

NEVADA COMMISSION ON TOURISM
Meeting Minutes

December 2025

Date: Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (RSCVA) Board Room
4065 S. Virginia Street, Suite 100, Reno, NV 89502

A. Call to Order and Confirmation of Proper Posting (Discussion Only)

The meeting of the Nevada Commission on Tourism was called to order at 9:02 a.m. on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, by Vice Chair Rick Murdock.

Confirmation of Proper Posting

For the record, Kelly Benoit stated that the meeting was properly noticed and posted in accordance with Nevada law.

Designation of Presiding Officer

Rick Murdock stated that he was experiencing issues with his voice and requested that Commissioner Mike Larragueta preside over the meeting.

Mike Larragueta agreed and served as presiding officer for the remainder of the meeting.

Roll Call / Quorum

Roll call was conducted by Kelly Benoit.

- Lieutenant Governor / Chair: Absent, excused
- Commissioners present:
 - Rick Murdock
 - Fletch Brunelle
 - Shelly Capurro
 - Mendy Elliott
 - Annette Kerr
 - Jill Rowland-Lagan
 - Mike Larragueta
 - Jane Moon

- Judith Perez Siegel
- Herb Santos Jr.

A quorum of the Commission was present.

Public Access Information

Kelly Benoit noted that ncot.publiccomment@travelnevada.com was temporarily unavailable. Members of the public wishing to provide written public comment were directed to email kbenoit@dtca.nv.gov.

Dial-in and access code details were read into the record. Meeting participants were reminded to keep microphones muted unless recognized and to use the “raise hand” feature when possible.

B. Public Comment (Discussion Only)

Mike Larragueta called for public comment on items on the agenda.

Kelly Benoit, for the record, stated that there was no public comment received via audio.

No public comment was offered.

C. Approval of Minutes – September 18, 2025 NCOT Meeting (For Possible Action)

Mike Larragueta introduced the item for approval of the minutes from the September 18, 2025 Nevada Commission on Tourism meeting.

No corrections to the draft minutes were requested.

Motion

- Motion: Approve the minutes of the September 18, 2025 Nevada Commission on Tourism meeting.
 - Motion by: Herb Santos Jr.
 - Second by: Annette Kerr
 - Vote: Motion carried unanimously.
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E. Travel Nevada Quarterly Report (Discussion Only)

Presenters: Rafael Villanueva, Caroline Sexton, and Nicole Orsua.

Summary of Presentation

Rafael Villanueva, for the record, stated that the quarterly report covered activities from July 1 through September 30, 2025. He noted:

- The report format had been updated to be easier to read and navigate.
- Short video recaps used in prior meetings had been discontinued due to production cost and message complexity; the emphasis is now on written reporting of the work and outcomes.
- Since the last Commission meeting, Travel Nevada held successful groundbreaking events for the Nevada Adventure Centers in Boulder City and Carson City, with strong media coverage and community engagement that helped elevate awareness of statewide destination development efforts.
- Because Tracie Barthouse was heavily engaged in final preparations for the Governor's Conference on Tourism, Caroline Sexton and Nicole Orsua would present selected highlights from the quarterly report and from recent activities between the close of the quarter and the meeting date.

Caroline Sexton, for the record, explained:

- Quarterly updates will now occasionally include major activities occurring slightly outside the strict quarter timeframe (e.g., Nevada Day), to avoid artificially excluding timely efforts.
- Travel Nevada's paid media program began the fiscal year strongly:
 - Updated creative assets were deployed quickly.
 - Early performance metrics from the paid media campaign were positive and in line with or above expectations.

Caroline Sexton highlighted the "Get a Little Out There Month" initiative:

- Tied to Nevada Day in October.
- Travel Nevada secured a Governor's proclamation designating "Get a Little Out There Month".
- The initiative targeted both in-state residents and regional drive markets, encouraging people to explore more of Nevada.
- Key activities included:

- Participation in the Nevada Day Parade in Carson City, with the Lieutenant Governor and Travel Nevada staff.
- A Nevada Day booth distributing merchandise and Travel Nevada magazines and engaging directly with residents about in-state travel.
- Participation at Nevada Day events at the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas, including Travel Nevada’s VR headset experiences featuring Nevada dark skies.

Caroline Sexton also described:

- A promotion supporting the Dark Prison Haunted House at the Nevada State Prison:
 - Travel Nevada produced and promoted video content featuring Travel Nevada staff and family members experiencing the haunted house.
 - The attraction subsequently sold out after the video promotion.
- A second Las Vegas Raiders activation:
 - Travel Nevada partnered on an event at Allegiant Stadium linked to the International Car Forest:
 - Two window panels from the Car Forest were brought to the stadium for fans to sign.
 - The signed panels will be installed back at the International Car Forest as a permanent or semi-permanent feature.
 - This activation offered a new type of fan engagement—“leave your mark”—beyond the prior more saloon-style activations.
 - Early engagement metrics were strong; detailed reporting will follow at a future meeting.

