

# HIGHWAY 1

*Road trip*



JUST COAST

2024-25  
MARKETING  
PLAN

Photo credit: Instagram user @oswan

## **Executive Summary**

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the unincorporated San Luis Obispo County Tourism Business Improvement District (CBID), known as Highway 1 Road Trip, continued to successfully navigate the rapidly changing travel landscape. Although a myriad of challenges continues to affect travel in our region - including ongoing inflationary pressures and the closure of Highway 1 - we will forge ahead to focus on increasing awareness and offering travel planning resources driving high levels of intent to visit. Utilizing the resources of our focused and flexible team, we anticipate another successful year of continuous improvement along with several key new initiatives designed to take us to the next level in promoting memorable visitor experiences while being stewards for thriving, welcoming, and cohesive communities.

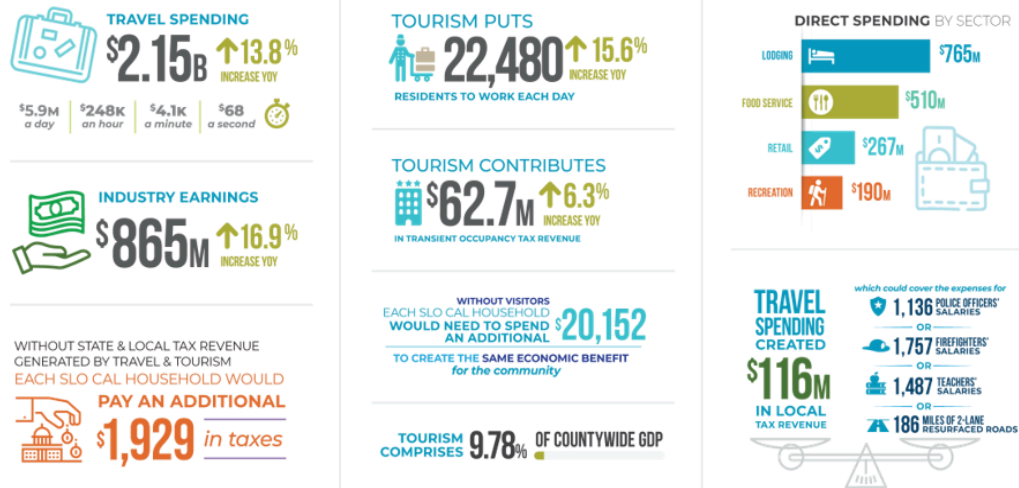
## **Year End Synopsis**

As we look back over 2023, the year closed out with weaker travel appetite relative to the prior year in San Luis Obispo County. After experiencing a rapid recovery post-Covid with people wanting to travel somewhere by car to be outside and experience a change of scenery, 2023 brought many challenges including heavy winter rains and flooding; the closure of Highway 1; a decline in summer leisure travel with many prioritizing international vacations; and overall inflationary pressure and recession concerns. All of these made some travelers more wary of making plans, and/or being more mindful of their budget.

The CBID's main focus as a Tourism Marketing District has seen continued success in driving more interest to our Highway 1 communities. Even with the myriad of 'trials and tribulations' in 2023, marketing efforts continued to drive more visitors to the website, more efficiently. We welcomed over 1 million interested visitors to our website in 2023, and from 2019 to 2023 our TOT grew 57%, outpacing all other communities in SLO County.

Highway 1 Road Trip has seen success in engaging with our audience through storytelling and content that highlights the unique experiences along our stretch. Utilizing paid media, email marketing, social media, content marketing/blog posts, and user-generated content to share the beauty and adventure of Highway 1 has resonated well with both new and returning travelers.

## WHY TOURISM MATTERS



Source: Visit SLO CAL

- Year-over-year Organic Traffic was up 54% for Users and 48% in Sessions. Our organic reach on search engines like Google increased dramatically from the prior year to 8.8 million impressions.
- New strategies for email content have consistently increased open and click through rates while decreasing the unsubscribe rate. And our database is over 120,000 potential visitors, and continuing to grow.
- Facebook and search engine marketing continue to be our strongest paid media tactics, generating the highest impressions, clicks and driving engagement and conversions. However, we are seeing improvements in all tactics, including video, paid content, and paid email.
- Travel for Good messaging was integrated throughout our content and marketing efforts, including tips and activities on existing and new authority pages and information in email in an effort to fully support a sustainability message.
- Public Relation efforts continue to be important to our overall marketing strategy with travel publications featuring our stretch of Highway 1 in over 40 articles so far in the current fiscal year.

The CBID organization remains viable and collaborative. We grew our BID Bunch team up to 23 professional contractors with the addition of an email marketing expert, and we

contracted with the branding company that originally created SLO CAL's Life is Too Beautiful to Rush brand promise. Furthermore, our local fund area boards continue to thrive, funding 660 projects totaling \$12 million over the last 12 years, all guided by 29 volunteer board members, four administrators and five marketing teams.

We will continue to improve our program offerings and partnership with our seven local fund area boards, seek new opportunities, and bolster our 10-year-old Stewardship Travel for Good efforts as sustainability becomes an important platform in tourism.

## **Looking Ahead to 2024**

Travel demand and advances in technology are continuing to change the landscape for tourism marketers. Following are top tourism predictions for the future, gleaned from various travel industry sources: Each of them offers opportunities for our County.

### **Increase in Leisure Travel Despite Rising Costs**

- Skyscanner study from fall 2023 indicated that 85% of U.S. travelers plan to take the same if not more trips abroad in 2024.
- Hilton found that the blending of business and leisure travel is expected to continue growing in popularity with 46% of global full-time and self-employed workers planning to travel for business or leisure.
- Statista forecasts that travelers are estimated to increase by nearly 200 million in 2024 and continue increasing another 160 million by 2027.

### **Cultural Exploration**

- Travel in 2024 will be all about building and strengthening connections with people and cultures, with approximately 45% of each generation traveling to reconnect with friends and family.

### **Travel Behavior of Younger Generations**

- Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X and Boomers to be proactive in reducing the impact of their travel on the environment.
- While 90% of Millennials indicate that authenticity is crucial when considering a brand, 84% want to travel somewhere where they can immerse themselves in local culture.
- Of Generation Z and Millennial travelers, 34% say they plan to take longer trips than they did before the pandemic, compared to 15% of older generations.

