

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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U.S. TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

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MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022

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The Advisory Board met via  
Videoconference, at 4:00 p.m. EST, Bill  
Hornbuckle, Chairman, presiding.

PRESENT

BILL HORNBUCKLE, MGM Resorts; Chair  
BRAD DEAN, Discover Puerto Rico; Vice Chair  
CAROLINE BETETA, Visit California  
LIZ FITZSIMMONS, Maryland Office of Tourism and  
Film  
MICHELLE MCKINNEY FRYMIRE, CWT  
DAVID GILBERT, Destination Cleveland and Greater  
Cleveland Sports Commission  
RUSSELL HEDGE, Hostelling International USA  
SHEILA JOHNSON, Salamander Hotels and Resorts  
STEPHANIE JONES, Cultural Heritage Economic  
Alliance  
ROLF LUNDBERG, Choice Hotels International  
GLENDA McNEAL, American Express  
DUFFIELD MILKIE, Cedar Fair L.P.  
WILL MOREY, Morey's Piers  
VINAY PATEL, Fairbrook Hotels, VA  
CATHERINE PRATHER, National Tour Association  
BRIAN QUINN, Domio  
OLGA RAMUDO, Express Travel  
STEPHEN REVETRIA, Giants Enterprises  
DANIEL RICHARDS, Global Rescue LLC  
MONICA SMITH, Southeast Tourism Society  
DONALD TAYLOR, UNITE HERE  
ROB TORRES, Google, Inc.  
RON VLASIC, Hostmark Hospitality Group  
GREG WEBB, Travelport

**ALSO PRESENT**

**GINA M. RAIMONDO, Secretary, U.S. Department of  
Commerce**

**GRANT HARRIS, Assistant Secretary for Industry  
and Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce**

**JULIE STUFFT, Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
State for Consular Affairs, U.S.  
Department of State**

**JENNIFER AGUINADA, Designated Federal Official**

**DEKE ARNDT, National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration**

**MICHELLE CHANG, U.S. Economic Development  
Administration**

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (4:04 p.m.)

3 MS. AGUINAGA: Good afternoon,  
4 everyone, and welcome to this meeting of the U.S.  
5 Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. The meeting  
6 is now officially open.

7 Just a few logistical notes before we  
8 begin. Please be sure to keep your lines on mute  
9 if you're not speaking. When there is the  
10 opportunity for Board discussion, please use the,  
11 Raise Your Hand, features or if you're on the  
12 phone, where that feature is not working, feel  
13 free to send me an email, or just unmute your  
14 line.

15 As a reminder, the only section for  
16 members of the public to speak, is during the  
17 public comment portion of the agenda. In the  
18 interest of time, we will not be doing a roll  
19 call. We will capture the Teams participant  
20 list. If you are just on the phone, please send  
21 me an email to let me know that you are  
22 participating.

1                   With that, I will turn it over to our  
2 Board Chair, Bill Hornbuckle.

3                   CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you,  
4 Jennifer. And thank everyone for joining us  
5 today.

6                   I'd like to start out, first and  
7 foremost, by thanking the Secretary. Hopefully,  
8 my designation as Chair will be something that we  
9 can uphold with the industry, the Department,  
10 ultimately the Secretary, looks to all of us for.

11                  I also want to reach out and thank  
12 Brad, for his interim, all of his work. I had a  
13 chance to speak to Brad. He came to Las Vegas a  
14 couple weeks back. I want to thank him for his  
15 work and, ultimately, his orientation to myself.  
16 It was well-heeded and well-regarded. So, thank  
17 you, Brad.

18                  Obviously, a lot to tackle. Very  
19 excited by what's before us. The pandemic has  
20 impacted the industry in many different ways.  
21 Some of you heard the banter a moment ago, Las  
22 Vegas has fully recovered, but many of our

1 destinations like many of yours, have not.

2 And so, we look forward to talking  
3 about that. I also, look forward to hearing from  
4 Julie Stuftt, Deputy Assistant Secretary, about  
5 visas. Deke Arndt from NOAA, about climate.  
6 From Brad, ultimately, about tourism planning.

7 But since we only have the Secretary  
8 for the first 30 minutes, if I may, Madam  
9 Secretary, I'll turn this over to you.

10 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you, Bill.  
11 Thank you, thank you, thank you, and thank you  
12 again, for taking on this role of Chair. Bill  
13 and I had a chance to talk last week. And it's a  
14 big agenda. So, and I know you're busy. So, I  
15 cannot thank you enough for stepping up to chair  
16 this group.

17 A big warm welcome to our new Board  
18 Members, Michelle Frymire and Sheila Johnson.  
19 Thank you, to both of you for joining us. This  
20 TTAB is always important. It's always been  
21 important. But in the wake of COVID, it's more  
22 important than ever. Because I think more than

1 any other industry, COVID and the economic  
2 shutdown, has affected your industry the most.

3 And so, that's what we have to do  
4 here, is work together on policies and advocate  
5 for policies that will help you. The good news,  
6 is as you know, domestic leisure travel has  
7 thankfully bounced back very significantly.

8 Big problem though, is international  
9 travel and business travel, which are still very  
10 significantly lagging. Our, the Biden  
11 Administration is doing everything we know how to  
12 do to support the industry's recovery. And I  
13 want you to hear from me today, that I am, and  
14 President Biden is, fully committed to continuing  
15 the support to your industry as we move forward.

16 And as I just said, I know  
17 international travel -- your businesses that  
18 depend on international and business travel, I  
19 know are disproportionately hurting. And so, I  
20 want you to know we're going to continue to work  
21 with you until you're back to where you need to  
22 be.

1           One of the key initiatives that we  
2           have engaged in here at the Commerce Department,  
3           is putting out the \$750 million in grant funding  
4           to support communities that have suffered losses  
5           in travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

6           Good news is we've already distributed  
7           half a billion dollars of that funding. And we  
8           are also making awards on top of that through the  
9           Competitive Tourism Program.

10          Response to that program, has been  
11          enthusiastic. Demand is greatly exceeding  
12          supply, as you might expect. And we expect all  
13          that money to be awarded on schedule by the end  
14          of this September.

15          So, between last year and this, the  
16          end of September, we will have fully put out the  
17          \$750 million.

18          But full recovery of travel and  
19          tourism is also going to depend on aggressive  
20          marketing to the world. To show the U.S. is  
21          open, open for travel. And more important, open  
22          for business.



1                   And we're very grateful that the 2022  
2                   Omnibus Spending Bill included \$250 million for  
3                   Brand USA, which I am very excited about. We  
4                   need Brand USA now more than ever. And of  
5                   course, now it depends on dues and fees, and with  
6                   your industry being challenged, we really needed  
7                   the shot in the arm from Congress.

8                   And so that's going to allow us, and  
9                   partners, to rebuild traveler confidence,  
10                  stimulate demand, and I think, really accelerate,  
11                  I hope, accelerate the return of international  
12                  visitation and spending.

13                  I also want to thank the TTAB for  
14                  raising the idea of this new funding in a letter  
15                  to me. So, I chaired, or posted this meeting  
16                  some months ago, and in that, I asked, as I'm  
17                  going to do today, what more do you need? Give  
18                  me some specific ideas.

19                  One of the ideas was, we need money  
20                  Brand USA. And we worked hard with Congress and  
21                  I'm pleased to say, that we've been able to  
22                  deliver that. So, I guess what I'm telling you,

1 is your time here isn't wasted. I know you're  
2 busy people, but the ideas that you give us, we  
3 will do everything we can to implement.

4 You know, I expect today, we'll talk  
5 about visas, talk about testing. You have to let  
6 us know what are the barriers? What can we do?  
7 So, we can get to work in doing that.

8 I want to take a second to introduce  
9 our newest Assistant Secretary for Industry and  
10 Analysis, Grant Harris. Grant is one week on the  
11 job, not even, I think it's like five days on the  
12 job. He just got confirmed. He has unbelievable  
13 energy, drive, and experience.

14 And he, I've already talked to him  
15 about how this is a priority of mine, to get  
16 travel and tourism numbers back to pre-pandemic  
17 levels. And he'll be on the agenda later, but I  
18 wanted to recognize him and thank him.

