

UNITED STATES TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

On behalf of the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, we thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations that will improve the nation's infrastructure to advance seamless travel.

Enhancing travel infrastructure serves as the cornerstone of advancing the travel and tourism industry and the foundation for a seamless and enjoyable travel experience. Last year, the Biden Administration released the *National Travel and Tourism Strategy* to support the growth and sustainability of the travel and tourism industry. The Strategy set an ambitious goal of welcoming 90 million international visitors and \$280 billion in annual spending by 2027. To meet this goal, bolster the industry's growth, and support a resilient industry, collaborative efforts across public and private sectors are essential, with a holistic approach on travel infrastructure.

A comprehensive whole-of-government approach to improving travel infrastructure is paramount to promoting efficient resource allocation, reducing redundancies, and fostering the collaboration needed to deliver transformative improvements. Travel and tourism transcends geographical boundaries. It connects people, cultures, and experiences across diverse landscapes, fostering a mutual understanding that enriches our global community.

Uniting the efforts of federal, state, and local government agencies will streamline decision-making, optimize investment, and ensure that every facet of travel infrastructure works to enhance the traveler experience and create a more resilient travel and tourism industry. This year, as the Department of Transportation continues its work to update the *National Travel and Tourism Infrastructure Strategic Plan*, we urge continued coordination across all of government to support effective prioritization and support for much needed improvements to our public roadways.

Congress established the role of Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Travel and Tourism, who will play a vital role in supporting this whole-of-government approach. We continue to support and advocate for the office to be fully funded to support the nation's travel and tourism priorities.

We offer the following recommendations to advance seamless travel and support our nation's travel and tourism industry, acknowledging that only through collective action can we truly realize the potential of a modernized, interconnected, and resilient travel system.

Recommendation #1: Improve road infrastructure by promoting the widespread use of predictive traffic planning and intelligent transportation technology to address the persistent challenge of traffic congestion and increase safety. Such systems have the ability to analyze event schedules, historical traffic data, and expected arrivals to predict potential congestion in transportation routes, event venues, or other areas prone to traffic.

Predictive traffic planning integrates seamlessly with Internet of Things (IoT) devices, allowing travelers to receive real-time updates and alternative route suggestions based on predicted traffic conditions.

- The Tourism Policy Council should conduct a study utilizing various predictive traffic planning and intelligent transportation technologies to identify areas of critical congestion in top tourist destinations and provide targeted investments and improvements.
- The Department of Commerce should coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to facilitate the implementation of pilot projects in top tourist destinations with high concentrations of traffic using predictive traffic planning and intelligent transportation systems to determine effectiveness for broad adoption.

Recommendation #2: Coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to create targeted initiatives to enhance intermodal transportation connectivity to link diverse modes of travel and optimize transit efficiency. Intermodal transportation systems designed to facilitate a seamless transition between different modes of travel optimize the efficiency of transit options and link diverse transportation methods. The traveler's journey begins at home and may utilize several modes of travel to reach a destination. Targeted initiatives to support intermodal transportation hubs simplify the journey for tourists and commuters alike.

Recommendation #3: Leverage technology and innovation to support resilience in the travel and tourism industry to enhance the travel experience while fortifying the industry against unforeseen challenges. A modernized approach to key aspects of the travel experience like airports and air traffic control systems, visa applications and interviews, and emergency management helps ensure the travel and tourism industry can withstand and recover from the impacts of natural disasters, ensure the safety and well-being of travelers, and cultivates a strong foundation for a modern and seamless travel experience while safeguarding the livelihoods of those reliant on the travel and tourism industry.

Strategic investments ensure our nation's travel and tourism infrastructure evolves with the changing needs of the traveler while promoting economic growth. Commitment to improving travel infrastructure signifies to the world that we are dedicated to providing a seamless travel experience, reinforcing our position as a premier destination, and fostering sustainable economic growth in the travel and tourism industry.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BH' with a flourish.

