

Updated January 27, 2021

# Power of Travel Policy Platform

Priorities to Guide the Next Four Years

**U.S. TRAVEL**  
ASSOCIATION®



# U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION®

U.S. Travel Association is the leading, national nonprofit association representing travel businesses of all sizes across every sector of the industry and country.

For more than 75 years, we have been the voice for entire travel industry, elevating the interests of our industry to the administration and Congress. As a bipartisan organization, we work closely with both sides of the aisle. We advocate for policies that grow travel to and within the U.S., educate on the outsized impact travel has on our economy and workforce, and ensure travel remains an important part of conversations concerning the most pressing issues of our country.

Since the start of the pandemic, the U.S. Travel team has been working side by side with our members, the broader industry and like-minded travel organizations to provide relief and protection for our businesses and workforce and develop solutions that will stimulate safe travel and help drive our industry's recovery. As we look toward 2021 and beyond, U.S. Travel will continue to be the primary force that brings travel leaders from all sectors of the industry together to address our shared challenges and determine our path forward to renewed growth.

After a decade of unprecedented growth and prosperity, 2020 was the year the travel industry as we knew it ceased to exist.

International borders closed, flights were grounded and the industry was plunged into chaos as the coronavirus spread across the world. In mere weeks, U.S. travel industry unemployment soared to 51%, imperiling workers and small businesses in every pocket of America.

The U.S. travel industry continues to face enormous challenges as it looks toward recovery, but the pandemic should not be viewed only as a setback—it is an opportunity to rebuild a stronger travel ecosystem that adheres to the highest health and security standards.

Our collective industry must work together to ensure that travel is viewed by public officials as an essential industry and continue to advocate for representation at the highest levels of government. We must consider all of the possibilities before us to improve infrastructure, modernize travel technology, enhance the air travel experience and prepare to compete with other countries for a resurgence in travel demand.

Our **Power of Travel Policy Platform** focuses on these five areas to rebuild the industry and position ourselves for future growth.



### ENACT ECONOMIC RECOVERY MEASURES

to sustain and grow the U.S. travel economy and workforce.



### INCREASE GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

to prepare the U.S. to welcome back visitors from around the world and to compete for international tourism dollars.



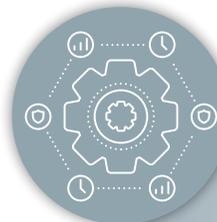
### PRIORITIZE INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE FUTURE OF MOBILITY

so the U.S. can emerge from the pandemic with stronger, more connected systems than ever before.



### RE-IMAGINE THE AIR TRAVEL SYSTEM

with better, more innovative technologies to meet the shifting demands of providing a safe and expedient travel experience.



### ENHANCE TRAVEL FACILITATION PROGRAMS

to increase security, accessibility and efficiency across the travel ecosystem.

# Building Off Our Most Urgent Policy Priorities

The **Power of Travel Policy Platform** seeks to build off of the strong foundation of our “Building Back Better: Travel’s Power to Accelerate Economic Recovery and Reunite America” document, which details the immediate policies the Biden administration can enact in its first 100 days in support of two overarching themes:

- ✓ **Establish a national plan to restore domestic travel and reunite America** by quickly developing public health and COVID-19 testing guidance to safely resume travel, and enacting aggressive economic stimulus measures to boost travel demand and bring back jobs.
- ✓ **Safely reopen international travel** through risk-based COVID-19 testing protocols, remove international travel bans and set a goal of welcoming 116 million visitors to the U.S. by 2028, which will re-establish the United States as the most welcoming country in the world.

To View our recommendations for the first 100 days, read our **[Building Back Better Plan](#)**

# Economic Recovery

The pandemic's effect on global travel has cost the U.S. economy billions in lost spending, imperiled the livelihoods of millions of American workers and jeopardized travel businesses of all sizes. The travel industry is one of the hardest-hit industries in the economic fallout of the public health crisis: It is clear that there can be no broader economic recovery without a recovery within the travel industry. Until widespread travel fully resumes without restrictions, the travel industry will continue to need federal assistance to maintain operations and expedite the recovery process.