19 Finally, last thing I'll say is, last  
20 month, Deputy Secretary Graves led a meeting of  
21 the Tourism Policy Council, to review the five-  
22 year goal for international visitation and

1 spending recommendation. Ninety million visitors  
2 to the U.S. who are expected to spend, \$280  
3 billion.

4 I'm pleased to report, the Council  
5 agreed to that goal, which I hope you agree is a  
6 good goal. And it will be included in the new  
7 National Travel and Tourism Strategy, which we're  
8 hoping to release in early June.

9 The Board has previously provided  
10 strong recommendations, which are guiding the  
11 development of the strategy. So, with that, that  
12 was a mouth full. Bottom line is, we're eager to  
13 engage with you, and eager to hear your feedback,  
14 and eager to continue to work with you. So, we  
15 can get the industry back to where you need and  
16 deserve to be.

17 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Madam  
18 Secretary. Particularly, great to hear about the  
19 \$250 million for Brand USA. Much needed.

20 If I can now, I'm going to turn this  
21 session over to Julie Stufft, Deputy Assistant  
22 Secretary for Consular Affairs on part of the

1 state. Julie, the floor is yours.

2 MS. STUFFT: Thank you very much.

3 Madam Secretary, that's a tough act to follow.  
4 But I will say that, Secretary Blinken, and all  
5 of our team, here, in the State Department  
6 couldn't agree more with what you've said, and  
7 the enthusiasm with which you've said it.

8 We who manage Visa Operations globally  
9 are thrilled to see, having come from basically a  
10 complete work stoppage that was never envisioned  
11 obviously, just like so many things associated  
12 with the pandemic in March 2020, to something  
13 that's starting to look like normal operations  
14 again.

15 It's not perfect, but it's a lot  
16 closer than we have been. Every week we see more  
17 and more, non-immigrant and immigrant visas being  
18 adjudicated. All over the world, we see fewer  
19 restrictions on our waiting areas. From COVID,  
20 we see more staff going to the field. And this  
21 is extremely gratifying for all of us.

22 We have a long way to go. But I do

1 want to say too that, we, having gone through  
2 this, like with so many things that all of us  
3 have experienced, in the last few years, we're  
4 not going to go back to the old way of doing  
5 things. We're committed to actually learning  
6 from what we've seen, and innovating. So, that  
7 we're -- the normal that we have in the future is  
8 going to be much different, I hope, than what we  
9 had pre-pandemic.

10 And part of what I mean by that is, we  
11 need to be able to innovate our processes within  
12 the realm of the statute and what we're permitted  
13 to do by Congress. To make this as simple as  
14 possible. To use all the technology that we've  
15 adapted and that we know how to use, to make  
16 things as easy for legitimate travelers to come  
17 to the United States as possible.

18 We're very excited that Secretary  
19 Blinken, with the agreement of DHS, has expanded  
20 our interview waiver capacity significantly, at  
21 the end of last year. And that will be good for  
22 this year, and we hope for the foreseeable

1 future. And we look forward to ideas on how to  
2 expand that.

3 That allows our consular officers to  
4 focus on the cases overseas that require an  
5 interview, that they have to do, and allows us  
6 flexibility in allowing both some colleagues here  
7 in Washington, colleagues at other posts, which  
8 is a first, to work on those visa applications  
9 that don't require an interview.

10 We've done some pretty amazing stuff  
11 in terms of sharing applications between  
12 different posts. Having folks in Washington  
13 manage appointments at various posts that were  
14 overwhelmed, and helping them dig out of those  
15 backlogs by doing that.

16 So, we're figuring out ways to move  
17 work around, to match the capacity that we have  
18 overseas. And this is working to really help us  
19 dig out of these backlogs.

20 This is just the beginning, the first  
21 stage of recovery from the pandemic. And we are  
22 looking at a lot of different ideas. Many of

1 which came to us from you, TTAB and TTAB Members  
2 about how we can modernize our visa operations  
3 overseas, and really attract visitors to the  
4 United States.

5 And make this, the visa process  
6 something that is pleasant, and is secure for  
7 everybody in a way that really helps us bring  
8 back, and hope exceed, the number of travelers to  
9 the United States that we've had prior to the  
10 pandemic.

11 We're looking at, you know, replacing  
12 the visa foil that we have now with something  
13 electronic. Looking at more services that can be  
14 conducted here in Washington and overseas. And  
15 every possible way to conduct our work  
16 electronically to maximize our ability to have  
17 officers overseas, but not make people wait for  
18 those appointments.

19 The picture is much better than it  
20 was. And actually, like I said, improving all  
21 the time. And in some cases, moving back more  
22 freely than we had ever anticipated in some

1 places, which is good.

2 But in other places, we still have a  
3 lot of work to do. We still have wait times to  
4 get down to reasonable levels. And we'll do that  
5 by both applying these innovations and by sending  
6 more officers to the field, which is also  
7 happening this year, in record numbers.

8 So, thank you very much for having me.  
9 My boss, Ambassador Rena Bitter was hoping to be  
10 here today, but she's on travel. She can't wait  
11 to see you at a future meeting. And we're  
12 absolutely committed to this, and to really  
13 revolutionizing the visa process, and the ability  
14 of international visitors to come to the United  
15 States. Thank you.

16 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Deputy  
17 Assistant Secretary Stuftt.

18 Does anyone have any direct questions  
19 of the Secretary?

20 MEMBER JOHNSON: Yes, I'm not sure --  
21 this is Sheila Johnson. Being in the hospitality  
22 business and having hotels, we have been having



1 problems with the, you know, the J1 visas and  
2 trying to bring employees over, saying even from  
3 Jamaica, or some of our other properties.

4 Because I know during the Trump  
5 administration, that was really shut down. And  
6 we just really had a problem. What's the status  
7 on this now?

8 MS. STUFFT: Sure, thank you for that.  
9 I think you're referring to the Summer Work and  
10 Travel Program, is that?

11 MEMBER JOHNSON: Yes.

12 MS. STUFFT: Okay, great. Well, I'm  
13 happy to say that we've actually, have the most  
14 numbers certainly, than past three years, this  
15 year. But almost close to pre-pandemic levels  
16 for this exchange program, the Summer Work and  
17 Travel Program. In the past two years, I think,  
18 more a matter of the pandemic than policy. We've  
19 really had to shut those down and move them to  
20 different places.

21 And a lot of the students found a way  
22 to apply elsewhere. But obviously, many did not.

1 And some of our biggest posts for that were shut  
2 down. But this year is a completely different  
3 story, and almost a full recovery of that  
4 program. We meet with the sponsors regularly.  
5 Actually, we just met with them, the week before  
6 last about this, for updates.

7 So, I do hope that you're seeing an  
8 improvement. I also want to say, that the H2  
9 visa program, which I'm, obviously includes  
10 different types, but hospitality support is one  
11 of those. That program does not require a visa  
12 interview, now.

13 So, we do hope that that helps those  
14 in the hospitality and other industries to bring  
15 people more quickly. It's much easier for us to  
16 process a visa application when no interview is  
17 required.

18 MEMBER JOHNSON: Okay. All right.  
19 I'll check with my HR department. It's been  
20 something we've been struggling with. Okay.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Are there any other

1 questions of the Secretary?

2 And Jennifer, if you could help out  
3 now.

4 MS. AGUINAGA: I see Dan Richards, Mr.  
5 Chair.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Pardon me.

7 MS. AGUINAGA: I see Dan Richards has  
8 his hand raised.

9 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: I can't see, so if  
10 you could help me, that would be great, thank  
11 you.

12 MS. AGUINAGA: Yes. Dan.

13 MEMBER RICHARDS: Yes. Thank you very  
14 much. And Assistant Deputy Secretary, thank you  
15 very much for your informative overview.

16 My question relates to what Secretary  
17 Raimondo said earlier, with respect to what do we  
18 need in order to remove barriers to travel going  
19 again, particularly, international travel?  
20 There's two major barriers. The first was the  
21 mask mandates that were required, and obviously  
22 that were struck down, and are now being

1       contested.

2                   But I can tell you somebody who flew  
3 home from Asia on Saturday, I had flown to Asia  
4 wearing a mask. And I flew home without having  
5 to wear a mask, and it was a heck of an  
6 improvement. And it was cheered by everybody on  
7 the airplane, that I was on, myself included.  
8 So, it's nice to see that drop away. And  
9 hopefully, hopefully it will be permanent.