Bill Hornbuckle
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Brad Dean'.

Brad Dean
Vice Chair

Attachments: Appendix

APPENDIX: Additional Background on Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Improve road infrastructure by promoting the widespread use of predictive traffic planning and intelligent transportation technology to address the persistent challenge of traffic congestion and increase safety.

Urban Areas Leveraging Traffic Planning Technologies

Traffic remains a persistent challenge in many communities, resulting in time inefficiency and an increased risk of accidents. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), as a key part of Traffic Planning Systems, plays a key role in reducing traffic congestion by real-time adaptation to dynamic traffic conditions. Integrating traffic planning systems with Internet of Things (IoT) devices enable seamless integration and connectivity between various components of the transportation network allowing for improved traffic management and an enhanced travel experience.

Cities throughout the world use a variety of traffic planning technologies to reduce congestion, improve safety, and decrease emissions.

- **Barcelona¹:** Six million trips are made daily in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, split between public transit, private vehicles, and pedestrians and bicycles. Barcelona’s traffic system is managed with the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV), intelligent sensors, and dynamic message signs, allowing drivers to change their normal route as congestion increases.
- **Beijing²:** China has a centralized approach to smart cities, with hundreds of smart city programs in the country. Beijing has launched the commercial operation of driverless taxis in the Beijing High-Level Autonomous Driving Demonstration Zone, in an area spanning nearly 200 square miles, to assess the passenger safety, traffic conditions, and autonomous driving functions.
- **New York City³:** The city completed the Connected Vehicle (CV) Pilot Program in hopes to use modern technology and performance data to improve traffic management in real time and assess system performance in the future. The pilot aimed to reduce crash frequency while evaluating the benefits of connected vehicle technology in an urban environment. Lessons learned upon completion of the pilot may be useful in continuing the advancement of ITS.

Research Involving Traffic Planning Technologies

Research is also underway on traffic planning technologies. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)’s Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) program marks the initial stride toward creating a modern travel infrastructure system that supports the evolving needs of the traveler. DOT awarded the University of Michigan a \$9.8

¹ [Barcelona, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration \(Accessed August 2023\).](#)

² [“Robotaxis in Beijing: China’s Baidu wins approval to offer driverless-cab service in Yizhuang Economic Development Zone,” South China Morning Post \(March 2023\).](#)

³ [New York City \(NYC\) DOT Pilot, U.S. Department of Transportation \(Accessed August 2023\).](#)

million federal grant to deploy vehicle-to-everything technology, allowing the exchange of safety-enhancing data between cars and the world around them.

Continued support for such programs, promoting the use modern technology, and utilizing predictive traffic planning systems will continue to drive innovation in travel infrastructure, ensuring safer and more efficient journeys, enhancing the overall travel experience.

Recommendation #2: Coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to create targeted initiatives to enhance intermodal transportation connectivity to link diverse modes of travel and optimize transit efficiency.

The DOT's National Travel and Tourism Strategic Infrastructure Plan (NTTISP) identifies four strategies to improve intermodal connectivity for travel and tourism: (1) developing guidance and best practices to help states and metropolitan planning organizations consider enhancements to travel and tourism; (2) modernizing data collection and modeling/forecasting approaches for long-distance trips; (3) assessing how DOT formula and discretionary funding programs could benefit travel and tourism projects; and (4) communicating key travel and tourism facilities and corridors.

The Department of Commerce, in collaboration with the DOT, should build upon the foundation built in the NTTISP and create targeted initiatives to broaden intermodal connectivity.

Recommendation #3: Leverage technology and innovation to support resilience in the travel and tourism industry to enhance the travel experience while fortifying the industry against unforeseen challenges.