- Finally, 51% of Millennials and Gen Z consumers indicate that remote working accommodations are an important factor in their decision making, a far greater percentage than evidenced by older generations (15%).

### **New Road Trippers**

- Road trip activity increased during the pandemic and appears to have some staying power. A 2023 Summer Travel Survey by The Vacationer found that nearly 85% of Americans planned to take a road trip in the summer of 2024. Of this, 17% intended to take a road trip within 100 miles of their home; 20% intended to take a road trip within 500 miles of their home; and 18% intended to take a road trip further than 500 miles of their home.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

- Travelers were already trending toward demand for more sustainable destinations before the pandemic, and the disruption seems to have accelerated the trend with 74% of travelers wanting to make more of an effort to travel sustainably in the next year, up from 66% in 2022.
- Another survey done in the U.S. found that sustainable/environmentally friendly travel was very or somewhat important for 82% of respondents. However, this is down 5% from the same survey the prior year. This may suggest that inflation, cost of living, and other crises have altered traveler's perception of the importance of sustainable travel.

### **Travel Caution**

- The economy in the U.S. has improved since the beginning of 2023 but, there is still talk of caution. Travelers may be more wary of making plans, being more mindful of their budgets, and may make decisions to spend less.

## **Key Objectives & Strategies**

Highway 1 Road Trip has outlined three organizational objectives in the 23-27 strategic plan, including key indicators and strategies:

### **OBJECTIVE 1 – ACCELERATE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **Strategies**

- Foster a deeper integration with Visit SLO CAL planning and programs to ensure Highway 1 voice and visibility

- Develop deeper connections with DMOs and attractions in all Highway 1 communities to collaboratively grow awareness of Highway 1 in SLO CAL
- Bolster CBID/LFA strategic connections through expansion of LFA imperatives and increasing opportunities to connect and collaborate
- Explore strategic partnerships with external businesses and organizations to increase awareness of our stretch of Highway 1

## **OBJECTIVE 2 – EXPAND EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION**

### **Strategies**

- Identify and elevate best practices and LFA community engagement and share to all LFAs
- Engage CBID Board members in attending LFA Board meetings and institute regular connection between board chairs
- Support integration of Visit SLO CAL programs into our communities
- Multiply opportunities for LFA communities to work together and cross-promote
- Engage Highway 1’s broad constituency to educate, inform, gather feedback, and demonstrate value

## **OBJECTIVE 3 – DRIVE MEASURABLE RESULTS**

### **Strategies**

- Leverage new brand to maximize awareness and to improve shoulder and off-season visitation
- Partner with Visit SLO CAL programs to drive visitation within our communities
- Continue to invest in development and sharing of high-value digital assets
- Investigate opportunities to leverage the Highway 1 asset as a sustainable and inclusive road trip experience

## **Destination Partners**

Highway 1 Road Trip partners with organizations via Visit SLO CAL to impact programs, and through Visit California and Brand USA to showcase the coastal communities to a larger audience. Key to Highway 1 Road Trip’s main focus is the specific partnership with Visit SLO CAL, other area destinations like Morro Bay and Paso Robles, and specifically with the local fund areas of Ragged Point, San Simeon, Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos | Baywood, Avila Beach, Edna Valley | AG Valley, and Oceano | Nipomo.



## Initiatives for 2024 | 2025 Fiscal Year

Over the past several years we've made huge strides. Each and every member of the team has worked to drive a continuous improvement process - always looking and testing new ideas while at the same time, improving on the tried and true.

As we look to the future, we will continue to support successful programs, test new ideas and technologies, and grow awareness of the Highway 1 Road Trip brand by innovating our creative direction, rebuilding the infrastructure of our website to improve usability, further integrating the Travel for Good message that aligns with the sustainability efforts of Visit SLOCAL, and testing new technology products utilizing artificial intelligence.

### New Branding Integration



**Innovate Our Creative Direction:** With fresh, bold concepts that resonate with our audience, we will define a distinctive branding direction that captivates our target market. Focused as a springboard for creativity within our team, we're looking for everyone on the team to add their inspiration that further tells our most authentic story.

## Highway 1 Road Trip at Your Own Pace

The Highway 1 Road Trip is not just about sightseeing; it's about deeply connecting with the land, the SLO CAL lifestyle, and oneself. The unhurried pace, the small charming towns with their locally-owned businesses, and the vast open spaces allow travelers to immerse themselves fully, offering a refreshing contrast to the fast-paced life of bigger cities throughout the California coast.

MORE SIMPLY PUT: For all the others - Highway 1 is a place to drive. For us - Highway 1 is a place to stop.

Our stretch of Highway 1 provides a sense of wide open spaces: You are free. You are free to wander. To venture out to the edge of the Earth and watch the sun take the day's last breath. Its rays embrace the land and sea a little differently here. Everything it touches turns to gold. The mountains. The trees. Moments, big and small. So pure and so full of life. Each one calling you to slow down and enjoy the ride you're on.

## Our Brandifesto

On the California Highway 1 Road Trip in SLO CAL, experience a bucket-list road trip, where you have the freedom to get out of the car and immerse yourself in the local culture with a myriad of quintessential California experiences - all at your own pace.

*Some people take trips.*

*They lock dates and make plans.*

*There's an itinerary. Reservations. Expectations.*

*Then there are those who let the trip take them.*

*Just look across the cliffs, the vines, the waves and see a world that's just your speed. Venture out to the edge of the Earth and watch the sun take the day's last breath.*

*Turn a roadside stop into a stay.*

*You see, this 100 miles of Highway 1 is not just a drive but a destination.*

*There's no need to travel in a straight line or on a deadline.*

*Because life's best moments can't be planned.*

*And you're not making memories if you're driving right by them.*

*You can't taste an olallieberry pie from the backseat.*



*Or enjoy the sand in your toes through the car window.*

*Adventure demands one small thing of you: to get out there.*

*Leave the air conditioning and seatbelts behind and set the wanderer inside you free.*

*You want to ride something? Try a clydesdale.*

*This is so much more than a stop along the way.*

*The most epic adventures don't take reservations.*

*And the trip isn't worth it if you arrive on time."*

**Establish Brand Guidelines:** Create comprehensive brand guidelines that cover all aspects of our visual and verbal identity. These guidelines provide a consistent framework for all our communications and creative endeavors, ensuring coherence and consistency across all touchpoints.



