



**TRAVEL SANTA ANA  
Q1 2026: QUARTERLY BOARD  
MEETING  
Wed. April 15, 2026 JWACA**

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**Call to Order**

- A meeting of Travel Santa Ana was held on Wednesday, April. 15, 2026
- Meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm by Aaron Saliba

**Attendees**

- Aaron Saliba, Hotel Zessa, a DoubleTree by Hilton
- Wendy Haase-Roberts, President & CEO, Travel Santa Ana
- Marc Morley, City of Santa Ana
- Erin Warady, US Cannabis Chamber
- Ryan Chase, 4th Street Market
- Louis Vasquez, Holiday Inn Express
- Frank Atayde, Holiday Inn
- Jimmy Lounethone, Holiday Inn
- De'Andre Gipson, South Coast Metro Courtyard
- Quinn Su, Orange County Hotel
- Cory Sams, Main Place Mall
- AnaLaura Becerra, Travel Santa Ana
- Maria Gonzalez, Travel Santa Ana

**Public Attendees**

- Selica Diaz, Parks & Recreation Commissioner
- Chris Schmidt, Resident

**Approval of Minutes**

- Motion to approve the Jan. minutes by Ryan Chase and Cory Sams

**Public Comments**

- No public comments currently

## Chair Report (Aaron Saliba to Frank Atayade)

- **Transfer of Leadership**
  - **Leadership Transition:** Aaron Saliba transitioned into the role of Past Chair; Frank Atayade assumed the role of Chair; and Louis Vasquez was appointed Vice Chair.
  - **Officer Appointments:** A motion was presented to approve the appointment. Approved by Marc Morley and Cory Sams.
  
- **2025 Annual Report**
  - **2025 Annual Report Review:** The City Manager's Office has raised questions regarding whether the Travel Santa Ana (TSA) Annual Report data fully complies with the requirements outlined under the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) law.
  - **Legal Review in Progress:** Civitas's legal counsel to conduct a formal review of the report to ensure alignment with all applicable TMD guidelines and compliance standards.
  - **Next Steps:** Any required revisions or clarifications will be incorporated in response to legal feedback. The finalized report is anticipated to be resubmitted for consideration and approval on the May 5th Consent Calendar.
  
- **Bylaws – Election of Officers:**
  - Reviewed Section 3 of the bylaws, which currently states that all officers are elected for one-year terms.
  - **Proposed Amendment:** A request was made to extend officer terms from one year to two years; the proposal was presented, approved by Ryan Chase and Marc Morley; all members were in favor; motion approved.
  - **Board Term Continuity:** A motion was introduced to maintain the current board through the 2026–2028 term; approved by Louis Vasquez and Marc Morley.
  
- **City & Hotel Meeting**
  - On April 13, 2026, a joint meeting was held with the City Manager, City Council members, and Travel Santa Ana (TSA) to discuss hotel development and tourism priorities.
  - **Business Development Focus:** The City expressed a desire to advance additional hotel development to support long-term tourism growth.
  - **Stakeholder Perspective:** Investors and hotel partners emphasized the need for increased City support and incentives to facilitate new development opportunities.
  - **Market Considerations:** It was noted that strengthening current hotel occupancy rates remains a priority before introducing additional room inventory.

- **Drones – Public Safety Initiative:**
  - The City shared plans to deploy three drones operated by the Santa Ana Police Department (SAPD) to support public safety efforts.
  - **Use Cases:** The drones will be utilized to monitor and respond to on-property issues, including vandalism and homelessness-related concerns.
  - **Capabilities:** The technology can assess both exterior and, when necessary, interior areas of properties to support situational awareness and response efforts.
  
- **Stadium Usage & Event Coordination:**
  - It was noted that a recent concert event was not communicated to local hoteliers or to Travel Santa Ana (TSA), limiting opportunities to support the event through lodging partnerships and coordinated marketing efforts.
  - **Missed Opportunity:** Earlier awareness and collaboration could have helped drive incremental hotel bookings and broader economic impact for local businesses.
  - **Recommendation:** City officials are encouraged to proactively include TSA and hotel partners in advance planning and communication for large-scale events that may impact local tourism and hospitality.
  
- **City Events Notifications – Parks & Recreation:**
  - Discussion centered on improving communication and coordination with Santa Ana Parks & Recreation regarding upcoming events and opportunities.
  - **Process Improvement:** Streamline application processes and outreach/invitations for prospective event hosts.
  - **Permitting & Licensing:** Current permitting and licensing requirements were identified as complex and, at times, a deterrent to attracting additional events, film productions, and activations.
  - **Next Steps:** Ongoing discussions are underway to simplify processes and reduce barriers to entry while maintaining appropriate oversight.
  