Resiliency in the Travel and Tourism Industry Through Technology and Innovation

Ensuring a resilient travel and tourism industry through the power of technology and innovation is pivotal in fortifying its capacity to withstand and recover from unforeseen disruptions while enhancing the overall experience for travelers and stakeholders. The global tourism landscape was dramatically altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a staggering decline in international arrivals, with 180 million fewer arrivals worldwide between January to March 2021⁴. For communities dependent on the economic impact of the travel and tourism industry, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic quickly became an immediate and critical priority.

Integrating advanced technologies and emergency management strategies prepares the industry to mitigate the impacts of unexpected events, creating a robust and adaptable industry that can swiftly recover from disruptions, inspiring confidence in travelers and stakeholders alike, and contributing to the overall stability and growth of our economy.

- **Enhanced Airport Efficiency and Safety:** Modernized airports and air traffic control systems equipped with advanced technology can optimize air travel operations, reduce delays, and improve safety. For decades, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been working toward modernizing communications, navigation, surveillance, and air traffic management capabilities. Yet airports continue to face operational challenges

⁴ ["Tourist Numbers Down 83% but Confidence Slowly Rising," UNWTO \(June 2021\).](#)

caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of sustained investment in infrastructure. A streamlined operation is crucial to enable quicker response times and minimize the impact of unforeseen events on travel schedules.

Disruptions in air travel have far-reaching effects that go beyond just their airlines and their passengers, extending to various sectors of the economy. The cost of flight delays to the United States in 2019 were estimated to be \$33 billion, including \$4 billion in “indirect costs” to the economy⁵. Enhancing efficiencies and modernizing key elements of air traffic control, air traffic management systems, and traveler experience could enhance the economic benefits, reliability, and resiliency of American aviation.

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is a great example of an airport modernizing its infrastructure for the needs of today’s travelers while promoting security. LAX launched *LAX Fast Lane*⁶, a pilot program that allows travelers to schedule a specific time for their Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security screening, reducing the wait time for those who participate.

- **Facilitate Travel Procedures:** Upgrading the visa application and interview process through innovative technology can expedite the visa process, reduce wait times, and encourage international travel. The visa process remains a point of concern for many travelers, causing a loss of 2.6 million visitors and \$7 billion in spending due to the likelihood of the international travelers’ inability to secure a visitor visa⁷. Ensuring smoother application and entry processes attracts more visitors and allows for quick recovery after disruptions.

Collaboration between Congress, the Administration, and stakeholders is essential to addressing the demands of the modern era while promoting a secure and accessible environment for all travelers. Policies that seamlessly integrate digital applications, remote interviews, biometric identification systems, and AI-supported solutions should be implemented to promote a seamless and efficient travel experience.

- **Advanced Emergency Management:** Emergency management that incorporates technology-driven strategies enables the industry to respond swiftly and effectively to natural disasters and emergencies. Emergency management consists of four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. A coordinated whole-of-government approach to the creation of a consolidated crisis management plan is necessary to ensure the industry’s continued viability.

Whether through the use of drones to gather fire data, deploying intelligent street lamps equipped with environmental sensors to identify hazards, utilizing emergency communication apps, or harnessing other various technological innovations, comprehensive strategies supported by advanced technology can help manage resources,

⁵ [“Cost of Delay Estimates,” Federal Aviation Administration \(July 2020\).](#)

⁶ [LAX Fast Lane, Los Angeles International Airport \(Accessed August 2023\).](#)

⁷ [“Visa Wait Times Remain Embarrassingly High for Millions of Potential U.S. Visitors,” U.S. Travel Association \(March 2023\).](#)

provide timely information to authorities and travelers, and ensure safe and orderly evacuation or recovery efforts.

The insights gained from the post-COVID era underscore the critical importance of building resilience within the travel and tourism industry. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of the industry to sudden shocks, emphasizing the necessity of having robust systems in place to safeguard against such events. By embracing technology and innovation, the travel and tourism industry can foster a resilient framework that can minimize the impact of unforeseen challenges, maintain continuity, and swiftly adapt to evolving circumstances, ultimately ensuring its sustained contribution to economic growth and global connectivity.