



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 9, 2025
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, Kathleen Naughton, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

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

AGENCIES PRESENT: Harry Balfour (Pensara), Darren Bishop (Heart + Mind Strategies), Morelle Ellison (Shipyard), Beth Shaini (Shipyard), Maureen Thielen (Pensara), Rachel Haik (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 July 15, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Cuming/Jackson to approve the July 15, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 11-0-2

Akers, Jacob, Naughton & Sanpei arrived after vote. Fiedler & Wambolt abstained.

4. Visit SLO CAL VP of Marketing Report

Cano presented an updated production timeline for the Turns Well Taken campaign. Cano also gave the committee an update on Spartan Race including information on the new lodging discount program, race promotion timeline and the Visit SLO CAL (VSC) on-site activation. Cano provided a reminder that tickets are on sale for the SLO CAL Summit and gave a brief overview of the programming for the day. Cano reviewed the airport taxiway rehabilitation project and associated closures at SBP and also flight status overall. VSC is sponsoring the Volaire Air Service Conference in April. Lastly, Cano shared that VSC is in the process of creating Strategic Direction 2029. All Marketing committee members will be asked to participate in a feedback survey about SD29. Cartier added the importance of the document for staff and the organization.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob asked if VSC board members have reserved seats for SLO CAL Summit. Cano replied that they have the option to sit at the board table or at destination tables and that VSC staff can help coordinate. Wambolt asked about city managers/ elected officials. Cartier replied they will not have reserved seating from Visit SLO CAL, but to let VSC know if they are attending.

Akers requested an update on SD 26 and the results. Cartier confirmed that staff will share with the committee. Fiedler asked about Volaire Conference opportunities. Cano responded that staff would keep everyone in the loop and will provide an email update. Cartier added that once the hotel choice has been finalized there will be a conscious effort to move the group around to different destinations.

5. Visitor Profile Study Key Findings

Cano introduced Darren Bishop from Heart and Mind to go over high-level findings from the Visitor Profile Study, while more detail will be shared at the SLO CAL Summit. Bishop shared key takeaways including that over half of travelers, especially low income are making different travel decisions based on economic and geopolitical factors and that SLO CAL has seen an increase in brand metrics since 2021 but not enough to pass up other California destinations. SLO CAL visitors are trending younger, more multicultural and more likely to have children at home. Core and lead audiences remain California markets.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Fiedler asked for clarification on why those traveling with kids have a higher spend. The committee had discussion around affordability, value and luxury and the challenge of increasing demand with new inventory.

6. DAMs Portal Overview

Theilen shared that the DAM platform is being developed for now and the future, so it will continue to evolve. Balfour introduced the design interface with the committee and noted how the DAM has been developed to house the VSC asset library while improving efficiencies in searching and in sharing assets. Cartier called out that the new brand campaign assets will be shared on the new DAM system as a test case and to gain feedback.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Committee feedback was positive. Sonne asked if partners will be able to add in their own assets. Cartier replied that the goal is to have everything in one place, so if VSC has clear usage rights additional assets could be added.

7. FY 25 Paid Media Summary

Shaini introduced Morelle Ellison, Media Supervisor. Ellison presented an overview of paid media for FY 25, the strategy and the performance, especially compared to FY 24.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Keller asked about quality measurements vs. quantity measurements. Shaini replied that they look at both including average engagement duration and partner referrals. Akers asked for a benchmark for average engaged duration. Shaini replied between 5 – 10 seconds, and this campaign averages over 20 seconds.

8. SLO CAL Welcome

Chaney shared that SLO CAL Welcome is back online, updated and on a new platform. The new version is streamlined with increased use of videos and easy to navigate. Chaney also presented the marketing plan for the re-launch.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob wondered if those that previously completed the program should retake SLO CAL Welcome. Chaney responded that everyone would need to sign up on the new platform to access the content and there has been additional information added to the curriculum. Cartier added that staff would welcome any feedback from those who complete the updated training.

9. Marketing, Sales & ESC 2050 Updates

Belsanti and Lohnes provided PR updates including a recap of the recent agency immersion and SLO CAL being featured in Sunset Magazine. Halvorson shared the new interactive map integration on the website trail pages and updates on recent newsletter sends. Weisbecker went over the social media performance for July & August. Halvorson discussed highlights and metrics of recent advertising activity. Carlson highlighted the

August meeting planner FAM. Chaney announced that Caltrans is now sending weekly updates on Highway 1, which VSC is including in the partnership newsletter. For film, Halvorson reviewed some takeaways from FLICS' quarterly board meeting in July highlighting the tax credit programs.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Keller asked if VSC is looking to add more trails. Halvorson replied that it takes a lot to maintain them, but staff is always looking for opportunities.

Next Meeting: January 13, 2026

ADJOURN: 10:47 AM