



**MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (MTDB) BOARD  
QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

September 13, 2024 | 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.  
10209 Wincopin Circle,  
Columbia, Maryland, 21044

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Al Spence, A.S. Midway Tours  
Del. Wayne Hartman, Maryland House of  
Delegates  
Juan Carlos Linares, Federal Realty  
Investment Trust  
Rick Howarth, Consultant  
Robert Arthur, The Ivy Hotel  
Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism  
Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., World Footprints,  
LLC  
Dave Ferraro, Friends of Patapsco  
Valley State Park  
Andrew Frank, Cap Ex Advisory

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Ben Seidel, Real Hospitality Group  
Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County  
Department of Economic Development and  
Tourism  
James Mathias, University of Maryland  
Eastern Shore  
Chris Riehl, Rent-A-Tour  
Gerardo Martinez, Wild Kid Acres, LLC  
Melonie Johnson, MGM National Harbor  
Leverne McElveen, Levern McElveen &  
Associates, LLC  
Shelonda Stokes, Downtown Partnership of  
Baltimore  
Del. Melissa Wells, Maryland House of  
Delegates

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Ruth Toomey, Maryland Tourism Coalition  
Terry Hasseltine, Maryland Sports Commission  
Amy Rohrer, Maryland Lodging Association

**DESTINATION MARYLAND ORGANIZATIONS (DMO)**

Kristen Goller, Talbot County Economic  
Development and Tourism  
Trish McClean, Visit Baltimore  
Leslie Graves, Experience Prince George's

Amanda Hof, Howard County Tourism &  
Promotion

## **COMMERCE STAFF:**

Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director  
Brian Lawrence, Advertising and Content  
Cynthia Miller, Strategic Partnerships & PR  
Rianna Wan, Research

Daesha Elliott, Advertising and Content  
Greg Bird, Advertising and Content  
Julia Bouie, Administration

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

- a. Acting Board Chair Rick Howarth called the meeting of Friday September 13, 2024, to order and noted that the meeting is being recorded. Howarth thanked Amanda Hof, President, Howard County Tourism & Promotion for hosting this meeting at the Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel. Hof welcomed everyone and provided the historical context of the hotel and current overview of the area.
- b. Howarth called for a motion to approve the minutes of 6/07/24. A motion to approve was made and seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved. MTDB member introductions followed with brief industry updates.

## **II. Board Chair Nomination & Election - Sandy Turner**

- c. Current co-chairs Melonie Johnson and Ben Seidel terms are ending. It is time to nominate new MTDB officers at this meeting. Sandy Turner, Maryland Tourism Development Board member and Cecil County Tourism Coordinator informed members on how the nomination and election process for new officers will work. All available positions and guidelines were reviewed and nomination forms were distributed and returned by October 15, 2024, COB. Results will be announced at the November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Questions please contact [Liz](#) Fitzsimmons.

### **ARTICLE III** **OFFICERS - STAFF**

**SECTION 1. Election and Term of Officers.**  
The Board shall elect annually from its membership, a Chairperson, four (4) Vice Chairpersons (one each to represent the lodging, food service, transportation, and attractions sectors), and a Secretary-Treasurer, each of whom shall serve for a term of one (1) year, or until death, resignation, or removal. Upon the vacancy of any officer position, a successor shall be elected at the next regular meeting to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

## **III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT - Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director, Office of Tourism & Film**

- d. Fitzsimmons presented on several key topics:

**Tourism is an economic ecosystem derived from visitor spending that delivers opportunity and quality of life for Marylanders.**

### **Vision Statement**

Maryland leads the way as one of America's most exciting, diverse and welcoming destinations - creating memories and experiences for visitors worldwide to enjoy.

### **Mission Statement**

OTD stimulates and drives Maryland's thriving tourism economy, with a primary goal of creating a great place for all Marylanders to live, work and play.

