

THE
MAT-SU
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

FY26 ANNUAL REPORT



FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The Mat-Su CVB has made great forward strides in recent years. Three years ago, the board hired Casey Ressler as the organization's new President & CEO. Two years ago, The Mat-Su CVB initiated a thorough branding research project that resulted in a fresh look and a strong message that resonated with residents as well as visitors.

This past year our team did not slow down in the least. With new leadership and a new brand, our staff set out to redesign the organization's two most visible marketing assets: The Mat-Su Alaska Visitor Guide and The Mat-Su's official website, now titled TheMatSuAlaska.com. Aligning these tools with the new brand enabled The Mat-Su CVB to put its best foot forward when the time came to announce the completion and opening of a long-awaited, state-of-the-art visitor center.

Opening the Gateway Visitor Center was a crowning moment, not only for The Mat-Su CVB, but for The Mat-Su Borough and community partners who have worked tirelessly for many years on this vision. I can't give enough praise to the borough for its unfailing support and collaboration on this project and the overall mission of The Mat-Su CVB.

As if a new visitor guide, new website, and new visitor center weren't enough, our CVB staff still pulled off an excellent year promoting The Mat-Su and engaging Mat-Su tourism businesses in its programming. Keep your eye on this organization in the coming years. I predict our communities will see huge benefits from the CVB's recent successes and its goals for the future.

Mark Austin,
FY26 Board Chair, The Mat-Su CVB



FY26 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Mark Austin
Musk Ox Farm

Vice Chair
Jeremy Sullivan
Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge

Treasurer
Roberta Warner
Alaska Tour & Travel

Secretary
Mandy Garcia
Salmon Berry Travel & Tours

At-large Executive Committee
Heather Dudick
Alaska Railroad

Travis Taylor
Premier Alaska Tours

Mark Fleenor
Sheep Mountain Lodge

Taylor Raftery
Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation

Courtney Shaffer
Talkeetna Air Taxi

Skye Hostetler
Outbound Heli Adventures

Ex-Officio
Jillian Morrissey
Mat-Su Borough

WELCOME TO THE NEW GATEWAY VISITOR CENTER

Just 14 months after a groundbreaking ceremony in 2025, the long-anticipated Matanuska-Susitna Borough Gateway Visitor Center opened its doors on June 19. It was arguably the most valuable of The Mat-Su CVB's victories in FY26.

The new facility features an outdoor walkway with signage and picnic tables, a spacious rentable meeting room with Wi-Fi and multiple flat-screens available, and an expansive indoor visitor experience furnished with large interpretive displays and interactive kiosks to help people plan their next great adventure in The Mat-Su.

With the opening of the new center, The Mat-Su CVB hired Dan McDonough as its new Visitor Services Manager. McDonough hit the ground running months before the official opening, drafting a strategy to host tour groups as well as independent travelers and Mat-Su residents at the center. McDonough also assembled a staff of local experts to welcome and assist visitors with their Mat-Su trip planning.

Thanks to a tremendous amount of support from elected leaders and partners at the Mat-Su Borough, this region's thriving tourism industry now has a prominent front door where The Mat-Su CVB can greet visitors from around the world. The



facility is as much a membership and community hub as it is a visitor center, though. The CVB plans to host more of its own member events at the facility, as well as organize new community gatherings and events in the future.

Among members of The Mat-Su CVB team, the general feeling about the completion of this project has been one of excitement. The organization now has a brick-and-mortar presence in the region it serves. A welcome message just inside the entry to the center shares the following invitation to visitors and residents, and fully encapsulates the message that The Mat-Su CVB has been sharing with the world for decades:

"The paths are open. The land is vast. Chart a course for an adventure all your own."

PROMOTING THE GATEWAY TO IN-STATE TRAVELERS

The Mat-Su CVB took advantage of its in-state marketing channels to promote the new Gateway Visitor Center ahead of its completion. A central goal of utilizing in-state promotion was to foster a sense of community ownership of the new facility among Mat-Su residents.

Social media ad campaigns and promotion through in-state travel and outdoor shows helped to boost awareness of the Gateway Visitor Center. The Mat-Su CVB also secured new display ad space in well-circulated in-state publications like the Bearfoot Guide (right).

