

Tacoma Regional Convention + Visitor Bureau

Modest State Tourism Growth Tied to Rise in Fuel, Hotel Prices *Washington Tourism Alliance Works to Maintain Share Amid Heavy Competition*

Feb. 22, 2012—Tacoma, Wash.— Preliminary tourism industry statistics released today by the Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) indicate a modest rise in 2011 Washington State visitor volume, expenditures, tax contributions and tourism industry employment and earnings, in line with national travel and tourism economic recovery. However, the WTA cautioned that the Washington State's tourism and travel industry is still not performing at the level prior to the recession and is dramatically out-spent by competing state tourism marketing budgets.

While economic recovery in 2011 spurred 1.6 percent growth in total person-trips to Washington, the rate of increase is less than the preceding 2009-10 period (2.8 percent). Travel spending rose 5 percent, to \$16.4 billion, in 2011 but was due primarily to price increases for hotel rooms and transportation.

Total local and state tax receipts generated by travel spending increased 4.5 percent in 2011, the same rate of increase as in the preceding year. Lodging tax revenues increased 7.7 percent. Travel spending in Washington State generated \$1.8 billion in local, state, and federal tax collections in 2011. The estimated federal tax receipts are comprised of the motor fuel excise tax, airline ticket taxes and payroll and income taxes. Almost \$1 billion local and state tax revenues were collected in 2011.

In 2011, travel-generated employment grew to 150,900, up 2.1 percent, according to the estimates, suggesting that travel industry businesses are beginning to hire new workers for the first time since 2008. Total state earnings (payroll) generated by travel were \$4.5 million.

"These estimates reflect the enormous impact that travel and tourism has on our state's economy," said Suzanne Fletcher, Executive Director of the Washington Tourism Alliance. "However, the road to economic recovery is long and Washington will need to compete aggressively to preserve and grow its share of the tourism market."

While the Washington State numbers reflect a national trend toward incremental travel and tourism growth, Fletcher notes that Washington's primary competing states all boast dramatically larger tourism budgets, ranging between \$10 and \$50 million. WTA began work July 1, following the closure of the state tourism office, with a budget of some \$300,000 and has been working to raise funds through membership and corporate sponsorships. A long-term funding plan is in development.

The annual *Washington State Travel Impacts Report*, prepared for the Washington Tourism Alliance by Dean Runyan Associates, studies the state's travel industry and its statewide economic effects. These statewide tourism figures can be viewed at www.watourismalliance.com; county impact breakdowns are available for purchase from the Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations Association (WSDMO) by emailing Kathryn_hedrick@comcast.net.

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The Tacoma Regional Convention + Visitor Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for Tacoma + Pierce County, WA. Accredited by Destination Marketing Association International.
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