**Engage a Creative Director:** Focused as a springboard position to direct the creativity within our team, we will be adding another team member focused on overseeing the

direction and execution of our new branding to ensure we launch in the most authentic and effective way possible.

## Website Usability

The development of our content is primarily optimized for search engines, resulting in our website's organization and navigability falling short. This makes it difficult for users to locate and access information efficiently. We spent the last year rebuilding the infrastructure of the website with the main focus being the migration to a new server platform and rolling out the new template platform.

As we migrated we also worked to improve the user experience. This work will continue in 2024. We have some outdated plugins that we will be replacing and we will continue to migrate content from Elementor to Gutenberg. We'll also be replacing our interactive mapping platform (e.g. CDT and H&H maps) to one that is more performant and far more economical. From a user experience standpoint, we are looking to revamp the listings pages to provide more curated results to users rather than a firehose of data.

## Fine Tune Technology

The growth in artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR), along with other technology shifts such as the phase out of cookies, provide both challenges and opportunities.

The reality is we've been using A.I. in our paid media for years, particularly with Google ads and Programmatic, and it's getting even more expansive with the advent of ChatGPT and other generative tools. Here's what we're currently doing:

- **Use of First Party Data:** In the on-coming cookie-less environment first party data is gold and we have been using our growing CRM data (and that of our partners like Hearst Media) combined with AI to model look-a-like advertising that has proven to be very effective.
- **Optimizing strategies in Real Time.** Google Ads employ AI, specifically machine learning, to optimize campaigns based on user interactions. It tracks metrics like click-through rates and landing page behavior to improve ad targeting. And AI helps understand user behavior without relying heavily on individual data like cookies. Despite privacy concerns, AI targeting is a significant improvement over traditional methods.

- Programmatic Media. AI and machine learning in programmatic media buying analyze data and make decisions at a scale beyond human capability. ChatGPT is utilized to analyze campaign performance data, offering insights and recommendations for improvement. And its integration within programmatic dashboards simplifies data analysis and campaign optimization. Integration with tools like Google Analytics 4 provides detailed insights and recommendations making our spending more efficient.







## Public Relations in Person

The publishing world continues to change with the consolidation of media houses, the rise of the freelancer, decentralization of media and more restrictive press trip policies. The H1RT PR team will be testing a focus on themed FAMS to get writers to visit and ensure coverage with major publications featuring experiences in line with current travel trends including, coolcationing – traveling to temperate destinations, and wild feasting – curated culinary experiences in natural environments with the incorporation of hyper-local and foraged ingredients – among others.

## LFA Imperative Programs

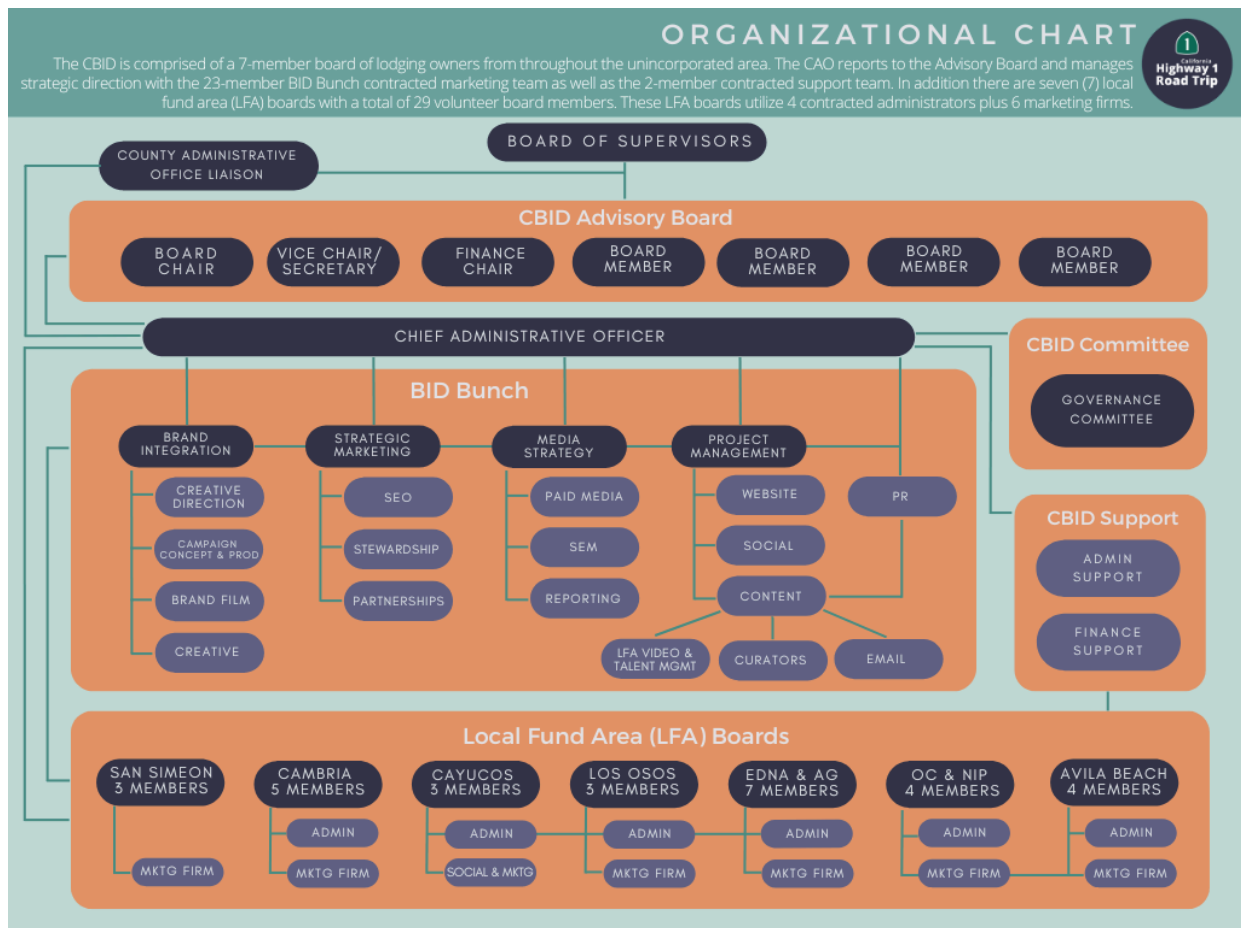
Since 2020, the CBID has leveraged opportunities with multiple leading media and platforms to present co-op opportunities to our LFA regions. This co-op seeks to provide CBID-tested opportunities in these media and platforms to achieve measurable results for differing LFA strategies. In 24-25, each LFA will have the opportunity to work with a range of leading digital media publishers such as Hearst/SFGate, LA Times, Facebook/Instagram, Google Ads and Amazon, while capitalizing on the awareness the CBID's consideration campaign also generates in these markets.

