



ANNUAL REPORT

Alaska Travel Industry Association

2016-2017



Letter from the Chair

Greetings ATIA Members:

I had the distinct privilege to become your Chair at the ATIA Convention in October, 2016. I've spent my entire 30-year career working in the Alaska visitor industry, so it is truly an honor.

The incoming ATIA Board faced an immediate challenge. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, the State of Alaska provided \$15 million to the Alaska Tourism Marketing Board (ATMB) for a statewide marketing program; in FY17, that amount was reduced to \$1.5 million. With the significant drop in revenue from oil production affecting budgeting statewide, the Alaska Legislature also mandated that our industry develop a plan for a self-sustainable marketing program.

Our first step was to address the budget shortfall. Our Board worked closely with ATMB to cut programs and ensure that the remaining programs could be self-funding. Our next step was to address the Legislative mandate. We discussed multiple ideas, and creating a Tourism Improvement District (TID) became the preferred solution.

The proposed TID structure would include vehicle rental tax funds, already collected from the State and intended to be used for tourism marketing, along with funds from the private sector. The sole purpose of the TID, protected in legislation, would be to fund a sustainable statewide marketing program.

The TID concept is very complex and we are still working with industry to ensure the program is fair and equitable. The Board submitted the concept to the Legislature in 2017 as a response to the Legislature's mandate. We made it clear this was a working concept and we need more discussion with our membership on how best to implement it. The fact that we even came to the table with a possible solution was well received by the Legislature, and we were able to secure a modest increase of marketing funding in FY18. However, the \$3 million allocated is still well below what is needed to make a difference in attracting visitors to our great state.

I firmly believe the State has a responsibility to fund a statewide marketing effort. It was outlined in the legislation creating the vehicle rental car tax and is evident in the more than \$4 billion in economic activity that our industry creates. Yet, we can—and should—be part of the long-term fiscal solution. I look forward to hearing from you on how we can best implement this plan together.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dennis McDonnell".

Dennis McDonnell
Chair

ATIA Sustaining Partners, 2016-2017

We would like to thank and recognize all of our [Sustaining Partners](#), all of which play a key role in the growth of ATIA programs, resources, education, advocacy, and more.

DENALI LEVEL

Alaska Airlines
Alaska Railroad
Holland America Line
HAP Alaska-Yukon
Princess Cruises

ARCTIC LEVEL

Explore Fairbanks
The Alaska Collection
UnCruise Adventures
Visit Anchorage

ORCA LEVEL

Ketchikan Visitors Bureau
Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau
Travel Juneau
White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

GOLD LEVEL

Alaska Coach Tours
Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council
Skagway Convention & Visitors Bureau

JADE LEVEL

Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau



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ATIA Mission

The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) promotes Alaska as a top visitor destination, communicating and promoting Alaska’s tourism industry as one of the state’s major economic forces. ATIA is the respected voice of the industry, promoting industry growth while caring for the environment, recognizing cultures, and supporting Alaska’s unique quality of life.

Letter from the President

ATIA remains a strong, effective voice for the tourism industry because of you—our more than 700-member businesses, organizations, and individuals. Because of you, tourism in Alaska continues to be the bright spot in Alaska’s economy. As president, I am honored to represent ATIA and bring our voices to the table as we look toward the challenges—and opportunities—ahead.



Our principle is that every member’s voice is heard. During the last 12 months, we’ve heard your voices on issues such as professional development, tourism marketing, and fiscal sustainability.

In FY17, ATIA led the industry in providing professional development opportunities. We hosted more than twenty speakers and panelists at our annual convention in Anchorage, Alaska, and shared information on visitor data, destination marketing, and traveler experiences. We also supported industry creativity and growth with ATIA’s First Annual Tourism Shark Tank. We look forward to hearing about the future success of the winning businesses.

While certain areas of our industry are growing, it was a tough year for tourism marketing. After years of stable state funding, ATIA and the Alaska Tourism Marketing Board (ATMB) saw a significant decline in support for the state’s tourism marketing campaign. Despite the challenges, ATIA and ATMB invested in travel trade and media strategies, and were able to focus precious marketing dollars on making sure TravelAlaska.com, our main consumer website, remained a credible resource.

While the state’s economic outlook remains uncertain, ATIA is taking steps to ensure long-term financial sustainability for the statewide marketing program. In FY17, industry leaders began a strategic initiative to create a Tourism Improvement District (TID). The proposed TID legislation creates a framework that would allow industry to assess ourselves. The funds, supported by an investment from the State of Alaska through the Vehicle Rental Car tax, would generate a sustainable fund for Alaska tourism marketing.

We still have a long way to go, but our outlook for FY18 is optimistic.

Sarah Leonard
President & CEO

Membership

ATIA is the state's leading industry organization for travel-related businesses and supporters. ATIA membership grew, and members continued to enjoy exclusive [benefits](#) such as the [ATIA Annual Convention and Trade Show](#), online courses offered through the [ATIA E-Learning Center](#), participation in [local chapters](#), and access to support from the [Family Assistance Foundation](#).