Rafael Villanueva, for the record, added that:

- The Allegiant Stadium activations are designed to reach two key audiences:
 - Southern Nevada residents who, research shows, often do not travel to northern Nevada; and
 - Fans of visiting NFL teams (in this case, Denver Broncos fans from Colorado), a critical out-of-state market for Nevada.

- The Broncos game appeared to have a very high share of visiting fans, making the activation particularly valuable.

Nicole Orsua, for the record, presented on public relations and industry development components:

- The PR team supported Nevada Adventure Center groundbreakings in Boulder City and Carson City by:
 - Creating a digital media kit for distribution to media.
 - Working with partners to develop press releases and share them with local businesses and outlets.
 - Securing extensive coverage, including live segments and articles in KLAS, Las Vegas Review-Journal, Las Vegas Sun, and Boulder City Review.
- The PR team launched a new quarterly e-newsletter aimed at industry partners:
 - Designed to share industry trends and reinforce communication pathways between Travel Nevada and partners.
 - The first issue achieved strong click-through rates.
- On industry development work:
 - Travel Nevada led a mission to Mexico with 12 Nevada delegates, visiting three cities:
 - Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey.
 - There was strong interest in Nevada beyond the familiar icons of Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe.
 - Travel Nevada partnered with the Nevada Arts Council on a Grant Road Show that visited multiple rural communities:
 - Jointly promoted grant opportunities from both agencies.
 - Reached new and existing audiences in rural areas.
 - Travel Nevada hosted a territory retreat:
 - Brought together territory board members to share best practices.
 - Reviewed territory strategic progress.
 - Discussed priority topics, including stewardship.

- Travel Nevada staff attended Brand USA's UK & Europe Week in London, meeting with 44 key trade and industry partners over four days.

No action was taken on this item.

F. Financial Report (Discussion Only)

Presenter: Stewart Terry, for the record.

Stewart Terry provided the Commission with the overall budget summary, focusing on:

- Category 31 – Promotion and Advertising, and
- Category 40 – Rural Matching Grants,

as the principal categories under Commission purview.

Key points:

- The State is nearly halfway through the fiscal year.
- Promotion and Advertising (Category 31) is currently approximately 20 percent expended:
 - This level is typical for this point in the year due to:
 - The State's accounting period running through mid-August.
 - Invoices for major contracts (such as the agency of record) trailing actual activity by several months.
- Categories 17 and 18 – Adventure Centers:
 - These are operating expenditure budgets for the Nevada Adventure Centers (utilities, miscellaneous operating costs, etc.), not construction budgets.
 - Actual utility expenditures are limited at this time because the sites are still under construction.
 - Construction and planning costs are primarily supported by:
 - Category 25 – EDA ARPA grant, and
 - An additional Economic Development Administration construction grant (approximately \$2.4 million), which is being carried forward from fiscal year 2025 via work program into fiscal year 2026.

Commission Questions

Herb Santos Jr., for the record, asked what happens to funds in Categories 17 and 18 if they are not used in the current fiscal year.

Stewart Terry responded that:

- Unexpended lodging-tax funded appropriations revert to the lodging tax fund within the administrative budget account.
- Those reverted funds may later be brought forward via work programs to enhance future budgets, particularly when costs shift between fiscal years.

No action was taken on this item.

G. Request to Initiate RFP – Nevada Magazine, Nevada Adventure Guide, and Other Printed Materials (For Possible Action)

Presenters: Rafael Villanueva, Caroline Sexton, and Stewart Terry.

Background

For the record, Rafael Villanueva explained:

- The existing printing contract for Nevada Magazine was executed when Nevada Magazine was still a separate entity.
- During the transition to full Travel Nevada oversight, staff believed there was one remaining issue under the prior contract, but that was not the case.
- As a result, the upcoming issue will be printed under a one-time contract with a state-approved printer.
- A longer-term RFP is now needed to cover:
 - Two issues per year of Nevada Magazine,
 - One issue per year of the Nevada Adventure Guide,
 - The annual Nevada calendar,
 - Printed educational materials tied to curriculum development with the Department of Education,
 - Other bound print products that support Travel Nevada's goals.

For the record, Caroline Sexton added:

- The proposed RFP would be for a standard four-year term (two years plus a two-year extension).
- The anticipated total contract authority is approximately \$1.4 million over the four years, based on:
 - Current printing and paper costs,
 - Recent contract spending (including estimated ~\$350,000 in printing costs in the last fiscal year),
 - Expected issue counts and potential spoilage.

Discussion

Mendy Elliott, for the record, asked for a description of the selection process and panel composition.

