

Louisiana Tourism Development Commission Meeting
Tuesday, March 25, 2025 | 11:00 a.m.
East Baton Rouge Main Library | Baton Rouge, LA

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: Carrie Stansbury, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:11 a.m.

Roll Call by Lynne Coxwell:

Present: Carrie Stansbury, Al Schof, Brett Bares, Janice Delerno, Melissa Dottolo, Herman Fuselier, Jay Kumar, William Langkopp

Absent: Thomas Carmody, Ben Berthelot, Mary Ann Nowlin, Morgan Moss, Anna Koch Tusa, Greg Domingue, Cassie Condrey, Bill Stark, Alice Scarborough

7 members present and a quorum (due to the number of Senate approved Commissioners at the date of the meeting)

William Langkopp resigned prior to the meeting leaving his seat open. Three (3) commission members' seats were in the process of being selected prior to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Chair Stansbury called for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Al Schof moved, seconded by Janice Delerno. Motion carried and the minutes were approved.

With several new commissioners in attendance, the members went around the room to introduce themselves and their organizations. The guests, in attendance, also introduced themselves.

Doug Bourgeois, Assistant Secretary for Louisiana Office of Tourism (LOT), welcomed the commissioners and guests and began the meeting with the LOT updates. He reviewed the LOT objective and mission as well as recent organizational chart updates with our now robust staff and other staff moving into new positions. Reminding members that in-state advertising is capped at 10 percent. The LOT aims to provide information in different ways. One way is refreshing advertising and campaigns. Doug discussed travel trends and how it changes so quickly. For instance, the rise of solo traveler and number one solo travelers are women and an increase in road trips. We're seeing less travelers due to the recent tariffs especially from Canada. Trying to appeal to Canadians. Everyone wants to travel, but seeing some hurdles, such as the strong dollar, which is at par with the Euro.

Doug mentioned that the LOT will be attending Travel South Global Week the following week, which lead to other events that took place since the start of 2025. Lots of things happening but uncertainties in travel.

Doug asked Donald Chube, Director of Partnerships and Sponsorships for the LOT, to speak on the Super Bowl activation in early February. Donald gave a brief snapshot of the LOTs partnership with the French Market and Super Bowl media event. The LOT offered buy-ins to

industry partners to provide sweet treats to showcase their brand and destination to engage consumers at the media event as well as a booth at the French Market for the Louisiana Culture Festival. Three Louisiana bands played at the media event.

Next up was Jennifer Berthelot, Director of Communications for the LOT, who reviewed the LOTs 4th year attending the Tournament of Roses (TOR) parade. Partner buy-ins were offered, and taken by the Northshore, Baton Rouge, Houma, Shreveport-Bossier, and Tangipahoa, and their benefits included a rider and media tours. The 2025 theme was “Louisiana Saturday Night.” The coverage mentions by media type were nearly 1,800 media items over 221 days generating nearly \$50 million in advertising value.

Following Jennifer, Karron Alford, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the LOT, introduced a new staff member from the advertising section, Heather Prejean. Karron reviewed the 2025 Year of Food campaign and the activations to promote the food scene. The LOT will still attend the Toronto Food & Drink Festival in April since it has been paid for; however, no partners will be joining the LOT team.

In 2026, the Year of Outdoors will be highlighted.

Karron discussed the ongoing strategic plan, which has been launched and introduced the vision, mission, values, and position statement. The LOT hosted 30 statewide meetings as the process started last year. There are 4 focus areas or imperatives as they are called – evolve partner relationships; increased organization effectiveness; amplify our brand identity; and communicate the value and impact of our work.

Next, Maria Manzella, Director of Tourism Sales for the LOT, gave a brief overview of the successful and interactive inaugural Tourism Sales & Marketing Education Seminar from January. There were 88 attendees including staff, speakers and sponsors with 7 sessions. The next seminar will be held January 26, 2026.

On April 16, the sales team is hosting a ‘Steps to Success’ course in Alexandria in conjunction with the International Travel Association. This course will help attendees build profile sheets and work with tour operators.

Lastly, Sharon Calcote, First Assistant for the LOT, handed out schedules to invite commissioners to attend the next Rural Tourism Conference on May 13-14. This conference will get in the community and be interactive and offer experiential learning including with 5 different breakout sessions.

