

Travel Lane County

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# SEMI ANNUAL REPORT

July – December 2021

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**EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND COAST**

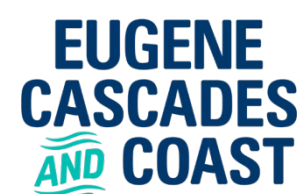






As I reflect back on 25 years as President and CEO of Travel Lane County I could not be more proud of the work we've accomplished together. Lane County has supported tourism investments made by Travel Lane County, the Eugene, Cascades & Coast Sports Commission and our more

than 600 partner businesses and organizations. While no one knows what a "return to normal" may look like, we feel the first six months of FY22 shows that our industry is fighting back and having success. We are excited to see what the future holds for our region.



## Our Brand Promise

The Eugene, Cascades & Coast region has Oregon's greatest variety of adventures in easy to reach, uncrowded places.

## Our Communities

### Eugene & Willamette Valley

Coburg, Cottage Grove, Creswell, Eugene, Junction City, Lowell, Springfield, University of Oregon, Veneta

### Cascade Mountains

McKenzie River, Oakridge, Westfir

### Oregon Coast

Dunes City, Florence

## Our Mission

Travel Lane County's mission is to increase the number of overnight visitors. We market and promote the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region as a destination for leisure, conventions, sports, meetings and events.

## WHY

### Why We Do What We Do

We believe our work inspires people to experience and appreciate Lane County, creating opportunities, a sense of place and stronger communities.

## HOW

### How Do We Do it

We provide **Leadership** in the development of the region's year-round tourism sector.

We are **Brand Ambassadors** who are committed to knowing our destination from one border to the other and living our brand promise.

We are **Professionals** who provide informed, friendly, prompt and respectful service.

We **Value** our staff, partners and customers.

We practice **Good Stewardship** of resources.

We are **Welcoming** and oppose discrimination of any kind.

## WHAT

### What We Do

We market Lane County to leisure travelers, sports planners and meeting planners.

We create content that is inspiring, available and valuable.

We provide member benefits that create value.

We greet visitors with information and resources to plan experiences.

We communicate timely and accurate information to our stakeholders.