For the record, Caroline Sexton and Stewart Terry explained:

- This RFP will be a State Purchasing-led process:
 - Travel Nevada will develop a scope of work.
 - The scope will be reviewed by the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) and State Purchasing.
 - Vendors will submit responses through the State’s electronic procurement system.
 - A review panel will be assembled in consultation with Purchasing.
 - Panelists will score proposals using a State-approved scoring matrix that considers scope compliance, quality, and cost.
- Panel composition requirements:
 - A majority of panel members must be state employees.
 - At least two state agencies must be represented.
 - State-employee panelists may not be in a supervisory relationship with one another.
 - Commissioners may serve on panels, but the number of commissioners must be limited to avoid creating a Commission quorum and to maintain the required state-employee majority.

For the record, Jane Moon stated that Travel Nevada has been diligent in including commissioners on prior RFPs and that she has previously served on such a panel. She commented that the process is structured, well-documented, and supported by training and robust scoring guidelines.

Annette Kerr, for the record, asked whether the motion should specify “not to exceed \$1.4 million” in light of the agenda’s reference to that amount, and whether such explicit language would be beneficial.

For the record, Stewart Terry and Kevin Doty (Senior Deputy Attorney General) noted:

- Travel Nevada typically includes a “not to exceed” amount in the RFP and contract documents themselves.
- If that maximum is described as a mandatory condition, any bid exceeding it could be disqualified.
- The Commission may choose whether to treat \$1.4 million as a strict ceiling or as a planning estimate, with each choice having implications for vendor pricing behavior.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. stated:

“Item G notes an anticipated contract amount of \$1.4 million.

If we put ‘not to exceed \$1.4 million’ into the motion, I would expect every bid to come in at \$1.4 million. I’d be uncomfortable with that.

I think we can say we anticipate the contract will be around \$1.4 million, but a hard cap takes away negotiation. If I’m bidding and I see \$1.4 million, that’s what I’m going to bid.”

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. also suggested that the motion explicitly state the contract term as July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2030.

In response, Jane Moon restated her motion to incorporate a clear description of scope and term.

Motion

- Motion:
 - “I move that staff initiate the RFP process for the selection of a printer for Nevada Magazine and the Nevada Adventure Guide, to include printing services for:
 - Nevada Magazine and the visitor guide,
 - the Nevada Adventure Guide,
 - student educational materials, and

- other bound print products that may be necessary to promote Travel Nevada's goals,

for the term July 1, 2026, through July 1, 2030."

- Motion by: Jane Moon
- Second by: Herb Santos Jr.
- Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

H. Agricultural Tourism – Feasibility Study and Strategic Direction (For Possible Action)

Presenters: Nicole Orsua and Matthew Landkamer.

Background

For the record, Nicole Orsua stated:

- At the June 2025 meeting, the Lieutenant Governor requested that Travel Nevada explore agricultural tourism (agritourism) as a potential initiative.
- Since then, Travel Nevada has partnered with the Nevada Department of Agriculture and the Lieutenant Governor's Office in a steering-type group.
- These discussions revealed that the State has more questions than answers, especially around:
 - Legal and regulatory barriers,
 - Economic feasibility,
 - Partnership structures.
- Travel Nevada therefore proposes an Agritourism Feasibility Study, to be led by Matthew Landkamer, who:
 - Previously worked with Travel Nevada on the multi-year statewide strategic plan,
 - Serves as one of Travel Nevada's destination development consultants,
 - Has experience with agritourism in other jurisdictions.

For the record, Matthew Landkamer summarized the proposed feasibility study:

- Definition: Agritourism is a form of commercial enterprise that connects agricultural production or processing with tourism to attract visitors to farms, ranches, or other agricultural businesses for entertainment or education while generating income for the owner.
- Purpose of the study:
 1. Identify opportunities to grow agritourism as:
 - A tourism asset,
 - A driver of visitation,
 - An economic development tool in rural Nevada.
 2. Identify practical economic and legal barriers to agritourism development.
 3. Lay groundwork for partnerships with private and public entities that would be necessary to advance agritourism.
- Inputs and methods:
 - Industry engagement:
 - One-on-one interviews with approximately 40 targeted stakeholders (farmers, ranchers, academics, officials, and legislators).
 - A broad industry survey distributed to agricultural operators statewide.
 - Document and data review:
 - Existing Nevada programs, reports, and relevant state documents.
 - National and international agritourism research.
 - Benchmarking and analysis:
 - Inventory of Nevada agritourism-related assets.
 - Comparison to select competitor states.
 - Audience alignment and potential market demand analysis.

Matthew Landkamer stated that the initial feasibility phase was estimated at approximately \$27,500, and that findings could be presented to the Commission at the March 2026 meeting.

Discussion

For the record, Shelly Capurro asked whether “working ranch” experiences or “dude ranch”-type operations would be included in scope.

Matthew Landkamer replied that such operations fit within the working definition of agritourism and would be considered.