10                   The second question is with respect to  
11 testing. Over the last four months, we've seen  
12 hospitalizations for ICU beds drop 92 percent.  
13 We've seen regular hospital bed occupancy drop 91  
14 percent. The majority of folks that -- and I'm  
15 sorry, I should have introduced myself, I'm the  
16 CEO of Global Rescue. The majority of folks that  
17 we deal with are, they have very mild symptoms,  
18 and the testing requirement is a significant  
19 barrier.

20                   So, we're still only about 87 percent  
21 of TSA volumes. A lot of those volumes are  
22 international. So, are we going to be able to

1 see a path for getting this testing requirement  
2 removed? And if so, how long in the future?

3 Thank you.

4 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes, thank you,  
5 Dan. So, first let me say, reassure you, that  
6 I'm doing a lot of outreach with your industry,  
7 like I am doing today. And this is probably the  
8 number one thing that I hear. I hear it  
9 everywhere I go. It adds to cost, and  
10 uncertainty. You know, the pre-departure tests,  
11 and we think it's probably a leading reason that  
12 people don't travel internationally.

13 The reason I'm leaving this call at  
14 4:30 is that I have a meeting with Dr. Ashish  
15 Jha, and I'm to discuss exactly this point and a  
16 couple of other points. And, you know, I know we  
17 need to ensure full resumption of travel, safely.  
18 And this is -- I got the memo loud and clear from  
19 industry. So, I plan to discuss it with him, in  
20 fact, this afternoon.

21 MEMBER RICHARDS: Thank you very much.

22 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Again, Jennifer, I

1 still see a hand raise. I just can't see who.

2 MS. AGUINAGA: Yes, I see Russ Hedge.

3 You're on mute, Russ.

4 MEMBER HEDGE: Thanks. Julie, Russ  
5 Hedge, CEO of Hostelling International USA. I  
6 just wanted to dive in a little bit deeper in  
7 terms of the visa modernization efforts that are  
8 happening in state. And again, congratulations,  
9 a lot of progress, and love your can-do sort of  
10 approach to the topic.

11 Wanted to dive into two topics in  
12 particular. Conducting in-person interviews  
13 electronically, and also the effort to digitalize  
14 forms and enable their electronic transmission.

15 I'm wondering if, how you see the pace  
16 of progress in both of those areas? We're  
17 interested in particular because we feel like  
18 both would increase access and diversity in terms  
19 of our J1 applicant pool. It would also lower  
20 the environmental impact of the current process.

21 So, if you can give us some additional  
22 details that would be helpful.

1 MS. STUFFT: Yes, sir. Thank you very  
2 much. No question that the future of this  
3 process, as so many others, is digital and  
4 electronic. And certainly, when it comes to  
5 forms and anything involving the application, we  
6 need to go as electronic as possible. And I  
7 would love to hear more feedback from you as to  
8 what forms you think could be useful. Because we  
9 do generally get that feedback from outside the  
10 department.

11 When it comes to what we call, virtual  
12 interviews, or like you said, in-person  
13 interviews that are conducted electronically, the  
14 State Department's legal team has reviewed that  
15 quite a bit, because we would obviously, also  
16 like to avail ourselves of that technology if  
17 possible.

18 And because the statute reads the way  
19 it does, and also because we are required by  
20 statute to take biometrics, fingerprints from  
21 visa applicants, it's not clear to us a way  
22 forward that's actually going to make that easier

1 than an actual interview.

2 We've piloted this. We've tried doing  
3 posts between two different embassies with an  
4 applicant in one, and an officer in another. And  
5 we're frankly struggling to figure out what the  
6 efficiency to be gained in this is?

7 We'd very, very much like to use that,  
8 if possible, but I don't -- I think that my legal  
9 colleagues would say that the statute doesn't  
10 give us that ability at this point. That could  
11 change if there's something in the future that  
12 clarified that.

13 But right now, because we have to  
14 bring in applicants for biometrics, and conduct  
15 an in-person interview, we're not exploring that.  
16 But we get that question all the time, and please  
17 continue to raise that in all circles that you  
18 can.

19 MEMBER HEDGE: Thanks, Julie.

20 CHAIR HORNBuckle: Thank you, maybe in  
21 deference to time, one more question. Jennifer.

22 MS. AGUINAGA: Catherine Prather.



1                   MEMBER PRATHER:  Actually, thank you.  
2                   Russ covered mine.  And Julie, appreciate your  
3                   response.  That was helpful information.  Thank  
4                   you.

5                   CHAIR HORNBUCKLE:  I guess one more  
6                   then.  Jennifer, you want --

7                   MS. STUFFT:  If I could just say, too.  
8                   Because I know that the Secretary is going to be  
9                   leaving soon.  How much we appreciate our  
10                  partnership with her team at the Department of  
11                  Commerce.  And how great our ability to really  
12                  focus in on this huge problem, and get back to  
13                  the not only normal, but better than normal,  
14                  better than what was, is.  And so, thank you,  
15                  Madam Secretary.

16                  CHAIR HORNBUCKLE:  Thank you.  Maybe  
17                  before we lose the Secretary, and Secretary, I  
18                  have one question.  We had a good conversation  
19                  last week, principally around workforce.  I think  
20                  if there's any one thing that's immediate to us,  
21                  as successful as these -- our destinations have  
22                  been getting people back to work, remain a very

1 complex and difficult issue.

2 Any one place that we could help lean  
3 into, from your perspective in your office, and  
4 the department?

5 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Yes, so a couple  
6 of things. Right now, we at the department are  
7 putting money out the door in something called  
8 the Good Jobs Challenge. It's a job training --  
9 money for job training. So, that might be  
10 something you want to take a look at.

11 But I'd say even more than that,  
12 anything we can do together to create career  
13 pathways and then, for lack of a better term, you  
14 know, advertise that fact. Anything I can do to  
15 amplify that, I think would help.

16 Obviously, I think some of the  
17 challenge is that people don't understand that  
18 the job you start at, in hospitality, doesn't  
19 have to be the job that you finish at. You can  
20 go from being, you know, a waitress, to managing,  
21 to maybe owning your own place, et cetera.

22 Also, I think that you can make more

1 money in these jobs than people realize. So, to  
2 the extent that we can work together, to put a  
3 really fine point on those career pathways, and  
4 that I and the administration could help get that  
5 word out. I think that would be good.

6 Beyond that, some things that I'm  
7 doing, you know, if you come to me -- and I don't  
8 know if this applies to you, but if there are  
9 government regulations, or training requirements,  
10 or licensing requirements, that you find are  
11 barriers, then you could come to me and let me  
12 know that.

13 So, for example, there's a huge truck  
14 driver shortage. I learned that through a lot of  
15 these convenings. It turns out, you had to be 21  
16 years old to be a commercial -- to get a  
17 commercial truck driver's license. So, we  
18 changed that from 21 to 18. It also turns out  
19 that it could take a very long time to get the  
20 job training, to get the license, of course  
21 driver's license. So, Secretary of the Labor,  
22 Marty Walsh has revamped the whole training

1 initiative. And now, you can get it in weeks,  
2 not months.

3 So, I would say to you, whatever the  
4 barriers might be, if you come to tell me, and  
5 let me know, and we can also work with the  
6 Department of Labor, or Department of  
7 Transportation in order to enact some of these  
8 things.

9 The final thing I'll say, is we also  
10 have to be recruiting in different places. So,  
11 truck drivers for example, are predominately men.  
12 And so, we're making a big effort, white men,  
13 actually. So, we're making a big effort to get  
14 to communities of color, and to women.

15 So, all -- I'm just kind of throwing  
16 out some ideas. But all of these are ways that  
17 we could work together, to expand your labor  
18 pool. And also, like I say, highlight the fact  
19 that these are good jobs.

20 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you. About  
21 particularly the career pathway. I think if we  
22 can educate the general populous of our industry

1 and what's available. And we can get behind  
2 initiatives. We all know that it's well beyond  
3 the frontline jobs. Before we lose you, I think  
4 Brad, did you have any questions of the  
5 Secretary?

