

Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism
Minutes May 1, 2026
Docking Building
915 SW Harrison St, Ste 300

Council Members in Attendance: Karen Hibbard, Susie Santo, Susie Coleman, Chuck Magerl, Bridgette Jobe, Laura Rose Clawson, Kim Anspach, Alexis Radil, Simone Elder, Janet McRae, Patrick Zollner, Jason Goetz, Rob Bergquist.

Kansas Tourism staff in Attendance: Jaimee Salalac, Jordan Roemerman, Julianna Hagen, Rosa Cavazos, Andrea Etzel.

Chair Karen Hibbard called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Council members introduced themselves.

Jason Goetz moved to approve the February 6, 2026, meeting minutes. Janet McRae seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

No public comments were received.

Tracy Whelpley, KC2026, provided an update on World Cup planning, including fan events, transportation, safety, community engagement and resources, and the FIFA app which includes visitor resources.

Deputy Director Jordan Roemerman presented updates on:

- Spring/Summer marketing campaign. Last year's 'Constellations' campaign performed incredibly well. Kansas Tourism is continuing the theme this year by adding six themed itineraries that demonstrate how visitors can use them while directing audiences to the website for additional travel ideas. Themes include Sports Fans, Cowboy Culture, Family Friendly, Memorable Museums, Arts in Kansas, and Relaxation. Markets include Denver, Oklahoma City, Dallas / Ft. Worth and Kansas City. Digital only markets - Lincoln, Tulsa, St. Louis.
Digital Flight Schedule: April - June. Broadcast Flight Schedule: Approximately six weeks, from late April through early June. The Kansas City market will begin later to align with World Cup.
- 2026 Sunflower Summer Program, including program dates, budget, eligibility updates, and recent national awards. This year's season will run Thursday, July 9 - Sunday, August 2. The season may be shortened or extended depending on available funding.
The program recently received the - eTSY Award (e-Tourism Summit) for Best Local Impact Campaign, ESTO Award (U.S. Travel Association) for Bridging Communities Award and the Huck Boyd Leader of the Year.

Rosa Cavazos provided an update on Kansas' America 250 initiatives and upcoming statewide events and programs. The Kansas 250 Commission meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month via Zoom. The Public are welcome to attend. Next meeting is May 20, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Director Bridgette Jobe reported on:

- Monthly activity reports.
- Designation of the Pony Express Historic Byway. This is the 13th Byway in Kansas and was announced at the Hollenberg Pony Express Station State Historic Site on April 7th.
- Grant program updates and upcoming application cycles. In March, Kansas Tourism awarded \$1 Million to 22 projects. 41 applications were received totaling over \$3.95 Million in requests.
- Legislative and budget updates. Kansas Tourism was legislatively appropriated \$4.9 Million, plus \$2.75 Million for the Sunflower Summer program.
- Kansas Tourism was recently awarded several NATJA Awards. NATJA is the North American Travel Journalist Association. For the second time, Kansas Tourism Office was awarded the Destination of the Year, plus we were presented with a Gold Award for our Creative Marketing Campaign, and a Silver for the 2025 Travel Guide.

Council Industry Members updates:

- Susie Coleman, Fuel Marketing Association - Susie reported on the fuel market. Gas prices continue to rise and will not come down quickly.
- Rob Bergquist, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association - Lodging – Hotels doing good. Demand down a little. Industry is doing well but pricing for food and supplies continues to be a challenge. A lot of brands rates rose. June and July could be rough.
- Chuck Magerl, Kansas Restaurant & Hospitality Association – Chuck reported on the restaurant and hospitality industry. Both workforce and pricing continue to be challenging.
- Simone Elder, Kansas Sampler Foundation - The Big Kansas Road Trip Pop Up for 2026 will be held in Humboldt on May 1-2, 2026. It will begin Friday, May 1 2026, with a music crawl and end the evening with a nature walk at sunset. The Pop-Up kick off on the Square will be held at 10:00 a.m., May 2. The next pop up will be October 3, 2026. Next week the Kansas Guidebook will be available online for free at kansasguidebook.org
- Alexis Radil, Kansas Museum Association – Match Madness went great. \$8,000 was raised to help KMA and museums across the state. Applications are open for the Cheryl Collins Legacy Scholarship named in memory of Cheryl Collins, longtime Director of the Riley County Historical Museum. The 2026 KMA Conference - Sky's The Limit - America 250 will be held in Atchison, Nov 4, 2026 - Nov 6, 2026. Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site have added a pair of mules, Penny and Percy.

Ex-Officio Members provided updates:

- Patrick Zollner, Kansas Historical Society – Patrick reported there has been 20,000 attendees since museum opened and 24,000 for the year. Curtis House has received funding for staffing and operations. It will open later this year. The 18th State Historic Site is coming soon – Junior Officers' Quarters at Fort Dodge. The first 1776 special exhibit will be on display through the end of the year.
- Laura Rose Clawson, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks – Laura reported that KDWP is pursuing an increase for state parks. SB 364 restores KDWP's authority to offer a discounted 10-year senior license and expands eligibility for the children's lifetime license. Children's licenses are now available for up to age 15. The 10-year senior license must go through the standard regulatory process before it can take effect. The earliest license will be available - November 2026. Lehigh Portland State Park will officially open late Summer 2026. A ribbon cutting date has not been announced yet.
- Kansas Department of Transportation – Seat Open

Chair Hibbard reminded members of the remaining 2026 meeting dates of August 7 and November 6.

Jason Goetz moved to adjourn the meeting. Susie Santo seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.