- **October Pride Event:**
  - Efforts are underway to bring the Pride event back to Santa Ana in October 2026, with event organizers currently in discussions with City officials. There is a strong interest in retaining the event locally.
  - **Partnership Opportunities:** The event's Executive Director will collaborate with Travel Santa Ana (TSA) to develop hotel packages and lodging partnerships to support visitation.
  - **Investment Consideration:** TSA may explore participation through its Opportunity Fund; a meeting with the event organizers is recommended to evaluate the scope and impact of a potential partnership.
  - **Strategic Alignment:** October (LGBTQIA+ History Month) presents a strong opportunity to drive community engagement, visibility, and inclusive tourism.

- **Congratualtions**
  - Travel Santa Ana congratulates AnaLaura Becerra and Maria Gonzalez on their 4 years with the DMO.

### **Financial Report (R. Chase)**

- Link to March financials located here [LINK](#)
- In February, \$118,755.40 in revenue from the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) was collected.
- 2026 Budget (November 2025 to October 2026) TMD revenue = \$449,686.72. Down 2.6% compared to the same timeframe between 2024 and 2025.
- Total cash in bank \$861,747.95
- 2026 Budget (November 2025 to October 2026) TMD revenue = \$449,686.72
- Total Tourism Marketing District revenue collected = \$7,324,967.17
- Motion to approve increase of monthly personal cell/wifi allowance of \$150 per person; motion approved by Aaron Saliba and Ryan Chase

### **President's Report (W. Haase-Roberts)**

#### **Sport Efforts**

- **FOOTLAB U.S. Flagship (Santa Ana)**
  - FOOTLAB, an AI-powered soccer performance and entertainment franchise, is launching its U.S. flagship in Santa Ana.
  - The organization is located at 400 W. Warner Ave, and is expecting a soft opening in early June.
  - It is a 165,000+ sq. ft. facility across five acres and is the largest FOOTLAB globally and U.S. expansion hub.
  - Combines real-world soccer, eSports, and proprietary AI for a data-driven training experience.
  - Features interactive training stations, real-time performance analytics, and global digital connectivity.
  - Positioned as both a high-performance training center and community hub (youth/adult programming, leagues, corporate events, brand activations).
  - This Orange County launch marks the first step in a broader national rollout as FOOTLAB aims to redefine soccer engagement and capitalize on the sport's rapid growth in the U.S.
- **World Cup Activation & Visitor Engagement**
  - Travel Santa Ana launched a dedicated World Cup landing page highlighting hotels, airports, watch parties, and citywide activations (June 10–July 20)
    - <https://www.travelsantaana.com/events/soccer-watch-parties-and-events/submit-soccer-themed-event/>
  - Event organizers are encouraged to submit soccer-themed events to the centralized calendar to drive visibility and attendance.

- Submissions will populate a public-facing calendar for both visitors and locals.
- We have provided the following example of what the Westin in Costa Mesa is offering here:  
<https://www.marriott.com/offers/costa-mesa-summer-soccer-escape-package-off-216623/snawi-the-westin-south-coast-plaza-costa-mesa> to our Santa Ana hoteliers in hopes they will create their own packages.

- **City Branding & Marketing Initiatives**

- TSA will introduce the “City of Celebrations” banner program, launching in key Downtown Santa Ana locations.
- There will be 70 banners installed for \$3,990 to enhance citywide branding, year-round festive atmosphere, and engagement.
- Strategic partnership with Visit California via Hopper World Cup advertising co-op.

- **Sports & Event Development**

- Jon Julio, Founder of Santa Ana’s annual Blading Cup, a skating competition held on the streets of Downtown, has an opportunity to have the event recognized as an Olympic Federation–sanctioned World Skate competition.
- Jon is seeking guidance on grants and sponsorship opportunities.
- Would elevate international visibility and align with 2028 Olympic momentum.
- Event organizer seeking grant and sponsorship support to meet qualification requirements.
- Having the Blading Cup as part of the Olympic Federation would bring international attention to Santa Ana and bring potential exhibitions in conjunction with the 2028 Olympics.

- **LA28 Olympic Readiness**

- Santa Ana venues are included in California’s official Events Venue & Sports Facility Resource Hub for the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- The platform provides a single, centralized resource to support statewide delegations in sourcing venues, hospitality spaces, and training facilities.