## HIGHWAY 1 ROAD TRIP LFA IMPERATIVE OPTIONS WHERE?

						
	Google ads: SEM	Google ads: Discovery	Facebook	Hearst/SFGate Stories	Hearst/SFGate Email	Amazon CTV
Key 2022/23 Highlight	Increased SOV and conversions for all LFA's. Drove additional Map downloads	Increased SOV for all LFA's. Increased time spent on LFA pages plus form submits. Volume drove down CPCs	\$22k in Matched funds Drove 8.3 million impressions, 152k clicks and avg 12k engagements across most LFAs, with over 100k to Avila and over 1 million to Cambria, Avg CTR 1.83% and as high as 5.2% (Edna Valley)	Stories drove millions of impressions, thousand of clicks and average 6+ minutes per story time spent for IFA's that used them.	Retargeting emails using CBID retargeting buckets are being made available to LFA's. Using A CBID test budget to prove out.	Email list targeting reflected best back end result including 16 map downloads. Now Testing Lookalikes and A.I. Results reporting.
Ad Units	SEM text ads targeting Keywords, Phrases. Dave will manage	Text + Image. Dave will manage.	Text + Image, Video, Multiple images (Carousel). <a href="#">Click here for more information.</a> Work with LATimes directly.	Custom stories, Links, photos. Work with Hearst directly. <a href="#">Click here for more detail</a>	HTML Text + Photos. Dedicated email to 50K opt-in subscribers (zip code targeted, behavior, demo, HHJ). Direct with Hearst	streaming TV (i.e. CTV) • Dimensions: 1920x1080 • Duration: 15 or 30 seconds - 30 reco. Format: MP4 bitrate=4,000 kbps (6,000 kbps recommended) • Video Frame Rate: 23.976 (recommended), 24.25, or 29.97.
Matching	No	No	100%	No	No	No
Strategy Recommended	Increase your current Share of Voice (SOV)	Increased SOV, Traffic, Revenue, CRM lead Gen	Traffic, Engagement, video Views, CRM, Look-a-likes	Engagement (Guaranteed), High Time on Site, Quality Users	High Time on Site, Quality Users. Not good for Map	Awareness
Timing Recommendation	Sept - June	Sept - June	Sept - June	Sept - June Plan 1 month ahead	One Email available each Month. First come first serve	Sept - June
Additional Information	Minimum \$500	Minimum \$500	Minimum \$500 + Matched	Minimum \$3,500 <a href="#">Click here for more detail</a>	Minimum \$1500 for 50k. Re-broadcast to all opens following week add \$500	Minimum \$5k a month

Thus far we've increased our share of voice and received thousands of conversions and engagements. Volume drove down cost per click and we saw varying levels of success in terms of click-through rates, some as high as 6.32%. Emails with SFGate showed particular strength in stickiness (time spent, engagement, pages viewed, etc). Cayucos and Edna Valley tried Story Studio from Hearst with good stickiness and better than average viewing.

For the coming year, we'll be adding two additional opportunities - leads ads with SFGate and "Handshake" ads with LATimes.



Our BID Bunch is our most valuable asset. With 23 professional contractors, it has allowed our marketing organization to drive measurable results that support top-notch TOT performance when compared to our DMO counterparts.

## BID Bunch Tactical Project Focus

### Strategic Marketing – Lori Keller

Responsible for developing and overseeing the execution of a comprehensive marketing plan that aligns with the organization's overall goals.

- Market Research and Analysis
  - Staying informed about industry trends and consumer behavior to gather insights and adapt strategies accordingly.
  - Continually analyze campaign performance data to make data-driven decisions.

- Ongoing awareness of new technologies, programs, and potential opportunities that may apply to H1RT efforts to ensure a continuous improvement culture.
- Manage brand lift studies and other surveys/measurement tools as opportunities arise.
- Team Leadership
  - Co-lead and manage the strategic integration of all BID Bunch efforts including the LFA Imperatives
  - Oversee Specific BID Bunch contractors to ensure continued progress (Brad, Lori R, Ann's team, Katie)
  - Continue partnership efforts with Visit SLO CAL (serving on the marketing committee) as well as opportunities for outside partnerships
- Brand Management and Program Execution
  - Co-lead the new brand development and integration, ensuring consistent messaging, design, and values across all marketing channels.
  - Oversee paid media strategy team and lead the execution of paid media efforts ensuring a continued test and learn strategy is in place to attain growth of critical KPIs.
  - Year end reporting and board communication as needed.
- Partnerships
  - Continue to look for strategic partnership opportunities related to the LFAs, Visit SLO CAL and/or other area DMOS, and outside companies.

### Content Marketing – Lori Ritchey with content curators Jaime Lewis and Hayley Cain, and photographer | videographer RainStudios

Manage the overarching content calendar, integrating content across all channels/disciplines: website (authority page, blog, photos, video, CrowdRiff), lead generation map, email, organic social media, paid media, paid social, and public relations.

- Content Audit and Content Calendar Management:
  - [CBID Project Management - Google Sheets](#)
  - Assess current content and identify gaps relative to the new branding that needs updating, repurposing, or archiving.
  - Creation and management of fiscal year content plan.
- Content Creation and Adaptation:
  - Work with Content Writers to create new or adapt existing content to reflect the new branding.