6 VICE CHAIR DEAN: You know, the  
7 Secretary touched on this, but I just want to  
8 reiterate. The historic nature of the EDA grants  
9 that you referenced before, it's really  
10 unprecedented for our industry. So, I want to  
11 thank you and your team at NTTD and EDA for that.  
12 And you touched on it earlier, I don't know if  
13 you have any updates.

14 I can tell you anecdotally, I'm  
15 hearing a lot of positives. A lot of encouraging  
16 signs, and I think the EDA's going to have a  
17 tremendous success story to share. So, thank you  
18 for your leadership in that and for making that  
19 happen. Because this is unprecedented, it's  
20 historic and I think it's going to be significant  
21 when we look back and realize the impact you've  
22 had with this.

1                   SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Well, I really  
2 appreciate you saying that. And I'll pass it on  
3 to the team, because they've worked so hard to  
4 get it out the door quickly. I'm hopeful we're  
5 going to start to really see this summer, a lot  
6 of the benefit of the work that was done there.

7                   So, a lot of communities they got  
8 money, you know, put it into efforts that will  
9 make the community that much more ready for the  
10 summer travel season. And I appreciate, I  
11 appreciate what you said. I'm hopeful it's going  
12 to have a big impact.

13                   CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: So, thank you,  
14 Madam Secretary. Julie, thank you as well. Very  
15 well, grateful that you joined us today, Julie.  
16 In particular we love to hear what you're working  
17 on. One, maybe final question of you.

18                   Metrics, an easy place to understand  
19 how we're doing in the context of visa, visa  
20 reform. Is there an easy place to go get data  
21 and information?

22                   MS. STUFFT: Thank you. But I think

1 that we'll always refer you back to  
2 travel.state.gov. That's where we're going to  
3 keep our best information.

4 But I welcome the chance to join any  
5 meetings in the future, so we can sort of give a  
6 lay of the land to those who are interested in  
7 the industry. It's really important to us that  
8 our wait times continue to come down, as they  
9 have been, and even faster.

10 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you. So, I  
11 don't know, Madam Secretary going to stay with us  
12 for a few moments, or --

13 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: I could, but I  
14 don't think you want me to. Because as I said,  
15 I'm going to meet with the Ashish Jha. And, you  
16 know, work on masking and pre-travel testing.  
17 So, if I were you, I'd kick me off to go do that.

18 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: We thank you, but  
19 bye.

20 SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thanks. Good-bye  
21 everybody. Stay in close touch.

22 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you.

1                   SECRETARY RAIMONDO: Thank you, Bill.

2                   CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you both.

3                   Last week, as I indicated in a quick  
4 comment, and you heard from the Secretary as  
5 well, I had a chance to talk to her at some  
6 length around some key priorities. And we did  
7 talk about workforce. We talked about the idea  
8 of educating a broader industry, around what our  
9 industry is all about.

10                   And so, I'm going to spend some time  
11 and hopefully some initiatives around that  
12 general idea. And ultimately, I'll ask for some  
13 assistant on that.

14                   We talked about climate, and I think  
15 we've all -- obviously, there was a letter  
16 submitted. We all understand electrification has  
17 become a key issue for travel. And the Secretary  
18 in particular is behind that initiative in a  
19 large way for transit and transport. So, we'll  
20 spend some time on that. There's a subcommittee  
21 ultimately, we're going to ask for here at the  
22 end.



1                   And also, spending time particularly  
2                   for some of our smaller companies to help  
3                   understand what can be done for sustainability  
4                   and climate. Our company and other large-scale  
5                   companies have taken on many initiatives.

6                   And so, taking those initiatives,  
7                   publicizing them, maybe potentially doing some  
8                   education around what was done and how it was  
9                   accomplished, we thought was informative and  
10                  hopefully productive.

11                  And the last significant one I talked  
12                  about with her, was infrastructure. The idea  
13                  that the Biden administration, at its very core,  
14                  in terms of election and its platform. A lot of  
15                  it was and is around infrastructure.

16                  And so, understanding what's being  
17                  done. Understanding what isn't being done.  
18                  Understanding where dollars are dedicated, and  
19                  where they're focused and earmarked. I think it  
20                  would be important for all of us to get our head  
21                  around that.

22                  We have a couple of -- and I'm just

1 using obvious examples for us. Our I-15 corridor  
2 is very important to this community. About half  
3 of the people here drive. New York subways are  
4 important. Mississippi roadways are important.  
5 And so, just understanding where we are as it  
6 relates to travel and infrastructure in general.

7 The Secretary's agreed to help stretch  
8 across to fellow, Department of Transportation  
9 Secretary, and help us unlock or at least  
10 understand what's being designated.

11 And then obviously, interested in  
12 hearing from any and all of you on those issues,  
13 and potentially the other issues that we're going  
14 to talk about. But maybe open it up, right here  
15 for a moment. And actually, I'm not. I'm going  
16 to turn this over to Brad, to keep on schedule.  
17 We'll open it up at the end.

18 For Brad Dean, our Vice Chair to talk  
19 about Tourism Planning. So, Brad, if I may turn  
20 this over to you.

21 VICE CHAIR DEAN: Sure. Happy to do  
22 so, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going to kick off

1 this discussion. I think it's going to be really  
2 led by our friends from the EDA.

3 But just, you know, in the, for  
4 purposes of the background having spent four  
5 years in Puerto Rico, during a major recovery  
6 effort both from a, you know, natural disaster,  
7 two hurricanes and then followed up two years  
8 later by earthquakes. A series of earthquakes  
9 that spanned over three weeks.

10 We've gotten very familiar with  
11 tourism planning and recovery unfortunately. But  
12 the good news is when you look at what's happened  
13 in Puerto Rico, within two years of Hurricanes  
14 Irma and Maria, tourist visitation and tax  
15 collections were up over pre-Maria levels. So,  
16 just two years to get back to record setting  
17 numbers.

18 As we were approaching year three,  
19 after Hurricanes Irma and Maria, revenues yield,  
20 employment, deplanements were all reaching record  
21 levels and the meeting-convention pipeline was  
22 actually exceeding pre-hurricane levels.

1           So, suffice to say, Puerto Rico has  
2 shown that it can recover far more quickly than I  
3 think anybody would have thought possible. And  
4 then of course, when you factor in what's taken  
5 place in the pandemic, and yet, here we are in  
6 2021, breaking those record numbers.

7           So, beyond the massive rebuilding  
8 effort, which continues to this day, in both  
9 instances, following a major hurricane and  
10 following earthquakes, the federal government  
11 played a huge, substantive role in that.

12           And one of the things the government  
13 provided was this vast network of support that  
14 not only saved lives, but changed lives, and  
15 nurtured economic growth. And as I think back to  
16 the role the federal government played in that  
17 economic recovery, and the tourism planning that  
18 went along with that. There's been countless  
19 actions taken.

20           Some of which were unique to Puerto  
21 Rico, but some of which would happen in the same  
22 way, in really any other destination. So, based

1 on our experience here, what I've seen with the  
2 federal recovery efforts, I think there's a few  
3 essential considerations that paved the way for a  
4 robust recovery of growth, regardless of what  
5 prompted the need for tourism planning.

6 Perhaps, the most important  
7 consideration is ensuring that tourism is  
8 referenced prominently in the economic  
9 development and planning of recovery strategy.  
10 That might seem logical and common sense,  
11 especially for an island in the Caribbean. But  
12 in fact, that was far from the case.

13 And sadly, I think there's still  
14 probably a few state agencies which don't always  
15 prioritize tourism as an essential component to  
16 the recovery or economic planning strategy. And  
17 with a lot of credit to the Department of  
18 Commerce, EDA, particularly the National Travel  
19 and Tourism Office.

20 Tourism was identified early on, and  
21 throughout our recovery period, even when it  
22 wasn't always prioritized locally, or for some

1 local community setting out on a lengthy economic  
2 recovery journey, or just looking for  
3 transformational tourism planning.

4 You know, they may just assume that  
5 tourism is going to recover on its own place, or  
6 on its own pace, or come along on its own. And  
7 may always be delayed due to the damage of  
8 infrastructure, or the perceived pace of  
9 recovery.

10 And while certainly, those factor into  
11 the pace of recovery in our case, by the federal  
12 government making certain tourism was accounted  
13 for in the early planning efforts. That really  
14 helped to ensure that our industry was considered  
15 in each element of the recovery plan.

