

**NWX-DOC ITA**

**Moderator: Jennifer Aguinaga**  
**May 22, 2020**  
**1:30 pm CT**

Operator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. All participants will be able to listen only until the question-and-answer portions of today's conference. To ask a question, please press star 1. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections please disconnect at this time. I would now like to your conference over to Ms. Jennifer Aguinaga. You may begin.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thank you, Operator. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you all for joining this meeting of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. As the Designated Federal Officer, I am officially opening the meeting. I will now take a quick roll call of Board members and then I'll turn it over to Vice-Chair Kurt Ekert. Operator, if you could open all the lines for the roll call.

Operator: Yes, one moment.

Jennifer Aguinaga: And all, if you could just mute your phones temporarily because we're going to have all the lines open.

Operator: Lines are open.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thank you so much. Kurt Ekert.

Kurt Ekert: Here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Todd Davidson. Brad Dean.

Brad Dean: I'm present.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Derek DeCross.

Todd Davidson: I apologize. Todd Davidson is here also.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks Todd. Derek DeCross.

Derek DeCross: Here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Fred Dixon.

Fred Dixon: Hi. I'm here. Thank you.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks Fred. Sean Donohue.

Sean Donohue: Here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: James Hagen.

James Hagen: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Russ Hedge.

Russ Hedge: I'm here Jennifer.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks, Russ. Pam Inman.

Pam Inman: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks. Debbie Johnson. Tom Klein.

Tom Klein: I'm here Jennifer. Thanks.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks Tom. Scott Lynn. Steve Morrissey.

Steve Morrissey: I'm here. Thank you.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks. Mary Motsenbocker.

Mary Motsenbocker: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thank you. Sue Presby.

Sue Presby: Hi Jennifer. I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Hi Sue. Tricia Primrose.

Tricia Primrose: Hey I'm here. Thank you.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks, Tricia. Olga Ramudo.

Olga Ramudo: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thank you, Olga. Stephen Revetria.

Stephen Revetria: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks. Brian Rothery.

Brian Rothery: Yes, I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Adam Sacks.

Adam Sacks: Hi. I'm here too.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Hi Adam. Bryan Saltzburg.

Bryan Saltzburg: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks, Bryan. Caryn Seidman-Becker. Bill Talbert.

Bill Talbert: Bill Talbert is here Jennifer.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Hi Bill. Denise Thevenot.

Denise Thevenot: I'm here.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thanks, Denise. Rob Torres. And Ernie Wooden. Okay thank you very much. Operator, if you could now close the line.

Operator: Lines are closed.

Jennifer Aguinaga: And then I'll turn it - okay thank you. I now turn it over to Vice-Chair Kurt Ekert.

Kurt Ekert: Thank you very much, Jennifer. And first of all, I'm very excited to be here with all of you today. And I am filling in on behalf of John Sprouls who apologizes that he can't be here. He is doing great work. Hopefully, you'll hear about that very soon.

And thank you for bearing with us with the late start today. It's simply the result of trying to coordinate everything virtually which goes to prove that technology doesn't always replace the value of meeting in person.

We have two great pieces of subcommittee work and recommendations to discuss today. And so, without further ado, I invite Brad Dean, who's chaired the Consumer Confidence Working Group to present the recommendations letter on Consumer Confidence. Brad.

Brad Dean: Thank you Mr. Vice-Chairman and good afternoon to everyone. First, I'll take the opportunity to thank the members of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board who worked diligently to develop these recommendations. This was truly a team effort and to a person they each invested their time, their talents, and the unique perspectives and brought much to numerous meetings prompting some really thoughtful and insightful discussions. And while I'm certainly not surprised by that knowing those individuals, the character and commitment of each TTAB member that was involved in this was exemplary and I want to extend my personal appreciation to each of them.