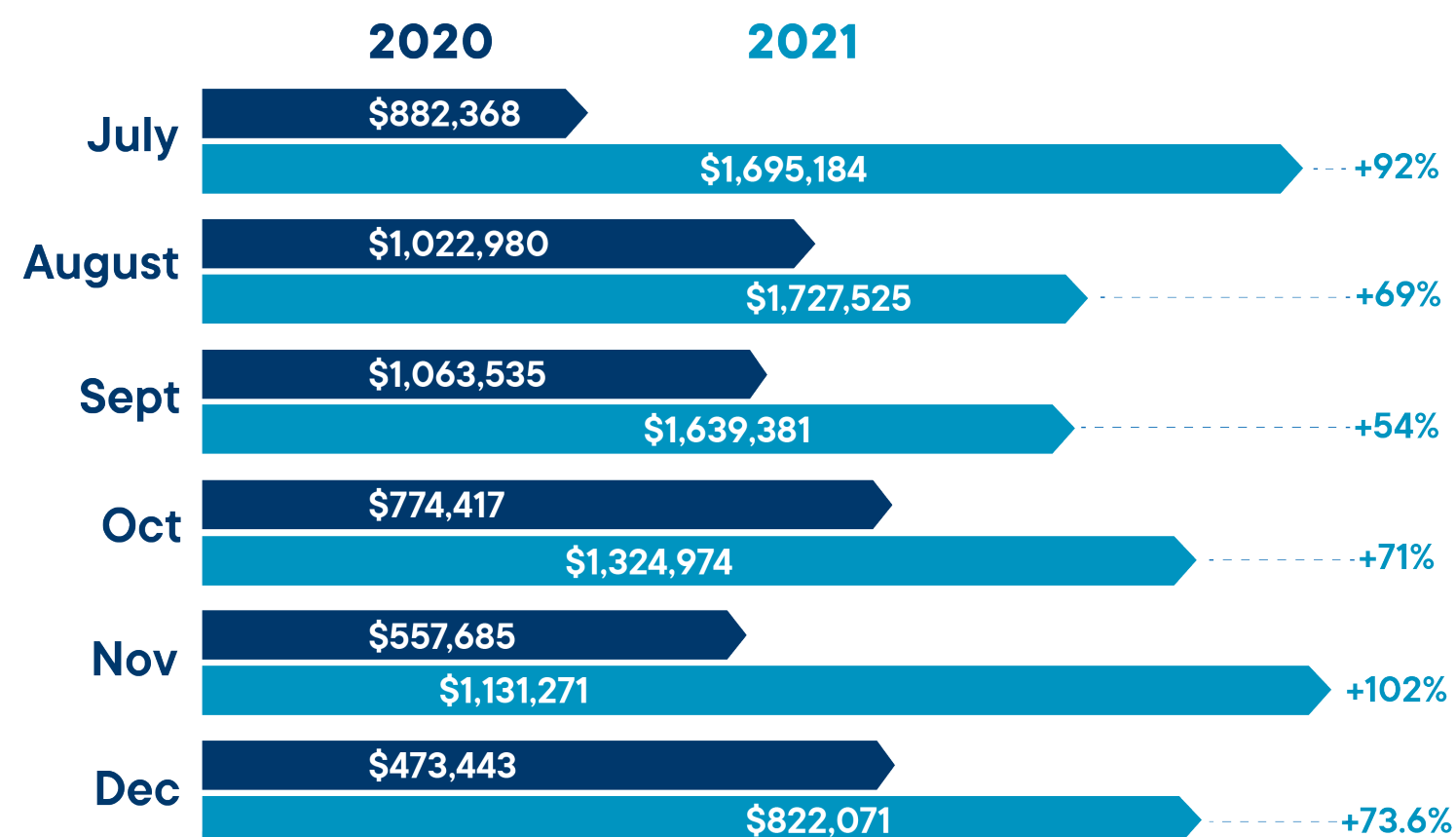
We develop tools that allow staff to be effective and efficient.

We partner with communities and organizations to provide the right experience for the right person at the right time.

# ROOM TAX REVENUE

As we began FY22, transient room tax revenues were estimated to begin moving toward pre-pandemic levels. The final few months of FY21 set the stage for a faster than anticipated recovery as June revenues set an all-time single month record of more than \$2 million. Between July and December tax revenues exceeded 2019 levels each month. The return of collegiate sports in the fall was a boost to metro area hotels that had been hardest hit during the worst of the pandemic.

Looking forward to the second half of the fiscal year, we anticipate a traditional winter lull will get a boost from sports events, like the Matt Hartner Memorial Classic volleyball tournament in February. In the spring the May PAC-12 Rowing Championships will build on the strong base we are seeing sustained by leisure travelers. The activation of Hayward Field from March - July will again position the region for a strong end to the fiscal year and an exceptional start to FY23.