- Working with photo | video curator to develop LFA raw footage content to continue to build asset library.
- Social Media Strategy:
  - Make sure social media profiles are updated with the new brand identity (logos, banners, bio).
  - Plan to introduce the new branding, using hashtags, stories, and interactive content.
- Email Marketing:
  - Work with Kempler to Inform and engage existing customers and subscribers about the new branding.
  - Design email templates that reflect the new brand identity.
  - Craft an email campaign to announce the rebranding, highlight the changes, and explain the value to subscribers.
- Content Distribution Plan:
  - Ensure the new branding reaches the intended audience across all relevant channels.
  - Schedule content releases to maintain a steady stream of brand messaging to the market.
  - Paid Media Campaign: Develop campaign toolkit for distribution.
- Manage Blog Strategy:
  - Identify strategy for lifting blog rankings and exposure.
  - Content ideation for blog topics.
  - Provide blog outline for writer to follow.
- Monthly Management and Collaboration with the following BID Bunch Members: Jeff Pedigo (Website), Jaime Lewis & Hayley Cain (Content Writers), Josh & Kat Morris (photo & video), TJA/Claudia Torkelson (Social Media), and Kempler (Email Marketing) to manage priorities, projects, deliverables, deadlines, provide proactive ideas and processes.
- Monthly Reporting Recap: Gather and consolidate reporting monthly from BID Bunch members to complete one comprehensive report for the CBID Advisory Board.

### **Creative Advertising Campaign Concept & Development – Sunshine & Bourbon**

Manage the creative development that is reflective of California Highway 1 Road Trip's new brand and new brand promise: Just Coast. The objective is to allow for a clear vision of how

the creative campaign and messaging should align with the new brand by focusing on the following:

- Brand Launch and ongoing creative direction for H1RT and the BID Bunch to facilitate brand standards throughout all elements of the integrated marketing campaign.
- Video concepting and production, including both a Brand Video as well as Campaign videos and other digital assets for use by the local fund areas.
- Production and distribution of the creative assets needed for the approved paid media plans as well as updating the lead-gen maps.
- Creative direction: Work with the BID Bunch creative team members to ensure that the new Just Coast brand is implemented across all disciplines for a cohesive consumer-facing brand campaign - to include the initiatives of those managing the content, website, social platforms and email marketing.
- Campaign concepting: Sunshine & Bourbon will concept the campaign direction under the new brand, Just Coast, with 3 annual campaign themes in mind – wildlife (Jan/Feb), beaches (March/April/May) and small towns / big experiences (August/Sept/Oct/Nov). Once this is approved, the brand film and campaign assets will be built from these approved concepts.
- Film production: With the BID Bunch creative team, the Sunshine & Bourbon team will coordinate an initial film production on-site in SLO CAL. This will be inclusive of a limited crew to include a producer and videographer on-site.
- Brand film: From the assets gathered during the filming as well as using existing film assets, Sunshine & Bourbon will create a brand “sizzle” reel (video) that would be presented at the brand roll-out and used in the consumer-facing campaign launch where applicable.
- Video production and asset library: After the brand launch, the brand film would be edited into several different lengths and formats depending on paid media requirements. These could be edited slightly to incorporate the 3 annual campaign themes in mind – wildlife (Jan/Feb), beaches / wildflowers / green hills (March/April/May) and small towns / big experiences (August/Sept/Oct/Nov). Sunshine & Bourbon also will work with the BID Bunch team to begin building a library of video assets (that includes existing photography) that can be used in the organic and paid media marketing campaigns. The library would allow the team to archive and provide video shorts and raw video footage for use by local fund area marketing partners.



- Creative production: The Sunshine & Bourbon team will produce the additional assets needed for the paid media campaigns based on the media specification to include digital media (statics, html if needed and video ads). The Sunshine & Bourbon team also will update 5 lead-gen maps to incorporate the new brand.

Production Timeline:

- Kick-off and Concepting: May 2024
- Video Production: July 2024
- Sizzle Reel/Brand Film Development: July | August 2024
- Campaign Production: Initial completion by July 2024 and ongoing thru June 2025
- Campaign Deployment: Initial completion by July 2024 and ongoing thru June 2025
- Ongoing Meetings: Meeting monthly via Zoom and connecting with individual BID Bunch members on an as-needed basis.

### Email Marketing – Kempler Group

Create effective email campaigns and increase engagement. Focus this year will be on building user preferences (audience buckets) and using dynamic content to provide relevant content. The new Highway 1 Road Trip brand will be implemented into the email program, including brand logo, brand look and feel (colors and typeface) and the brand voice.

- Continue delivering engaging and content rich newsletters twice (occasionally 3 times) a month to the H1RT's audience. Implement email marketing strategies to maximize exposure and engagement.
- Design – incorporate new brand guidelines and dynamic content in existing newsletters.
- Engagement - Use of preferences and dynamic content to be more engaging. Survey emails to gather preferences and customer insight.
- Integration – Connect email and other marketing streams to create a more holistic customer experience and better understand the target audience.
- Deploy messaging to subscribers every other week as well as track and analyze the performance of each email campaign to provide detailed reports on the open and click-through rates.
- Additional Considerations:
  - Dynamic content blocks: Personalize email content using the behavioral data to deliver personalized content (hero image, main story, etc) based on recipient's interests.

- Segmentation: Divide database into segment groups based on engagement, interests, geography or other relevant data points to deliver more pertinent content or appropriate frequency of communications. Surveys have been a great resource for getting preferences of recipients.

### Social Media: Claudia Torkelson, TJA

Enhance brand visibility and engagement through strategic organic social media management and content creation across platforms.

- Develop comprehensive content for Facebook (FB) and Instagram (IG) focusing on consistent posting schedules and varied content types to maintain audience interest. Cadence will be 10 to 12 posts per month.
  - Update older stories to reflect new content and best practices.
  - Develop visually appealing Pins for Pinterest to drive traffic and increase brand visibility within relevant communities.
  - Use new content developed by the H1RT team as pins such as blogs and major PR features.
  - Identify opportunities for user-generated content and encourage user participation through photo sharing and tagging.
  - Repurpose existing Instagram Reels content for TikTok to expand reach and tap into a younger demographic. Tailor content to suit TikTok's platform dynamics and trends while maintaining brand consistency.
- Implement strategies to increase follower engagement focusing on what is working based on the current algorithm.
- Incorporate the new brand voice and guidelines into organic social media activities across all platforms once they are finalized.
- Monitor and respond to audience comments, messages, and mentions promptly to foster a sense of community and enhance brand loyalty.
- Fully utilize Crowdriff:
  - Continuously source high-quality user-generated images through Crowdriff to showcase authentic experiences and local attractions.
  - Curate and manage Crowdriff galleries to highlight diverse content and optimize visual storytelling.
  - Stay up to date on Crowdriff updates and communicate best practices to the LFAs.
  - Produce engaging Localhood Stories that showcase unique experiences and new content created by the H1RT team to promote destination awareness.