STOP BY THE NEW GATEWAY VISITOR CENTER

THE
MAT-SU
ALASKA

PALMER
WASILLA
TALKEETNA
WILLOW
BIG LAKE
GLACIER VIEW
HATCHER PASS
KNIK GLACIER
DENALI STATE PARK
MATANUSKA GLACIER

MAY 2026 EXPECTED OPENING

ON THE GLENN HWY, 1 MILE NORTH
OF THE PARKS HWY INTERSECTION

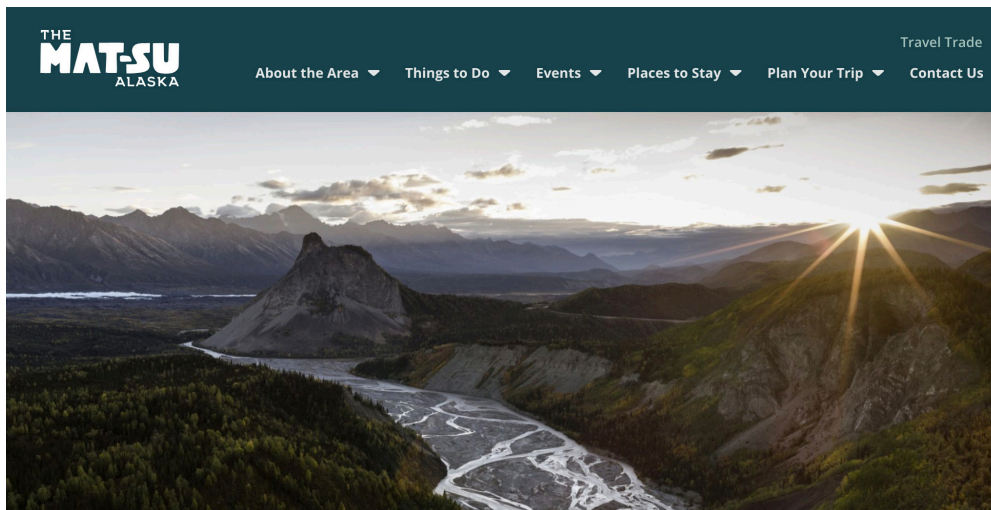
ALASKAVISIT.COM (907) 746-5000

THE MAT-SU'S AUTHORITATIVE WEB SITE REDESIGNED

In FY26 The Mat-Su CVB completed a thorough refresh of its web site. A significant part of this was a site address change from AlaskaVisit.com to TheMatSuAlaska.com. The organization still owns the older domain name and redirects its user traffic to the new address.

The redesign project, in collaboration with Madden Media, achieved two main goals. First, The Mat-Su CVB is always focused on keeping the site up to date with intuitive navigation and functionality. Second, this redesign allowed for the full implementation of The Mat-Su Alaska brand and message online.

The web site remains the powerhouse of The Mat-Su CVB's online marketing strategy. Active pay per click campaigns and organic traffic yielded a total of 177,000 unique Internet users, which is a mod-



The redesigned homepage features more Mat-Su imagery and intuitive navigation complimented by The Mat-Su logo, badges and other brand elements.

est boost in visitation over the previous year. With 383,000 page views last year, the site also maintained a user engagement rate of 60%.

The Mat-Su CVB is continuing its partnership with Madden Media to monitor its search engine optimization and maintain traffic growth to the site.

CONNECTING MAT-SU COMMUNITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

On its Facebook page alone, The Mat-Su CVB has more than 19,000 followers. Social media is an effective tool in inspiring visitation and recreation in The Mat-Su.

Social platforms have also helped Mat-Su residents connect with The Mat-Su's brand identity. Likewise, by collaborating on social posts with local chambers, foundations and tourism industry partners, The Mat-Su CVB can share the use of its brand assets to further unite our destination.

In FY26, The Mat-Su CVB ran targeted social media ad campaigns that announced the opening of the new Gateway Visitor Center and promoted attendance at the Alaska State Fair.



The Mat-Su's highest performing post was a reel of Talkeetna's Wilderness Woman Competition, yielding well over 98,000 views.



FUELING A GLOBAL INTEREST TO VISIT THE MAT-SU

Nationwide advertising

Domestic travel to The Mat-Su from across the U.S. remains strong. In FY26 The Mat-Su CVB renewed its ad in the nationally circulated Alaska Magazine (right), inviting readers to request a copy of The Mat-Su Alaska Visitor Guide online.

Similar ads were placed in publications by Alaska tourism industry partners like Visit Anchorage and Explore Fairbanks. Print advertising alone accounted for nearly 2,000 visitor guide requests.



Writer Kit Bernardi interviews contestant at Alaska State Fair Giant Cabbage Weigh-off.

Hosting writers and content creators

Travel writers give The Mat-Su CVB invaluable publicity in national and globally distributed magazines. The Mat-Su hosted three writers during the 2025 Alaska State Fair. Freelance writer Gwen Pratesi and AAA editor April Kilcrease toured The Mat-Su on an itinerary created in partnership with Thompson PR in Anchorage. Kilcrease later produced a [AAA article](#) covering her Mat-Su experience.

The Mat-Su CVB hosted travel writer Kit Bernardi for a week as she explored the region's agricultural nuances and enjoyed the farm-rooted traditions at the Alaska State Fair. Her [USA Today article](#) highlights the resilience of Mat-Su communities and residents in the face of unique farming challenges.

The Mat-Su CVB also works with influencers and content creators through direct collaboration and partner referrals. Family travel blogger Rob Taylor spent the 2025 winter holiday in The Mat-Su. The CVB worked closely with him on lining up his Mat-Su itinerary. Taylor's visit resulted in a comprehensive write-up on his Alaska travel planning resource, [MyAlaskaTrip.com](#).