**YTD**

**\$4,774,428**

**\$8,340,406**

**+74.4%**



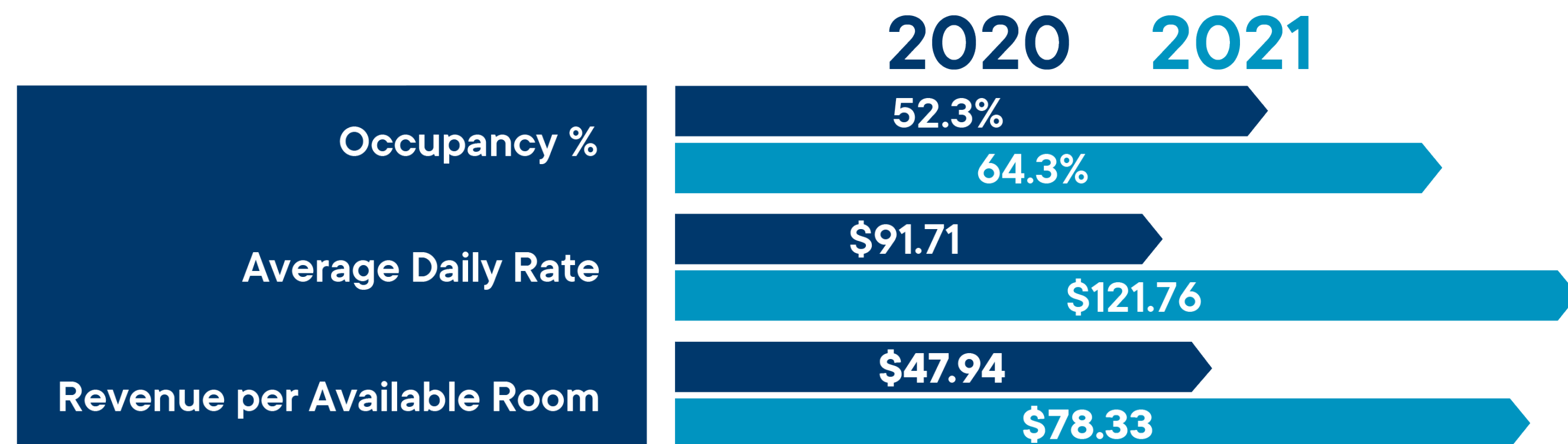
# LODGING SECTOR

Bolstered by strong leisure travel, the region's lodging sector performance exceeded projections for much of the period. Mass gathering activities picked up as sports, conventions and performing arts all contributed to filling room nights throughout the metro area. Rural areas continue to see consistent numbers of leisure travelers. Workforce shortages continue to be problematic for many properties in the region.

Openings include everything from housekeeping, food service and maintenance to front desk and sales positions. We continue to see a small number of fire evacuees in hotels and traveling nurses have been a consistent source of room nights throughout the period.



EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND COAST



Source: Smith Travel Research



# TOURISM MARKETING

In the first six months of FY22 Travel Lane County ramped up leisure advertising to extend reach beyond its 500-mile drive market. Adding to “always-on” paid search engine marketing and paid social media efforts, display placements focused on key target market flight markets such as Los Angeles, Bay Area, Las Vegas, Seattle and more.

Marketing efforts were measured and planned using Travel Lane County’s new business intelligence platform which identifies metrics such as anonymized visitor spending and location data to target audiences.

The Tourism Marketing team worked in tandem with the destination development team to take findings back to tourism committee community meetings to grow tourism planning work in collaboration.

Summer campaigns bolstered visitation with the call to Go Exploring and plan a getaway. During this period, key media tours and events such as the Wine Media Conference earned coverage of the South Willamette Valley in top-tier publications such as Forbes and Travel + Leisure.

A media visit hosted in partnership with the Willamette Valley Visitors Association, including Gerrish Lopez from USA Today, led to The Gordon Hotel being included in USA Today’s 10BEST New Hotels contest. The Gordon Hotel ultimately landed in the #3 spot!

Even with a brief pause due to Delta Variant concerns late in August, Fall ad campaigns still saw consistent performance. Additional campaign lines in this shoulder season built on targeted key markets such as Portland and Seattle, prioritizing destination awareness and inspiration for a visit. Key inspirational content included conversion points such as referrals and offers provided by Travel Lane County partners that were accessed regularly.

In the Winter season, Travel Lane County launched a new campaign around a “Come and Stay” theme. This campaign highlights travel motivators and encourages visitors to visit and stay the night. This work is expanding marketing prospecting with tools like additional video and digital placements to new potential visitors.

COME FOR THE OUTDOORS **AND** STAY FOR THE MEMORIES

EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND  
COAST





# TOURISM MARKETING

These marketing efforts put Lane County in position to drive overnight stays quickly and visitation recovery remained strong throughout the region. Demand in the Florence area resulted in record-setting transient room tax receipts as lodging properties saw robust demand coupled with revenue per available room returning to pre-pandemic levels.

