



TRAVEL SANTA ANA
QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING
Wed. July 16, 2025

Call to Order

- A meeting of Travel Santa Ana was held on Wednesday, July 16, 2025
- Time: 2:00 p.m.
- Meeting was called to order at 2:04 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
- Cory Sams, MainPlace Mall
- Ryan Chase, 4th Street Market
- Frank Atayade, Holiday Inn
- Luis Vasquez, Holiday Inn Express & Suites
- Jimmy Lounethone, Holiday Inn

Directors Not in attendance

- Alissa Salima, Courtyard By Marriott
- De'andre Gipson, New GM South Coast Metro Courtyard (Phone)
- Quinn Su, Former DoubleTree (Phone)

Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the April minutes approved by Frank Atayade and Marc Morley

Public Comments

- No public comments currently

Chair Report (A. Saliba)

- **Tourism Marketing District renewal**
 - Thank you to the board members who took the time to submit letter(s) of support.
 - Special thanks to Frank for his time and efforts on behalf of the renewal process.
 - Unanimous vote to renew for 10 years beginning January 1, 2026, with the potential ladder increase of 0.5% every two years up to 4%.
 - Next steps, Wendy, to work with Civitas and Marc on the new city contract.

- **City of Santa Ana & Hoteliers meeting**
 - Thank Frank and his team for hosting these quarterly meetings.
 - In attendance were Councilmember Bacerra, City Manager Alvaro Nunez, Marc, Miguel Montes, and Ricardo Ornelas from the City's Parks & Recreation Department.
 - Parks & Rec shared information about the facilities, including capacity, the process for sports planners to reserve fields, and how the department collaborates with Travel Santa Ana to secure opportunities.
 - Four hotels were represented: Hotel Zessa, Holiday Inn, Orange County Hotel, and Embassy Suites.
 - Encourage fellow hoteliers to attend.
 - Consider rescheduling the 2026 meetings for a new time.

- **Q4 Board of Directors' Meeting**
 - October 15th @ 2 p.m.
 - Please allow 1.5 hours for this meeting, as Travel Santa Ana will be presenting the 2026 Budget, and we must have a quorum for this meeting.
 - Hotel Zessa will be hosting.

- **2026-2028 Board of Directors**
 - Per the Bylaws, TSA shall have a minimum of nine (9) members.
 - Each Director of the Corporation shall serve a two (2) year term.
 - There shall be a designated City of Santa Ana City Manager representative.
 - At least one (1) Santa Ana Chamber of Commerce board member shall serve as a representative.
 - Additionally, at least two (2) members at large, representing tourism attractions in Santa Ana such as lodging businesses, restaurants, and attractions, shall be part of the board.
 - All remaining seats shall be lodging representatives who pay the Santa Ana Tourism Marketing District assessment, and these seats must always constitute more than half of the Directors.
 - Election of Directors shall be held at Travel Santa Ana's annual meeting, which shall take place in April.
 - Directors shall be elected by the Board.
 - The officers of Travel Santa Ana shall be chosen annually by the Board and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, subject to any terms in their employment contracts.
 - All officers shall serve a one (1) year term or until their successors are elected and qualified.
 - During the last election, the Board decided to keep everyone in their positions due to the organization being new and gaining momentum.
 - Wendy and I will contact each of you before the October Board of Directors meeting to assess your interest in continuing to serve on the Travel Santa Ana Board.
 - If you are considering stepping down from your role on the Board, please let us know if you have any recommendations.

Financial Report (R. Chase)

- Link to Q2 financials located here
- In May, \$119K in Tourism Marketing District (TMD) revenue was collected.
- Budget YTD (November 2024 to present) TMD revenue = \$851K.
- Total Tourism Marketing District revenue collected = \$6.1M since 2021.
- Motion to approve by Frank Atayde and approved by Cori Sams.