696
Total members

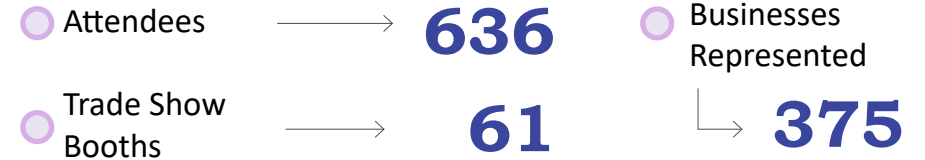
ATIA Chapters

- Anchorage
- Fairbanks
- Juneau
- Ketchikan
- Skagway
- Arts, Culture & Heritage



2016 ATIA Annual Convention & Trade Show

Dena'ina Convention Center | Anchorage, Alaska | October 4-6, 2016



Adventure Green Alaska

[Adventure Green Alaska](#) (AGA) is ATIA's voluntary certification program for sustainable tourism businesses operating in Alaska. AGA-certified companies believe that outstanding Alaska experiences can also be sustainable and of benefit to visitors and hosts alike. Using standards of sustainable management and economic, environmental, and social sustainability, AGA encourages tourism businesses to evaluate their operations and determine whether they use – or could be using – best sustainable practices.



2016-2017 CERTIFIED AGA BUSINESSES



ATIA Foundation

The [ATIA Foundation](#) was created in 1997 under the Alaska Visitors Association for the purpose of reinvesting in the future of the Alaska tourism industry. Alaskans pursuing a degree in or related to tourism in Alaska can qualify for scholarships, with a special Rural Award benefiting individuals from villages and small communities.

ATIA Foundation scholarship funds are raised through annual events and pledges from industry members at the ATIA Annual Convention.



\$29,740

**Total ATIA Foundation
Funds raised in FY17**

\$335,000

**Awarded since
inception**

2017 ATIA Foundation Scholarship Recipients - \$25,000 awarded!



Kaitlan Head, Chugiak
\$2,500
UnCruise Adventures Scholarship



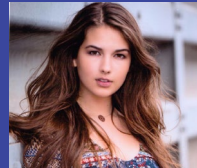
Helen Bismark, Anchorage
\$2,000
ATIA Anchorage Chapter Scholarship



Dixie Dittbrenner, Eagle River
\$1,000
Alaska Airlines Scholarship
\$1,000
Alaska Railroad Scholarship



Stuart Relay, Valdez
\$2,500
Holland America Line Scholarship



Ellie Wells, Anchorage
\$1,000
Premier Alaska Tours Scholarship
\$1,000
Tim McDonnell Mentorship Scholarship



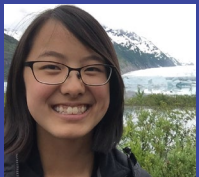
Chastity McCarthy, Kodiak
\$1,000
Chuck West Memorial Scholarship



Spencer Erickson, Ketchikan
\$2,500
Kris Geldaker Memorial Scholarship



Eliza Oldham, Eagle River
\$1,500
All Alaska Tours Scholarship



Kacy Grundhauser, Anchorage
\$2,500
White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad
Scholarship



Brenda Carlson, Anchorage
\$500
ATIA Continuing Education Scholarship

7 1-year scholarships funded through member pledges were also awarded:

- Ellie Wells, Anchorage, AK - \$1,000
- Andrew Agosti, Kenai, AK - \$1,000
- Kamerin Karp, Anchorage, AK - \$1,000
- Jordan Kesler, Eagle River, AK - \$1,000
- Jeri Henry, Anchorage, AK - \$1,000
- Eliza Oldham, Eagle River, AK - \$500
- Dixie Dittbrenner, Eagle River, AK - \$500

