced and expanded through the enactment of the American Apprenticeship Act, Senate Bill 793 as introduced by Senators Klobuchar and Collins which is bipartisan by the way which would provide competitive grants to stage for the creation or expansion of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship program so basically taking the content of that fourth bullet and folding it into the first bullet on that page.

I'm making a recommendation that we make that suggestion so I'm walking you through orally and I'll share this with Brian Beall assuming this is updated or approved following this discussion here.

John Sprouls: Hey Brian?

Brian Rothery: Moving on, yes, go ahead.

John Sprouls: Brian, just only because it's right there. I don't want because you're going to go through some other stuff, I would just suggest that you flip the names of Collins and Klobuchar, this is a Republican administration, have the Republican lead?

Brian Rothery: Yes, good point. I support that. Thank you. Okay, the other edit to this is now we're on the fifth bullet. This is immediately below the one I just struck, instead of encourage the Department of Commerce, we want to stick with the naming convention we've used through the remainder of the letter which would be to recommend and then after Department of Commerce insert the phrase work with the Department of Labor so I think that would make a more specific recommendation.

Again, this came from the input of lots of folks who reacted to the version that Brian put-out which to me is a good indication that you all read it and had some thoughts so I want to accommodate these and I think they make it a better letter so that wraps-up Page 2.

On Page 3, I've got to the recommendation at the top in addition of a comma, strike the period, addition of a comma to fill seasonal jobs period, I think makes it a more complete statement.

And then actually in the bullets or, excuse me, the recommendation below that, the word seasonal should actually modify workers instead of the employment location so we're taking seasonal, they're seasonal workers really, not seasonal employment locations and I think that is a more accurate description. We'll make that change.

Okay, and that wraps-up Page 3. Page 4 is clean. Page 5 I think this improves actually the readability so at the top paragraph we say over 40% of the hotel's workforce are in Gen Y or millennial categories, I'd like to strike the remainder of that sentence beginning with and to the period and replace it with many of whom favor the convenience of video-based learning.

I think it's a better way to state the same idea there which is that Gen Y people like to they like their screen time. All of the footnotes so again Footnote 13 and 14 on Page 5 where we source the AHG and the phone, those need to be struck. Again, those were internal references for our own purposes and certainly have been included in the final version so strike those.

And then also the description of 15 which says source phone conversation with National Restaurant Association, I think just the hyperlink is sufficient there. We don't need to reference it if it's from a phone conversation.

Everything on Page 6 is clean, everything on Page 7 is clean and then the final Page 8, right before the second the last sentence and the second to last paragraph, there's a Cape Cod example. It would read a little cleaner to actually make that Cape Cod an example, a footnote like we had done all of the rest of the examples in this document so make that a footnote.

And then instead of just saying Cape Cod example colon, read the following which would be many places like Cape Cod, Massachusetts and Florida Keys have trouble meeting their seasonal workforce needs due to deficiencies in housing and transportation infrastructure, hyphen, leading some businesses to suffer losses due to shortened hours, limited accommodations or declining customer service.

Greater attention to the housing and transportation needs of the communities that rely on seasonal jobs to help mitigate such difficulties and then list the hyperlinks below that as footnotes.

Final change - sorry for all these changes - final change would be the letter as currently written ends rather abruptly so I'd like a new bulleted conclusion paragraph so it would say the below immediately before the last sentence, in the last sentence of the letter.

The last sentence in the letter is the TTAB appreciates your leadership so immediately before that, it would say conclusion in bolded fashion and this is done throughout the rest of the letter, it would say the following and this is short so just bear with me.

The travel and tourism industry is a diverse industry that encompasses 34 NAICS codes that span the accommodation, transportation, food and retail sectors of our economy. Collectively our diverse workforce offers not just a job but a career opportunity for every American.

The travel industry is well-positioned to create jobs in the future and meet the challenges and opportunities that technology brings and then you just complete with that final sentence, we'll keep (have) appreciate your leadership as is currently in the letter so those are the technical changes that I have.

Again, I think that it is required by our mandate here that we deliberate and approve these orally at the time. These came from you and so I think it makes it a better letter so I'll through whatever parliamentary rules we adhere to here, Mr. Chair, we'll sort of accommodate those but before I do that, I just want to make some basic comments about the letter.

You know, as I mentioned we span a pretty diverse set of industries and you know, the challenge is sort of talking about workforce issues given the disparate nature of what we represent, it can be challenging but I'm really proud of the way this committee came together to sort of come-up with recommendations that really cut across common (unintelligible) for all of us.

You know, we're united by a handful of things and I think one of the neat things when you look at our industry, we've got some really great examples throughout the hotel sector, throughout our industry sector, (unintelligible) sector, we do a tremendous job of this sort of promote from within the environment.

I look around on this call and at national meetings, lots of folks that started at entry-level positions that have grown a career and it's something to be proud of. We bring people on, we bring people on at jobs and we teach them our business and we give them opportunities to grow.

And I think it's for that reason the Secretary really wanted us to share our best practices and I think we've done a good job of that portion of the letter spends a lot of time focusing-on ways we can get folks into the pipeline so some of the apprenticeship and educational opportunities.

Some of the things in our industry you can't go to school for or it's not readily apparent where or how to go to school for it. Sometimes we need more attention drawn to the various opportunities that are out there and I think this letter does a good job of calling some of those things out.

Collectively we all have an opportunity to do a better job of highlighting where those opportunities are but I think this letter, you know, highlights some of those best practices.

