

# Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

*“Gateway to Economic Prosperity”*

Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report



# Message from the President

The Mat-Su CVB had an exciting and busy Fiscal Year 2014, filled with many new additions to our marketing program, successful member events and infrastructure development that will only further bolster tourism.



Last spring, the Mat-Su Borough received a \$1.235 million appropriation from the Alaska Legislature for design and analysis of the Gateway Visitor Center. We are extremely proud to say the Mat-Su CVB has been the driving force on this project, which will have major positive ramifications for years to come. We truly believe this project is a “Gateway to Economic Prosperity,” not only for those in the tourism industry, but also the community as a whole. This project will encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more and ultimately, tell their friends about their great Mat-Su Valley experiences. We also see this new building as a community center where residents will find many uses to gather and celebrate.

In FY14, we also saw record visitation to our Web site, which helps drive visitors to your businesses. We added a meeting planner workshop to attract more small meetings and conferences to the Mat-Su, and we invested in video projects that will help highlight the Valley as a premier destination, both on social media channels and at various consumer shows. On the membership side of things, we continued to host roundtable discussions in all our communities, so we can hear directly from members and help shape our marketing programs to best suit their needs.

Leaf through this annual report and find out more about how the various marketing and membership programs are benefitting the community and the tourism industry. We are looking forward to continuing and building on that success in FY15, as well as many more developments with the Gateway Visitor Center.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Craig Saunders, *President*  
Alaska Backcountry  
Adventure Tours

Rick Peterson  
Mt. McKinley Princess  
Wilderness Lodge

Cheryl Metiva, *Vice President*  
Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman

Dee Dee Kay, *Past President*  
Grand Denali Lodge/Denali Bluffs

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First National Bank Alaska

Travis Taylor  
Premier Alaska Tours

Karen Harris, *Secretary*  
Alaska Garden Gate B&B

Mabel Wimmer  
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Mark Austin, *Executive Committee*  
Palmer Musk Ox Farm

Zack Steer  
Sheep Mountain Lodge

# Membership Report

## MEMBERSHIP HOLDS STRONG

A STRONG MEMBERSHIP IS AT THE HEART



Membership is the core of the Mat-Su CVB operations. In FY14, the CVB welcomed 17 new members, with a total of 249 member businesses. The CVB had a 94.7 percent retention rate, well above industry averages. Membership events included a highly successful annual meeting and awards banquet, monthly luncheons and community roundtables.

## NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS LEADS TO INCREASED BUSINESS FOR EVERYONE

The Mat-Su CVB hosted monthly luncheons during the winter season where members learned about a variety of issues, trends and topics. The annual meeting and awards luncheon in the fall and the open house in May gave members an opportunity to network, learn about each other's product and build partnerships. We also hosted a very successful Land Purchase Celebration at the site of the Gateway Visitor Center, where members met with Rep.



Bill Stoltze, Rep. Shelley Hughes and Mat-Su Borough Assembly members to recognize them for their support in securing funding.

## EMPOWERING MEMBERS

COOPERATIVE MARKETING ALLOWS MEMBERS TO STRETCH THEIR MARKETING BUDGETS

Giving members the tools they need to succeed is important to the Mat-Su CVB. In FY2014, we offered cooperative marketing opportunities in our visitor guide, Web site, magazine ads and consumer shows. By empowering our members and stretching their marketing dollars through cooperative efforts, the entire industry has a voice.

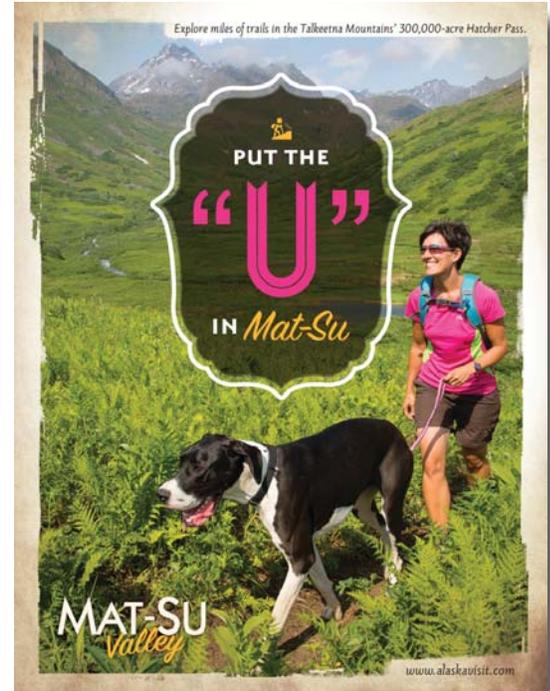


# In-State Marketing

## A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

ALASKA RESIDENTS AND THEIR VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES MAKE UP A BIG PART OF OUR TARGET MARKET.