16 The second important priority was  
17 that, to connect us to the vast network of  
18 tourism recovery agencies and work that was being  
19 done by the federal government. And this was  
20 kind of hit or miss for us.

21 In my four years in Puerto Rice, I've  
22 worked directly with 13 federal agencies as a

1 part of our recovery of tourism. But initially,  
2 only three were connected to us, after the  
3 hurricanes that I mentioned earlier. The others  
4 happened over time.

5 And I've got to get a lot of credit to  
6 NTTO, because they were often the main connector  
7 to these other agencies. And what I found was,  
8 often the network of federal agencies work really  
9 well together across agency lines at the federal  
10 level. But naturally, they rely upon their local  
11 government counterparts to bring in other  
12 parties, particularly NGOs.

13 And unfortunately, those local  
14 agencies are often at a tremendous disadvantage.  
15 They're understaffed. They're handling, you  
16 know, recovery or a planning process that maybe  
17 they weren't trained or staffed to handle.

18 And so, often times, what happened is  
19 they may not be thinking about who needs to be at  
20 the table. A good example, the U.S. Department  
21 of Transportation might not know or think to  
22 liaise with the local tourism industry. And the

1 local tourism industry may not know who to  
2 contact at U.S. DOT.

3 So, unless the local government  
4 provides that linkage, it doesn't happen. And in  
5 our case, NTTD often provided that linkage, which  
6 has had a big impact on our ability to accelerate  
7 the recovery and ensure that the planning takes  
8 us, not where we were, but where we need to be in  
9 the future.

10 A third key consideration that we  
11 found, and I think this factors into every  
12 element of tourism planning, is that in every  
13 recovery that involves tourism, there's three  
14 organizations that should always be at the table.

15 Of course, the local destination  
16 marketing organization, the local trade  
17 associations, which might be one and the same.  
18 It may be a restaurant hotel association, or they  
19 may be separate organizations. And then the  
20 state and regional tourism agency. Even when  
21 it's a local recovery, state tourism offices  
22 provide invaluable support and assistance.



1                   And so, those three entities are  
2                   ideally suited to not only collaborate, but bring  
3                   in the private sector partners, that may or may  
4                   not be at the table. So, if you're not including  
5                   those three entities at the table, then chances  
6                   are you're leaving aside opportunities to  
7                   accelerate the recovery.

8                   And the final consideration, that we  
9                   noticed for the recovery and the planning of  
10                  tourism, is that when evaluating economic  
11                  recovery, it's important to recognize that  
12                  tourism recovery or growth, occurs in phases.  
13                  And it doesn't necessarily occur all at once.

14                  I think there may be a tendency  
15                  sometimes to kind of look at the tourism industry  
16                  as a big large industry, and its full recovery  
17                  happening all at once. When actually what's  
18                  happening is phases of recovery. The Secretary  
19                  actually spoke to this earlier. We've seen  
20                  leisure come back quickly, but yet, we're still  
21                  challenged to see international or business  
22                  travel increase.

1           In our case, the cruise lines and  
2           airlines came back a lot more quickly than anyone  
3           anticipated. And that opened up other avenues of  
4           recovery that wouldn't have happened otherwise.  
5           So, I think getting past that tendency to think  
6           of it as all one recovery, but rather a phase  
7           recovery.

8           And the core tenets of that recovery  
9           such as rebuilding, infrastructure, human  
10          services, housing, obviously are very important.  
11          But recognizing that there are some decisions  
12          made early on, that will ensure whether or not  
13          the destination and the tourism industry, come  
14          back more quickly or if it lags behind.

15          And what I've observed is, there may  
16          be a tendency just to look at that as all one  
17          process, as opposed to stepping back and thinking  
18          of it from a more business-like approach. As to  
19          what are the pathways to recovery for each  
20          segment of tourism? And what's the likely and  
21          best pathway to accelerate those?

22                 I think, at the same time, that

1 there's a tendency to maybe to focus on the  
2 physical infrastructure, when in fact there's a  
3 lot of other factors that dictate when that  
4 recovery will begin, and too many to get into  
5 today, but certainly those are the things that I  
6 think the right players in the tourism industry  
7 bring to the table.

8           And overall, I can attest that amazing  
9 results that would not have been possible, were  
10 it not for the federal agencies and in  
11 particular, Department of Commerce, EDA, and  
12 NTTO.

13           We've learned a lot of lessons. And  
14 one of the most important is that if the  
15 appropriate segments of the tourism industry are  
16 at the table and included in those early  
17 discussions and planning, the recovery process is  
18 viewed as a process with key milestones along the  
19 way, recovery can happen far more quickly and  
20 more completely than otherwise might be possible.

21           And I think those same considerations,  
22 are absolutely relevant whether the planning

1 process is prompted by the need for recovery,  
2 growth, or just simply economic transformation.  
3 So, hope that sets the stage for the comments  
4 from our friends at EDA.

5 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Brad.  
6 I would like to introduce now, and invite to  
7 speak, Michelle Chang, Economic Development  
8 Administration to update us on tourism and the  
9 grant program. And then open this up for  
10 discussion or questions of either. Michelle.

11 MS. CHANG: Great. Thank you so much.  
12 Nice to be with you all today. Like mentioned,  
13 this is Michelle Chang from the Economic  
14 Development Administration. Just wanted to give  
15 a quick update on what we're doing with the  
16 American Rescue Plan.

17 As you all may know, we have \$750  
18 million that was allocated through the American  
19 Rescue Plan to support travel, tourism, and  
20 outdoor recreation. As you may recall, that  
21 grant program was divided into two parts.

22 We had our non-competitive portion.

1       Where there were direct allocations to states.  
2       That was \$510 million. Those funds have already  
3       been distributed to all 50 states and  
4       territories.

5                 Just a quick overview for those of you  
6       who may not have heard this before. Some quick  
7       stats on what some states and territories are  
8       using those funds for. Forty-eight states and  
9       territories are intending to use those funds for  
10      statewide or regional marketing campaigns.

11                Twenty-four states and territories  
12      described infrastructure upgrades to existing  
13      tourism destinations. Seventeen states and  
14      territories plan to use those funds for statewide  
15      strategic planning and tourism at work. And  
16      then, 15 states and territories are using the  
17      funds to create or build out tourism and  
18      hospitality sector workforce development and  
19      training programs.

20                And then three states noted that  
21      they're going to use the funds to support  
22      technical assistance for tourism, hospitality

1 businesses. So, we're seeing a wide range of  
2 different uses. But, as you can see from the  
3 stats I just mentioned, there is quite a bit of  
4 use around marketing campaigns. As that was one  
5 of the intended uses of the funds.

6 As you all will also recall, the  
7 remaining \$240 million is going towards  
8 competitive tourism, grant program that we're  
9 running. For those of you who follow closely,  
10 you may have noted that in early February, we  
11 closed that program.

12 We were quite oversubscribed. We had  
13 six times the demand of the amount of money that  
14 we had. And so, there was a recommended deadline  
15 to submit all applications by January 31st of  
16 2022. We received six, over 6X, the 240 million  
17 that we had for that.

18 And so, that program has now been  
19 closed. To date, we have awarded nine of those  
20 travel and tourism grants totaling just over \$11  
21 million. And over the course of the next few  
22 months, you will see us continuing to award

1 additional grants to complete that \$240 million.  
2 That will have to be awarded by September of this  
3 year.

4 So, that's a quick overview of where  
5 we're at. For folks who are continuing to look  
6 for funding opportunities, I do encourage you all  
7 to reach out to your local economic development  
8 representative. These are staff members that we  
9 at EDA have, that are dedicated to each state and  
10 territory.

11 They can help you identify what sort  
12 of grant opportunities we do still have  
13 available. And what projects that you're working  
14 on, and what grant programs may be most  
15 appropriate.

16 CHAIR HORNBuckle: Thank you,  
17 Michelle. So, I'll turn it open to anyone for  
18 any comments or questions, of either Brad or  
19 Michelle.