New air service providers are providing exciting opportunities to reach fly markets in new ways. Meetings with Avelo Airlines have positioned Travel

Lane County to be the first destination to provide regional content to the Avelo website in early 2022. In-flight promotional opportunities are being explored, which may include Eugene-area themes like track and field themed clothing items and trivia concepts. Additionally, Avelo is looking into program possibilities that tie into destination themes, such as a “wines fly free” program similar to what Alaska Airlines currently offers. The addition of Southwest Airlines, aha! Airlines and additional destinations by other air carriers has brought Eugene Airport passenger counts back to pre-pandemic levels.



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## Earned Media Goal

**9 of 15 Stories Secured in Top Tier Travel Publications**

## Paid Media

**16,700,000 impressions | 30% ahead of pre-pandemic levels**

## Paid Media

**78,000 clicks to key content**

## Leisure E-newsletter Signups

**up over 300% from FY21 YTD**

## Promotional Offers

**2,000 clicks recorded**



# CONVENTIONS

The first half of FY22 Convention Sales saw several events occur in Eugene, Cascades & Coast communities. Two we would highlight include the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and the Wine Media Conference. The AOC, which has been in existence for more than a century, rotated their conference between Eugene and Portland until 2012 when they moved the conference to Eugene permanently. In November 2021, Graduate Eugene was once again the host venue and the event had close to 500 attendees. Our Conventions and Tourism staff collaborated to bring the Wine Media Conference to the Valley River Inn from August 5-8, 2021. More than 140 wine media attendees from across the country attended. This event featured a media trip from downtown Eugene locations to Cottage Grove's Chambers Railroad Covered Bridge and out into our South Willamette Wine country along the Territorial Highway. Seven local wineries also assisted in hosting dinners at Pfeiffer Vineyards and at The Gordon Ballroom.

Quarterly meeting planner newsletters received high open rates at over 25%, and engagement was also high with improved click-through rates to website content.

New branding was introduced including a new logo that aligns with the destination and Sports Commission logos and new creative is now in market that aligns with both leisure and sports creative. The alignment is intended to strengthen brand recognition across target markets.

## FY22 Goals

### Monthly Planner Contacts

**Goal 200 | YTD 253**

### RFPs Converted to Leads

**Goal 30 | YTD 43**

### Rooms Booked

**Goal 10,000 | YTD 9,796**

### New Bookings vs. Rebookings:

**Annual Goal 81% | YTD 48%**



**MEET AND EXPLORE**

**EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND COAST**

— MEETINGS —



# SPORTS

Midway through FY22, the Sports Commission finds itself in a positive position. Year-to-date estimated economic impact (EEI) is the sole metric that has decreased from the prior year, which is due to booking four consecutive years of NCAA Track and Field Championships in FY21. Accounting for this \$24 million, the Sports Commission is up \$5 million in EEI over FY21.

Key events secured during the period include the Professional Disc Golf Association U.S. Masters

Nationals, 2022 Pac-12 Men's and Women's Rowing Championships and the Flag Football World Championship Tour 7 on 7 Regional.

New branding was introduced including a new logo that aligns with the destination and meetings logos and new creative is now in market. This alignment is intended to strengthen brand recognition across target markets. Specialized planner guides by venue type were created for sales enablement and to support the content on the relevant venue web pages. Quarterly sports planner newsletters and monthly stakeholder newsletters have consistently received open rates above 25%. Earned media goals have already exceeded the annual goal.