- Reporting: Generate regular performance reports detailing key metrics such as engagement rate, reach, follower growth, and content effectiveness. Analyze data to identify trends, insights, and areas for improvement, and adjust strategies accordingly to manage to KPIs:
  - Increase in organic reach and engagement across social media platforms.
  - Growth in follower base and community engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares, etc.).
  - Improvement in content performance indicators such as click-through rate and conversion rate.
  - Enhanced brand sentiment and positive feedback from the community.

Social media and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) work together by complementing each other's strengths. Social media boosts content visibility and engagement, which can lead to increased brand recognition and website traffic. This can indirectly influence SEO by generating more backlinks (through other users/brands linking to it; not necessarily from the link within the social platform) and improving behavioral signals like dwell time and bounce rate. So, if social media improves website engagement metrics, it's valuable to SEO since the more engaged traffic we get to the site, the better. The social team is largely responsible for this action by creating interesting and engaging posts that drive people to the website.

We focus on the following:

- Social sharing buttons on the site
- Provide social feeds on the site in various formats
- Incorporate hashtags on the site, which are also our keywords when promoting posts
- Create high-quality, shareable content for use by end-users
- Amplify the content and hashtags on the site
- Add content links into the first comment of posts; however, this is to get more traffic as most social platforms have no follow links from their platforms; so not a strong backlink strategy that uplifts SEO
- Encourage sharing posts from the social platforms; this does help and is likely an indicator that Google registers.
- Optimize all social profiles on the different platforms to include links to the site with strong branding
- Constantly create engaging posts that drive website interest and engagement, which increases engagement metrics on the website to improve user engagement metrics and content consumption

## Search Engine Optimization – Brad Rubin and Vingage team (Lucas and Daina)

Organic search is an important component to our overall success and has been an ongoing focus. A comprehensive workbook has been created for the next year with two SEO focuses - new specifications and proposed spec updates.

Priority	Title	Status	Type of Page
Authority - Longtail	Best of SLO Nightlife	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Nightlife in Arroyo Grande	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Horseback Riding Oceano	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Hiking Arroyo Grande/Edna Valley	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Scuba Diving on Highway 1	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Hiking Big Sur	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Surfing Big Sur	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Things to Do in Big Sur	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Best Restaurants in Big Sur	New	Things To Do
Authority - Longtail	Best Beach Hotels on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Resorts on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Highway 1 Wine Country Hotels	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Kid-Friendly Hotels on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Hotels with Pools on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Hotels Near Downtown on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Pet Friendly Hotels on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Hotels with Free Breakfast on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Hotels with Bars on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Longtail	Best Hotels with Views on Highway 1	New	Authority
Authority - Niche	Indigenous Travel on Highway 1	New	Things To Do
Authority - Niche	Chumash National Marine Sanctuary designation	New	Things To Do
Authority - Niche	Gen Z and Millennial Travelers (Content?)	New	Blog
Authority - Niche	Coolcationing	New	Blog
Authority - Niche	Skip-Gen	New	Blog
Authority - Niche	Wild feasting	New	Blog
Authority - Niche	Shoulder Season Travel	New	Blog

The new specifications task consists of ideas for new content. There are currently 26 items outlined where the CBID can capture additional search traffic. The specification updates consist of older pages we have built in the past or pages where we can capture search traffic where there is currently thin content. There are currently 25 pages outlined for update. The CBID team will collaboratively work to prioritize the content for development. Vingage will produce 36 specs per year or three per month.

### **Search Generative Experience (SGE)**

SGE is the next evolution of Google Search results. SGE is still mostly experimental, but it does show up when using the Chrome browser if you are opted-in to Google Labs. Based on case studies, best SEO practices and achieving first page rankings, which we do, will be the fuel for SGE results. SGE results will take very long-tail searches and create a list of websites and snippets where you can receive information. That list will be presented to the user.

SGE will replace the Google snippet, however, for all the areas that are on the Google search first page or achieve top 5 results, the H1RT pages will be presented to the user. It is important to note that SGE uses Large Language Models (LLMs) to process and output information. Given that H1RT is very content rich, this will likely give H1RT a leg-up on competing content. Therefore, it is likely that once SGE is rolled out, H1RT would have more presence since H1RT ranks so high for the majority of the topics we build content for on the website.

As we look to the H1RT 24/25 content plan, the goal is to continue building content to achieve high rankings whereby SGE will eventually pick up H1RT content and present it to the user. Google has communicated that SGE should roll out sometime in 2024.

Organic search is an important component to our overall success and has been an ongoing focus. A comprehensive workbook has been created for the next year with three SEO worksheets - new specification ideas, proposed spec update Ideas, and the update schedule (going back to 2020). The plan includes building three specs per month.

### **Website – Jeff Pedigo**

#### **Clean-up and Functionality**

Continue to use a 3-pronged approach:

- Clean up of old code

- UX improvements
- Support for creating content
- More Guidebook, less yellow pages

### **Clean-up of old code**

In 23/24, the focus was on updating the theme, which controls the look and feel of the site. We completely rebuilt the theme and made some UX improvements in the process. In 24/25, the focus will be on the site plugin, which controls the functionality of the site. With the site now being over 5 years old, there is functionality that was developed that is no longer needed. There have also been new technologies introduced that are better ways to implement existing functionality.

Our overall focus will be on achieving the best performance while making the site easier to manage and maintain. Some specific items include:

- Rewriting the H1DR plugin
- Phasing out the CMB custom fields plugin for the newer ACF one
- Adding full Gutenberg support throughout the site
- Phasing out Press and Ads if no longer needed

### **UX Improvements**

In 23/24, the focus was on UX improvements we rolled out in conjunction with the theme rewrite, like a better single page template and better filters. In 24/25, we will focus on improving our listing pages and navigation UX. Some specific items include:

- Adding areas to listing pages for editorial content
- Adding curated, categorical listings to listing pages
- Implementing mega menus for better presenting navigation dropdowns

### **Content Creation Support**

In 23/24, the main focus in this area was the transition from Elementor to the Gutenberg content system. This transition continues into 24/25 and we will also look at other ways we can make content creation more efficient. Specific items include:

- Continue converting Elementor content to Gutenberg with the goal of being completely off of Elementor by the end of the fiscal year
- Migrating from Google Maps to Mapbox for cost and performance reasons
- Working with SLOCAL on integrating their new event system
- Assisting in the development of any pages needed for specific campaigns

- Creation of new, custom Gutenberg blocks as needed
- Creation of new, custom Gutenberg patterns as needed
- Creation of training videos for content creators as needed

### Stewardship Travel for Good – Katie Sturtevant

This award-winning program continues to focus on evolving a newsworthy platform to bring top of the line media to our area.