The following policies should be enacted to sustain and facilitate a recovery within the travel industry and the larger American economy:

## STIMULATE THE RESTORATION OF TRAVEL, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- ✓ **Create tax credits and deductions to help facilitate a stable recovery.**
  - Provide a refundable tax credit for individuals and families to spur travel demand and growth.
  - Provide a tax credit for businesses to offset the cost of participating in or hosting conventions, business meetings and events.
  - Provide a tax credit to help businesses cover costs related to new COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.
- ✓ **Congress should provide grants—either through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Coronavirus Relief Fund or another federal grantmaking process—to eligible state tourism offices and local destination marketing organizations to promote travel and support economic recovery efforts in local tourism markets.**
  - The grantmaking process should be streamlined to ensure funds can be used as soon as possible to help encourage Americans to follow healthy travel practices, such as wearing masks.

## SAFELY RESTART INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL THROUGH A SCIENCE-DRIVEN, RISK-BASED APPROACH TO COVID-19 TESTING

- ✓ **Ensure a stable and affordable market for pandemic risk coverage in business interruption and event cancellation insurance.**
  - Provide a cost-sharing program to cover business interruption and event cancellation insurance losses related to a public health emergency. Pandemic risk insurance can help drive businesses and individuals to take the steps needed to guard against future health risks, while improving the overall resilience of the U.S. economy and reducing the financial burden of taxpayers during future pandemics.
- ✓ **Implement a global framework for a science-driven, risk-based approach to COVID-19 testing to safely reopen international travel.**
  - Using lessons learned from the “air bridge” pilots, the federal government should implement a science-driven, risk-based COVID-19 testing program for inbound international travelers. The testing program should:
    - Provide flexibility and adjust requirements for short-haul international flights and trips shorter than three days;
    - Devote federal funding to support testing capabilities in areas of the world where the cost and availability of COVID-19 tests make the pre-departure testing requirement difficult or unworkable; and
    - Avoid mandatory quarantine requirements upon arrival, which can be difficult to enforce and deter travel.
  - In conjunction with implementing a testing requirement for inbound international travel, the administration should lift travel restrictions issued under section 212(f), which should no longer be needed with a testing requirement that substantially reduces the risk of inbound travelers being infected with COVID-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) does not recommend traveler quarantines and has found that quarantining entering travelers has not substantially delayed virus introduction in past pandemics.
- ✓ **Direct the U.S. Department of State to devote resources and staff to address the backlog of passports and visas expeditiously (for both travel and work visas).**
  - Quickly develop safety protocols to restart visa and passport processing, which will help accelerate demand for safe international travel.
  - Lift moratoriums on work and cultural visas to ensure the U.S. workforce’s needs can be met.

## PROMOTE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES THAT ENABLE A PREDICTABLE, NATIONWIDE FRAMEWORK FOR SAFE DOMESTIC TRAVEL

- ✓ **Establish a uniform set of health and safety guidance for states and local governments to follow to safely resume travel.**
  - Clarify which areas of the airport the federal mask mandate on interstate travel applies, and whether local or federal authorities will be responsible for enforcing the mask requirement.
  - Rely on a risk-based, layered approach to health and safety measures that avoid mandatory quarantines or universal vaccine mandates for domestic travel.
  - Set risk-based health and safety guidelines that account for the facts and circumstances of structured meetings and events, apart from other types of mass gatherings.
- ✓ **Implement consistent testing and preventive measures.**
  - Increase federal resources for testing centers and other critical healthcare infrastructure.
  - Remove financial barriers to COVID-19 testing, treatment, preventative services and vaccine access.
  - Boost the output of supplies needed to eradicate COVID-19 through large-scale government procurement and reduced trade barriers.
- ✓ **Provide federal leadership and resources to accelerate vaccine distribution.**
  - Increase funding for states and localities to expand purchasing of available vaccine dosages.
  - Establish best practices and resource sharing to help states improve and execute distribution plans.
  - Establish federal vaccine distribution teams to target high-priority areas and hard-to-reach communities.
- ✓ **Provide liability protections for entities that make reasonable efforts to follow applicable government coronavirus standards and guidelines.**
  - Provide protections from certain public accommodation laws if lodgings, entertainment venues, restaurants, or other places of public accommodation cannot offer the requested accommodations because doing so would pose a serious public health risk.