For the record, Jill Rowland-Lagan expressed strong support, citing positive experience working with Matthew Landkamer on previous Travel Nevada strategic planning efforts and emphasizing the importance of understanding Nevada’s agritourism potential before making commitments.

For the record, Rick Murdock asked about the estimated total cost of the feasibility work and whether it was budgeted.

For the record, Nicole Orsua responded:

- Travel Nevada already has a contract with Matthew Landkamer through its destination development consultant pool, with approved hourly rates and scope ranges.
- The agritourism feasibility work will be funded from destination development program funds, which were expanded by the Legislature.
- The initial feasibility phase is estimated at approximately \$27,500, with additional phases (if pursued) to be scoped once findings are available.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. stated:

“We’re talking about a feasibility study to determine whether agritourism is something we want to pursue. I think it’s a good idea to do the feasibility study, but it’s also reasonable for us to know what it’s going to cost.

The feasibility study needs to give us enough information to decide whether we should move forward with an agricultural tourism strategic plan and to make an informed decision.”

For the record, Mendy Elliott asked how this work would intersect with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED), Regional Development Authorities, and the Farm Bureau, and whether the end product would provide a clear roadmap sufficient to support legislative proposals, potentially in the 2027 or 2029 sessions.

Matthew Landkamer responded that:

- This feasibility phase is focused on data gathering and synthesis.
- Interviews and the survey will include input from key partners such as the Department of Agriculture, GOED, and RDAs.

- The final feasibility report will:
 - Present key themes, quotes, and data.
 - Identify strategic implications and open questions.
- A subsequent phase, if directed, would be designed to develop a more detailed roadmap and legislative strategy.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. further stated:

“If we’re aiming for something for the 2027 legislative session, we need to have everything no later than July. The lobbying process doesn’t start when the session starts. What is your timetable to complete the feasibility study and then give us a roadmap so we know what we need to do to get this before the Legislature?”

Nicole Orsua and Matthew Landkamer replied that:

- They plan to present feasibility findings to the Commission at the March 2026 meeting.
- If the Commission and the Lieutenant Governor wish to move forward beyond feasibility, a second phase could proceed in April–June 2026, with the aim of having a roadmap or strategic framework ready by July 2026, subject to staffing and Commission direction.

For the record, Fletch Brunelle commented that:

- From a practical standpoint, agritourism could advance along two tracks:
 - Within existing Travel Nevada budgets by adjusting marketing and development priorities, and
 - Potentially via new legislative initiatives if supported by the Lieutenant Governor and justified by the data.

For the record, Rafael Villanueva confirmed that:

- Travel Nevada expects to incorporate agritourism into its broader marketing and destination development plan, to be presented to the Commission in June, if feasibility results indicate real opportunity.
- Separately, the Lieutenant Governor may decide whether to pursue a legislative initiative once feasibility findings and a potential roadmap are available.

For the record, Jane Moon noted that agritourism is already occurring in various rural communities and that this effort could help connect programs, avoid duplication, and present a more cohesive and diverse Nevada to travelers.

Motion

- Motion:
“I move that we approve moving forward with a feasibility study to determine whether to proceed with a strategic plan for agricultural tourism in the State of Nevada.”
 - Motion by: Herb Santos Jr.
 - Second by: Annette Kerr
 - Vote: Motion carried unanimously.
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I. Fiscal Year 2026 Special Projects Grant Program – Accessibility (For Possible Action)

Presenters: Nicole Orsua and Cortney Bloomer.

Program Overview

For the record, Nicole Orsua explained:

- The Legislature approved an increase in Category 50 – Destination Development funding from \$1.0 million to \$1.5 million.
- Travel Nevada divided these funds to:
 - Support larger, multi-year 3D destination development projects, and
 - Establish a new Special Projects Grant focused on smaller, high-impact efforts.
- For Fiscal Year 2026, the Special Projects theme is accessibility:
 - Driven by national and global data showing large populations of travelers with disabilities.
 - Intended to help rural communities become more accessible and visitor-ready.

For the record, Cortney Bloomer described the program in detail:

- The Special Projects Grant focuses on “small but significant” projects that:

- Address immediate needs,
- Strengthen rural communities,
- Improve accessibility and readiness for visitors with disabilities.
- Supporting data:
 - Over 61 million U.S. adults (about 1 in 4) live with a disability.
 - Travelers with disabilities represent an estimated \$100+ billion U.S. market.
 - Approximately 1.3 billion people globally live with some form of disability.
- Travel Nevada has partnered with TravelAbility, which supports accessibility in tourism, and offers an “Accessible Travel Nevada” label and resources to partners.

Two grant categories were offered:

1. One-year Programmatic Support and Training
For efforts such as:
 - Staff training on accessibility and service,
 - Technology to support accessible visitor information,
 - Visitor readiness and workforce capacity building.
2. Two-year Infrastructure Projects
For physical improvements such as:
 - Accessible pathways and routes,
 - Wayfinding signage,
 - Accessible seating, entrances, and amenities.