As a reminder, the objective set forth by the Board for this Working Group was to recommend what the public and private sectors can do together to help restore consumer confidence in traveling. And that was to encompass various topics such as public health, the standards of care, communication, measures

and methods and other support for the restoration of Consumer Confidence in this sector.

And in addition to the relevant experience and perspectives of the TTAB members who are involved, we also engaged in discussions with the CDC, with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA. We also examined travel-related studies and analyses completed after the EBOLA and the SARS pandemic. And then we also heard presentations and gathered quite a bit of input from key trade associations like the U.S. Travel Association, Airlines for America, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the American Society of Travel Advisors as well as our partners at Brand USA, and we also delved into some reviews of post-crisis communication strategies designed to restore travel and tourism.

So all of this was an attempt to really build a body of work that would meet the objectives set forth and as well be in alignment with the objectives set forth in the Administration's guidelines for opening up America again and being mindful of the pro-safety, pro-public health initiatives underway in the private sector already. Not only is a large project of research but also the analysis relevant to those.

So, you have the letter in front of you. It encompasses nine specific recommendations. And I'll just touch on the highlights of each of those and then happy to open this up for discussion and questions. First and foremost, you'll notice one of the first recommendations was to support the acceleration of accessible, reliable, rapid testing for COVID-19 and also the broader application of contact tracing or similar measures which are certainly necessary in containing the transmission of this disease.

And along with that providing reliable data for the public health agencies,

policymakers, and the private sector. And one clear point that was made through, repeatedly throughout our conversations and discussions and affirmed readily by the CDC professionals that certified testing and contact tracing are essential to winning this battle and ultimately to restoring consumer confidence certainly necessary for de-escalating travel advisories and enabling travel and tourism to resume.

We also documented a series of collaborative communication initiatives designed to restore American's confidence in travel. And obviously this is a matter of great importance and great urgency and one that we believe should begin immediately with a collaborative effort amongst the public and private sectors.

And I cannot overstate the urgency and importance of this. And as we delved into this, we ultimately viewed it from four phases really. Phase 1 in building confidence. And we believe that the Department of Commerce led by Secretary Ross can help with an interagency communications plan that will help to draw attention to the extensive effort that's been underway by the private sector and led by several national trade associations I referenced earlier as it relates to standards of care and protocols and guidelines intended to help protect public health as we reopen businesses and travel resumes. That would be followed by Phase 2, which we term traveling again and recognizing that the research tells us the most powerful message to restore consumer confidence is sensible proactive measures implemented by businesses backed with positive affirmation from both the government and the medical community.

A third phase termed in the letter you have back to a new normal recognizes the industry's need to spur demand but also acknowledges that many of the traditional demand generators, DMO, state tourism agencies as well as the

private sector will be facing diminished funding, a robust well-funded promotional effort to boost travel and tourism and ultimately accelerate the recovery is going to be necessary.

And then we didn't want to ignore the importance of Brand USA and their role which arguably is even more important today than ever before in helping restore the consumer confidence of international travelers. And of course, Brand USA could also be affected from some of those same concerns with diminished funds.

So, the communication's recommendation is broken down into four phases because we felt each of those while they might be implemented in different timeframes or concurrently all require coordination between the public and private sector but slightly different objectives in each.

We also detailed a number of other recommendations that are general and broad but yet very, very important and unique in each facet as it relates to coordinated policy and within and throughout the federal government. And we developed these mindful of the Secretary's role as head of the Tourism Policy Council. One of those of course is a joint effort involving the private sector and relevant federal agencies to establish a reliable strategy for the repatriation of U.S. citizens during a global pandemic. Another involves establishing criteria and guidelines to de-escalate health travel advisories which support the recovery of travel and tourism as we saw the escalation was quick. Quicker than any of us have ever seen. So how do we de-escalate? And we certainly need to take a deep dive into that.

We also are recommending measures to improve border protection by seeking the appropriate measures that will interdict the change of infection at our nation's borders. And this is not only a matter of national security and public



health but obviously directly affects consumer confidence in travel. And ultimately employee's safety as well.