20 Stephanie, I see --

21 MS. AGUINAGA: I see Stephanie Jones.

22 CHAIR HORNBuckle: Thank you,

1 Jennifer.

2 MEMBER JONES: Thank you. Thank you,  
3 Michelle for that report. My question to you is,  
4 all of the competitive grants that had been  
5 selected, and will be awarded, are you keeping  
6 track of which of the grantees are, say for  
7 instance, Black-led nonprofit organizations? Or  
8 which of the nonprofit organizations specifically  
9 serve that population?

10 MS. CHANG: Thank you for that  
11 question, Stephanie. So, thank you for also  
12 highlighting that. Equity is our number one  
13 investment priority at EDA. This is something  
14 that about a year ago, actually April, around  
15 this time last year, we realigned our investment  
16 priorities to align with the Biden-Harris  
17 Administration. And we placed equity at the top  
18 of the list.

19 So, that is something that we are  
20 looking at when we are making our investment  
21 decisions. And we are working on our data, to be  
22 able to say, not only at the day of the \$750



1 million that go towards travel and tourism  
2 grants, but for the entire \$3 billion that we  
3 have received in the American Rescue Plan Act.

4 How they're supporting underserved  
5 communities and populations, so that we can make  
6 sure that we are appropriately doing that.

7 MEMBER JONES: And my second part of  
8 the question, is there a current list of all of  
9 the grantees for the competitive grants, that's  
10 accessible?

11 MS. CHANG: So, if you go to our  
12 website EDA.gov and go to press releases. Every  
13 grant that we have distributed, are listed there.  
14 There is a press release that goes along with  
15 every grant that is awarded.

16 You can tell the ones that are travel  
17 and tourism, because in the press release, it  
18 will say that was funded through the Travel and  
19 Tourism, American Rescue Plan funds.

20 MEMBER JONES: Okay. And when would  
21 the final list of all the grantee --

22 MS. CHANG: The final lists will be,

1 so we have to award all the grants by the end of  
2 September. So, we'll have the final list there.  
3 and yes, we will aim to get a clean list, so you  
4 don't have to go through all the press releases  
5 to find it that way.

6 MEMBER JONES: Thank you.

7 MS. AGUINAGA: Next we have Caroline  
8 Beteta.

9 MEMBER BETETA: Hi. Thanks, Michelle  
10 and Brad for outlining that. I just have a quick  
11 comment, to say, thank you so much. I can't  
12 believe we're actually engaged in this  
13 conversation and activation. California is one  
14 of the biggest recipients of those grants. And I  
15 just want to say, it's just with the flexibility,  
16 it's allowed us to go into new territory with  
17 industry partners.

18 We're one of the states doing  
19 strategic planning, which we feel is particularly  
20 important as we reboot our tourism economy in a  
21 sustainable fashion. We're able to engage  
22 regional partners. So, the industry is very

1 optimistic and excited about that endeavor.

2 For the first time ever, we're  
3 engaging with our tribal establishments. We have  
4 more Native American tribal establishments than  
5 any other state in the nation. And this is the  
6 first time that we're able to look at engagement  
7 and content, and share that with the world.

8 So, just a couple quick comments on  
9 its new ground. And I appreciate the long  
10 timeline. That's really helpful for us too.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Any other questions  
12 or comments?

13 Okay, and thank you both. And Brad,  
14 I know you're -- I think you're going to leave us  
15 to go catch an airplane. But thank you, both,  
16 and thank you Michelle as well.

17 Next, I want to move forward and talk  
18 about climate change. And, you know, living in  
19 the Southwest, I think you've all -- particularly  
20 for those here in California already know, we've  
21 had the least amount of rain in Southern  
22 California in its history, or its recent modern

1 history. And already in April, they're facing  
2 wildfires in Southern California.

3 So obviously, climate change continues  
4 to impact the industry. Deke Arndt with NOAA  
5 will speak about a readout of listen session on  
6 Traveling, Tourism and Climate Change. It was  
7 held on March 28th, organized by NOAA and the  
8 International Trade Administration.

9 So, Deke, if I could turn this over to  
10 you, that'd be great.

11 MR. ARNDT: Yeah, you bet. And thanks  
12 for having me. Can you hear me, okay? Oh,  
13 fantastic.

14 So, I'm going to try -- I'm going to  
15 try to share a tab. It's probably not going to  
16 work. So, let me see if I can do this. And, of  
17 course, I cannot. So, I won't even try. I will  
18 have some pretty substantial notes that I can  
19 share with you here.

20 So, my name is Deke Arndt, and I'm  
21 here -- I'm with NOAA, National Oceanic and  
22 Atmospheric Administration. And I'm specifically

1 with the National Centers for Environmental  
2 Information, which is where a lot of NOAA  
3 weather, climate, ocean, and the world's weather,  
4 climate, and ocean data, end up.

5 And I wanted to share just a quick  
6 readout. Many of you were involved in this  
7 session itself, and in the run-up to this  
8 session, and in the planning for this session of  
9 a listening session that NOAA held with the  
10 travel, tourism, and recreation sector. With  
11 some wonderful collaboration and support, and  
12 insight and know-how from the folks at NTTD. And  
13 I just wanted to kind of briefly share out what  
14 we heard at the meeting and what was said in the  
15 prep sessions running up to the meeting.

16 None of this is quite formally,  
17 official yet. We did -- participants haven't had  
18 the chance to kind of vet this. So, we are  
19 speaking generally in themes, but I don't expect  
20 the kind of final report to be much different  
21 than what we share today.

22 So, just for background, NOAA, with

1 the Department of Commerce, and at the direction  
2 of the Department of Commerce, held five  
3 listening sessions with five sectors. They were:  
4 insurance and reinsurance; architecture and  
5 engineering; retail; the new blue Economy, which  
6 overlaps quite a bit with the TTR, with travel,  
7 tourism, and recreation; and then travel,  
8 tourism, and recreation.

9 The goal for these was just to refresh  
10 the conversation with these sectors, to get a  
11 read for their experience, their place, where are  
12 you with climate, climate change? The  
13 information that supports your decision making  
14 and your own industry or commercial assessment of  
15 climate change and your needs to help inform your  
16 adaptation, mitigation, and just general business  
17 decisions related to climate change.

18 So, that was kind of the gist of all  
19 of these sessions. There were stakeholders  
20 primarily from the private sector, but from trade  
21 associations as well. This was the case also  
22 with the -- I'm going to keep saying TT&R. I

1 hope that's okay, Jen. Jennifer, is that all  
2 right?

3           You're good with that, okay. Travel,  
4 tourism and recreation session, we all had a few  
5 nonprofits and academics and a couple invited  
6 state government types, that were dealing with  
7 issues at the state level.

8           We wanted folks to share candid  
9 comments on their current understanding and their  
10 desires for climate information related to any  
11 combination of their strategy, planning,  
12 operations, supply chain, and then any other  
13 relevant activities.

14           So, it's kind of the scope of the --  
15 the kind of general, generic listening session  
16 that we had. So, travel, tourism and outdoor  
17 recreation was the fifth of five. It occurred in  
18 March. Basically, for a five-month stretch we  
19 had retail, insurance and reinsurance,  
20 architecture and engineering, new blue economy,  
21 travel, tourism, and outdoor rec.

22           The reason I'm listing all of those is

1 because there was some definite themes that came  
2 out across those sectors in those sessions. And  
3 it's definitely kind of shared themes, and many  
4 of these business and sectors overlap. So, I  
5 wanted to kind of share a big picture finding,  
6 and then we'll jump into the travel and tourism  
7 findings.

8 So, overall, across all five of those,  
9 we listed four kind of big takeaways that were  
10 shared in kind of the majority of these sessions.  
11 So, kind of the big picture landscape where the  
12 TT&R session fits in, where the takeaways were,  
13 assemble the most relevant data and information  
14 for the sectors.

15 So, a quote we heard in some form or  
16 another, over and over and over again, is don't  
17 make me go on a scavenger hunt to get the  
18 information that I need. Very true in the TT&R  
19 session and in the four sessions that led to it.

20 A lot of folks in several of the  
21 industries would like a better selection of event  
22 catalogs and case studies. So, some big weather



1 or climate thing happened, or coastal thing  
2 happened. Can you, NOAA, assemble all of the  
3 relevant kind of information and assessment of  
4 the science?