President's Report (W. Haase-Roberts)

- **Advertising (Q2)**
 - **Expedia:**
 - Expedia Always-on campaign, which began January 1, 2025, has generated 17,358 room nights to date, worth \$2.3 million in hotel revenue. The display ads have garnered over 5 million impressions.
 - ROI = \$20.91:\$1 Includes the \$27,500 in co-op funds from Visit California.
 - Expedia Orange County Q2 joint marketing campaign generated 14,524 room nights, worth over \$2 million in hotel revenue.
 - ROI = \$80.97:\$1
 - Expedia Soccer World Championship co-op with Visit Buena Park and Visit Greater Palm Springs. The campaign ran mid-March through June in conjunction with the soccer championship at the Rose Bowl June 15-26.
 - The campaign generated 5,651 room nights worth more than \$750,000 in hotel revenue.
 - ROI = \$18.96:\$1
 - **International:**
 - TSA ran a campaign from April through June on Despegar, a Mexico booking platform.
 - Exceptional campaign performance as it provided over 40 percentage points of difference in GB USD, and +6 percentage points vs. the rest of CA destinations within the same period.
 - Room nights sold during the campaign concentrated on short to medium travel windows focused on the summer period. 85% of the room nights booked are scheduled to check in before September 2025.
 - Room nights 111. ADR \$127. Estimated \$14K in hotel revenue. ROI = \$1.40:\$1
 - In addition to the campaign, our Despegar representative hosted a webinar for the hoteliers to learn about the platform and how to partner. Five hotels attended the live webinar:
 - Holiday Inn
 - Hotel Zessa
 - Sonesta Suites
 - Orange County Hotel
 - Comfort Inn
 - *All reports are located in the Google folder.*

- **Santa Ana Enthusiast Program**

- As of June 30, 124 hoteliers, tourism partners, city employees, and residents have become official Santa Ana Enthusiasts.
- On July 2, the TSA announced a challenge among hoteliers; the top five hotels with the most SA Enthusiasts by July 31 will receive a pizza party.
- Since the announcement, 15 hoteliers have become official Santa Ana Enthusiasts.
- Hotel Zessa and Holiday Inn were challenged to be the first to reach 25 employees; as of July 15th, Holiday Inn had 29 and Hotel Zessa 26!
- Current standings:
 - Holiday Inn – 29 employees*
 - Hotel Zessa – 26 employees*
 - Comfort Inn & Suites – 7 employees
 - Courtyard South Coast Metro – 6 employees
 - Orange County Hotel – 4 employees
 - Mainstay Hotel – 1 employee

- **Visitor Loyalty Program**

- On June 2, the TSA launched the Visitor Loyalty Program, offering special discounts and promotions to guests staying at Hotel Zessa, a DoubleTree by Hilton, and the Holiday Inn Santa Ana – Orange County Airport.
- Exclusive offers are promoted through a designated TravelSantaAna.com landing page, accessible only via a QR code provided to guests at check-in at the two participating hotels (see visual above). The goal of the Santa Ana Visitor Loyalty Program is to encourage visitors to explore and experience the city's attractions, restaurants, and retail establishments.
- Currently, the Bowers Museum, Chapter One: The Modern Local, Discovery Cube, Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken, Mongiello's Pizza & Wings, the Santa Ana Zoo, Tacompadre, The Frida Cinema, and The Pizza Press are participating with special offers.
- The program is currently in beta testing. If it is deemed successful, it will expand to include additional hotels in Santa Ana.
Aaron and Frank will provide an update regarding the front desk promotion and guests' response.
- Will request an update from Marketing Advisory Group participants and restaurants later this month.

- **Awards**

- Among several awards the organization received this quarter for campaigns, videos, and collateral, Travel Santa Ana was recognized as a winner in Smart Meetings 2025 Smart Stars as "One of the Best CVB/DMOs."
- Others recognized in the same category include Discover Puerto Rico, Travel Portland, Greater Miami CVB, Visit Seattle, and Visit Greater Palm Springs.
- The awards are voted on by the Smart Meetings community, highlighting the best of the best in the meetings and events industry.

- **Cannabis Update**

- A recent article in the OC Register, "Santa Ana cannabis tax money plummets," noted that the City is projecting \$10 million in revenue for 2025-2026, compared to \$20.6 million in 2021-2022.
- As more cities legalize dispensaries, visitors are not drawn to a destination solely because of the dispensaries.
- While the city has legalized consumption lounges, the dispensaries are not in a position to develop due to industrial locations and inadequate space.
Consumption lounges would differentiate Santa Ana from other SoCal cities.

