



UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

June 10, 2013

The Honorable Cameron Kerry
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On January 19, 2012, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the Task Force on Travel and Competitiveness ("Task Force"), which he in turn charged to develop a National Travel and Tourism Strategy ("National Strategy"). The Task Force, chaired by then Commerce Secretary John Bryson and then Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, sought input from state and local governments, the travel and tourism industry, and relevant federal agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy. The resulting National Strategy has truly energized the public and private sectors alike.

The reinvigoration of the Tourism Policy Council ("TPC") under the leadership of the Department of Commerce has been met with great appreciation throughout the travel and tourism industry. On behalf of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, we extend congratulations to and thanks for the work being conducted through the TPC. The creation of the TPC working groups (Ease of Travel, Research, Visitor Services, and Marketing and Promotion) appears to be well-suited to ensure all relevant areas of the federal government are involved in encouraging more international visitors to the United States; facilitating entry into and across the United States; and increasing cooperation between the public and private sectors to maximize the quality of visitor experiences.

Our recommendations are offered in the hope of continued progress and success. We see the potential for a new model of public-private partnership (PPP) to come from this collaborative work and we believe it could have lasting positive effects on the work of government over the long term. To that end we have the following recommendations:

1. **Designate a portion of the September Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (Board) meeting for an information exchange session that would lay the groundwork for the second of our four recommendations.** This session would be for the purpose of gleaning information on the work on the National Strategy accomplished to date, the

work recommended but not yet completed, the historical data which would be most useful on a going forward basis and general perspectives of the TTAB and government staff engaged in this collaborative process.

2. **Produce an Annual Report on the work of the Tourism Policy Council.** This Annual Report would be a document that describes in some detail the activities of the TPC, including reports from each of the four working groups that describe significant accomplishments, challenges, impediments to success and goals for the following year, a Director's Report by Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office and a statement from the Secretary. We suggest the Annual Report include comment from the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board in the form of a letter from the Board's Chair with input from the Subcommittee Chairs and approval of the full Board. Documenting the structure, process and accomplishments on an annual basis in this fashion would inform and inspire future work, and provide the government and private sector an opportunity to ascertain where they are acting in concert with each other, and to set goals accordingly.

3. **Make a commitment to the public private partnership concept and set a goal to explore and build on such partnerships or collaborations in the most effective way.** The current Board and its predecessors have presented you and your successors with detailed, actionable recommendations. This positive work has put us in concert with other respected organizations and government agencies, all of which are working to improve the visitor experience and create a positive impact on job growth. This Board credits much of the success to the following: the whole of government approach; the access to high level staff for information gathering and discussion; participation across agencies in board meetings and working sessions; an identification, on the government agencies' part, of the value of private sector perspective, knowledge and resources resulting in a meaningful use of private sector resources; and true collaboration between private and public sector entities resulting in workable solutions implemented in a reasonable time frame.

Thus, we recommend that you request the member agencies of the TPC to review the practices and policies by and through which they work and partner with the private sector. Further, we recommend that Commerce develop a model, to be named Public Private Collaborative, that would outline the optimal way in which the private sector can coordinate with the various federal government agencies. We suggest that the model have enough specificity to provide clear guidelines for the private sector as they seek to support government, create strategic partnerships, effectively address barriers and harmonize work efforts. Such a model would present logical, effective, efficient and inspired solutions to the challenges government faces in setting travel policy, particularly budget issues. To start, we recommend that the model port initiative serve as a pilot project to explore the creation of a model Public Private Collaborative.

4. **Create a goal for domestic travel.** The existence of Brand USA, and the focus of the

National Strategy have received a lot of attention – and rightly so. It is critical that the National Strategy identified an overarching goal of attracting and welcoming 100 million international visitors by the end of 2021. But there’s not just one goal in the National Strategy; there are two. International visitor spending counts as an export; and we have much opportunity because of lost market share throughout the last decade to reach that goal. But the National Strategy is not just about attracting more international visitors; it is also a strategy to encourage Americans to travel within the United States and its territories to see all that our country has to offer.

We must elevate this second goal of encouraging more Americans to travel. We call upon the Tourism Policy Council with the direct involvement and input of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board to set forth at least one specific and measurable goal that all of us, the public *and* private sector can use *together* to encourage Americans to travel throughout the U.S.

In closing, we want to offer our gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board and represent the many travel and tourism businesses across the United States and the hard working members of our industry. We acknowledge and applaud the many successes to date and ask that you consider our recommendations as ways to build upon these successes. Perhaps, most importantly, we ask for you to reach out personally to our travel and tourism industry stakeholders to tell the story of our accomplishments thus far and to further inspire the United States government and its private sector partners to continue this tremendously valuable work.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Davidson
Chair



Sam Gilliland
Vice-Chair



Greg Stubblefield
Business Climate Subcommittee Chair



Maryann Ferenc
Business Climate Subcommittee Vice-Chair