Eligibility:

- Rural communities with populations under 30,000,
- Local and regional governments,
- Tribal governments,
- Nonprofit organizations operating in qualifying communities.

Applicants were required to submit:

- Organizational partner letters of commitment,

- Letters of community support,
- Landowner permissions for any infrastructure work,
- A detailed budget and project narrative,
- Documentation of compliance with all relevant local, state, tribal, and federal requirements.

Grant recipients must report quarterly on:

- Project spending,
- Performance indicators,
- Progress against their workplan and timeline.

Applications and Recommendations

- Applications received: 14
- Total amount requested: \$1,406,833
- Projects recommended for funding: 9
- Total recommended awards: \$414,935

To facilitate recusals and voting, recommended projects were grouped into:

1. Northern Nevada Block
2. Central Nevada Block
3. Southern Nevada Block

Cortney Bloomer summarized the recommended projects in each region, including:

- Accessibility improvements at museums and heritage centers,
- Accessible routes, pathways, and wayfinding,
- Accessibility audits, training, and system-wide planning,
- Amenities such as benches and shade structures.

Discussion

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. asked about the Tahoe Rim Trail Association application, noting that the staff comments indicated the only deficiency was an insufficient number of required community letters of support. He asked what the requirement was.

For the record, Cortney Bloomer replied:

- The application guidelines required three letters of community support.
- The Tahoe Rim Trail Association did not meet this eligibility requirement, so the application was deemed ineligible and was not scored.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. stated that:

So my thought is it's not creating an exceptional rule, but providing them a window to be able to support those if it's not taken away from anyone else, and beyond the process, I would support giving them a two week period to provide those, those letters for reconsideration of their application."

For the record, Cortney Bloomer and Nicole Orsua acknowledged that:

- The Tahoe Rim Trail Association proposal was substantively strong.
- However, granting exceptions after the submission deadline for one applicant would undermine fairness and could expose the program to challenges from other applicants.
- Staff recommended maintaining consistent adherence to published eligibility requirements.

For the record, Jane Moon supported strict adherence to stated requirements, based on her experience in both applying for and administering grants. She noted that if applicants cannot provide basic required materials, it can signal downstream administrative challenges.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. requested:

- A copy of the Special Projects Grant application instructions.
- That Travel Nevada consider adding very explicit language to the guidelines, for example:
 - "Failure to provide all required materials will result in denial of the application," to avoid ambiguity in future application cycles.

For the record, Nicole Orsua stated that:

- Staff would provide copies of the application materials to commissioners.
- Staff would strengthen the clarity of application instructions for future rounds.

Herb Santos Jr. for the record, you don't need to produce it to me, because I just pulled it up. The only thing I would, I would suggest, is that and then even put in caps failure to provide everything that's in there will result in denial of the application.”

Budget and Category Clarification

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. added:

This is our first one. So, we still have another million dollars left, because we have 1.5 for these grants.

For the record, Rafael Villanueva explained:

- Category 50 now totals \$1.5 million:
 - \$1.0 million for 3D destination development projects (e.g., Goldfield, Mesquite).
 - \$0.5 million for Special Projects.
- The \$0.5 million for Special Projects was intended to be allocated approximately as:
 - \$100,000 for technology/programmatic projects,
 - \$400,000 for infrastructure/accessibility projects.
- The \$414,935 recommended award total slightly exceeded the originally earmarked \$400,000 infrastructure portion and therefore drew a small amount from the \$100,000 technology portion.
- In response to commissioner comments, Category 50 will be explicitly added to future financial reports presented to the Commission.

Motions – Special Projects Grant Awards

Northern Nevada Block

There were no recusals for the Northern Nevada block.

- Motion:
“I move to approve the Northern Nevada Special Projects grant block as presented.”
- Motion by: Herb Santos Jr.
- Second by: Annette Kerr

- Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Central Nevada Block

There were no recusals for the Central Nevada block.

- Motion:
"I move to approve the Central Nevada Special Projects grant block as presented."
- Motion by: Annette Kerr
- Second by: Jane Moon
- Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Southern Nevada Block

For the record, Jill Rowland-Lagan stated that she would recuse herself from voting on the Southern Nevada block.

- Motion:
"I move to approve the Southern Nevada Special Projects grant block as presented."
- Motion by: Mendy Elliott
- Second by: Jane Moon
- Vote: Motion carried unanimously, with Jill Rowland-Lagan recused.

J. International Market Development Update (Discussion Only)

Presenters: Nicole Orsua, Elsa Gomez, Gabriel Mortensen, Corey Marshall, Heather McGillivray, Alex Pace, and Jim O'Dwyer.