- **Sports Tourism & Partnerships**

- Mater Dei High School has created a new sports-focused role for Bryan Ponce, a Mater Dei alumnus, who joined Travel Santa Ana as a guest at the GROW Conference.
- Travel Santa Ana joined the Playeasy platform (Feb) to support sports tourism lead generation and bookings.
- 40 leads generated to date; each requires careful evaluation due to cost and operational considerations. *See Excel Doc*

- Ongoing need to refine tournament targeting and streamline booking processes for city facilities.

- **Hotel & Booking Insights**

- Hotel bookings for sports events are managed through third-party providers.
- Most local hotels participate and receive RFPs.
- Key challenge: low conversion rate from room blocks to actual bookings.

**ULTIMATE STRONGMAN 2026, 2027 and beyond**

**HOSTLING PACKAGES 2026**

FORMAT	3 days, ticketed festival of strength and entertainment
DATES	Proposed Dates 2026 - Shoulder Season included
LOCATION	Iconic location / stadium backdrop (Ideally, at least 15,000 sqft)
CAPACITY	5,000 - 7,500 people attending per day (6,000+ per day achieved in Canada; 10,000+ in St Albans UK)
CONCEPT	A 3-day international championship featuring Strongman, Strongwoman, and Collegiate Strongman. Each day showcases new athletes and disciplines – from the Log Lift, Super Yoke, Farmer's Walk, and Car Deadlift, to the Atlas Stones finale.
HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Record Attempts broadcast globally</li> <li>• Festival atmosphere with live music, beer tents, BBQs, and family activities</li> <li>• Open Amateur Events to drive community participation and hotel nights</li> <li>• Fan activations like "Strongest Kid" and interactive challenges</li> </ul>

BRONZE – REGIONAL EVENT	SILVER – NATIONAL EVENT	GOLD – WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
1-2 day event (e.g. "[CITY]'s Strongest Man")	2-3 day event (e.g. "Ultimate Strongman [COUNTRY]")	3-day World Championship festival
Athletes, staff, travel, and equipment included, host city provides or supports venue/location	Includes Strongman + Strongwoman categories.	Strongman, Strongwoman, Collegiate, Open Amateur competitions.
Showcasing and supporting grassroots and strong men/women of tomorrow	Prize money, equipment, staff, hotels, and travel covered, host city provides venue/location or support	Full festival set-up: fan activations, music, beer tent, family zone
Up to 25% of sponsorship inventory shared	Up to 50% of sponsorship inventory shared	Athletes' prize money, staff, travel, and equipment included
National/regional media exposure	National event/championship broadcast coverage guaranteed	World record attempts filmed for global broadcast, Global broadcast and highlights package
<b>US\$99,000-\$140,000</b>	<b>US\$150,000-\$200,000</b>	50% of sponsorship inventory shared <b>US\$350,000-\$500,000</b>

- **California Events Fund Pilot Program**

- California is losing sporting and entertainment events to other states and countries that offer financial incentives to attract them.
- These events generate significant economic activity, tourism, hotel stays, dining, retail, and substantial tax revenue.
- Without a competitive tool, California leaves money on the table.
- Through legislation, the California Events Fund Pilot Program has been launched:
  - A five-year pilot that uses the incremental tax revenue generated by an event to help fund the costs of hosting it.
  - Think of it as the event paying for itself: the new tax dollars an event brings in are reinvested to win and host that event.  
*See documents in Google folder.*
- The California Travel Association is leading efforts on advocacy. If all goes as planned, the bill will be introduced to the legislation at the end of May.

## Advertising

- **Agency Report:**

- **MMGY Digital Advertising Q1 report** (February 15-March 31)
  - Total Media Spend: \$12,042
    - Impressions: 902,692
    - Engagements: 144,286
      - CTR: 0.29% (benchmark is 0.25% - *we are outperforming!*)
      - VCR: 97.30% (benchmark is 90% - *we are outperforming!*)
      - CPE: \$0.08 (benchmark is \$0.12 - *we are more efficient!*)

- Our media campaign is running programmatically, targeting audiences across a range of premium publishers and digital inventory.
  - The brand video is amplified across Amazon Prime Video and Amazon’s broader streaming ecosystem, extending to premium partner platforms like Pluto TV, Tubi, and Xumo, with added scale and visibility on Amazon Fire TV devices.
  - Creative focuses on three different audiences: SoCal visitors, those interested in Disneyland, and those considering travel for the World Cup.
  
- **Hopper**
  - <https://www.hopper.com/explore/collection/california-fifa-2026>
  - Travel Santa Ana has strategically partnered with Visit California on a Hopper World Cup advertising co-op.
  - Hopper, a travel booking app and online marketplace for flights, hotels, and rental cars, is targeting users across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, giving Santa Ana broad yet strategic exposure to travelers in the active planning phase.
  - The campaign will run through June. / Cost: \$5,000.
  