## FY22 Goals

**Leads & Confirmed Events**  **30%**

**New Bookings vs. Rebookings:**

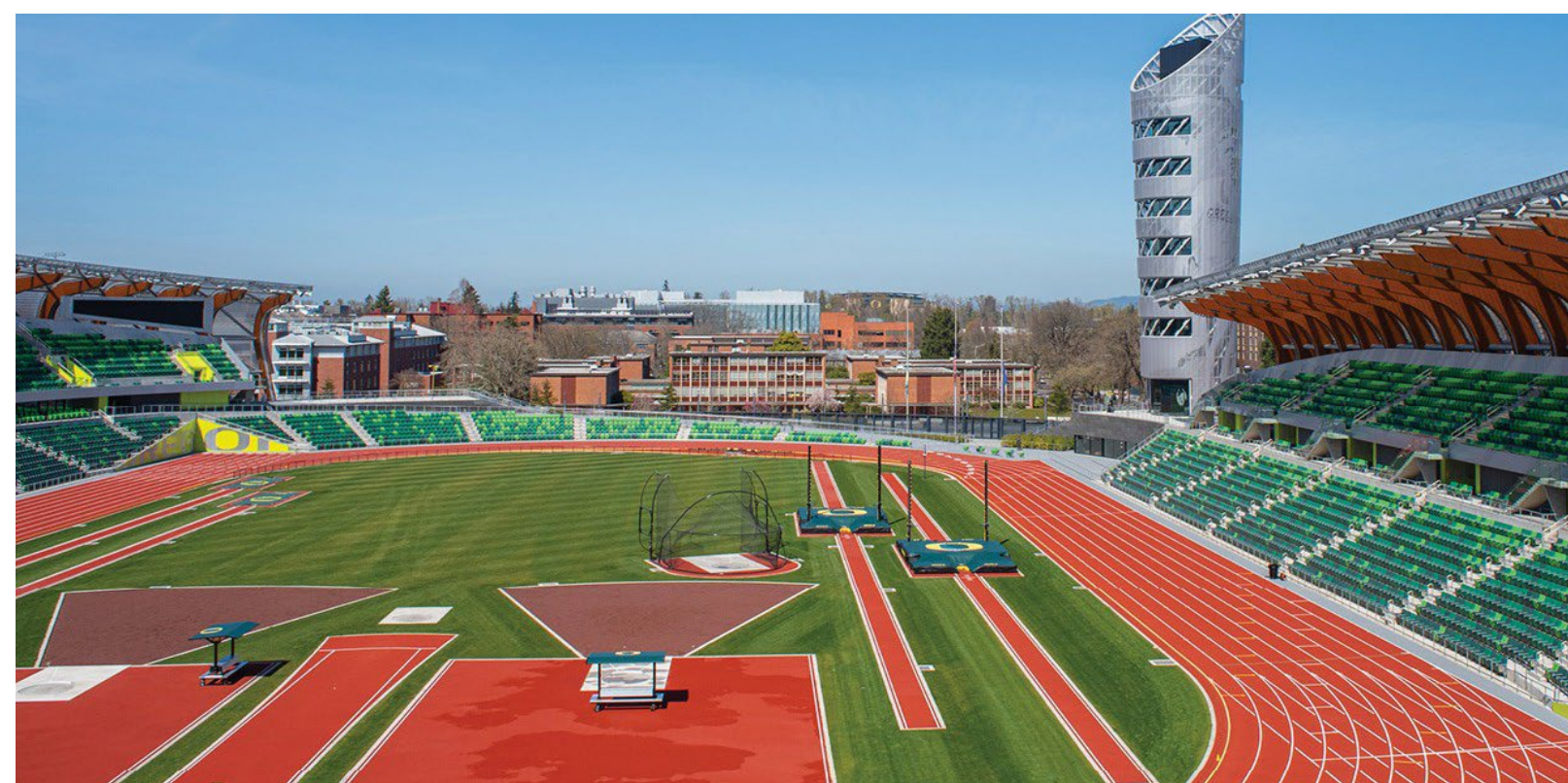
**Annual Goal 30,000 | YTD 14,687**

**COMPETE AND EXPLORE**

**EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND COAST**  
— SPORTS —

**EUGENE  
CASCADES  
AND COAST**  
— SPORTS —

**COMPETE AND EXPLORE**





# Website Performance

**Website performance has completely rebounded from pre-pandemic levels and traffic is outpacing 2019 numbers.**

## 512,259 Users

- **43% increase from previous year** 
- **17% increase from same period in 2019**

## 659,868 Sessions

- **45% increase from previous year** 
- **13% increase from same period in 2019**