The Rural Tourism section is also hosting two grant writing workshops with sessions July 14-19 in Marksville and July 21-25 in Port Allen. These will be in-depth workshops and intensive including a federal funding overview, RFPs, working with funders, and entire process on writing. It’s a \$1,500 value per person, but the LOT is only charging \$100.

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) is holding their next national annual meeting on September 10-12 in Baton Rouge. A highlighted presentation will be on A.I.

Within the strategic plan, a big push is more education. We need help getting the word out.

Upon completion of the LOT updates, the meeting attendees took a break and resumed at 11:49 a.m.

Doug introduced the 3 of 4 agencies represented at the meeting to share what they do and how they help promote Louisiana. The agencies include advertising, Zehnder; media buying, Roux Advertising; and interactive media, Miles Partnership.

As a reminder, the LOT did something different, we broke out media buying during the last RFP process.

Doug stated that some of the agencies have been with us for a while and are back with us, and some are new to the LOT. Bringing new and fresh ideas.

Karron introduced Roux Advertising, formerly Morgan and Company, who rebranded. This allowed them to keep their roots and how they approach their work as a media agency. Eric Morgan presented their strategic approach: S.T.I.R.

S – Sift

T – Translate

I – Implement

R – Refine

Through data-driven media planning.

Work well with the other agencies to share information, insights, and paid versus earned media.

Jeffery, with Roux, worked on performance and how Roux tracks.

With budget shifts, FY 25 updates included changes in optimization and increased budget on social and digital out of home (OOH).

Roux looks at target markets and the Louisiana traveler. Shares snapshots with the LOT on each campaign performance. Mardi Gras performance campaign exceeded goals. The My LA performance campaign increased goal benchmarks and surpassed benchmarks with 1.5 million, a 12% increase in engaged sessions and :41 seconds average time per session increased.

Research includes:

How they determine travel – 64% weather; 61% food; and 57% attractions

Travel inspiration is 49% word of mouth.

7 in 10 outdoor travelers enjoy being active when traveling.

Miles Partnership presented next. They have been working with DCRT for 15 years. Jessica Ragusa and Maggie Heller discussed A.I. and its impact on Louisiana.

1 in 10 travelers use AI as a travel planning resource (Future Partners). Tech Trends Report: 11.3% of U.S. travelers use A.I. planner and 32.5% of India travelers use an A.I. planner.

Frontier models for A.I. are Copilot, Chat GPT, and Gemini.

A.I. overview pulls and summarizes. Use Perplexity A.I. for research.

Carrie Stansbury asked a question – are visitors trusting A.I.? Miles answered that it's a different level of trust and by generational usage.

The LOT is still offering Destination Optimization, otherwise known as Google My Business.

The LOT is participating with Miles in A.I. Opener courses.

Miles uses Cludo within Google search within your website. Guide Geek is an A.I. travel assistant. Occasiongenius is an A.I. for smart events. Concierge is an A.I. based on sites content.

The LOT usage and implementation of A.I. on ExploreLouisiana.com includes:

- personalized itinerary builder based on personas and interests
- powered chat
- site search

Lastly, Zehnder presented. They made introductions of Erin Joyce, Katherine Simon, and William Gilbert. Went over who they are and gave examples of work.

Create advertising campaigns through messaging and call to action. Focus on the 5 key pillars: food & drink, outdoors, music, history/culture and road trips.

Discussed the campaign focus, and 2027 multi-year campaign, which they will develop 2-3 unique concepts and sense of place.

Gave out a focus group questionnaire for the LTDCs assistance or they could use a QR code, due to time.

Doug thanked the agencies for their presentations. Wrapping up, Doug discussed tourism stats and the new legislative impact book. Reviewed the emerging markets and countries from our 3-year grant from the Department of Commerce. Shared the LOTs successes and accomplishments

from 2024 including Office of the Year from Southeast Tourism Society and Cannes Dolphin award.

Other new business discussed was from Lynne Coxwell, Director of Research for the LOT, who went over trainings that the commissioners have to complete and will send out links and verify when the trainings are due.

Jeff Harlan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the LOT, gave a brief update on the budget. The 3/100 of one cent of the state sales and use tax dedicated to LOT had language cleaned up in a 2024 revised statute; however, the district remains and legislation remains. Tax base is broader. Forecasted to be up. Interagency transfer are appropriated funds to sister agencies.

No one had any new or old business to discuss.

Carrie called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Jay Kumar. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:09 p.m.