And then in addition to that we're recommending to accelerate the expansion of the biometric entry and exit processes to create a contactless traveler identity process. For those that have served on the TTAB in the past this is nothing new to you. This has been an ongoing process. But we feel like this is an opportune time to take a look at that and accelerate the expansion of that.

And as we got into that particular recommendation it became very apparent that we can't just stop with the biometrics. We really need to as termed in the letter, reimagine the entire entry and exit process for individual and group travel. And this particular recommendation acknowledges the issues we face which exceed tactical matters like testing and biometric identification and also involve infrastructure challenges and issues like physical staging and queuing and process flow in light of new requirements for physical distancing.

So all of those are broad and encompassing a lot of interagency and intra-agency coordination. And we believe while most of those extend beyond the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Commerce inclusively, the Secretary's role as head of the Tourism Policy Council makes this an important initiative that he can lead or certainly influence.

And then last but certainly not least we've added a couple of broader considerations anticipating the future of what we have to do in the travel and tourism industry and certainly as the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. One is to strengthen the institutional capacity to integrate public health considerations into the development of travel and tourism policy. And the second is to continue these efforts underway. Simply put, we acknowledge that we are in the midst of this that we couldn't complete all the work that will

be needed.

And in some respects, I guess you could say that as the public health officials are flying the plane and building at the same time, we're hoping to change the flight plans not exactly knowing where we're at and when we'll get there. And so we believe that whether this may become the work of the next TTAB, another working group, or perhaps a joint public/private sector working group appointed by the Secretary either in, through or with the Tourism Policy Council that our work is certainly not done. In fact it may be just beginning and we didn't want to let that go unnoticed or unstated.

So Mr. Vice-Chairman again I want to thank the TTAB members that were involved in this. I want to extend our appreciation to those outside of TTAB who came to the table with great insight, research and information and recommendations. I'd also be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the exceptional support we got from the NTTTO staff and specifically Isabel Hill and Jennifer Aguinaga. And Mr. Chairman I'm happy to answer any questions.

But at this point, I'll turn it back over to you.

Kurt Ekert: Brad that's just a terrific job by you and the entire team so thank you. At this point, I invite any Board members who'd like to ask any questions, make any recommendations or offer their perspective to do so.

Jennifer Aguinaga: And Operator, can you please remind the Board members how to indicate if they have a comment or question?

Operator: Yes. If you would like to make a comment or ask a question you can hit star 1. You will be prompted to record your first and last name. Please unmute your phone before recording your name and to withdraw your question or comment

please press star 2. One moment, please.

Kurt Ekert: If we don't have any questions, again I want to thank Brad Dean and everybody who was part of the working group. I'm just incredibly impressed by the great work that's been done. We'll come back to that shortly.

At this point, let's move on. Fred Dixon stepped up to lead the Recovery Indicator Working Group. And Fred I ask you now to present the recommendations letter on the Recovery Indicators.

Fred Dixon: Thank you very much Kurt. And Vice-Chairman I look forward to the opportunity to work on this important project. And hats off and congratulations to my colleague and good friend Brad Dean on the remarkable work that they have done in that committee working group. Herculean effort on their part and we're here to contribute to that effort. In so much that it is important to identify the resources and key data points to Brad's earlier reference to where we are in the process.

We were asked to track the significant inflexion points and pace of recovery for the U.S. travel industry as we move forward through the COVID-19 situation. I want to thank members of the working group and other TTAB members who contributed to this effort to develop a data roadmap for building a recovery dashboard. And we're happy to present our recommendation.

We approached this project with several considerations in mind. First and foremost, that it is always necessary for both the public and private sectors to have reliable and consistent indicators but particularly in this challenging and unique environment. Second, that these data would identify the key inflexion points in the recovery, help measure the pace and scope of the revitalization of the travel industry, and support the development of public policies to safely

recover from the crisis.

