



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 27, 2026
8:30 am – 11:00 am
Visit SLO CAL Office: 81 Higuera St, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Sheridan Bohlken, Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Kathleen Naughton, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Krista Rupp, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, Leann Standish, Jill Tweedie

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Annie Braunschweig, Molly Cano, Ashlee Akers, Kristen Carlson, Whitney Chaney, Matt Halvorson, Aleigh Hogan, Mayla Lohnes, Alyssa Manno, Lauren Miller, Brooke Weisbecker, Megan Leininger

AGENCIES PRESENT: Rachel Haik (Shipyard)

Call to order at 8:35 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Cano welcomed Krista Rupp, the new Executive Director at Visit Morro Bay to the committee.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – Jacob introduced Jolie Cazier, the new account manager at Solterra Strategies.

CONSENT AGENDA – <i>motion required</i>
--

3. Approval of March 17, 2026 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Jacob/Bohlken to approve the March 17, 2026 Marketing Committee Retreat Minutes.

Motion carried: 12-0-0

7. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cano welcomed Ashlee Akers to the Visit SLO CAL (VSC) team and shared the updated organizational chart. Cano thanked those who attended the Bash. Cano highlighted why tourism matters stats from National Travel & Tourism Week/CA Tourism Month. Cano provided a recap on the Voltaire Air Service Conference in mid-April and played a recap video. Cano provided an SBP update for the committee including up gauging planes and changes to flight schedules.

Cano provided an update on the Tapped Into SLO CAL content series sharing that the SLO CAL beer will be released the upcoming weekend at the Firestone Walker Beer Invitational. Cano also provided an update on Where the Music Takes You: two episodes have been filmed with two more to come and the series will be released next fiscal year.

Cano shared an update on Cal Poly Rodeo: Breakaway, September 25 & 26 is moving to Avila Beach.

Cano shared a save the date for the SLO CAL Summit at the Madonna Inn Expo center on Thursday, October 29. Tickets will go on sale in August. Cartier shared the confirmed Summit speakers with the committee. Cano went over Marketing Committee meeting dates for FY 27, which will stick with the traditional cadence of meetings, and shared the advisory committee meeting dates.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – The committee had a conversations about future fly markets and possible upcoming routes. Cano noted that past data, as well as marketing investments made in fly markets is a draw for airlines adding additional routes.

Jacob asked if the SLO CAL beer will be available for purchase. Cano replied that after release it will be available at Firestone's Emporium, their taproom and at local activations this summer.

4. FY 2027 DRAFT Business & Marketing Plan

Cano went over the objectives from the new SD 2029 as it directed the FY 27 Business & Marketing Plan. Cano dove into details on how the work will be applied to each objective in the next fiscal year through specific strategies and key results.

Haik introduced the new audience framework to the committee based on the visitor profile study and past performance to make the most of paid media dollars. Audience framework included the purposeful traveler evolution with a strong focus on new visitors which has been shown to lead to return visitation. Haik presented the spontaneous traveler profile and how it compares to the spontaneous travel family profile.

Cano highlighted added components in the Brand Storytelling framework: Tapped Into SLO CAL and Where the Music Takes You. Future content to include Turns Well Taken family edition, SLO CAL Crafted culinary series and additional Where the Music Takes You episodes.

Cano went over the objectives and strategies, as well as geographic prioritization for Paid Media. Cano shared updated paid media budget. Cano covered website, email, social media, earned media, partnerships & events, sales, film SLO CAL, Experience SLO CAL 2050 and advocacy objectives and strategies.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Naughton asked why wine was not listed as a trip activities on the presented visitor profile. Cartier clarified that wine was on the list, but while visitors do go wine tasting here, it was found to not be a trip motivator (this offers an opportunity for SLO CAL). Haik added that there is data specifically related to wine tasting that can be shared.

Sanpei asked if the long stays shown in the visitor study were hotels vs. short term vacation rentals. Cano clarified that this data covers the trip overall, and not the specific stay in SLO CAL. Could be a vacation rental stay or multiple hotels across multiple destinations.

Jacob asked about budget spending in tier 2 & 3 fly markets. Cartier shared that VSC is still putting paid spend behind these markets, based on an agreement with SBP, as this is seen as a win-win (to increase visitation and air-service).

Jackson asked where the extra money is coming from to increase paid media budget. Cano replied we are seeing the impact of Highway 1 reopening and because of that increase, there is projected additional revenue. The priority is to put that back into paid media. Cartier added there are also items that will not be in next year's budget that were in FY 26. Peterson asked if content creation was included in the paid budget. Cano replied that placement of the content is, but not the creation.

Jackson shared that sales section is important to lodging properties and is going to be well received. Bohlken asked if there is more last mile discussion in this plan. Chaney replied that VSC continues to have conversations with stakeholders. Jacob recommended thinking about the train experience. Cano added that the LOSAN (Surfliner) just expanded service. Bohlken asked if AMTRAK has been part of last mile conversations. Cano replied that AMTRAK sees last mile differently and most of the work VSC has done is around the airport.