- The two-day cannabis event proposed by a reputable organizer remains pending with the city's attorney. We will continue to monitor the opportunity. Have earmarked \$35,000 in reserves to support national promotion and hotelier education.
- Effective July 1, we are no longer outsourcing the writing of cannabis-related blog content due to limited engagement, a lack of content, and concerns about the use of AI to write inaccurate articles.
- **Q3 & Q4**
 - Travel Santa Ana met to discuss the remainder of the year, from July to December, to ensure our efforts are aligned with the budget and projected revenue.
 - California Expands Film Tax Credit to Boost In-State Production – great news and aligns with Travel Santa Ana's three-year strategic plan in promoting the destination for film production. Unfortunately, UCI is no longer providing internships through its "Humanities Out There" program.
 - We are exploring UC Fullerton interns as a possibility to assist with the creation of a Santa Ana Look Book.
 - In early August, Visit Buena Park will co-host five members of the International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association for two days to showcase Santa Ana's culinary offerings.
 - On August 19, we will host two Canadian travel agents to promote future product.
 - In October, we will host a FAM for 10 Mexican journalists, influencers, and tour operators with the assistance of our Mexico City-based agency, VIP Public Relations.
 - Also, in October, we will host Aeroméxico representatives in Mexico City for a breakfast in conjunction with attending IBTM Americas. IBTM stands for Incentives, Business Travel, and Meetings and brings together the largest community of event organizers and experience creators from Mexico, Latin America, and North America.
 - Mark your calendars for December 10 @ 4 p.m. for our annual board of directors and hotel reception. Location TBD.

Sales Report (A. Becerra)

Q2. Sales Efforts

Q2 - 2024		Q2 - 2025	
● Leads	26	● Leads	24
● Room Nights	6,424	● Room Nights	4,009
● Delegates	2,048	● Delegates	1,231
● Economic Impact	\$2.6M	● Economic Impact	\$1.6M



- **Meetings Live**
 - 22 appointments with meeting planners. Resulted in 2 leads onsite.
- **Meetings Professional International Global Meetings Industry Day Event**
 - 36 appointments with meeting planners.
- **Meetings Professional International WEC**
 - 27 appointments with meeting planners.
- **Helmsbriscoe Annual Business Conference**
 - 10 appointments with meeting planners. Resulted in 2 leads onsite.

- **Overview**

- Q2 (April-June) is traditionally the slowest quarter of the year, due to Easter week, school recess, and companies preparing their budgets.
 - Group lead production is significantly down across the US, including Santa Ana.
 - Despite receiving 24 qualified leads, this trend reflects shorter stays and fewer attendees.
 - The current main concern for planners is the high cost of food and beverages. In Southern California, especially OC, this has led to more room-only requests as larger companies handle meetings in-house or prefer larger meeting spaces than Santa Ana hotels can offer.
 - Strong dollar: A strong dollar creates opportunities for overseas group bookings, often accompanied by tax rebate incentives or all-inclusive properties that offer greater value. The strong dollar also influences domestic summer travel, with people visiting expensive destinations such as the Middle East and Asia.
 - The organization partnered with Lamont & Associates, a specialized meeting planning company focused on niche markets, including a new branch catering to sports teams. Conversations with Lamont are ongoing, with detailed standards for partnership.
 - Travel Santa Ana will conduct a partner training next week, starting with a general city overview and a Q&A session.
-

Marketing Report (M. Gonzalez)

- **Website**

- Pageviews 146,418  13% vs. Q2 2024
- Engagement  38% vs. Q2 2024
- January-March received 241,860 page views, an increase of 79.7% YOY.
- AI Chatbot - In Q2, we introduced an AI-powered chatbot on TravelSantaAna.com to provide instant, 24/7 support for visitors planning their stay.
 - The bot helps answer common questions about hotels, attractions, parking, and experiences, and it also collects valuable insights about what travelers are genuinely curious about. (Talk about the data or engagement it's received)
- Events remain the primary search driver, with "Orange County Events" being the most frequently used keyword. Things to Do is driving the most traffic to the site.

- **Misc:**

- Travel Santa Ana will be participating in Google's DMO pilot program.

Announcements

- Next BOD meeting will be held on **Wednesday, October 15** at 2:00 pm at Hotel Zessa

Adjournment

- The meeting is adjourned at 3:09 p.m. Minutes recorded by Erin Warady

###