



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 13, 2026
8:30 am – 10:30 am
Visit SLO CAL Office: 81 Higuera St, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Jessica Blanchfield, Sheridan Bohlken, Cheryl Cuming, Laura Fiedler, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Courtney Pene, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Molly Cano, Lisa Marie Belsanti, Kristen Carlson, Whitney Chaney, Matt Halvorson, Aleigh Hogan, Alyssa Mano, Brooke Weisbecker, Lauren Miller, Megan Leininger

AGENCIES PRESENT: Rachel Haik (Shipyard), Morelle Ellison (Shipyard), John Risser (Shipyard)

Call to order at 8:32 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of September 9, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Banish/Akers to approve the September 9, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 15-0-0
Pene, Sorgenfrei, Cuming arrived after vote.

4. Visit SLO CAL VP of Marketing Report

Cano recapped the 2025 SLO CAL Summit sharing the attendance by industry and playing the event video highlight reel.

Cano provided an updated timeline for the Economic Impact & Lodging Forecast co-op deliverables. The lodging forecast has been received by Visit SLO CAL (VSC), delivered to co-op partners and will be shared with the Marketing Committee in mid-January. In the meantime, Cano provided top level highlights, as well as a local summary.

Cano presented VSC's budget reforecast based on the total reforecast revenue, which is down from the original budget.

'Tapped Into SLO CAL' filming has kicked off this week. Cano provided an overview of the content in this five-part series. The full series is expected to launch on April 7th.

SLO CAL Crafted Connections is a new VSC series, in partnership with Cal Poly CIE, providing free education and networking opportunities for makers and small businesses in the region.

The next Committee meeting will be the Marketing Committee Retreat, and Cano provided save the date information.

Cano requested that each community submits destination events via a google form (to be shared after the meeting) to help guide VSC staff with event-focused content and promotion throughout the year. Completion is requested by January 23rd.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sonne requested the Summit video highlight reel to share at a future meeting. Roberts asked if there was a lodging summary that doesn't include short-term rentals. Cano confirmed that there is.

5. Turns Well Taken Campaign Update

Cano introduced the campaign assets and John Risser from the Shipyard. Risser reviewed the new brand campaign timeline. Highlighting the inclusion of 'In the Land of SLO CAL' to provide continuity and build off the previous campaign. Risser also reminded the Committee that this campaign is from the travelers' perspective and shared the extent of the production. The brand assets were previewed. Cano shared some of the photo selects and went over the timeline for launch with the official launch date of February 2nd. Next, Cano shared the paid media campaign overview for when the content is switched to 'Turns Well Taken'. Cano provided an

outline of the new DAM system for asset management that will be pilot launched in conjunction with the new campaign. Demo destination partner meetings to follow. Cano went over next steps for the destination partners with a focus on the Land Of assets expiring and needing to be removed no later than February 15th. Cathy added her thanks to Partners, The Shipyard and Pensara to make the new brand spots happen.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei found the concept of spontaneously extending a trip to be very strong. Standish requested a review on who the HOB (House of Brand) partners were. Positive feedback was shared from the Committee about the new spots.

6. World Cup & Highway 1 Programming

Cano shared VSC's plans for the FIFA World Cup and Highway 1 Reopening at Regent's Slide, and how they work together. For the World Cup, the focus is on road trips for visitation dispersal into SLO CAL. Cano reviewed new destination partner co-ops with Sojern and influencers around the World Cup. There will be a push in March to get local businesses to submit World Cup watch parties and other events. Trade distributed a one sheet highlighting SLO CAL as an idyllic stopover between games which Visit CA has used as an example for other destinations.

The Governor is expected to make an announcement of the reopening on 1/13, with the reopening of Highway 1 at Regent's Slide Reopening expected on 1/14 at noon. Belsanti shared that VSC has been coordinating messaging closely with See Monterey which the PR team will share with the Committee and Visit California has a reactive statement ready. Cano reviewed the phased reopening plan for Highway 1 content. Partner resources including a copy of the media release and messaging will be distributed. Co-op partner programs around Highway 1 reopening include Sojourn HOB spots, hosting influencers and trade opportunities.

Co-op interest forms for the World Cup & Highway 1 Reopening are to be completed by the end of January, with commitment by the end of February.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – The Committee provided input about who in their communities has soccer connections/stories. Sorgenfrei wondered if the impact on the gateway cities is enough to get people to want to escape and come visit. Cartier replied that regardless, it is another opportunity to invite people to visit. Cano added that it is a two-prong approach targeting soccer fans, as well as, those that want to escape, and that the number one focus is the roll-out of 'Turns Well Taken'. Jacob thanked the team for having these conversations. Risser embellished on exposure, and that even if visitors who see ads don't come during the World Cup it's a hook to come another time. Fiedler asked about the weekend vs. mid-week impact as the World Cup takes place during peak season. Cano replied that although it is during a busy season, staff doesn't think that World Cup travelers will inundate the region. Akers asked about Visit California's watch party toolkit. Cano replied that VCA is working on putting a toolkit together, and VSC is working very closely with VCA regarding the World Cup.

There was Committee conversation about where and what Regent's slide is. Cartier clarified that the overarching message is that the highway is open all the way through. Cal Trans wants to wait until spring (after the rainy seasoning) for a big activation; however, VSC will start talking about it as soon as it is open. Cuming offered to share VSC's Highway 1 messaging at IMM. Sorgenfrei added that for the World Cup, Highway 1 reopening is SLO CAL's strongest angle.

7. Strategic Direction 2029

Cartier reviewed the Strategic Direction 2029 three-year plan (starting July 2026) with the Committee.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob asked about the possibility of adding rail into mix of how people are coming in. Also, when talking about new inventory it would be helpful to break it down by year to really show what is coming online in reality. Cartier shared that VSC does have that data and agreed that it is common for those that are far in the future to fall off before breaking ground.

8. Marketing, Sales & ESC 2050 Updates

Belsanti presented noteworthy coverage, including the San Luis Obispo County New York Times article—focusing on the inclusion of every community. Belsanti also covered local media, the LA media mission and provided a media mixer recap. Halvorson announced the official release of the 2026 Visitor Magazine and provided an overview of distribution. Halvorson highlighted the new SLO CAL Art Trail on the website featuring 19 locations across the county, which was also included in the Arts & Culture specialty consumer newsletter. Weisbecker reviewed November & December's social media data and top posts. Halvorson presented information on the Hopper activation for Travel Deal Tuesday. VSC has seen 2,807 bookings and is the fourth most popular destination in California for bookings. Halvorson shared that paid media is wrapping up Land Of creative to prepare for Turns Well Taken. Carlson went over sales activities including the launch of a UK Travel Incentive, SLO CAL Director of Sales meeting market roundtable and attending the ABA (American Bus Association) conference. Upcoming Sales events include Volair Air Service Conference that will be hosted in SLO CAL in April, and IPW (VSC's largest trade show) which will be attended by staff in May. Mano recapped the Spartan Race. This year saw 239 consumer newsletter sign-ups and a race team partnership with a local gym. Mano shared attendee information highlighting that this year saw an increase in attendees and less than 800 attendees registered with SLO County zip code. Chaney provided an update on countywide trails project and showcased the SLO CAL All Trails portal with access to trail data. Halvorson shared that the SLO CAL Film commission attended the COLA (California on Location Awards) Awards, with Halvorson presenting an award. VSC fully launched a location database with 128 locations included that will continue to be updated.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – There was discussion around the County's new fee schedule for events.

Next Meeting: Marketing Committee Retreat March 17, 2026

ADJOURN: 10:48 AM