# INTEGRATED MARKETING

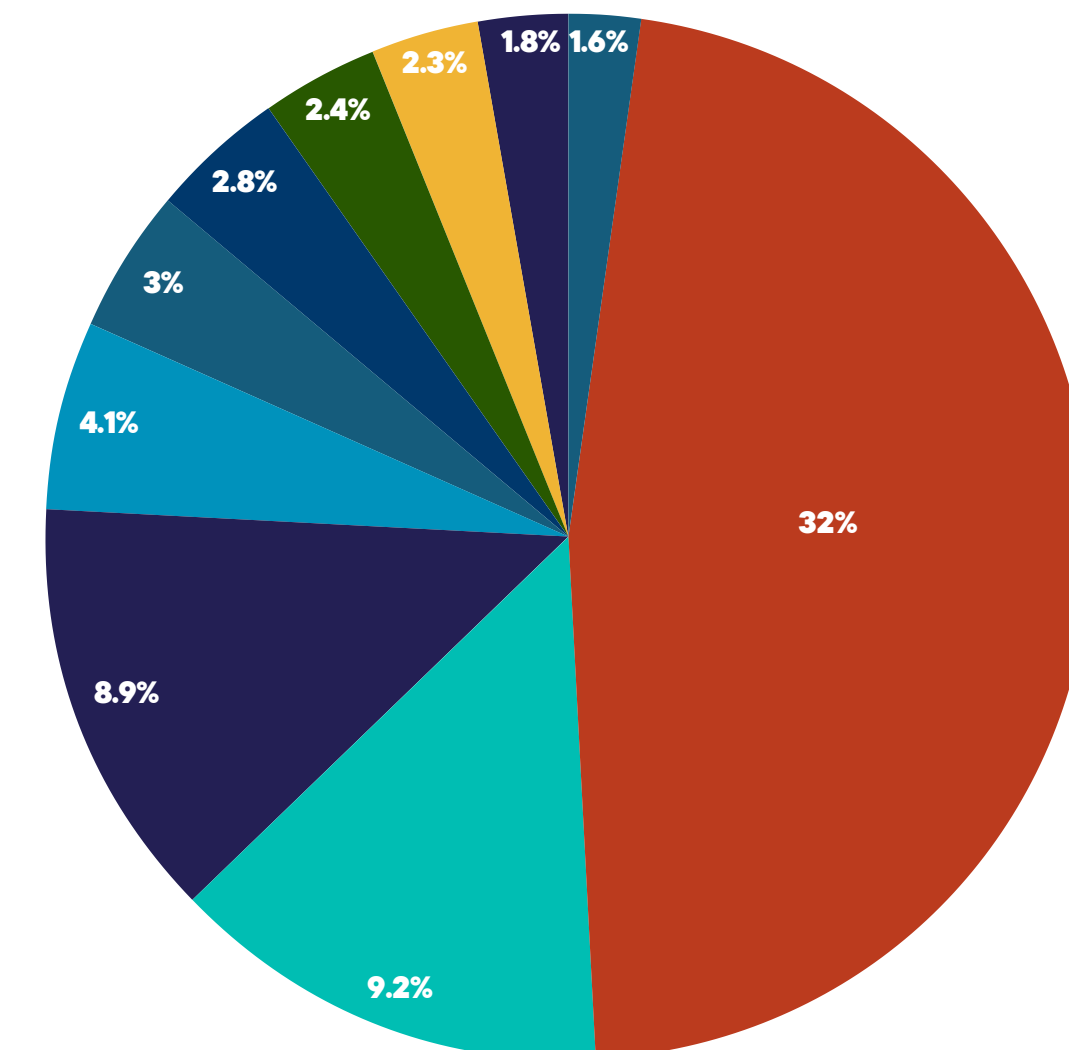
## FRESH CREATIVE

A refresh of the design elements of the brand – logo, color palette and fonts – was completed and implemented in December. The new look reinforces the core elements of our destination brand, aligns our target markets more closely, and allows more flexibility for a strong branded presence in digital applications.

## TRACKING VISITATION DATA

Bringing together data from a number of sources, our new business intelligence dashboard has brought together a more comprehensive look at visitor activity. Anonymized device ID data allows us to see cross-visitation patterns, visitor flow around major events and points of interest relative to other data sources like Smith Travel Research and Google Analytics.