# Global Competitiveness

International inbound travel has the ability to bring people together from different backgrounds, bolster local economies and spur recovery efforts: We must be ready to meet a resurgence in international travel demand once global travel can resume. To better prepare the U.S. to welcome back visitors from around the world—and to compete for international tourism dollars—travel must be viewed by policymakers as an export on par with other U.S. industries. Importantly, international visitors must also see the U.S. as a welcoming destination.

The following policies should be enacted to allow the travel industry to compete for international tourism dollars and meet its goal of welcoming 116 million annual international visitors by 2028:

## **CREATE A NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TRAVEL AND TOURISM POSITION WITHIN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE TO WORK ACROSS AGENCIES TO DEVELOP A COHERENT, GOVERNMENTWIDE PLAN TO BOOST TRAVEL EXPORTS**

- ✓ **The office should set national goals and objectives for growing international visitation to the United States and work across federal agencies to implement policy changes needed to achieve these goals.**
  - Set international arrivals and travel spending goals every four years, which should include the goal of welcoming 116 million annual international visitors by 2028.
  - Lead interagency development of strategies to meet travel goals, such as necessary changes to visa processing and customs and entry procedures.
  - Coordinate with stakeholders to promote and increase the competitiveness of U.S. travel exports, such as large international trade shows and sporting events.
  - Develop a plan for the travel industry's recovery from COVID-19 and develop strategies to avoid future threats.

## **PRIORITIZE AND ELEVATE TRAVEL EXPORTS IN U.S. TRADE AGREEMENTS, SUCH AS THOSE PENDING WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE EUROPEAN UNION, JAPAN AND OTHERS**

- ✓ **Establish language to prevent the politicization of outbound travel warnings and restrictions.**
  - Create rules to ensure outbound travel advisories and regulations are necessary, reasonable and based on science or objective evidence.
- ✓ **Establish language to promote cooperation and capacity-building on matters related to travel security and travel facilitation programs, such as U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Preclearance and the Visa Waiver Program (VWP).**
- ✓ **Negotiate incentives for travel and tourism exports similar to how manufacturing exports are negotiated.**

## **SUPPORT THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF BRAND USA, THE UNITED STATES' DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION**

- ✓ **Protect the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) fee from any diversion or threat that could significantly impair Brand USA. Over the past seven years, Brand USA's marketing efforts—which are funded in part from private contributions with a matching contribution from the ESTA fee—helped to attract 7.5 million visitors to the U.S., generating \$55 billion in economic activity and sustaining more than 52,000 American jobs each year.**
- ✓ **Provide additional federal funding to allow Brand USA to continue its work, as its ESTA funding stream has been severely diminished amid the stoppage of international inbound travel. Brand USA's work is crucial to promoting America's image abroad and bringing back visitors, spurring an economic recovery and communicating health and safety requirements to visitors.**

# Future of Mobility and Infrastructure

By prioritizing infrastructure investments now, the U.S. can emerge from the pandemic and rebuild the travel industry with stronger, more connected infrastructure systems than ever before. Even before the public health crisis, cities and towns were growing further apart due to aging, insufficient infrastructure and congested roadways. There is an opportunity to modernize these systems, invest in new modes of transportation and facilitate recovery efforts by reconnecting Americans to each other and the world.