5 Can you start cataloging sort of  
6 events by event so that me, my business, my  
7 sector, can compare that information or plug it  
8 into, compared side by side with our own actions,  
9 our own cataloging, our own business practices at  
10 the time? And begin to build some, a better set  
11 of intelligence on kind of who did what to whom,  
12 in the event, in a big event?

13 And that was, that came up in several  
14 forms over and over throughout the sessions as  
15 well. Some of the sessions called these event  
16 catalogs. Some of them called table-top  
17 exercises. There's basically a -- can you bring  
18 all of the information kind of surrounding some  
19 big event that happened into one place, so that  
20 we, the sector, can use that as something of a  
21 library to reflect on lessons learned?

22 The last two takeaways are

1 complimentary, in that they don't point in the  
2 same direction, in fact they probably point in a  
3 pretty close to opposite directions. But they're  
4 both important.

5 So, we heard over and over again, make  
6 the forward-looking model output, NOAA's  
7 projections of future climate conditions, make  
8 that have a similar kind of ease of use and  
9 familiarity, as some of the products with our  
10 retrospective data.

11 So, everybody is kind of familiar with  
12 the normal high and low temperature that you see  
13 on the TV weathercast every night. That actually  
14 comes out of here, in Asheville. And that's a  
15 very, very kind of accessible way of packaging  
16 information about the last 30 years or so.

17 Can we do similar things in kind of  
18 distilling big giant datasets into reasonable  
19 numbers, for the strategic thinkers, for the  
20 Board room? And the quote we heard over and over  
21 again in some sort of fashion or another was,  
22 don't make me be a climate scientist. Don't make

1 me be a data scientist. Please roll this up, I'm  
2 an executive, or I'm a strategic thinker. I'm in  
3 the C-suite, and I've got to balance a lot of  
4 stuff. So, we heard that quite a bit throughout  
5 the sessions.

6 And then the last one that we heard  
7 kind of throughout the sessions was kind of the,  
8 from the engine room, rather than the board room.  
9 Was, you know, for the heavy data users, for  
10 those companies or sectors that have really  
11 invested in a data shop. They said, give it to  
12 us all. You know, use the cloud. All of these  
13 data geek terms, analysis ready information,  
14 machine-readable information, just put all the  
15 data in a giant reservoir and let the data folks  
16 go at it.

17 And so, that was kind of the mirror  
18 image of this: please roll it up. And they can  
19 and will exist together. There will continue to  
20 be both of those needs. I think they both spoke  
21 to what we heard as an agency was, these are  
22 definitely complimentary, kind of two different

1 tracks. But they both kind of demand that NOAA  
2 become a trusted broker in that space.

3 That whether you're getting the giant,  
4 giant -- I don't know what a petabyte is, but  
5 we've got 42 of them here. If you're getting the  
6 multi-petabyte, giant data download. You want  
7 that to be good, trustworthy, trusted, best of  
8 breed information.

9 And then for the rolled up, you know,  
10 half-pager graphic with a very quick look at  
11 what's going on, or what will go on with the  
12 climate system, you also want that to be vetted  
13 vigorously as well.

14 So, that was the general takeaways,  
15 the travel and tourism session was not much. It  
16 definitely included elements of all of those.

17 I'll jump kind of quickly to the  
18 program. The program was kind of arranged in, it  
19 was like a play in three acts basically. And the  
20 themes for each act were regional and coastal  
21 perspectives. So, we got a quite a bit of the  
22 industry as it relates to where you are. You

1 know, so, place-based perspectives.

2 Outdoor recreation in general, so,  
3 sports, and fun, outdoors recreation. We had  
4 quite a bit of representation from the outdoor  
5 recreation roundtable.

6 And then the last section was a little  
7 more on the strategy, policy and planning side.  
8 A little bit more of the strategic vision. How  
9 do we pre-pond to regulatory pressures or other  
10 strategic pressures related to climate? And so,  
11 we had a little bit of a discussion on that.

12 And so, in addition to those four  
13 overarching, kind of themes that did come up  
14 throughout the TT&R, sea level information,  
15 obviously. Specifically, quite a bit of  
16 information about sea level. I don't think that  
17 will be a surprise to anyone. But ranging from,  
18 can you get us the most precise, kind of future  
19 forward-looking sea level information that we  
20 can, because we've got operations to plan as we  
21 work and attract people to this particular space,  
22 to kind of working on just a better understanding

1 of the uncertainties and confidence in the models  
2 that will generate this.

3 Another specific thing that we heard  
4 in TT&R, which was kind of consistent with the  
5 others, was kind of better support for climate-  
6 related decision making and management.

7 So, just again, kind of access to  
8 better data, better information. It was this  
9 sort of yin and yang of, you know, the best  
10 rolled up, distilled information that NOAA can  
11 provide, versus can you point us to the biggest,  
12 most -- you know the big -- to big data  
13 solutions.

14 Particularly an emphasis on extreme  
15 events. So, this came through in your letter to  
16 the Secretary, a focus on big weather, big  
17 extreme events, wildfires, storms and flooding  
18 were the -- they asked us for better projections  
19 of these.

20 Again, with that, don't make me be a  
21 climate scientist, but help direct us and guide  
22 us and point directly towards kind of these

1 events. And what is their shape in the future?

2 To repeat a theme a little bit, but it  
3 came through as the industry wants more clarity  
4 of concrete actions that they can take to prepare  
5 for long-term impacts. So, the quote we heard  
6 here is, we're swimming in sea of data. So, this  
7 was very much from the strategic thinking side,  
8 is to help distill information. Kind of get the,  
9 what does it mean, out of it?

10 We heard quite a bit about the  
11 industry's relationship with carbon neutrality.  
12 And how can NOAA help the industry? You said  
13 electrification earlier, how can the industry  
14 take steps to become more carbon neutral, kind of  
15 whatever your operations are?

16 And NOAA was asked to help facilitate  
17 and inform those kinds of policy conversations.  
18 Because those involve very large capital  
19 investments. And we want to make sure that we're  
20 working on the best information available.

21 The last thing that we heard, specific  
22 to TT&R, and it was really kind of cool, was a

1 real emphasis and almost an enthusiasm for  
2 improving education outreach and awareness among  
3 both the industry, but especially the industry's  
4 customer base, constituent base. To work on how  
5 can we work together to help build a more  
6 informed constituency for the industry?

7 How can the industry borrow, use NOAA  
8 information? How can NOAA help get the best  
9 information in your hands? And especially with  
10 your consuming public, as they make decisions on  
11 what and when, and how to go. So, there was  
12 quite a bit of enthusiasm for improving this  
13 educational outreach space as well.

14 And that was quite a bit of fun. And  
15 there was a lot of discussion on that. And I  
16 think that was kind of new and fresh. I will  
17 say, that of these industries, and this is my --  
18 Jennifer, please let me know if I'm going long.

19 MS. AGUINAGA: Maybe just one more  
20 minute, Deke.

21 MR. ARNDT: One more minute, you bet.  
22 So, the relationship between NOAA and especially



1 the NTTO is young, and fresh, and new, and very  
2 exciting. And I think we got quite a bit to work  
3 on just within the agency here. But we're really  
4 looking forward to follow-on conversations. And  
5 to doing smart work with our colleagues at NTTO.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you. Just,  
7 in a couple of moments, we're going to talk about  
8 four committees that the Secretary has asked us  
9 to form. One of them is obviously around climate  
10 change. She's asked Brad Dean to chair that, and  
11 Brad's agreed to do so.

12 With the mindset of taking all of the  
13 information that Deke and his colleagues have,  
14 and potentially putting it into bite-sized stuff,  
15 that folks like I can understand, and that you  
16 all can use. And so, that's a process that  
17 ultimately through that committee, we'll continue  
18 to push down that road.

19 Having said that, open it up for any  
20 other questions or comments of Deke and what he  
21 heard.

22 (No audible response.)

1 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Okay. Seeing none,  
2 or hearing none, pushing forward. Next agenda  
3 item is public comment. We had no public comment  
4 that was submitted in writing ahead of the  
5 meeting. If there's any other member that wished  
6 to speak, could you raise your hand?

7 I think Chris Thompson with Brand USA  
8 is likely to want to say a few words. We've love  
9 to hear from you Chris, if you're there.

10 MR. THOMPSON: I am here.

11 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: There you are.