And third, that this tool would continue to support the dynamic growth and health of the U.S. travel and tourism sector and its important contributions to employment, trade, and tax revenues.

As you can see in the letter we approached this task of creating and making available a comprehensive tracking and forward-looking dashboard to inform the industry's recovery by not only identifying a wide array of digital sources that would quantify the immediate situation but also help prepare the industry for recovery over the longer term.

To do that we focused on three sets of data, macroeconomic indicators that drive travel and tourism, traveler behavior and activity, and consumer sentiment and intentions about travel. When put together in the dashboard or other easily accessible format these indicators will provide a solid foundation we believe for business decision making and the policy support for our industry today and in the future.

Again I want to thank the working group and the NTTD staff, in particular, Isabel Hill and David Huether and as well as Jennifer for their important work and support in this process. And we want to also thank the Secretary and leadership of the Department of Commerce for their support and attention to this important initiative.

And we look forward to working with the group on this as we go forward.  
Thank you Mr. Vice-Chairman.

Kurt Ekert: Fred thank you and thank you to your working group for terrific output and a lot of good stuff to consider.

At this point, we open the floor up for any comments, any questions, any perspective from any members of the Board specifically on the Recovery Indicators.

Operator: Once again to ask a question or make a comment please press star 1. One moment. I'm showing no questions or comments.

Kurt Ekert: Thanks again, Fred. We now have an opportunity to invite public comment. So if there are any members of the public wishing to make comments I'd ask that you keep your remarks to no more than two or three minutes. But Operator, we have the ability to do that here at this time.

Operator: Thank you. Once again, to make a comment or ask a question, please press star 1.

Kurt Ekert: Easy crowd today apparently.

Operator: We do have a question or comment. One moment. Tori Barnes with U.S. Travel, your line is open.

Tori Barnes: Thanks. This is Tori. I just wanted to say a huge thank you and kudos to Brad and Fred and to the great folks at NTTU and all of the Board members for all of your tremendous work. It's been a pleasure to get to listen to the important conversations that you all have been having and as you put together this thoughtful plan. You know so critical to the devastated, you know, travel industry, which I know you all know so well so thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and all of the hard work. Just wanted to say how grateful we are and have a wonderful Memorial Day Weekend.

Kurt Ekert: Thank you so much for the thoughtful comments. Much appreciated, on behalf of the Board and the two subcommittees.

Operator: We do have another question...

Kurt Ekert: Do we have any other?

Operator: ...or comment. Yes, one more. Hold on.

Kurt Ekert: Okay.

Operator: Aaron your line.

Aaron Wodin-Schwartz: Hello this is - oh great. Hey, this is Aaron Wodin-Schwartz at Brand USA. Just to echo Tori's comments that first of all, this is a tremendous body of work that you guys have put forward in a very short period of time. And, you know, a lot of congratulations are due to everybody involved, the Board, NTTO, and others. And I personally and we all at Brand USA appreciate the opportunity to participate in part of that process.

And I just want to say in general that, you know, we're already, you know, getting pinged by various travel, trade, and others kind of around the world who sort of are asking about what is happening and what is the process. And it's just been a really great process for us to see to be able to say that there's tremendous amount of work going into this both through the TTAB, through private sector entities and at the government level.

But to integrate public health in the travel process and to make sure that we have everything in place we need for everybody to continue to come to the United States as they continue to want to do as soon as it's appropriate to do

so. So it's really already given us great, you know, background to be able to speak to those questions from the market and then it's only going to improve moving forward so again kudos, thank you, and just wanted to offer that perspective.

Kurt Ekert: Aaron thank you kindly. I really appreciate the comments.

Operator: And no further comments.

Kurt Ekert: Okay great. Well we move to a very exciting part of our agenda today. We're actually going to - all of the Board members will have the opportunity to vote on each of the two letters.

So let me first ask, we're going to - we'll do this as a group as aye for yes or no for not adopting the letter. So first will be the Consumer Confidence letter. And I ask all Board members in favor of the letter to unmute their phones and to say aye. Aye.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Yes Kurt.

