



**San Luis Obispo County
Tourism Business Improvement District Advisory Board (CBID)
2016 2017 ~ Our Goals and Looking Ahead**

The CBID had 3 organizational marketing goals within our 2-year plan (Fiscal 2014|2015 and 2015|2016):

1. Evolve and clarify the regional consumer brand: Highway 1 Discovery Route
2. Increase overnight stays and length of stays for our constituency
3. Create efficiencies amongst tourism partners and shared-asset programs for local funds

In January 2015, the CBID Advisory Board directed the CAO and Core Marketing Firm to update the 2015|2016 fiscal year marketing activities. Summarized below are the four areas of focus along with a brief outcome:

- **Enhance co-op efforts with local funds:** Through interaction with the marketing firms of the local boards and Visit SLO County (VSLOC), the co-op programs evolved to include 805 Living, Diablo Magazine and Sunset CA Road Trips. Furthermore, the Core Marketing Firm assisted VSLOC with American Way co-op, placing a 10-page advertorial in the April 2016 issue with 2 pages focused on the Highway 1 Discovery Route.
- **Enhance event promotions:** Enhancements completed during the calendar year include On the Road with Jo travel show videos focusing on key events within many of our larger regions, an enhanced digital event calendar, and a successful getaway giveaway promotion partnership with Sunset Savor, creating almost 10,000 new database subscribers. Additionally, we focused on integrations at the local fund level by providing interactive, PR, social, content marketing and database tools to local funds and their agencies.
- **Provide in-market tools to assist lodging constituents with length of stay:** Our CAH1DR map, videos, photography and social content are being shared throughout the 10 destinations. A challenge we continue to face is that there is no unified front desk or property manager awareness program consistently connecting the CAH1DR brand with the guest. In an effort to provide more tools that directly support guest servicing, the CBID collaborated with County Parks, State Parks and NOAA/Monterey National Marine Sanctuary, and recently created Wildlife Viewing and Stewardship tips, as well as front line training that focuses on sharing activities that may result in an increased length of stay.
- **Create efficiencies with strategic partners** (Visit SLO County, Visit CA, Central Coast Tourism Council, and our Local Boards) - Collaboration with VSLOC and other partners continue to be a primary focus, with the connection to Hearst Castle and State Parks demonstrating significant improvement. One example is the CBID's work with The Whale Trail (see page 29) and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, through our Stewardship Travel program, whereby we have funded 6 Whale Trail signs in our coastal communities (San Simeon, Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, Avila Beach, Oceano) to emphasize the importance of learning about, and caring for, our fragile marine life.

As we look ahead, we want to take from our experiences and learn some actionable insights that were gained in 2015 that will help guide our 2016|2017 efforts, which include:

- Marketing, dedicated to the 10 destination brand, is delivering approximately 25 million paid and 40 billion earned media impressions annually
- Road Trips and multi-gen promotions are acquiring more core market travelers interested in our regional experiences – with 50,000 email subscribers and 60,000 Facebook fans
- All 10 destinations are attracting extensive earned media coverage from CAH1DR public relations and social media outreach efforts
- Multi-generational focus with our *Together Again* campaign is showing encouraging response, offering a flexible, sustainable platform for a variety of multi-gen travel scenarios targeting tier 1 audience consisting of boomer females who are planning travel
- Collaboration with local funds is progressing from shared assets to awareness and acquisition campaigns
- Local destination key messaging and imagery is essential to enhance co-operative advertising and satisfactory referrals to each destination from H1DR.com
- CBID regional TOT has been trending positive year over year (see page 8)

Furthermore, we must consider relevant travel trends that will directly influence our strategic priorities:

- **Visitors to CA Slowing** – 2.1% increase in 2015 vs 3.5% in 2014. Forecast for 2016 is 2.3% growth in total visits. GDP and consumer spending expect moderate growth.
- **Boomer Motivation** – 99% of all boomers plan to travel for leisure in 2016. Their primary motivations to travel are:
 - Spend time with family
 - Relax/rejuvenate
 - Get away from daily life
- **Rise of the boutique destination** – Visitors are looking for emphasis on local unique experiences. Destinations need to focus on what truly differentiates.
- **Curated experiences** -- Destinations have the opportunity to curate experiences for travelers, allowing them to meet locals, connect to local and cultural activities, and experience local dining, based on their individual tastes and interests.
- **Destination celebrations** -- Boomers age and think about life celebrations (birthdays, anniversaries), more and more of those are taking place in-destination.
- **Traveler flexibility and control ~ they research everything** - With the continued growth of online and mobile resources, consumers looking for flexibility and control of their vacation decisions have the ability to research everything and often do it not only in pre-trip planning but once a trip is underway.
- **Increasing focus on millennial travel** – With the aging of the Boomer generation, more focus is on Gen X and Millennials. They prefer unique lodging experiences over cookie cutter offerings.
- **Greater degree of personalization** -- Increased data mining capabilities, marketing efforts will lead to customization for our core visitors.

As we consider travel trends, and other key learnings, **the CBID will use this information as the basis of our 2016|2017 fiscal year marketing program with our eye on 4 specific areas:**

- The CA Hwy 1 Discovery Route through Coastal San Luis Obispo County is **well-positioned to compete for leisure travelers** emerging from gateway markets of Southern CA, Northern California and Central Valley. Further research may influence outreach tactics for the route, rural road trips, packaging and promotions.
- **Measurement criteria and attribution must be unified** for final program development. Recognizing the challenges of attributing immediate seasonal lodging bookings to many programs.

- **The web mobile presence needs to evolve** so that Highway1DiscoveryRoute.com delivers compelling web/mobile/social experiences for all targeted audiences. While the mobile-responsiveness scores well with Google, the destination content and interface needs to be refreshed to consumer preferences and destination key messaging. With refreshed content, opportunities to improve SEO/SEM on relevant key phrases of high volume travel search terms will result.
- CAH1DR subscriber database of 50,000 targeted CA travelers offers valuable entry point for **ongoing data profiling and our ability to gain visitors preference to visit our H1DR destinations.**

In Conclusion

Travel growth in San Luis Obispo County is currently outpacing that of California overall, showing a 4% increase year over year. The CBID performed well, with a 4.9% Y|Y TOT growth within our 10 regions (see page 8 comparing 2013|2014 TOT to the 2014|2015). The CBID clearly understands that our efforts do not solely impact TOT, and we do recognize that the significant gains we have enjoyed since the TBID's inception in 2009 are attributed to many factors.

As we look to our future, the CBID recently concluded a process to reassess our 5-year vision (see page 31). This will help guide the CBID organization into 2020 utilizing 4 key pillars that will drive our focus and our resources:

- Collaborative Partnerships: Enhance collaboration with state, regional, county-wide and local tourism partners
- Awareness and Engagement: Generate incremental awareness and engagement in the CAH1DR and 10 destinations
- Economic Well-being: Enhance economic well-being through increased in overnight stays and length of stays
- Local Fund Evolution: Guide and support the evolution of local funds

We are optimistic as to the "state of travel", as well as the CBID's ability to drive results by creating interest and preference to visit the Highway 1 Discovery Route and our 10 regions.

The State of California Travel survey, completed for VisitCA by Destination Analytics, shows that 36% of US travelers are likely to visit California in the next 3 years. Furthermore, over 85% of Californians travel within the state, providing a real opportunity with our 5-hour drive markets.

The economic forecast remains optimistic, and we are positioned well to continue to be a regional marketing voice for our lodging constituents.

With that, the CBID will continue to strive to deliver more travelers, and in turn drive increased Transient Occupancy Tax contributions, with the hope that those outside of our county understand how truly special this place is that we all call home.