### **Three Measurable Objectives = One Outcome**

#### **MARKET EXPANSION**

- Further promotional pushes in Cleveland, Pittsburgh and New York metro

#### **LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS**

- Working with private sector and county tourism offices on grants to generate overnight stays

#### **MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Looking for those events, trends and opportunities to showcase Maryland in a positive light - domestically and internationally

Transactional Outcomes = CUSTOMERS SPENDING TIME AND MONEY IN OUR STATE
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### **Maryland's Leading Five (Differentiators)**

- The Most Powerful Underground Railroad Storytelling Destination in the World
- Maryland's Trail System Second-to-None
- 18 Scenic Byways
- Fish & Hunt Maryland
- The Great Chesapeake Bay Loop

## Key Findings of Economic Impact of Tourism in MD 2023

Tourism in MD	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Visitors (Domestic & International)	41.9 million	42.1 million	24.7 million	35.2 million	43.5 million	45.1 million
Visitor Spending	\$18.1 billion	\$18.6 billion	\$11.6 billion	\$16.4 billion	\$19.4 billion	\$20.5 billion
Visitor Spending Growth	2.1%	3.0%	-37.6%	42.0%	18.4%	5.7%
Total Economic Impact	29.6 billion	30.3 billion	20.9 billion	26.4 billion	\$30.3 billion	\$31.4 billion
Fiscal Contributions (State & Local taxes)	\$2.5 billion	\$2.6 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$2.1 billion	\$2.3 billion	\$2.4 billion
Tax Savings (For each household)	\$1,140	\$1,175	\$775	\$923	\$999	\$1,027
Tourism Supported Jobs (Direct and Indirect)	226,235 jobs	226,427 jobs	166,000 jobs	173,700 jobs	187,296 jobs	190,660 jobs
Tourism Industry Employment (Direct jobs)	150,073 jobs	149,991 jobs	104,328 jobs	112,879 jobs	123,617 jobs	126,977 jobs
Direct Labor Income	\$6.5 billion	\$6.6 billion	\$4.9 billion	\$5.3 billion	\$6.0 billion	\$6.4 billion
Private Sector Employer in Maryland Ranking	10th	11th	12th	12th	10th	11th

Sources: Tourism Economics

### DMO Grant Program

- FY24 - All Reimbursement Requests have been processed; final closeout is underway
- FY25 Next Steps:
  - Grant Application Kits are being prepared; updated Reimbursement Request forms have been shared
  - Annual training was held on 9/11
  - DMO/OTD “future-facing” discussion set for 10/18
  - Qualifying Expenditure Report training set for December

### Marketing Maryland Scenic Byways

- FY25 Procurements:
  - New Printed Guide - writing, photography, production, printing and delivery (\$180K)
  - I-70 Welcome Centers Exterior Exhibits replacement (\$60K)
  - Multi-form video (\$190K)

### September - IUGRR Month 2024

- Launch events - Riversdale House Museum and Historic Sotterley Home
- Updated Information on [visitmaryland.org](http://visitmaryland.org)
  - International Underground Railroad Events
  - Historic Annapolis Underground Railroad Walking Tour
  - Southern Maryland - Underground Railroad Sites
  - The Hidden Chesapeake: Slavery and Freedom through Harriet Tubman’s Eyes
  - Finding Freedom, Faith and Family on Maryland’s Underground Railroad Guide
- Media Summary
  - [Southern Maryland News](#)
  - [The Southern Maryland Chronicle](#)

- o [MSN](#)
- o DC News Talk 105.9 WMAL radio - (upcoming, air date TBD)

#### **October - Maryland Horse Month 2024**

- Two new equestrian driving collections - Montgomery County and Frederick County ([www.visitmaryland.org/horse](http://www.visitmaryland.org/horse))
- Major tourism events in October ([marylandhorse.com](http://marylandhorse.com))
  - o 9/26 - 10/6 - Capital Challenge Horse Show
  - o 10/5 - State Jousting Championship
  - o 10/5 - Celebration of the Horse
  - o 10/12 - National Jousting Championship
  - o 10/12 - Maryland Million
  - o 10/17 - 10/20 - Maryland 5-Star at Fair Hill
  - o 10/21 - Washington International Horse Show
- 2025 - Celebrate 5th anniversary of Maryland Horse Month