Networking with tour operators

Group tour packages are a substantial portion of The Mat-Su's visitor volume each year. The Mat-Su CVB met with 17 tour operators at the American Bus Association Marketplace in Reno, Nevada to assist with future itinerary plans in the upcoming years.

The CVB also met with travel agents on FAM tours in The Mat-Su through the Alaska Travel

Industry Association, or ATIA. The Amazing Alaska Experience was another event hosted by ATIA in Fairbanks. The Mat-Su CVB attended and met in person with 30 qualified travel advisors with strong potential to sell Alaska travel.

By working with tour operators the CVB can better inform them on the range of Mat-Su activities and experiences available to their customers.

THRIVING MEMBERS ARE THE BASIS OF OUR SUCCESS

Exclusive benefits for members

Every benefit offered to members is a tool to further promote their business. Members who take advantage of those benefits and engage in The Mat-Su CVB's marketing programs help shape our marketing message and magnify our destination's identity.



Cooperative marketing, networking events, social media campaigns and affordable advertising have long been effective member benefits.

In FY26 new benefits were added with the opening of the Gateway Visitor Center. Members have complimentary brochure display space at the center. Digital member listing content is the core of the facility's new interactive visitor kiosks, as well. The kiosks help visitors form itineraries and find the services they're seeking. Members also benefit from visitor center staff referrals and annual complimentary use of the Susitna Room for their meetings or events.



Member events and community engagement

The Mat-Su CVB hosts events like membership luncheons, open houses, and product showcases. In FY26, these events took place in Mat-Su communities like Talkeetna, Glacier View, Palmer and Wasilla. The Mat-Su CVB also looks for opportunities to sponsor community hosted events like Talkeetna's Live At Five concerts. Being a positive force in our communities keeps The Mat-Su CVB invested in members' growth right where they live and operate. Community engagement also exposes more Mat-Su residents to the local and regional benefits of The Mat-Su CVB's work.



Print and online content centers on members



Like our web site, The Mat-Su Alaska visitor guide underwent a comprehensive redesign this past year. Through all the aesthetic and functional upgrades, what did not change is how The Mat-Su CVB utilizes the experiences offered by its members as a baseline for its authoritative print and online content.

In FY26, 75,000 copies of the visitor guide, with listings for every member, were distributed throughout Alaska and nationally to tour operators and travel agents, at consumer and trade shows and through direct requests. Affordability remained a priority with visitor guide display ad space offered to members. Members could further leverage The Mat-Su CVB's investment in online marketing by purchasing digital ad campaigns with customizable page distribution and runtimes on TheMatSuAlaska.com.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Financial Position (as of June 30, 2026)

Assets

Current assets:

Cash	\$260,752
Receivables	\$1,457
Prepaid expenses	\$49,704
Total current assets	\$311,913

Property and Equipment:

Furniture and equipment	\$108,307
Software, website, other assets	\$140,875
Land & building improvements	\$5,153
Accumulated depreciation	(\$110,793)
Net property and equipment	\$143,542
Security Deposits	\$2,145
Total assets	\$457,600

Liabilities and net assets

Current liabilities:

Accounts payable	\$90,329
Payroll liabilities, deferred revenue	\$56,097
Total current liabilities	\$146,426
Unrestricted net assets	\$311,174
Total liabilities and net assets	\$457,600

FY26 Revenue Detail

Mat-Su Borough Grant Revenue	\$1,000,000
Membership Dues	\$42,314
Advertising Sales & Marketing Programs	\$82,141
Special Events & Fund-raisers	\$19,086
Interest	\$1,307
Gateway Visitor Center Revenue	\$232
In-kind Donations	\$6,384
Other/Miscellaneous Income	4,965
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$1,156,428

FY26 Expenses by Division

Marketing	\$592,824	51%
Administration	\$242,377	21%
Membership	\$106,206	9%
Visitor Services	\$51,748	4%
Capital Expenditures	\$160,705	14%

Per board policy, The Mat-Su CVB's financial statements, accounting practices and reporting methods are audited every third year. The FY26 financial statements have not been audited.

CONTACT US

Casey Ressler, President & CEO	(907) 746-5037	casey@thematsualaska.com
Tasha Belka, Administrative Manager	(907) 746-5000	tasha@thematsualaska.com
Katie Reeves, Membership Manager	(907) 746-5001	katie@thematsualaska.com
Justin Saunders, Marketing & Comms Mgr.	(907) 746-5032	justin@thematsualaska.com
Dan McDonough, Visitor Services Manager	(907) 746-5012	dan@thematsualaska.com

Advocates for tourism

The Mat-Su CVB staff have served on numerous boards of directors, both locally and statewide, representing The Mat-Su's tourism industry and its valued communities.



THE MAT-SU ALASKA



The Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau
2764 S. East Matanuska Spur Road
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-5000

