

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Survey of International Air Travelers; OMB Control Number: 0625-0227

1. Is the proposed collection of information necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information has practical utility?

- Yes, the collection is necessary for the agency and U.S. business. Yes, the information has practical utility. My company works with U.S. destination marketing organizations and U.S. businesses to expand U.S. travel exports. The U.S. DOC, Office of Travel and Tourism Industries (OTTI) Survey of International Air Travelers (SIAT) is the only primary resource available to measure and steer export investment and promotions. It is vital for budgeting, reporting return on investment, economic impact, and reporting jobs. It is required to assist businesses compete globally. Without out this program investment in travel exports would not be possible.

With our partners, we have invested private funding to expand this program in a public private partnership. The OTTI Supplemental Airport Survey Program (SASP) provides U.S. exporters throughout the entire country the opportunity to expand and improve the SIAT resource and in so doing expand efforts related to expanding U.S. travel exports.

The SIAT program is vital to my firm and our vast array of partners. Expansion of this program has consistently proven to expand investment and measure returns in travel exports. We also contribute to the program through the purchase of data sets. This program could not be accomplished through the private sector without a federal lead.

- The SIAT program has been recognized by Congress as a vital part of the Travel Promotion Act (TPA). The SIAT supports each of the Acts cited in the Federal Register notice to provide research data to the government and industry. The requirements of the (TPA), the most recent Act, are needed to help the new Corporation for Travel Promotion achieve its goals as a result of the Act, as well as the government's own need for the data.

- There are no other sources of data on international traveler characteristics and visitation that are as comparable and comprehensive as this program. The Act requires that the program be improved. We strongly support the need to improve the program as outlined in the Act.

- The program and the improvements are necessary to assure the U.S. DOC, OTTI, and industry achieve the goals of the National Export Initiative to double exports. Travel exports are a key contributor to meeting this goal.

2. Is the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information accurate?

At this time we have no issues or concerns here. In the future we do see a need to revise and improve the questionnaire used by the agency.

3. Are there ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected?

- The way to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected is to fulfill the intent of the TPA. The TPA requires the U.S. DOC “to reach a 1 percent sample size and revising the design and format of questionnaires to accommodate a new survey instrument, improve response rates to at least double the number of states and cities with reliable international visitor estimates and improve market coverage.”

The TPA also calls for an economic impact of travel on state economies. Such a report would enhance utility of the information.

The additional sample is needed now more than ever. Additional surveys mean more markets can be broken out, meaning additional visitation estimates and traveler characteristics for my company and our partners (<state, city, region>). This data is required to assist us in developing research-based promotional campaigns to increase travel to our area.

As requested in the TPA, a larger sample is needed for OTTI to develop estimates of international travel exports (expenditures) on a state-by-state basis. Without additional data on the destinations visited and spending from this survey, this program cannot be developed.

We are delighted to see a new questionnaire for 2012 and we hope OTTI will revise the survey on a schedule that is more frequent than the current survey which has been in place since 1996.

4. Are there ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology?

- We support the exploration of better collection techniques, including the expansion of the SASP. It is vital that funds needed to explore automated collection techniques do not come from the current funds. Rather it should come from additional funds and additional opportunities to establish public-private partnerships.
- One use of technology would be to use PDA devices to collect the surveys from travelers. Here again, the cost to invest in this technology appears to be outside of OTTI's ability and OTTI would want more surveys rather than to cut the respondent base to invest in the technology.

Respectfully submitted,

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