

U.S. TRAVEL AND TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD
November 29, 2017 | 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM EST
Via teleconference

Moderator: Brian Beall

Coordinator: Good afternoon. Thank you for standing by. I'd like to inform all participants that your lines have been placed on a listen-only mode until the question and answer session of today's call. I would like - today's call is also being recorded. If anyone has any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

I would now like to turn the call over to Brian Beall. Thank you. You may begin.

Brian Beall: Good afternoon everyone. As the designated federal officer for the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, I'd like to call today's meeting to order. Today the board will be discussing recommendations in response to Secretary Ross' call for recommendations on how to accelerate recovery and destinations affected by the recent hurricanes. This includes recommendations for actions that the US government could undertake to support recovery, including working with the private sector.

So with that, I'd like to turn it over to our Travel and Tourism Advisory Board Chair John Sprouls to open the meeting with his comments.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Brian and thank you everybody for taking the time to join us today. As you probably noticed throughout all of our tenures, we tend to move very quickly with this board. And that is no exception with respect to the hurricane recovery subcommittee, who's done an incredible job.

What I'd like to do at this point before we actually present the letter is turn it over to Isabel Hill for a couple of opening comments Isabel?

Isabel Hill: Thank you, John. I just wanted to take a moment to commend the subcommittee members for the extraordinary work that was an effort in drafting the recommendations that are going to be discussed today. I know that all of the members worked really diligently and on a very short timeframe to respond to the tasking from the Secretary. And I want you to know how much we appreciate your time and commitment. And we look forward to hearing the discussions and these recommendations today.

John Sprouls: Thanks, Isabel.

((Crosstalk))

Brian Beall: And now before we jump into the discussion, John if I could quickly run down roll call just to make sure we account for all of our board members on the call with us today.

John Sprouls: Yes, please. Thank you.

Brian Beall: Of course we also have Margaret McKeough, our Vice Chair, also on the line with us. Do we have George Aguel? And Operator, if you could please open up the lines at this point so we can do roll call, that would be great.

Coordinator: Okay, one moment please. At this time, all lines are open.

Brian Beall: Okay. And I will now walk through roll call. Do we have George Aguel on the line?

George Aguel: Yes, here.

Brian Beall: Ted Balestreri?

Ted Balestreri: Here.

Brian Beall: Helane Becker?

(Conor Crahan): (Conor Crahan) is actually on her line.

Brian Beall: Bruce Charendoff?

Bruce Charendoff: I'm here.

Brian Beall: Henry Cruz? Todd Davidson? Brad Dean?

Brad Dean: Yes, I'm here.

Brian Beall: Fred Dixon? Kurt Ekert? I know he's not able to join today. Elliot Ferguson?
Mike Gallagher?

Mike Gallagher: Hello. I'm here.

Brian Beall: Adam Goldstein?

Adam Goldstein: Here.

Brian Beall: James Hagen?

James Hagen: Here.

Brian Beall: Nick Hentschel?

Nick Hentschel: Yes, here.

Brian Beall: Taylor Hoang? Steve Morrissey?

Steve Morrissey: Here, thank you.

Brian Beall: Mary Motsenbocker?

Mary Motsenbocker: Here.

Brian Beall: Susan Presby?

Susan Presby: Here.

Brian Beall: Tricia Primrose?

Tricia Primrose: Here.

Brian Beall: And we have Olga on the line with us here as well.

Olga Ramudo: Here.

Brian Beall: Sherry Rupert?

Sherry Rupert: Here.

Brian Beall: Adam Sacks? Gary Schluter? Marty St. George?

(Jeff Kudow): Hi. It's (Jeff Kudow) for Marty.

Brian Beall: Bill Talbert?

Bill Talbert: Bill Talbert is present.

Brian Beall: Denise Thevenot?

Denise Thevenot: I'm here.

Brian Beall: And Ernest Wooden.

Ernest Wooden: Good afternoon. Here.

Brian Beall: Great, thank you. Operator, if you could please close the lines. We will now turn it back over to John Sprouls.

Coordinator: Okay, thank you.

John Sprouls: Okay. Thank you, Brian. You know, at this point in time to present the draft board letter, I'd like to call upon Olga Ramudo, who will serve in Kurt's absence to give us a summary of the letter and the process the committee used in coming up with the recommendations. Olga?

Olga Ramudo: Thank you. Yes, as you all said, I'm standing in for Kurt, our President, our Chair of the hurricane recovery subcommittee. And hurricane recovery subcommittee was tasked with coming up with recommendations for actions that the US government could work with the private sector supporting recovery for worldwide disasters.

Part of our committee were Taylor Hoang, Sue Presby, Gary Schluter, Bill Talbert, Denise Thevenot. And we had immense help and I want to thank her personally, Natalie Von Lehr, who has worked tirelessly in getting this work done.

The committee also came up with a lot of help and feedback, which was integrated in the letter with the comments. We received advice from FEMA, From Destination International, from Brand USA, from travel commissioners such as (Gene Bryan) regarding the Yellowstone fires, local conventions bureau, meeting and event companies and other industry stakeholders. So yes, we were busy and everybody worked very hard.

Now, everybody had a chance to review the letter. And the first recommendation was that the Department of Commerce convene the (TPC) and include key agencies dealing with natural disasters that are not necessarily TPC members -- for example, HUD. The purpose of the meeting would be to get updates on ongoing efforts, continued needs advice on how the private sector could assist. We have proposed a deadline of setting that meeting by January 31st of 2018.