- Integrating approachable stewardship/sustainable messaging in all of our marketing efforts and as appropriate throughout our content.
  - Include stewardship/sustainable efforts and experiences during FAM and other media visits to encourage writers to use our existing stewardship content like the wildlife viewing tips, Back to Nature Tours, etc.
  - Integration with Visit SLO CAL's efforts in the sustainability space.
  - Integrate 'stewardship tips and sustainable' messaging in alignment with new branding.
- Launch & Promote the New "Back to Nature" Tours & Experiences on the Central Coast
- Continue to evolve and promote:
  - Wildlife and stewardship/sustainable focused campaigns
  - Annual Coastal Clean-Up & Earth Day Celebrations
  - Newsworthy communications to bring top of the line media to our area.
  - Messaging/content/approaches such as Wildlife Viewing and Stewardship Travel Tips, Guide to Stewardship Travel for Good Activities, History and Heritage Trail, Coastal Discovery Trail, and The Whale Trail.

### Public Relations – Kirstin Koszorus with Katie Sturtevant

Outreach continues to focus on targeted outlets with the following goals:

- At least 50% of online articles secured include a direct link to Highway1RoadTrip.com
- At least 45% of all coverage secured appear in a target outlet
- At least 5 articles will include Stewardship Travel for Good meaningful tips for travelers in the story
- Secure 88-100 placements

Media Hosting and Media Missions:

- 1 themed group FAM (3-5 Media)
- 8-16 Individual Media Visits

- Media Missions:
  - Travel Classics (November 2024 in Scottsdale)
  - IMM (January 2025 in NYC)
  - Visit California Media Event (LA or San Francisco)

Seasonal Story Ideas include:

- Road Trip on one charge
- Harvest/Shoulder season along Highway 1
- Fall Events & Festivals
- Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation
- Central Coast Holidays
- Stop and see the wildlife – Winter is the best season for wildlife on California’s Central Coast
- What’s new for 2025
- Winter Wellness
- Best spots for wildflowers
- Skip-Gen family road trip
- Thrill seeking spring adventures
- Unique ways to soak up the summer surf
- Wine Tasting along Highway 1
- Coolcation - Escape the summer heat and play outdoors on California’s Central Coast

### [Paid Media Strategy/Execution – Ann Balboa and Orange 22 team \(Dave, Alicia, Mike\)](#)

In 2024, paid media experienced remarkable growth in traffic, conversions, CRM, and cost efficiencies. 2025 paid media planning will build on our continuous improvement strategy using:

- Expansion of First-Party Data integrations for targeted advertising, emphasizing CBID's database for lookalike programming and making database growth our top KPI. Additionally, we'll explore effective retargeting strategies based on map downloads.
- Utilization of automation and AI for streamlined data collection, reporting, and analysis.
- Exploration of audience-centric targeting avenues such as Google Audiences and cohorts, all without cookies.
- Data-driven ad targeting and personalization for tailored messaging to relevant audience segments.



- Expansion of Google video content, including utilizing YouTube and potentially integrating Google video ads with 3D effects.
- Extension of programs into LFA imperatives for improved cost efficiencies and metrics.

#### Campaign Seasonality

- Fall: Launch new Just Coast branding (8/15-11/15)
- Winter: Just Coast branding with a wildlife focus (Jan/Feb)
- Spring Just Coast branding with a beach | wildflower | green hills focus (March 1 -May 15)

#### Targeting

- Geographical:
  - San Francisco-Oak-San Jose (DMA)
  - Los Angeles (DMA)
  - Fresno Visalia
  - Exclude: San Luis Obispo County
- Demographics:
  - Ages 35+, \$175k HHI+, Gender: All
- Custom Audiences:
  - Retargeting & Lookalikes
    - Email list
    - Map downloads
    - Website visitors
    - Facebook engagement
- Interests/Behaviors
  - Beach Goers/Beach Lovers
  - Road Trip, Road Trippers
  - Wine lovers
  - Swimmers & Surfers
  - Adventurers/Frequent Travelers
  - Outdoors / Outdoor enthusiast
  - Ocean lovers
  - Health and wellness seekers
  - Family
  - Wildlife /wildlife conservation / whale Watching
  - National Parks, State parks
  - Parks/Weekend Trips
  - Hiking, Hiking Trails

- Nature
- Travel + Leisure, Travel Enthusiasts
- Frequent travelers
- Nature Reserve
- Scenic /Nature/ Landscape/ Wildlife Photography
- Travel Bloggers
- Vacation rental seekers
- Empty Nesters
- Senior Travelers
- Retirees and seniors

Consideration Key Performance Indicators – Reported Monthly

- 45% = Map Downloads / CPL
- 27% = engagement/ CPE
- 27%= Time on site (4+ Pages)

Note: Final media plan will be presented in June 2024 and added to this document once approved.

## **Reopening of Highway 1**

As we look to the day when Highway 1 will be fully open to explore, H1RT is working with Visit California, Visit SLOCAL, Cambria, and Visit Monterey, along with San Simeon, Hearst Castle and Morro Bay, to develop programs and messaging that can be deployed when the time is right.

## **Measuring Our Success**

When considering our key performance indicators, we focus on engagement/time on site and map downloads, however, we don't know if those things really drive visitation. We've been looking for ways to gather that data and have had limited success. Certainly TOT collections help us with trending information, but geotracking cell phone data has proven perplexing as some visitors come through our county and get tracked, but not all stay in our county.

## **Brand Lift Study**

Develop a method to create a baseline and then follow up with another study in 12-18 months to measure the impact of our new branding efforts.

Continue to look for Arrivalist-type technology that works for us. With all of the advances in technology, one day we may be able to get a better understanding of the impact of our efforts.