#### **Remaining 2024 Social Media Campaigns**

- Main Street Mondays
  - o Showcase a different Main Street town each week
  - o Invite towns to participate in deals and discounts
- Great Chesapeake Bay Loop
  - o Short Form Videos
    - 13 completed videos
    - B-roll
- Support ongoing OTD areas of focus
  - o Fall Travel
  - o Holidays
  - o Byways
  - o Alcohol
  - o Diverse Travel

#### **2024 Destination Maryland Awards**

- Nominations received from DMOs in four categories
  - o Leveraging Partnerships
  - o Maximizing Opportunities
  - o Market Expansion
  - o Transactional Opportunities
- Eligible projects and campaigns conducted from September 1, 2023 - August 31, 2024
- Awards presented during the Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit, November 6, 2024

#### **e. MARKETING UPDATE -Brian Lawrence, Assistant Director, Office of Tourism & Film**

##### **RFP Updates**

- Publications: Awarded to Miles Partnership; awaiting scheduling for BPW approval
- Digital/Website: Decision made on vendor; contract going to vendor for signatures (SBR contract)
- Video Production: BAFOs have been returned; final decision scheduled for 9/16

#### **2024 Spring/Summer Mid-campaign**

- \$36,479,766 Revenue
- 56:1 ROI
- 111.4 million Impressions
- 72K Website Conversions

#### **Fall 2024 Campaigns**

- Fall Travel: \$335K
- Fall Byways: \$562K
- Intl UGRR Month: \$55K
- Total: \$952K
- Media Outlets Include: Over Air & Connected TV/Radio/Display-Retargeted Digital/Measured Media

#### **Marketing Updates**

- 2024 'Welcome Home for the Holidays' campaign runs beginning in November and through February of 2025
  - o First time - Winter Footage to showcase 1st quarter travel
- Call for Deals & Discounts now to be part of the campaign
- New video footage shot this week in Solomons and National Harbor for new spring/summer TV spots

#### **Marketing Expansion**

- Continue to weave Belong-ability in as an overarching theme and market Diverse Travel Experiences in Maryland
  - o Partner with Cool & Associates to conduct primary research for Hispanic travelers
  - o Develop engaging website content based on learnings from Hispanic Travel Study
  - o Create new visual imagery (photo & video) and incorporate belong-ability into all visual asset management projects
  - o Promote overnight packages in Maryland for World Pride 2025 (DC)
  - o Refresh African American Heritage Guide 2025
  - o Expand website content on African American culinary, arts, culture & heritage
- Elaborate on Indigenous Peoples stories during the year of America's 250th anniversary in 2026

### **f. RESEARCH UPDATES**

Fitzsimmons presented the following statistics:

#### **Website Traffic for the Past 5 Quarters**

- Users and New Users increased over 30% YoY
- The Spring/Summer and Chesapeake Bay Loop campaigns as well as Fleet Week activations ran simultaneously creating a spike in Q2 visitation

#### **Top 10 Website Content**

- Pageviews increased 23% YoY
- Sessions and Engaged Sessions increased over 30% YoY

#### **Partner Referrals**

- Visitmaryland.org sent more than 135,000 users to partner sites from April-June 2024
- Top Categories: Attractions, Events, Accommodations, and Dining

#### **Overall Updates**

- Baltimore Convention Center Task Force
  - o On-going
- o Winery and Vineyard Grant Program
  - o Opens shortly
- Maryland Alcohol Promotion Fund
  - o New round opening shortly
- Maryland Welcome Centers - normalizing operating hours

#### **IV. Reports from the Industry**

- Maryland Association of Destination Marketing Organizations – Kristen Goeller
- Maryland Horse Industry Board – Terry Hasseltine
- Maryland Hotel and Lodging Association - Amy Rohrer
- Maryland Tourism Coalition - Ruth Toomey

#### **V. Adjournment**

##### **Upcoming MTDB meeting**

Friday, November 1, 2024

Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Agenda: Annual Meeting with Chair/Executive Committee Elections

Location: B & O Railroad Museum

901 W Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21223

Room: Harry C. Eck Education Station

##### **Announcing**



<https://mdtourism.org/maryland-tourism-travel-summit/program/>