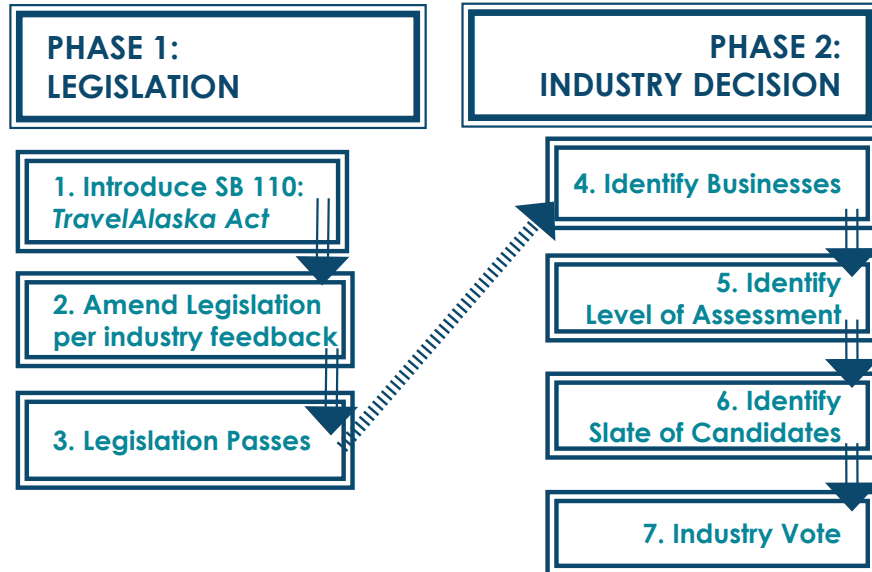
Tourism Improvement District

In 2016, the Alaska Legislature mandated that the tourism marketing board develop a plan to phase out reliance on unrestricted general funds for marketing and move toward a self-sustaining program funded by industry. The ATIA Board of Directors and industry partners began discussing the idea of an Alaska statewide [Tourism Improvement District](#) (TID) as a way to fund a statewide tourism marketing program.

A TID is similar to a business improvement district. Related businesses are assessed, with the proceeds used at a statewide level to fund tourism promotion efforts. The Alaska TID parameters include:

- Any new funding solution must be broad-based, not reliant on one industry segment or funding source
- Revenue should primarily focus on visitor activity, with less impact on Alaskans.
- Any successful plan should be a package of new revenue from tourism-related businesses combined with a portion of the existing Vehicle Rental Car Tax revenue.

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 110](#) was introduced in April 2017 with the support of Senator Mia Costello (R-Anchorage). The Bill sets up the legislative framework for an Alaska TID. If it passes, industry would still have to vote to implement the self-assessment.



Tourism Improvement District Supporters Include:

- Alaska State Chamber
- Alaska Tourism Marketing Board
- Alaska Travel Industry Association Board of Directors
- Brandy Dixon
- Bruce LaLonde
- Carol Fraser, Aspen Hotels of Alaska
- Chris McGraw, Halibut Point Marine
- Colleen Stephens, Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises
- Dale Wade
- Deb Hickok, Explore Fairbanks
- Deborah Hansen, Pike’s Waterfront Lodge
- Dennis McDonnell, Alaska Coach Tours
- Elizabeth Harpold, Northwest Maritime Center
- Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors
- Frank Flavin, Flavin Photography
- Irene Meyer, GoNorth Alaska Travel Center
- Jillian Simpson, Alaska Travel Industry Association
- John Hall’s Alaska
- Julie Saupe, Visit Anchorage
- Kelly Bender, Lazy Otter Charters
- Kory Eberhardt, A Taste of Alaska Lodge
- Linda Brandon, Major Marine Tours
- Luke Peroni, Seward Windsong Lodge
- Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors
- Michael Schuster, Meander In B&B
- Sarah Leonard, Alaska Travel Industry Association
- Sharon Heim Mahay, Mahay’s Jet Boat Adventures
- Steve Mahay, Mahay’s Jet Boat Adventures
- Tanya Carlson, Alaska Travel Industry Association
- Thomas McAleer, The Alaska Collection
- The Alaska Hotel Lodging Association
- Tom Garrett, YMT Vacations
- Visit Anchorage Board of Directors



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ATIA Staff

President & Chief Executive Officer

Sarah Leonard

Vice President

Jillian Simpson

Chief Financial Officer

Sioux-z Marshall

Director of Marketing & Travel Trade Relations

Tanya Carlson

Member Services Manager

Laurie Booyse

Membership & Sales Manager

Jackie Englund (not shown)

Marketing & Travel Trade Manager

Erica Hedman

Operations & Accounting Manager

Andrea Rayt

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AlaskaTIA.org

2016-2017 ATIA Board of Directors

Executive Committee

BOARD CHAIR

Dennis McDonnell, Alaska Coach Tours

VICE CHAIR

Julie Saupe, Visit Anchorage

PAST CHAIR

Colleen Stephens, Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises

SECRETARY/MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Elizabeth Hall, John Hall's Alaska

TREASURER/FINANCE CO-CHAIRS

Charlie Ball, Holland America Group
Bill Pedlar, Knightly Tours

TOURISM POLICY & PLANNING CHAIR

Deb Hickok, Explore Fairbanks

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CO-CHAIRS

Deborah Hansen, Pike's Waterfront Lodge
Colleen Stephens, Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises

MARKETING CHAIR

Patti Mackey, Ketchikan Visitors Bureau

ATIA PRESIDENT & CEO

Sarah Leonard, Alaska Travel Industry Association, EX OFFICIO

Board Members

Adam Baldwin, Anchorage Museum
John Binkley, CLIA/Alaska Cruise Association,
Riverboat Discovery
Dan Blanchard, UnCruise Adventures
Brett Carlson, Northern Alaska Tour Company
Shanon Davis, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council
Kory Eberhardt, A Taste of Alaska Lodge
Scott Habberstad, Alaska Airlines

Kirk Hoessle, Alaska Wildland Adventures
Josh Howes, Premier Alaska Tours
Holly Johnson, Wings Airways & Taku Glacier Lodge
Dan Oberlatz, Alaska Alpine Adventures, LLC
Thom McAleer, The Alaska Collection
Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau
Linda Springmann, Holland America Line