Kurt Ekert: Aye.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Kurt, this is Jennifer. I'm just going to ask the Operator to unmute all of the lines.

Kurt Ekert: Oh.

Jennifer Aguinaga: I think that's the only way we can do it.

Kurt Ekert: Perfect. Well that just saved me.

Jennifer Aguinaga: And just a reminder that please only Board members can vote.

Operator: One moment.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Operator, okay, thank you.

Operator: Thank you. Lines are open.

Kurt Ekert: Okay thank you. All in favor of adopting the Consumer Confidence letter please say aye.

Group: Aye.

Kurt Ekert: Any opposed please say no. All right great. The Consumer Confidence letter is hereby adopted.

Now onto the Recovery Indicators letter. All in favor of the Recovery Indicators letter please say aye.

Group: Aye.

Kurt Ekert: Any opposed. Great. The Recovery Indicators letter is also adopted. Thank you so much.

We're now privileged to be joined by Phil Lovas who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism who's going to share some thoughts with us. Phil, floor is yours.

Phil Lovas: Great. Thank you Kurt. I very much appreciate it and I want to thank the



members of the Board today for taking their time to be on the call. I want to particularly express my gratitude to Brad Dean and Fred Dixon for leading the work in the Consumer Confidence and Recovery Indicators Working Groups. I know how much time and work the Board put into these recommendations. We greatly value your efforts particularly in these challenging times.

If you are not a member of the Board and have not had a chance to read the letters they will be posted on our Web site at [travel.trade.gov](http://travel.trade.gov). And I would suggest you take a look at those and see the effort that was put into them. And they are very comprehensive and will be well-received.

Now that the Board has adopted these recommendations, the National Travel and Tourism Office will move the two letters to Secretary Ross for his review. I know Secretary Ross appreciates the diligence that you brought to the process of developing these recommendations to accelerate recovery for the travel and tourism industry.

At the same time, NTTTO will work to evaluate these recommendations with relevant stakeholders to determine the best path forward with respect to implementation. I, thank you all again for your efforts in developing these recommendations.

Also as this may be the last meeting of this Travel and Tourism Advisory Board under the current term, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your service as members of the Board and to especially thank Kurt and John Sprouls for their leadership. The Board has delivered time and time again on the Secretary's tasking often on short timelines and turned out phenomenal work product. You should all be very proud of the work you've produced over the past two years.

Looking forward I wanted to let the Board know that the National Travel and Tourism Office is accepting applications for the new Board that will begin this fall for a two-year term. The Federal Register Notice has been published and will be open until June 19th. Jennifer Aguinaga who is the designated federal officer and all of you know can send you the link if you are interested in reapplying.

And with that, I'll turn it back to Kurt.

Kurt Ekert: Mr. Secretary, thank you. This is first and foremost an excellent public/private partnership. And the Board deeply appreciates the great support and leadership by you, Mr. Secretary, by NTTO Director Isabel Hill and by everybody else from your team who's been involved in all of these efforts so thank you.

And I'd like to applaud the terrific work by the two working groups here especially the leadership of Brad Dean and Fred Dixon. It's a great testament to the efforts, the intelligence, and the knowledge that exists in our industry.

And I have every expectation that the work here will be impactful and helping catalyze the reopening and the long-term health of our industry and the engagement by all of you on the Board is so deeply appreciated.

So I wish all of you, your families, and your colleagues, good health. And to our industry and country I wish a very strong travel recovery.

With that, Jennifer I'm going to turn the phone back over to you to close the meeting. Thank you everyone.

Jennifer Aguinaga: Thank you Kurt and thank you all again for all of your tremendous work. I

hope you all enjoy your long weekend and I look forward to speaking with you soon. This meeting of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board is officially closed. Thank you.

Operator: Thank you for your participation. Participants you may disconnect at this time.

END