The following policies should be enacted to improve America's travel infrastructure systems:

## PRIORITIZE INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS

- ✓ **Modernize the national travel network by authorizing \$550 billion in federal funding for highways, transit, passenger rail and airports over five years, including:**
  - \$325 billion over five years for the federal-aid highway programs.
  - \$125 billion over five years for investments in public transit.
  - \$40 billion over five years for the Airport Improvement Program from both the Airport and Airways Trust Fund and the General Fund.
  - \$60 billion in passenger rail funding.

- ✓ **Expand and improve passenger rail service by increasing Amtrak funding to \$30 billion, providing \$18 billion in targeted investments for the Northeast Corridor, and allowing Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds to support passenger rail operations. Amend the state and local planning requirements to ensure that states and localities develop strategies and invest in projects that grow travel and tourism.**
- ✓ **Amend the federal planning requirements so that states and metropolitan planning organizations work with the travel industry to develop strategies and identify projects necessary to grow travel and tourism.**
- ✓ **Prioritize the award of federal discretionary grants to projects that improve travel mobility and achieve the goals of the National Travel and Tourism Infrastructure Strategic Plan.**
  - Amend the BUILD grant program by adding specific consideration for projects that would improve access to travel and tourism destinations.
  - Establish a Projects of National and Regional Significance program, funded at \$9 billion over five years, to invest in major projects that would improve travel mobility between regions, but cannot be funded through annual apportionments or other discretionary sources.

## **SUPPORT TAX INCENTIVES AND GRANTS FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

- ✓ **Travel businesses will continue to need access to the Section 30C tax credit to make needed investments in electric vehicle infrastructure and help facilitate the transition to a greener drive market.**
- ✓ **Establish a federal grant program within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to fund the establishment of a national network of charging infrastructure.**
  - DOT should establish the network by identifying the most highly used corridors for long-haul passenger travel and making travel businesses along those corridors eligible to receive grants.
- ✓ **Enact tax incentives to accelerate the development and use of sustainable aviation fuels.**

## THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SHOULD MAKE STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND MODERNIZE EXISTING SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SITES

- ✓ **Facilities management and maintenance funding issues need to be resolved structurally.**
  - The Great American Outdoors Act provided five years of funding for parks, but a permanent structure to address deferred maintenance and infrastructure should be identified. The parks' long-term viability is crucial to conservation efforts and the health of local economies: In 2019, 327 million national parks visitors generated \$41.7 billion in total economic output and supported 340,500 jobs.
- ✓ **Parks need updated infrastructure to balance access with conservation to provide all visitors with an exceptional experience and access while also protecting the environment.**
  - Implement crowd management technology and online booking systems.
  - Implement dynamic pricing for entrance, concessionaires and high-demand areas.
- ✓ **Increase park security and make safety upgrades to protect visitors and land.**
  - Expand broadband access.
  - Invest in technologies that help predict or thwart wildfires (rather than just suppress them when they occur).
  - Add trail and overlook protections.

# Reimagining Air Travel

As the U.S. air travel industry shifts to meet the demands of providing a safe travel experience during the pandemic and beyond, the need for better, more innovative technology across the entire air travel ecosystem is more pertinent than ever.

The following priorities should be enacted to enhance and strengthen the air travel experience:

## ADVANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY TO PROVIDE MORE EFFICIENT AND HYGIENIC SOLUTIONS AT PORTS OF ENTRY NATIONWIDE

- ✓ **The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) should rapidly invest in the procurement of technology to implement Credential Authentication Technology with Camera (CAT-C) at 90% of TSA lanes by 2022.**
  - A \$40 million investment is needed to upgrade technology and deploy by the end of 2022.
- ✓ **Expand the biometric exit systems that are currently operational at 20 airports and seven seaports to process 90% of exiting passengers by the end of 2021.**
- ✓ **Expand Simplified Arrival beyond its current 20 airports and four Preclearance locations to process 90% of arrivals by the end of 2021.**
- ✓ **Develop harmonies between TSA, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Trusted Traveler Programs' use of biometrics to ensure a seamless, secure and voluntary (for U.S. citizens) experience.**

## THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST SET AND COMMUNICATE CLEAR STANDARDS FOR BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY, PRIVACY AND SECURITY

- ✓ **DHS should develop and implement universal standards and rules concerning traveler privacy, data, and protection that will give nongovernment entities a framework for developing and implementing voluntary biometric solutions.**
  - U.S. citizens' use of biometrics should be voluntary, giving passengers the opportunity to opt-out of biometric screenings.
  - All biometric data should be secure.
  - Biometric data must be used for identification purposes, not for surveillance or law enforcement purposes.

## REAL ID ENFORCEMENT SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL IMPLEMENTATION WILL NOT REVERSE OR SLOW THE INDUSTRY'S RECOVERY; THE ADDITIONAL TIME SHOULD BE USED TO IMPROVE AND MODERNIZE THE REAL ID ACT

- ✓ **REAL ID enforcement is set to begin on October 1, 2021, but will need to be delayed. The REAL ID enforcement date should be based on metrics, such as REAL ID issuance rates and the percentage of Americans with acceptable alternatives, that demonstrate air travel will not be significantly disrupted.**
- ✓ **Develop alternative screening procedures for individuals who show up to the airport without a REAL ID-compliant document.**
  - Designate Precheck and CLEAR enrollment as acceptable alternatives to REAL ID at the airport security checkpoint.

# Travel & Security Facilitation

Some of the best, most innovative security programs are also the ones that make travel more accessible and efficient. As we look ahead to the next few years, a more streamlined approach to travel facilitation will be vital to handling a resurgence in travel demand.

The following policies should be enacted to ensure a more secure, seamless travel experience for low-risk domestic and international visitors:

## ENROLLMENT IN TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS—TSA PRECHECK, GLOBAL ENTRY, SENTRI AND NEXUS—SHOULD BE STREAMLINED INTO ONE PROGRAM FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY

- ✓ **The DHS should consolidate all of its Trusted Traveler Programs and have one application, vetting process, credentialing and fee structure.**
  - DHS should further optimize and modernize its Trusted Traveler Programs to make greater use of existing biometric technology.

## EXPAND GLOBAL ENTRY AND PRECLEARANCE LOCATIONS TO VWP COUNTRIES, WHICH WILL FURTHER IMPROVE TRAVEL FACILITATION AND LEVERAGE THE OVERLAPPING SECURITY STANDARDS OF GLOBAL ENTRY, PRECLEARANCE AND VWP TO EXPAND THE PROGRAMS' FACILITATION BENEFITS TO ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES

## ENHANCE EXISTING TRAVEL FACILITATION PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE THE TRAVELER EXPERIENCE AND REMAIN COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

- ✓ **Develop processes to streamline the adjudication process for travel visas.**
  - Congress should direct the U.S. Department of State with identifying consular posts with a history of excessive wait times and develop an action plan to reduce such wait times.
  - The State Department should pilot technology for increasing efficiency in visa processing, including biometric identification and video conferencing technology to enable remote visa interviews.
- ✓ **Automate processing procedures for low-risk visa applicants, low threat Global Entry applicants or create a “fast lane” for applicants from allied countries.**
- ✓ **Expand, streamline and automate non-immigrant visa applications and processing, including F and M student visa, J-1 cultural visa, B-1 and B-2 traveler visa, H-2B temporary, non-agricultural worker visa.**



U.S. Travel's **Power of Travel Policy Platform** sets forth an ambitious agenda—but these are extraordinary times. A bold vision will be needed to restore and rebuild and grow travel through the pandemic and the years to come. By working with our partners in the federal government, we can harness the true power of travel and reimagine an industry that is stronger, smarter and more resilient than ever before.