

Regular Meeting
Moab Tourism Advisory Board (MTAB)
Held at Grand County, Utah Commission Chambers
125 E. Center
Moab, Utah 84532

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzKBhILfbdo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isEoyHxcnwM>

MINUTES

January 13, 2026 | 3:00 p.m.

**** Time stamps (HH:MM:SS) correspond to the video****

Regular Meeting

Members in attendance: Lori McFarland, Wendell Williams, Cora Phillips, Jason Taylor, Brian Martinez, Sharon Kienzle

Members in attendance remotely: Alex Borichevsky, Howard Trenholme, Rebecca Monceaux

Non-members in attendance: Ali Harford (MOT), Mick Soleta (MOT), Bega Metzner (MOT), Lesley Rowbal (Madden Media)

Non-members in attendance remotely: Florian Hermann, Heidi Gress (Camp4)

Opening Items

Call to Order (00:00:34)

Introductions (00:00:49)

Citizens to be Heard (00:02:10)

Discussion and Action Items

1. Presentation: Florian Hermann (00:02:27)

- Lori introduced Florian Hermann (Hermann Global), explaining that he specializes in European and international tourism markets and has previously worked with the Moab Office of Tourism. Florian then gave a presentation detailing global markets trends and how they relate to Utah travel. His data is sourced from surveys of the Herrmann Global audience.

- Florian highlighted that Utah now ranks as the #1 desired U.S. state among his surveyed international national-park travelers, surpassing California and Arizona, due to strong statewide branding and marketing. He emphasized that international travelers rely heavily on authentic content.
- The board asked if Herrmann Global works with the UOT and its history with the Moab Office of Tourism. Florian also emphasized, from a question from Howard, that US destinations have an opportunity to market to international audiences during the 2026 World Cup. He encouraged Moab not to retreat from international marketing and instead to double down on authentic storytelling and destination-specific content to retain and grow market share.

2. Approval of the minutes: December 9, 2025 meeting (00:27:49)

- Cora motions to approve the December 9 meeting minutes. Sharon seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

3. Approval of 2026 MTAB meeting schedule (00:28:29)

- Sharon motions to approve the same meeting schedule for 2026 as in 2025. Wendell seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Approval of Madden Media 2026 Media PPlan and Review 2025 (00:29:27)

- Lesley outlined Madden's funnel-based strategy—Discovery, Trust, and Visit/Convert—using tactics such as connected TV, paid social, programmatic display, Performance Max, content collaborations, OTAs, and credit-card-based analytics to drive responsible visitation and measurable economic impact.
- Mick and Ali clarified that the Madden contract totals approximately \$1.8 million, which includes media, website, content, and analytics support, and that an additional \$300,000 in MOT-managed paid media (Utah co-ops, billboards, and in-house projects) brings the total 2026 paid media line to about \$2.1 million. Madden's direct media buying budget for 2026 is \$1.4 million.
- The board then discussed placing ads based on travel booking windows and ad campaign design, such as designing ads that could target specific events like Easter Jeep Safari.
- Lesley also pointed out that the presentation contains a detailed appendix to further breakdown tactics and placements.
- Wendell motions to approve Madden Media's 2026 media plan. Jason seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

5. Special Events Marketing Grant Review Subcommittees (00:58:46)

- Ali reminded the board of their current timeline for the Special Events Marketing Grant: the board approved the grant guidelines and application during its December 9 meeting. The deadline for the grant is March 1, so the board has to decide who is on its application review committee.

- The board discussed how many members should be on the committee: four would make it a quorum, and thus a public meeting. The board then discussed making all of its scorecards public, for better transparency.
- Technical difficulties! Switch to MTAB 1.13.26 Part Two video.
- Jason motions to have Howard, Jason, and Cora be on the first review subcommittee. Wendell seconded. Motion passes unanimously.
- Howard makes a motion to table the decision on the second review subcommittee to a future meeting. Jason seconded. Cora motions to amend the motion to include details that the folks in the first subcommittee are not expected to be on the second subcommittee. Jason seconded. Howard amended his original motion to state, "I make a motion that the first subcommittee be myself, Cora, and Jason, and that the second subcommittee will still be determined and will not preclude a previous subcommittee member being on the second committee." Jason seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

7. Letter to the editor (00:04:09 - new video)

- Moved up on agenda
- Lori introduced ongoing concerns about recent Times-Independent coverage of tourism and marketing issues that contributed to public misunderstanding and social media backlash. Wendell Williams cited a December 31 article that referenced "\$3.5 million" in agency spending in a way that many readers interpreted as wasteful spending by the Moab Office of Tourism, and a July article that inaccurately suggested a "\$2 million glow-up" on branding; he noted that while corrections and takedowns occurred, initial harm remained.
- Jason Taylor and Brian Martinez emphasized that any public statement should be coordinated with the County PIO and Commission, making clear that the PIO is the primary point of contact for official tourism information and clarification.
- Mick Soleta described internal discussions about a broader community communications plan to explain what the Office of Tourism does, how funds are restricted, and how tourism supports local services.
- Jason motioned that the Chair and Vice Chair work with Melissa Jeffers to draft a letter to local media that corrects key misunderstandings about tourism funding. Sharon seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

8. Board Member reports (00:29:05)

- Moved up on agenda
- Lori McFarland reported that she and Wendell are preparing a report to the County Commission on 2025 accomplishments and 2026 priorities, invited board input, and encouraged outreach to fill the vacant ninth MTAB seat reserved for a TRT/TRCCA collector, while also monitoring state legislation affecting tourism.
- Wendell Williams reported on new statewide ID requirements for restaurant alcohol service, noted a strong December for local restaurants driven by weather patterns, and thanked Madden Media and MOT staff for their data-driven work.

- Jason Taylor praised the holiday lighting projects (including the lighted bridge), reported on the City's strategic planning retreat focusing on downtown improvements, and described upcoming sidewalk and visibility upgrades near key visitor access points.
- Sharon Kienzle shared that Arches National Park visitation was up in December and for the year, and that Moab Information Center (MIC) visitation was up ~10% year-over-year, with plans to return to extended hours in March.
- Howard Trenholme provided an update on the Canyonlands Regional Airport and the upcoming Essential Air Service (EAS) decision, stressing the importance of reliable air service for tourism and inviting board participation in a January 23 EAS meeting.
- Alex Borichevsky reported his restaurants are on winter break until Valentine's Day, noted strong holiday visitation including international guests, and expressed appreciation for the board's work.
- Cora Phillips announced that the Grand Business Summit is sold out, praised the success of the Electric Light Parade and holiday events, and highlighted growing collaboration between the Chamber, MOT, Economic Development, and the Small Business Development Center.
- Commissioner Martinez said that Moab tourism had a successful end of the year with multiple holiday events, and congratulated and thanked the board for their work.
- Bega said there are exciting film projects coming to Moab in 2026. Mick and Ali reported on international trade and PR efforts, and upcoming industry events (Tourism Day on the Hill, IMM, sales missions).

6. Discussion: 2026 MTAB goals

- Tabled to a future meeting due to time constraints