Travel Nevada Overview – International Markets

For the record, Nicole Orsua stated that Travel Nevada maintains international representation in:

- Australia / New Zealand
- Canada
- Mexico
- United Kingdom

Using data from the U.S. Department of Commerce and other sources, Elsa Gomez, for the record, provided a high-level overview:

- Overall overseas visitation to the United States is slightly down year-over-year, with some markets—particularly Canada—showing notable declines due to:
 - Geopolitical issues,
 - Exchange rates,
 - Airline decisions (including a Canadian carrier strike in summer 2025).
- Mexico has shown growth and is helping to offset some Canadian declines at the national and state levels.
- Nevada generally tracks national patterns but has seen a relatively stronger rebound beginning in August 2025, supported by:
 - Major events in Las Vegas (e.g., rugby events, WrestleMania, Electric Daisy Carnival),
 - Expanded international air service.
- A new Air France nonstop flight from Paris to Las Vegas was recently announced, scheduled to operate from April through October 2026.

Elsa Gomez also noted that:

- Las Vegas international passenger volumes at Harry Reid International Airport reflect significant participation from the United Kingdom, Europe, Mexico, and parts of Asia.
- Reno-Tahoe International Airport remains an important gateway for Mexico via Volaris service from Guadalajara.

Commission Discussion

Herb Santos Jr. for the record, I've got a few questions on the one slide that you were showing Canada and Mexico. What is the difference in the spend between our Mexican visitors and our Canadian visitors to see the significance between an 11% increase from Mexico and a 20% decrease from Canada. What are the real differences in terms not of the numbers, but on spending.

For the record, staff including Gabriel Mortensen and Fletch Brunelle responded:

- At the U.S. national level, total Canadian visitor spending remains significantly larger than Mexico's in absolute terms, but:

- Average daily spending for air travelers from each country is similar (approximately \$215–\$218 per day).
- Differences in volume, trip purpose, and mode of arrival (air vs. land) complicate direct state-level comparisons.
- More detailed Nevada-specific spending analysis for 2025 will be available after year-end data are finalized.

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. further stated:

And my last question, I get Canada, with the politics. I get that, but I'm not buying the politics on everything else and why seeing numbers going down when we look at what has been important to just about everybody that I talk to is our economics. And it is not the same traveling to Vegas. It is not the same cost saving trip that you would take as it's so expensive down there now. And whenever I go down to Vegas and I'm driving with an Uber or Lyft driver, I'm always asking them questions about what, what they're seeing, what people are talking about, and the same things keep coming up. Resort fees, paying for parking, \$75+ buffets. It's, I know it's a different Las Vegas now, but I think we have to be looking at how we're going to drive people to Nevada. And economics is such an important thing for families when they are making a decision to take their family somewhere, we've got to address that. And I think that is something which, from all the way, from our marketing to international marketing, that everything is what we have to start looking at. And I guess I get a little frustrated when I hear this is due to political reasons. I don't think it's all due to political reasons. I think there's economic reasons that if a person's going to make a decision, is it easier to stay at home, or why go when it is so expensive? Why go someplace where I'm going to be spending 1000s of dollars, just in hotel rooms, parking and, you know, they're going to make the decision not to come. We got to give them a reason. We got to get back to making them want to come, where they're going to get value for their dollar. That's, that's it's my little soapbox. But I think we have to sort of focus our analysis, not to just say everything's political"

For the record, Herb Santos Jr. also asked:

- What percentage of Nevada visitors is domestic versus international.
- He noted that if international visitation is a relatively small share, that information should inform how Travel Nevada prioritizes marketing efforts and budgets.

For the record, Fletch Brunelle and Mike Larraguetaresponded that:

- Historically, Las Vegas receives approximately 88 percent domestic visitors and 12 percent international visitors.
- International travelers generally:
 - Stay longer,
 - Spend more per stay,
 - Plan and book further in advance.
- Domestic markets typically can be influenced more quickly by marketing and are important for short-term recovery and volume.

For the record, Mike Larragueta asked whether Travel Nevada had adjusted international market budgets in light of performance trends, similar to how a destination might reallocate from a declining U.S. feeder market.

For the record, Rafael Villanueva responded:

- Travel Nevada has reduced investments in certain international markets:
 - Germany representation was discontinued due to limited return relative to cost.
 - Budgets were reduced in other markets (including Canada), with a stronger focus on travel trade partnerships rather than direct-to-consumer campaigns.
- Despite reductions, Travel Nevada has retained a presence in key international markets (Canada, Mexico, UK, Australia/New Zealand) to preserve long-term relationships and position the State for recovery.
- These adjustments reflected an overall 13 percent reduction in Category 31 spending.

Market-Specific Presentations

Australia / New Zealand – Corey Marshall, for the record:

- Australians and New Zealanders:
 - Frequently take long U.S. trips (approx. 17-24 nights).
 - Commonly visit multiple states, often including Nevada.
 - Rely heavily on online information and the travel trade, with ~70 percent of U.S. bookings coming through agents, operators, and OTAs.