Jacob added that there is an opportunity to include VSC in a more active role in the TBID agendas that VSC staff already attends. Cartier shared that this is already happening in some communities and VSC is happy to do so. Jackson added that sales work specifically would be good to present.

ACTION: Moved by Peterson/Tweedie to recommend that the Board approve the FY 2027 Business & Marketing Plan in concept as presented.

Motion carried: 12-0-0

5. Marketing Committee Member Application Approval

Cano reviewed the application process and reminded the committee about the growth in seats over the years and how that leads to a higher quorum threshold. Cano shared that Peterson is up for renewal and submitted interest for consideration.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob shared that the question should be if all the voices are represented. Cano agreed that that is the goal. Sonne asked if there is any redundancy in voices. Cano replied not at the table right now, but in terms of who submitted applications, yes. Standish asked if there are term limits. Cano answered that there are not term limits.

Cartier reminded the committee that there are other ways to tap into applicants and get them involved if they are not added to the committee. Jacob the opportunity is to make sure that there is an open invitation to attend meetings. Clark-Charlesworth added that it is good to get properties from communities involved. Standish encouraged VSC to consider term limits to get new perspectives in the longer term. Cartier added that while the region is large, the industry is finite. The Grover Beach perspective is one that may be missing. Jacob stated that maybe applicants can be added to the distribution list. Cano added that communities can share out too.

Jackson added that Peterson has been very committed and a great addition to the committee.

ACTION: Moved by Clark-Charlesworth/Jacob to recommend that the Board approves the Marketing Committee's renewal of Joel Peterson for the Marketing Committee seat with no additional applicants at this time.

Motion carried: 11-0-0
Sanpei departed before vote.

6. FY 2027 Proposed Budget

Braunschweig went over the FY 27 operating budget. Taking surplus and reserves to apply to key one-time initiatives. Based on revenue coming in, staff was able to be more optimistic with the budget. Braunschweig went over large initiatives including digital redesign, AI initiative, meetings research, district renewal cost and Turns Well Taken assets.

Braunschweig shared that there will be no planned staffing changes for FY 27. And there will be 100k added back to paid media budget. Included in the proposed budget is a Brand Awareness study and Del Mar Food & Wine sponsorship.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Peterson asked for more information about the AI initiative. Braunschweig shared that the item will be taking AI consistently across the organization. Cartier added that the hope is that it will save 5%

of staff time across the board. Jacob asked about the partnership/co-op opportunity. Cano replied that it would combine learnings across organizations with an understanding of SLO CAL as a base. Braunschweig added that this can be seen as an evolution of House of Brand into technology. Cartier offered to bring back the opportunity after VSC kicks off this initiative in June.

Jacob asked about any changes to reserves. Braunschweig shared that right now reserves are at about 3.2 million or about 3-4 months of operating budget. The District Plan says the organization needs to set aside 5% of assessment revenue each year, but there is no direction on how much must stay in reserves. Braunschweig added that this plan won't meaningfully deplete reserves balance.

Naughton asked where staff pay and admin live in the budget. For clarity, Braunschweig shared expenses by function where it is pulled out separately.

8. Marketing, Sales & ESC 2050 Updates

Akers shared paid media highlights including a Visit California FIFA Co-Op with Expedia. Halvorson presented about website accessibility and the newsletter results, noting that event and seasonal content are performing high. Weisbecker shared social media highlights for March and April with an emphasis on interview man-on-the-street style posts performing well. Weisbecker also shared a save the date for the Social Media Summit & Mixer on June 3 at Region Event Center in San Luis Obispo.

Lohnes presented highlights in the earned media space for March and April and shared upcoming FAMs in May and June. Lohnes also reviewed the Visit California LA Media Mission, the Phoenix Media Mission Co-Op and Highway 1 Influencer FAM Co-Op in partnership with See Monterey. Lastly, Lohnes provided an overview of local media coverage for National Travel & Tourism Week.

Manno shared a recap of SLO CAL Open including the events in both Morro Bay and Pismo Beach.

Carlson reviewed recent group sales wins where leads converted into room nights, recent international FAMs, the upcoming incentive FAM with Visit CA Australia and Delta Airlines and provided a recap of the UK Trade Incentive that ended in March. Carlson also gave a high-level overview of IPW last week.

Chaney shared that the Oceano Dunes reopened, National Travel & Tourism Week Board of Supervisors & Assembly member Addis's resolutions and Highway 1 Press Conference hosted by CalTrans. Chaney also went over some upcoming bills that are making their way through the process. Additionally, the Estate Vineyard Tasting law went into effect on January 1 for a 20-month pilot period that expands direct to consumer opportunities.

Halvorson introduced his new role and priorities including the digital ecosystem redesign RFP. Halvorson also presented on Film SLO CAL's annual film fam and permitting event. Looking ahead, Film SLO CAL will also be hosting or supplementing individual film FAMs.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Clark-Charlesworth asked if there was any follow up visits or FAM from the LA and Pheonix media missions. Lohnes will share everyone who attended with co-op partners and will include in follow ups at that time. There was additional discussion around journalist reach.

Next Meeting: July 14, 2026

ADJOURN: 11:10 AM