The second recommendation was that the National Travel and Tourism Office establish a natural disaster task force to develop a strategic plan to facilitate private sector engagement in short term on the ground recovery efforts.

Third recommendation in the letter is that the National Travel and Tourism Office work with private sector in order to develop strategic plans for accelerating the long-term economic recovery in local travel and tourism industries in the aftermath of a natural disaster. This could be accomplished through convening meetings of key actors in the recently impacted regions.

We're recommending that a general universal plan be created that can also serve as a basis for more detailed location-specific plans for regions consistently impacted by these events.

The fourth recommendation would be that the Secretary direct the National Travel and Tourism Office to provide an update on the status of these recommendations at the next TTAB meeting.

And that is basically the summary of the letter that is being presented. And are there any questions? John, anything else that we should...?

John Sprouls: No. Thank you, Olga. That was a great summary of it. I know that everyone's had the opportunity to read it. At this point, we're going to open up to floor to any questions, concerns, deliberations, et cetera. Operator, is there a specific process? If you would remind everyone if they would like to have a comment with respect to the board letter.

Coordinator: Yes, thank you. One moment. Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please ensure your phone is unmuted and press star 1. Record your name clearly when prompted. Your name is required to introduce your question. Again, that is star 1 if you would like to ask a question. One moment.

Brian Beall: Thank you. And also one point of clarification -- this is for deliberation by the board members only. We'll have a separate section for public comment following the board member deliberation. Thank you.

John Sprouls: Yes, thank you Brian.

Coordinator: Currently there are no questions. As a reminder, please press star 1 and enter your name clearly. There are currently no questions at this time.

John Sprouls: Okay. Going once, going twice. If we have no questions, then I think we can move on to public comment. Brian, do we have anyone requesting public comment?

Brian Beall: We didn't have anyone from the public requesting to make comments in advance, but if there is anyone from the public on the line that would like to make a comment, please indicate to the Operator and she will open your line.

Coordinator: If you do want to make a public comment, again press star 1. One moment, please. There appears to be no public comments at this time.

John Sprouls: Okay. Thank you very much. Then we will move to a board vote. Operator, if you could open the lines for everyone so that I can call the question.

Coordinator: Okay. One moment, please. Currently all lines are open.

John Sprouls: Well thank you very much. I would just remind everyone there's a couple folks that are sitting in for advisory board members. With respect to voting, we can only have board members vote. Anyone who is sitting as a proxy is not allowed to vote.

At this point, I would ask the board for all in favor of approving the draft board letter that we will then send on to the Secretary of Commerce please signify by saying aye.

Group: Aye.

John Sprouls: Thank you. Any opposed like sign? The letter is approved unanimously. Thank you everybody.

At this point, I know that Isabel has a couple of comments she wanted to mention with respect to next steps. So I will leave that to her. Isabel?

Isabel Hill: Thank you. And I want to thank the subcommittee again for the work that you've done. Obviously, you've got the full approval and support of the board.

So we're going to transmit the letter as written and adopted today to the Secretary of Commerce this week.

I also wanted to update you and let you know that the NTTD is participating already in an interagency working group that is led by the Commerce's Economic Development Administration and tracking recovery effort. The group is focused on economic recovery in four affected areas, which are Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Florida, and Texas. And they have identified travel and tourism as a cross cutting effort for federal agency support.

So we expect to support recovery efforts even more in the oncoming months as the critical infrastructure comes back online. And these recommendations are going to be very helpful in developing our plans moving forward in this

area. So, extremely helpful, fantastic timing, and I know it was a really heavy lift with so much input from so many partners in such a brief time.

I also want to thank Kurt Ekert and his team, especially Natalie Von Lehr for their leadership in this as well as Brian Beall and Jennifer Aguinaga for facilitating these conversations.

For those of you who want to ask specific questions or track this, on my team Curt Cottle is going to be the point person for our hurricane recovery efforts. So he's available to you for any, you know, subsequent thoughts, observations, or engagement.

So we look forward to our next Travel and Tourism Advisory Board meeting on December the 14th.

John Sprouls: Thank you, Isabel. And I want to echo Isabel's comments with respect to the subcommittee. Thank you for an incredibly enormous amount of work to deliver a tremendous work product. We really appreciate it. I'd like to thank everybody on the board for being able to join us here and for everyone being able and ready to pitch in as we move forward. We are moving very quickly.

You know, with respect to our meeting on the 14th, we will have two recommendation letters -- one from the national goal subcommittee and the second a combined letter from Secure Travel Partnership Operations and Secure Travel Partnership Communications. So we are proceeding at great haste to make sure we arm the Secretary with everything that he needs to hear from the travel and tourism community.

So I again thank you all for all of your efforts in this case. We have done a tremendous amount of work already and I believe that will continue to be the case going forward.

So at this point, unless there is anything that I am missing or if there's anybody, you know, Brian or Margaret or anyone else that has any comments, we will be adjourned. Great. Thank you everybody.

Isabel Hill: Thank you, John.

Brian Beall: Thank you everybody. Have a great day.

John Sprouls: All right. You too. Have a great day.

Coordinator: That concludes today's conference. Thank you for participating. You may disconnect at this time.

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