As it relates to technology, I think we looked at technology and automation and some of the things we have around coming-up around the bend as real challenges and opportunities so there's no doubt that things like automation are going to have an impact on our workforce.

They certainly will but as an industry that, you know, relates to customer service, relates to, you know, the traveler experience and providing, you know, best-in-class experience for people, U.S. competing at the destination for traveler dollars around the world on a world market.

I think we've got an amazing opportunity to use technology to you know, get our products and services out there in a more efficient way to improve that experience for our travelers that are doing business with our companies at our destinations and really use it as a competitive advantage to continue to grow and claw-back from that loss that came that we saw that now looks, you know, sufficiently in our rearview mirror.

So I think we're really excited about technology but we have our eye on the ball to understand that it's going to have some impacts throughout our industry and we're ready to face the challenge head-on so with that I will wrap-up and just ask that you accommodate those edits that I ask for in this document and open-up to questions about the document itself so thank you, Chair and thank you, everyone.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Brian. Operator, if we could again open the lines to see if there are any comments or questions from the board with respect to the letter and

Brian, when we position the letter for the vote, we will position it with your changes included.

Coordinator: All lines are open.

John Sprouls: Thank you. Any comments, questions with respect to the letter that Brian has presented to us? Okay, hearing none, we will move now to public comment. Brian, do we have any public comment?

Brian Beall: Thanks, John. We did not have any members of the public indicate in advance that they would like to make comments during this portion of the agenda. Operator, if you could please instruct participants on how to indicate they would like to make a comment, we will go on with that portion, please.

Coordinator: It is star 1 if anyone would like to give a comment. Once again, star 1 if you would like to make a comment.

Brian Beall: Operator, is anyone indicating or it looks like maybe no public comments?

Coordinator: I have no one indicating, no one has pressed star 1 as of yet.

Brian Beall: Great, I think we can conclude that there are no public comments and I will turn it back over to John.

John Sprouls: Okay, thank you Brian. Okay, at this point I'd like to call to question for the vote. We will do each of the letters separately so first I would ask for all the board members - I guess we'll do it by a voice vote - and then assuming we don't have an issue, I don't know that we'll have to go individually so I would ask all board members who are in support of the biometric subcommittee letter, please signify by saying aye.

Man: Aye.

Man: Aye.

Man: Aye.

John Sprouls: And operator, I'm sorry, was the line open?

Coordinator: Okay, let me get all the lines open.

John Sprouls: Thank you. Sorry.

Coordinator: All lines are open for you.

John Sprouls: Thank you. Okay, sorry about that, I will try it again now that the lines are open, all those in favor of approving the recommendations from the biometric subcommittee in the letter, please signify by saying aye.

All: Aye.

John Sprouls: Thank you.

Sue Presby: And I don't know, it's Sue Presby, I think I missed the beginning so I didn't know if I had to answer the roll call or not.

John Sprouls: Yes, we'll note for the record on the roll call and I'm assuming you voted aye on the letter itself?

Sue Presby: I did, yes.

John Sprouls: Okay, great. Are there any nay votes with respect to the letter? Okay, then the letter is adopted and will be sent to the Secretary. Secondly, with respect to the workforce development subcommittee, I would ask all those in favor of approving and moving to the Secretary the letter as Brian has outlined on the phone with us in terms of the technical corrections, please signify by saying aye.

All: Aye.

John Sprouls: Any opposed? The letter carries as well. Thank you all very, very much. Both letters have been adopted and we will forward them to the Secretary. At this point I'd like to call upon Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism Phil Lovas who has a couple of comments for us. Phil?

Phil Lovas: Great, well thank you, John, I appreciate it and I just wanted to thank the members of the board for taking time to be on the call today. It's very much appreciated. I also want to particularly thank Sean Donohue and Brian Rothery for their insightful comments and thank the members of biometrics and workforce development subcommittees for their work.

I know how much time and work the board put-in to these recommendations and we certainly value your efforts so now that the board has adopted these recommendations, the next step in the process is for the National Travel and Tourism Office to move these letters to Secretary Ross for his review much as we did with the national goal letter.

I know that the Secretary will appreciate the diligence that you brought to this process in terms of developing these recommendations and so I want to take

just a moment to update you on where we are with the previous recommendation on the National Travel and Tourism Goal.

Today we heard back from the Secretary scheduler that Secretary Ross will hold a Tourism Policy Council meeting with his interagency counterparts on June 25th and the focus for that discussion will be consideration of a new national goal based on the board's recommendations.

And so we want to hold the next board meeting here in Washington after the Tourism Policy Council meeting. That'll provide an opportunity to update the board on the Tourism Policy Council discussion and we will certainly aim to give you as much notice as possible for that board meeting.

Right now we're aiming for some point in July but of course that will be dependent upon the Secretary's schedule and again I wanted to just say thanks so much for being on the call today and then responding to the Secretary's assignments and for your service as members of the board and with that I'll turn it back to John.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Phil, thank you very much and I want to add my thanks to everyone for all the hard work on this and helping us move these letters forward. At this point unless there is anything else to come before the board, I will turn it over to Brian to officially close the meeting until we all get together again in a few months.

Brian Beall: Thank you, John, and as a Designated Federal Officer for the TTAB, thank you all very much for participating and we look forward to our next meeting sometime this summer.

John Sprouls: Thank you, everybody.

Coordinator: Thank you and that does conclude today's conference. We appreciate your participation and you may disconnect at this time.

END