## TOP 10 VISITOR MARKETS, JULY - DECEMBER 2021



Source: Zartico / Near data 2021



# STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS



## Destination Development

Actively participating with rural communities in tourism marketing efforts led to writing of grants and providing grant support letters for five communities. Title II funding was secured for restoration work on the Oregon dunes, a Willamette Valley Visitors Association grant funded updated collateral materials for the South Willamette Valley Food Trail and a Travel Oregon Destination Ready grant will help Florence assess its tourism assets and plan for the future.

Working closely with our Tourism Marketing staff we successfully hosted the Wine Media Conference, and continued planning toward the 2022 Adventure ELEVATE event.

We stayed in close contact with McKenzie River recovery efforts and worked with our partner Together Anywhere Audio Tours to produce an updated McKenzie River audio tour.

Participation on the Lane County Bicycle Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee and the County Parks Funding Task Force provided opportunities to share valuable feedback on the visitor perspective.

## Visitor Services

Following the closing of the Adventure Center location last fiscal year, visitor center services were consolidated at the downtown Eugene location. An expanded retail section was developed and the sale of various permits and passes was added to the offerings available at the center.







Work was completed on two front line employee resources. The first was the introduction of a weekly front line employee e-newsletter. This e-newsletter provides a quick overview of what's happening in the community in the current week, as well as providing guest service tips and training opportunities. The second front line resource includes development of a training hub called Champion World Hosts. This hub provides front line employees a centralized web tool to learn destination information and become a champion host. Champion World Hosts will be available for everyone in Lane County and will prepare everyone to welcome the thousands of visitors we will host in 2022.

### Partnership

Our partner businesses leveraged a strong leisure travel market and a modest return of mass gathering events.

Travel Lane County hosted a hybrid (in person and virtual) Visitor Industry Celebration to recognize staff milestones and industry award recipients. Particularly gratifying was recognizing the stellar work of our Lane County chamber of commerce partners with our Tourism Ambassador Award. A second in person event was hosted in December as partners came together to raise a glass at our annual holiday party at the Bier Stein.

Partnership sales efforts were reinstated in November following more than a year supporting current partners. Partner Development Coordinator Mary Ann Reilly hit the ground running and welcomed more than two dozen new partners over the final two months of the period.

### WCH Oregon22 Support

- Accommodations
- Business outreach
- Printed pocket visitor guide
- Heritage Trail development
- Champion World Hosts training
- Community branding and business kits
- Federation training camps
- Temporary RV villages
- Rentable venue space listings
- Welcome tables



OFFICERS

<b>Julie Johns, Chair</b> Territorial Seed Company Cottage Grove	<b>Dana Turell, Vice Chair</b> Turell Group Eugene	<b>Pam Whyte, Treasurer</b> Emge & Whyte Eugene	<b>JB Carney, Past Chair</b> Remote Advenure Design Eugene
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

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<b>John Barofsky</b> Beppe & Gianni's Eugene	<b>Scott Freck</b> Eugene Symphony Eugene
<b>Dr. Lisa Benson</b> Lane Community College Eugene	<b>Anne Hallinan</b> Marrone Hallinan Event Management Springfield
<b>Richard Boyles</b> Mereté Hotel Management Group Springfield	<b>Jonnie Helfrich</b> A. Helfrich Outfitter McKenzie River
<b>Corey Buller</b> Lane Events Center Eugene	<b>Bob Jagger</b> Hyatt Place Eugene Eugene
<b>Robert Canaga</b> Robert Canaga Studios Eugene	<b>Lynda Kamerrer</b> Oakridge Lodge & Uptown Bistro Oakridge
<b>Mike Drennan</b> Individual Member Eugene	<b>Michael Newman</b> In Business Media Eugene
<b>Tom Driscoll</b> University of Oregon Housing Department Eugene	<b>Lorrie Newman</b> Vallhalla Winery Veneta-Fern Ridge
<b>Mike Duncan</b> University of Oregon Athletics - Ticket Office Eugene	<b>Tina Patel</b> ALKO Hotels Eugene

EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS

<b>Courtney Griesel</b> City of Springfield Springfield	<b>Austin Ramirez</b> Lane County Community & Economic Development Lane County
<b>Renee Grube</b> City of Eugene - Library, Recreation & Cultural Services Department Eugene	<b>Vonnie Mikkelsen</b> Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce Springfield
<b>Brittany Quick-Warner</b> Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce Eugene	<b>Erin Reynolds</b> City of Florence Florence - Oregon Coast
<b>Terry Hopkins</b> Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	<b>Cathryn Stephens</b> Eugene Airport Eugene
<b>Bettina Hannigan</b> Florence Chamber of Commerce Florence	
<b>Steve Mokrohisky</b> Lane County Administration Lane County	



## SPORTS ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Renee Grube - Council Chair

City of Eugene Library  
Recreation and Cultural Services  
Eugene

### Allan Benavides

Eugene Emeralds Baseball Club  
Eugene

### Dr. Anthony Cutting

Active Chiropractic  
Eugene

### Mike Duncan

University of Oregon  
Athletics - Ticket Office  
Eugene

### Bob Jagger

Hilton Garden Inn  
Springfield

### Tom Jordan

Eugene

### Daniel Lindsey

Mereté Hotel Management Group  
Springfield

### Jeri McPherson

Valley River Inn  
Eugene

### Vonnie Mikkelsen

Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce  
Springfield

### Ethan Nelson

City of Eugene  
Planning & Development Department  
Eugene

### David Penilton

America's Hub World Tours  
Eugene

### Brittany Quick-Warner

Eugene Chamber of Commerce  
Eugene

### Austin Ramirez

Lane County Community & Economic  
Development  
Lane County

### Michael Reilly

TrackTown USA  
Eugene

### Erin Reynolds

City of Florence  
Florence

### Mike Ripley

Mudslinger Events  
Lane County

### Tony Scurto

Lane Education Service District  
Eugene

### Bev Smith

Civic Park  
Eugene

### Rich Spurlin

Eugene Country Club  
Eugene

### Whitney Wagoner

Eugene

### Michael Wargo

Willamalane Park and Recreation District  
Springfield

### Kari Westlund

Travel Lane County  
Lane County

### Thomas Wuest, MD

DocTomConsulting, LLC  
Eugene





# TRAVEL LANE COUNTY STAFF

## Administration

**Kari Westlund**  
President & CEO

**Liz Bocking**  
Vice President of Finance & Administration

## Destination Marketing

**Natalie Inouye**  
Vice President of Destination Marketing

## Convention Sales & Marketing

**Juanita Metzler**  
Senior Director, Conventions

**Philis McLennan**  
Director of Conventions & Sports Marketing

**Linda Norris**  
Director of Convention Services

## Eugene Cascades & Coast Sports Commission

**Joey Jewell**  
Senior Director, Sports Commission

**Jessica Joyce**  
Director of Event Operations

**Katie Morton**  
Sports Sales & Marketing Coordinator

## Tourism Sales & Marketing

**Stephen Hoshaw**  
Senior Director, Tourism Marketing

**Meg Trendler**  
Director of Tourism Sales

**Julia Voigt**  
Tourism Marketing Manager

## Integrated Marketing

**Emily Forsha**  
Vice President of Integrated Marketing

**Taj Morgan**  
Director of Content Strategy

**Melanie Griffin**  
Art Director

## Stakeholder Relations

**Andy Vobora**  
Vice President of Stakeholder Relations

**Mary Ann Reilly**  
Director of Partnership Development

**Hayley Radich**  
Senior Director of Partner and Community Engagement

**Jeff Malik**  
Destination Development Manager

## Visitor Services

**Megan Temple**  
Visitor Center Manager

**Brian Saunders**  
Program Support Coordinator



# EUGENE CASCADES AND COAST

[EugeneCascadesCoast.org](https://EugeneCascadesCoast.org)