- **Santa Ana Restaurant Marketing Collective**
  - TSA has established the Santa Ana Restaurant Marketing Collective and will facilitate quarterly gatherings for local restaurant owners and managers.
  - The purpose is to keep the local dining community informed and connected while creating opportunities for collaboration and strengthening Santa Ana’s restaurant scene.
  - The objective of the group is to share ideas and marketing insights, including customer trends, upcoming events and activations, promotional calendars, and major announcements.
  - Through collaboration, participants can cross-promote, support one another, and ultimately drive greater traffic and visibility for Santa Ana’s restaurant community.
  - Savannah Spicer, Economic Development Specialist, will attend on behalf of the City of Santa Ana to provide updates, including information on incentives and grant opportunities.
  - This group will focus specifically on marketing and promotional collaboration.
    - It will not address operational business issues such as parking, food trucks, permits, or similar matters.
  - The first meeting is scheduled for April 23 and will be held at the 4th Street Market.
    - The collective is intended to represent all of Santa Ana, and additional locations will be explored for future meetings.
  
- **The Ace Agency:**
  - **The Ace Agency Engagement:** TSA has entered into a three-month contract with the Ace Agency to drive overnight visitation, with a focus on promoting the Culinary Passport and Michelada Guide.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Currently exploring a potential collaboration with the Surfliner train to expand regional reach and visitor engagement.
- **Public Relations Program:** TSA has approved a PR program at \$5,000 per month (total budget: \$45,000), inclusive of strategy development, media list management, campaign execution, media materials, media outreach, influencer programming, and performance reporting.
- **Media Events:** TSA has budgeted at \$3,000 per event, inclusive of strategy, media outreach, event coordination, post-event communications, and on-site support from two PR representatives.

## Sales Report (A. Becerra)

### Overview

- Conducted annual hotel reviews in March, to keep properties informed on sales efforts, update property/staff data, and gather need dates; provided summarized recaps to Directors of Sales.
- Delivered targeted, consultative support to underperforming properties, including hands-on Delphi GRC reporting training and curated vendor introductions to strengthen social market offerings; continues onboarding support for new hotel staff on city knowledge and sales strategies.
- Launched a 4-part hospitality-focused continuing education series addressing industry changes; hybrid format (2 live, 2 virtual), reaching 115 invitees quarterly and led by a seasoned hotelier and top meeting planner; replaces quarterly in-person hotel visits.
- Coordinating two strategic FAMs in April aligned with key industry events (Associations West and HelmsBriscoe);
  - AW FAM targets Oregon-based planners with a city-focused experience
  - HB FAM emphasizes experiential programming aligned with Visit California’s “Ultimate Playground” campaign to drive internal advocacy and lead generation within a highly competitive market
- Expanded international outreach in Mexico through Brand USA and Visit California missions, supported by PR-hosted agency engagement in Mexico City; reinforced strong media presence and advised hotels on optimizing visibility in hotel booking channels for FIT travelers.
- Executed robust Q1 activity (Jan–Mar), including presentations for MeetingsLive, MPI SCC, and Smart Meetings; participation in local events and four trade shows; and onboarding/training of new Project Manager.

## Marketing (M. Gonzalez)

- **Marketing Calendar**
  - TSA developed a marketing calendar aligned with key industry moments and are inviting partners to collaborate on upcoming campaigns.
  - These moments will focus on elevating Santa Ana’s profile and welcome partner participation through LinkedIn spotlights, team features, and business

- storytelling.
- Key opportunities include:
  - California Tourism Month in May
  - National Travel & Tourism Week, May 3 to May 9
  
- **Q1 Performance Snapshot (Jan to Mar 2026)**
  - Generated over 465,000 impressions across social platforms.
  - Recorded 1,646 engagements, with Instagram as the primary driver.
  - LinkedIn delivered a 10.4 percent engagement rate, indicating strong potential for partner visibility.
  - Produced 16,693 video views, with short-form content leading performance
  
- **Key Takeaway**
  - We are seeing steady growth and strong visibility, with continued Q2 focus on strategic partnerships, high-impact storytelling, and leveraging key tourism moments to amplify Santa Ana.

### **New Business**

- The board voted to meet at 1 p.m. for future meetings.

### **Announcements**

- The next BOD meeting will be held on Wed., July 15, at 1:00 p.m. Location to be determined.

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting is adjourned at 2:14 p.m.; minutes recorded by Erin Warady.

###