12 MR. THOMPSON: So, good afternoon,  
13 everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to make  
14 a couple comments. Bill, congrats on the  
15 chairmanship. Really appreciate your leadership.  
16 On behalf of Brand USA, support your personal and  
17 MGM's support of Brand USA over the years.

18 I'll keep my comments short, but it's  
19 a huge thank you to everybody here on the line  
20 and others that were here prior, and maybe no  
21 longer involved with TTAB. I have to say thank  
22 you to Secretary Raimondo, she as was

1 demonstrated on the call today, is a major voice  
2 for our industry and all things that we need, as  
3 it relates to travel policy.

4           Thanks to our team at NTT, who  
5 continues to be a major factor in what we do.  
6 And overall, thanks to this TTAB. As I look back  
7 on the last year and a half, and the Secretary  
8 referenced it, thanks to the leadership of this  
9 TTAB, and the one prior. Recommendations were on  
10 the Secretary's desk when she arrived, on her  
11 first day.

12           And I will say, that I think that had  
13 went a tremendous amount towards those  
14 recommendations becoming reality. And without  
15 the support of this Advisory Board, without the  
16 leadership of this Advisory Board, it would not  
17 have happened.

18           There's never been, in my opinion, a  
19 better demonstration of the public-private  
20 partnership that is created in general, here.  
21 And then through what was created with Brand USA.

22           We often also talk about the three-

1 legged stool, with the Department of Commerce  
2 having been here forever. Our friends at U.S.  
3 Travel -- and I call our advocacy army -- that  
4 advocate for travel policy from the private  
5 sector's side, and then us, on the marketing  
6 side. And I'm not sure there's a better example  
7 as it relates to what was done on our behalf, in  
8 that regard.

9           So, I much appreciate it for the \$250  
10 million in additional resource. Back on November  
11 8th, when our borders opened, we kind of did a  
12 soft launch of our recovery campaign. We had  
13 three comms stacks (phonetic) approved already,  
14 which we've been doing for a good bit of time  
15 now, with international influencers that have a  
16 tremendous following, a tremendous reach. And  
17 our ability to leverage their messaging as they  
18 travel around the country at our invitation, is  
19 proven that we're ready.

20           Certainly, the return of our domestic  
21 economy has proved to the world that we're ready.  
22 Now, we're ready for a "Welcome the World Back"

1 campaign. A launch, a hard launch of that  
2 welcome back. So, we've been doing it off and on  
3 since the borders opened, but, you know, we have  
4 talked about and mentioned that there is some  
5 uncertainty still involved in the pre-departure  
6 tests.

7 So, that is causing a little bit of  
8 pause, still a little bit of a level of  
9 uncertainty. So, as was mentioned already here,  
10 we look forward to when that's relaxed.

11 And then a final component is  
12 enticing, convert, and push it down the funnel as  
13 much as we can, through our distribution channel  
14 partners to actual booked business. We're  
15 planning on a big pep rally and a hard launch of  
16 our welcome, welcoming the world back, at IPW in  
17 Orlando in the first week of June.

18 It's the one time of year when we  
19 bring our entire world of stakeholders to one  
20 city, and one state. Hold both of them up, and  
21 otherwise promote the entirety of the country.  
22 So, that's going to be a great opportunity and

1 probably perfect timing for us to really launch a  
2 big-time welcome back message.

3 So, with that, Mr. Chair, I'll again  
4 thank everybody. And I appreciate all the  
5 collective efforts.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thank you, Chris.  
7 And obviously, the work that you all do at Brand  
8 USA is certainly important now, more than ever.  
9 And good luck in June.

10 Are there any questions of Chris,  
11 before we push forward?

12 (No response.)

13 MR. THOMPSON: Okay.

14 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Okay. Thank you.  
15 Like I indicated earlier, the Secretary has asked  
16 that we form four subcommittees to continue the  
17 work. And I'm actually going to ask, this will  
18 be a fifth, but I will get back with the  
19 Secretary on that later, Jennifer, around  
20 infrastructure.

21 But those four committees are: Diverse  
22 Tourism Product. Stephanie Jones will chair

1 that. It's to provide recommendations how U.S.  
2 government can better support the development of  
3 diverse tourism product in experiences across the  
4 United States.

5 The second committee is Tourism  
6 Planning. Monica Smith will chair that. It's to  
7 provide recommendations on ways the federal  
8 government can assist states and communities  
9 integrating tourism into broader economic  
10 development and disaster planning -- which you  
11 heard from Brad earlier on.

12 The third one is Business Travel. We  
13 all understand the significance and importance of  
14 this particular group of travelers. To provide  
15 recommendations on what the U.S. government could  
16 do to address challenges to the recovery of this  
17 important segment. Michelle Frymire is going to  
18 chair that one.

19 And the last one I alluded to earlier,  
20 was Climate Change, which Brad has agreed to  
21 chair. And hopefully put some reality and some  
22 common-sense information before all of us, so

1 that we can react, and act, and ultimately  
2 educate on it. The scope is to provide  
3 recommendations on the top five drivers and or  
4 incentives of implementing climate change  
5 strategies for business and destinations. Taking  
6 note of any government programs that have helped  
7 these changes, industry, or destinations, best  
8 practices and key challenges on -- like I  
9 mentioned earlier.

10 And so I want to thank each of them  
11 for again giving their time and agreeing to  
12 chair. I know this is not easy work. And it  
13 gets quite involved. And maybe Jennifer, you can  
14 help me on the formation, the timing, and the  
15 announcement of those particular committees here  
16 in a moment.

17 And, again, I'm going to want to  
18 launch a fifth one, and I want to do that in  
19 concert with the Secretary around infrastructure.  
20 And like I alluded to earlier, around information  
21 exchange. Around what is being done? What can  
22 be done? And how we might lean in and give some



1 information on behalf of the industry, what's  
2 important to us, for the Secretary, so she can  
3 share that with some of her colleagues at the  
4 Department of Transportation, of note.

5 Having said that, it is 2:11, and  
6 we'll open this up for additional questions or  
7 comments before we close. But I look forward to  
8 giving you back some of your evening. Are there  
9 any?

10 MR. HARRIS: Bill, this is Grant. I  
11 just wanted to jump in.

12 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Please, Grant. My  
13 apologies.

14 MR. HARRIS: Oh, no problem. First,  
15 thank you to you, and also the rest of the TTAB,  
16 for this great discussion. This is my first  
17 meeting with the industry in this new role, and  
18 I'm incredibly excited to be here.

19 And also, in discussing with the  
20 Secretary, she alluded to -- and Bill, as you've  
21 already laid out -- these four areas that you  
22 mentioned on diverse tourism products, and

1 tourism planning, business travel, and climate  
2 change, are areas where we'd really like to pose  
3 to the TTAB to get specific recommendations.

4 It's excellent that, Bill, you're  
5 already ahead of the game in picking committee  
6 chairs, and that's fantastic. We'd like to pose  
7 these four different travel areas as an actual  
8 charge to the committee and seek your formal  
9 input on each of those areas.

10 And in terms of the timing to get to  
11 your point, what we'd discussed with the  
12 Secretary is to really seek recommendations by  
13 July 29th, which I understand is a little longer  
14 than the time period that you've usually been  
15 working on in the past. But we were trying to  
16 recognize the complexity within many of these  
17 different baskets, and the importance to make  
18 sure that we're not rushing this work.

19 But it's, glad that it's already in  
20 the train, and particularly for me, new in this  
21 role as Assistant Secretary, I'm excited to meet  
22 you all and work with you. I'm just the latest

1 addition to put the oar in the water and be  
2 rowing in this direction on this important work.  
3 And so, very excited to be here. And hopefully  
4 meeting with you all in person next time.  
5 Thanks, Bill.

6 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Thanks, and again,  
7 my apologies. Jennifer, I will throw this over  
8 to you to close, if there are no other questions  
9 or comments.

10 MS. AGUINAGA: I am not seeing any.  
11 So thank you, Bill. And thank you all for  
12 participating in today's meeting. With that, the  
13 meeting is officially closed. And I hope  
14 everyone has a great week. Looking forward to  
15 seeing you next time.

16 CHAIR HORNBUCKLE: Bye, all.

17 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
18 went off the record at 5:13 p.m.)  
19  
20  
21  
22

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