## Survey our Database

We developed a two-pronged survey of our database based upon whether or not the potential visitor had downloaded a map to get an understanding for the benefit of travel intent among those who completed a download. Among those who downloaded a map, nearly 92 percent said it encouraged them to take a road trip on Highway 1 and 82% said it helped them to plan their travel. We also asked them to provide us with more preference information in order to further provide information of interest.

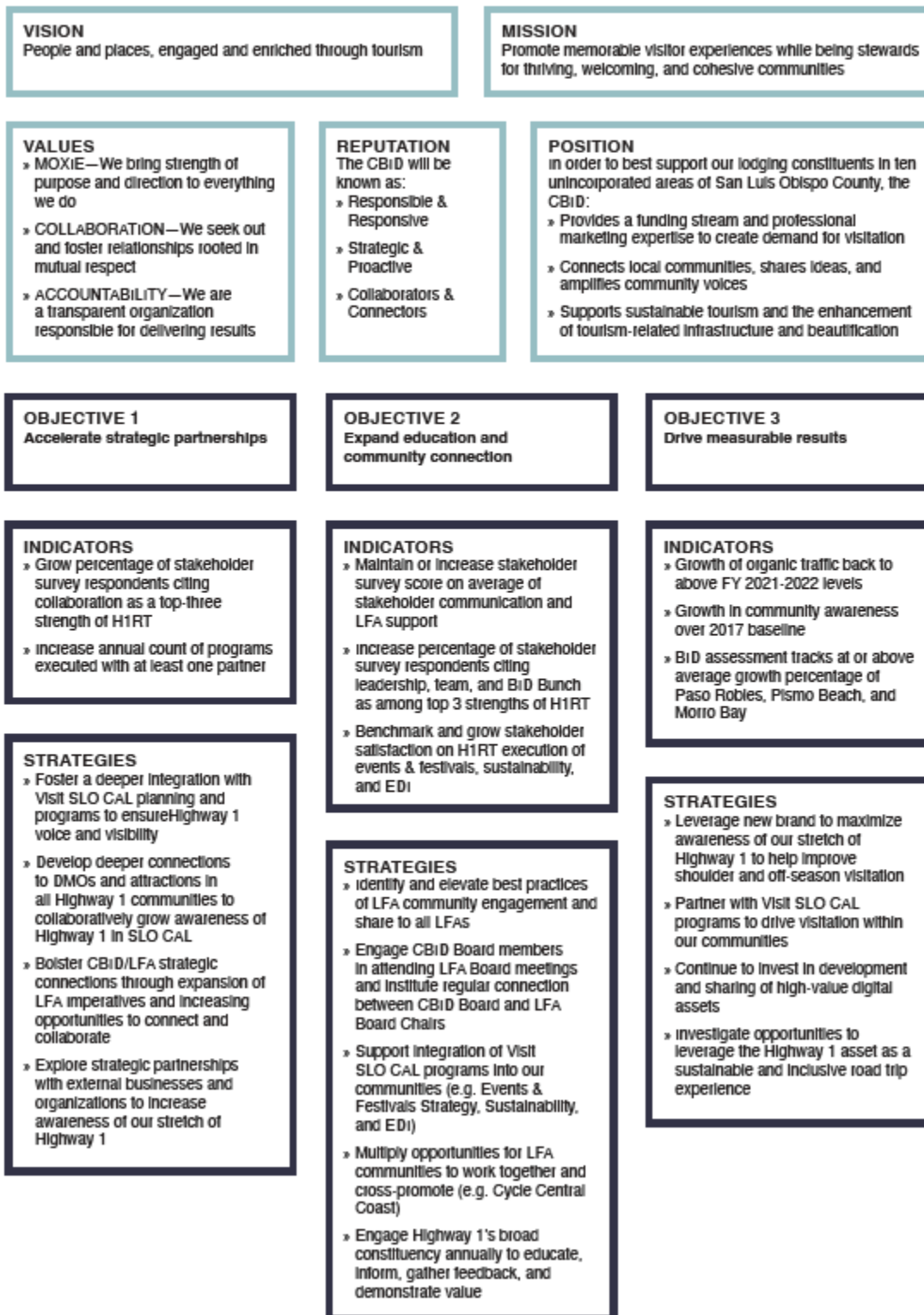
## Muck Rack Public Relations

Highway 1 Road Trip has switched to using the media monitoring service Muck Rack for the upcoming fiscal year to create more robust reports for our PR accomplishments. Not only does the service track coverage of the region on an ongoing basis, which assists in alerting us when articles we have worked on about the area have come out, it also provides details on the coverage such as unique monthly visitors, sentiment of the article, social coverage of the article, clicks to Highway1RoadTrip.com and more.

## A Living Document

This overall plan provides the BID Bunch with a working direction for the coming year. It is a living document, meaning that as things change, pieces of the plan may change to best adapt to new conditions. That has shown to be particularly important over the past few years. Each of the BID Bunch members have specific tactics outlined in their agreements that are measured and adjusted regularly to adapt to new challenges as well as new opportunities.

## Strategic Plan 2023-2027



## Budget 2024-2025 (as of May 2024)

<b><u>Projected Expenses</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>
LFA Imperative and Strategic Partnerships	\$53,843
Strategy, Planning, BID Bunch Management, Reporting	\$56,000
Paid Media	\$679,800
Content Curation and Visual Assets	\$153,060
Earned Media	\$138,000
Owned Media	\$183,300
Creative, Stewardship and BrandFolder	\$58,750
Total Expenses	\$1,322,753
Administration Expenses	\$203,900
Grand Total Projected Expenses for CBID	<b>\$1,526,653</b>
<b><u>Projected Income</u></b>	
Projected Assessment	\$1,422,725
Current Net Income	\$534,911
Anticipated Carryforward used to bridge 23   24 Revenue Shortfall	-\$82,000
Total projected revenue + anticipated carryforward	<b>\$1,875,636</b>
<b><u>Overview</u></b>	
24   25 Collection Projection	\$1,422,725
Anticipated Carryforward into new FY 24   25	\$452,911
Total Marketing + Carryforward + Contingency + Reserves	<b>\$1,875,636</b>
Anticipated Carryforward into new FY 24   25	\$452,911
Carryforward needed to meet budgeted expenses FY 24   25	-\$103,928
Available Carryforward Balance	<b>\$348,983</b>
Contingency (required by policy)	\$100,000
Reserves (required by policy)	\$125,000