- Travel motivations include:
 - “Set-jetting” (visiting places seen in film and TV),
 - Road trips and personalized itineraries,
 - Unique experiences that can be shared socially.
- Corey Marshall highlighted:
 - An Air New Zealand inflight magazine feature on a Nevada road trip.
 - Cooperative campaigns with airlines and tour operators.

Canada – Heather McGillivray, for the record:

- Canada has traditionally been Nevada’s largest international market.
- Canadian travelers:
 - Are value-conscious but continue to travel in significant numbers (around 80 percent of Canadians are still traveling).
 - Book trips both directly and through the travel trade (estimated 20+ percent via advisors).
- Heather McGillivray cited:
 - A Booking.com campaign where Travel Nevada was the first destination partner in Canada.
 - An Expedia cooperative campaign:
 - Approximate \$15,000 media spend;
 - Generated roughly 22,900 room nights and 4,600 air tickets for Nevada;
 - Total booking value approximately \$4.3 million, including nearly \$900,000 spent in rural Nevada communities.

Mexico – Alex Pace, for the record:

- Mexico remains a strong growth market for Nevada, with significant and growing air connectivity:
 - Flights from Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey to Las Vegas,
 - Service from Guadalajara to Reno (Volaris), with more lift anticipated.

- Mexican travelers:
 - Frequently travel as families or multi-generational groups.
 - Are highly interested in road trips and in visiting rural Nevada destinations (Carson City, Elko, Fallon, among others) beyond Las Vegas and Reno.
- Alex Pace noted:
 - Mexico has a population of roughly 130 million, with a median age of about 29 and a substantial, growing middle class.
 - The Mexican peso has remained relatively stable against the U.S. dollar over the last two years.
 - Competition for Mexican travelers is increasing from other U.S. states and international destinations.

United Kingdom – Jim O’Dwyer, for the record:

- The United Kingdom is one of Nevada’s strongest long-haul markets:
 - Over 500,000 UK visitors to Las Vegas in 2024.
 - Nearly all UK visitors come for leisure.
- UK visitors:
 - Often build multi-destination U.S. trips, visiting several states.
 - Have a strong affinity for road trips that can include Nevada.
- Despite recent economic and tax changes in the UK, forecasts suggest:
 - The UK could have one of the highest GDP growth rates among major European economies in 2026.
 - Nevada may see an increase of approximately 4 percent in UK arrivals compared to 2024, aided by the 2026 FIFA World Cup in North America.
- Only about 10 of the top 20 UK tour operators currently package rural Nevada, which presents an opportunity for targeted trade development.

No action was taken on this item.

K. 2025 Resident Sentiment Survey Results (Discussion Only)

Presenters: Fred Steinman and Gabriel Mortensen.

Survey Overview

For the record, Gabriel Mortensen introduced Fred Steinman and the 2025 Resident Sentiment Survey.

For the record, Fred Steinman stated:

- The survey was conducted between December 2024 and March 2025.
- It was developed collaboratively by the University of Nevada, Reno Center for Economic Development and Travel Nevada.
- The survey received approximately 2,100 responses from residents statewide.
- It included 38 questions, designed to measure:
 - Resident attitudes toward tourism, hospitality, arts, culture, and outdoor recreation.
 - Perceptions of benefits and drawbacks.
 - Preferences for the balance between resident and visitor needs.

Key respondent characteristics:

- Respondents were distributed across counties roughly consistent with population patterns, with:
 - The largest shares from Clark County (~33 percent) and Washoe County (~23-24 percent), followed by Carson City, Douglas County, and Lyon County.
- Approximately 62 percent of respondents reported living in Nevada for 20 or more years, indicating substantial long-term residency.

Key Findings

- Perceived Positive Impacts:
 - Residents identified tourism, hospitality, arts, and culture as having contributed positively to:
 - Outdoor recreation opportunities (trails, parks, open spaces).
 - Availability of arts and cultural experiences.
 - Preservation and celebration of local heritage and culture.

- Perceived Negative Impacts:
 - Residents expressed concerns about:
 - Traffic congestion on main travel corridors,
 - Rising cost of goods and services,
 - Housing affordability and availability,
 - Homelessness and crime.
 - These concerns generally align with broader statewide or national issues rather than tourism alone.
- Tourism vs. Arts/Culture:
 - Respondents clearly distinguished:
 - “Tourism and hospitality” (e.g., lodging, attractions, conventions), and
 - “Arts and cultural heritage” (e.g., museums, local festivals, historical programs).
 - Arts and cultural programs were viewed especially positively, with strong support for:
 - Activities that preserve local stories and identity,
 - Community-oriented festivals and events.
- Overall Ratings:
 - On a 1-10 scale, overall ratings for:
 - Tourism/hospitality,
 - Outdoor recreation,
 - Arts and cultural offerings
 were above 5, indicating general satisfaction.
 - Live sporting events received relatively lower scores, likely reflecting the concentration of major professional sports in Las Vegas and fewer large events in other regions.
- Resident vs. Visitor Focus:

- Residents perceived that current investments lean somewhat more toward visitor needs than resident needs.
- When asked what the emphasis *should* be, the largest share of respondents favored a balanced approach, with equal attention to residents and visitors.
- Use of Public Lands and Outdoor Recreation:
 - Residents:
 - Most frequently use public lands and outdoor recreation areas for daily or routine activities like walking, hiking, fitness, family outings, and wildlife viewing.
 - Visitors:
 - More often seek “once-in-a-lifetime” or highly memorable experiences.
 - The data suggest:
 - Resident use is frequent, often lower-spend per visit, but still meaningful for local economies.
- Spending on Arts and Culture:
 - Many respondents reported spending approximately \$100–\$500 annually on arts and cultural activities.
 - This level reflects:
 - Many free or low-cost community events, and
 - Limited budgets or time among residents for frequent paid attendance.

Discussion

For the record, Jill Rowland-Lagan asked whether the survey captured whether respondents worked in the tourism or hospitality industry.

For the record, Fred Steinman replied:

- Approximately 15–20 percent of respondents reported working directly or indirectly in tourism or hospitality.
- He had expected that share to be somewhat higher, given the sector’s importance to Nevada’s economy.

For the record, Mendy Elliott observed that she was somewhat surprised that only about one-third of respondents were from Clark County, given that Clark County holds a much larger share of the state's population. She asked whether this distribution surprised the research team.

For the record, Fred Steinman stated:

- He was slightly surprised, but overall satisfied with the geographic distribution.
- In some smaller rural counties, it can actually be easier to secure responses via local libraries and Extension offices.
- The resulting sample was sufficiently broad for statewide analysis.

For the record, Fletch Brunelle asked whether the data could be cross-tabulated by region (e.g., Clark County, Washoe County, rural counties) and whether such breakdowns were available.

For the record, Gabriel Mortensen and Fred Steinman responded that:

- An interactive data dashboard has been developed on Travel Nevada's website that allows users to filter results by geography and other variables.
- A second technical report is under preparation, providing:
 - Breakdown of results by tourism territory, including Indian Country.

No action was taken on this item.

L. Nevada's Indian Territory – Presentation (Discussion Only)

Presenter: Ben Rupert.

For the record, Ben Rupert introduced himself as Vice Chair of Nevada's Indian Territory and a member of the Washoe/Washishu/Numu people. He summarized the Territory's work and initiatives:

- Nevada's Indian Territory represents 28 tribes in Nevada and culturally related communities across the Great Basin, including areas of California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Arizona.
- The Territory's vision is to "change the world through eco-cultural tourism in the Great Basin."
- The Territory developed:

- A Great Basin tribal homelands map, grouping tribes into five major cultural regions:
 - Washoe,
 - Northern Paiute,
 - Western Shoshone,
 - Southern Paiute,
 - Fort Mojave.
- A strategic theme, “Many Tribes, One Destination,” emphasizing collaboration among multiple tribes to present a unified tourism narrative.
- Nevada’s Indian Territory has focused on:
 - A comprehensive website and downloadable brochure.
 - A suite of cultural sheets that describe each region’s people, language, and homelands (e.g., Washoe, Northern Paiute, Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, Fort Mojave).
 - Supporting powwows and cultural events across the state through mini-grants for marketing.
 - Interpretive signage in partnership with tribes and public land agencies (e.g., the Pyramid Lake Scenic Byway, Carson City trail signage).
- A major recent accomplishment was assisting the Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute Tribe in securing a \$250,000 grant for an observatory project, connecting indigenous sky stories with dark-sky tourism.
- Nevada’s Indian Territory also developed a navigation app that:
 - Features over 70 destinations across Nevada tied to indigenous homelands.
 - Emphasizes authentic, tribally guided storytelling.
- Ben Rupert reported that Nevada’s Indian Territory is engaged in the formation of a new international organization, DO IT – Destination Original Indigenous Tourism, which will initially bring together indigenous tourism leaders from the United States, Canada, and New Zealand.

No action was taken on this item.

M. Public Comment (Discussion Only)

Mike Larragueta called for public comment on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Nevada Commission on Tourism.

For the record, Kelly Benoit stated that there was no public comment at this time.

No public comment was received.

N. Adjournment (For Possible Action)

At the conclusion of the agenda, Mike Larragueta called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion

- Motion: "I move to adjourn."
- Motion by: Mendy Elliott
- Second by: (Second voiced on the record; may be recorded as "seconded by a member of the Commission.")
- Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:43 p.m.