In FY2014, we continued the award-winning print and digital advertising campaign, “Put the U in Mat-Su,” adding new photography to the image-based advertising. These ads appeared in both local and statewide newspapers, as well as online. The ads highlight the Mat-Su Valley as a destination for Alaskans by showcasing popular activities such as hiking, zip lining and flightseeing. The ads are targeted during the “shoulder” seasons of the spring and fall, and coincide with run dates of television and radio advertising, to extend their reach.



## TELEVISION AND RADIO

### A MARKETING CAMPAIGN THAT WORKS

In FY2014, the Mat-Su CVB continued its major investment in television advertising in the Anchorage market with our 30-second high-definition commercial. We also continued our year-round ‘Yahoo, Mat-Su!’ radio advertising. Research shows consumer awareness of our ubiquitous jingle is well above industry standards.

## PROMOTING THE MAT-SU’S EVENTS

### NEW PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS WINTER

The Mat-Su CVB launched a new campaign in FY14, highlighting the many community-organized winter events that draw visitors from around Alaska. This campaign featured newspaper advertising promoting four winter events - Colony Christmas, Talkeetna Winterfest, the Willow Winter Carnival and Big Lake Winter Fest - as well as radio spots leading up to the event. Attracting in-state visitors to our events leads to overnight stays, and this cooperative marketing effort was well received.



# Reaching Potential Visitors

## SOCIAL MEDIA

REACHING AND ENGAGING POTENTIAL VISITORS REMAINS VITAL IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE

Social media allows us to reach and engage thousands of potential visitors daily with targeted messages on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and via blog posts on our Web site. In FY14, the Mat-Su CVB made substantial investments in social media marketing to grow our audience and expand our reach. We increased our Facebook likes to 9,400, expanded our YouTube channel with video produced both professionally and in-house and continued to Tweet about deals and events. Social media allows us to market across multiple platform to ensure our destination remains top of mind.

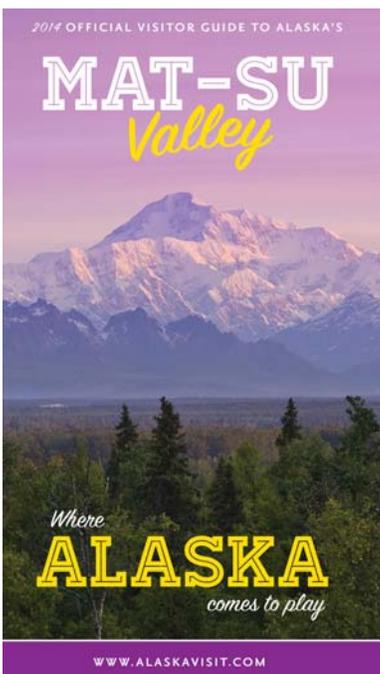
## WEB SITE

ALASKAVISIT.COM VISITATION NUMBERS GROW

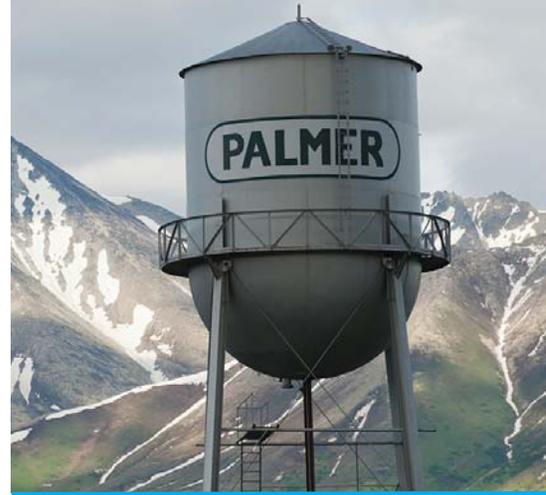
www.alaskavisit.com is our No. 1 marketing tool, and the Mat-Su CVB invested in an aggressive pay-per-click campaign in FY14, with impressive results. In FY14, traffic to the site increased 35 percent, with 80,000 site visitors clicking on 196,000 pages. The bounce rate also decreased by 6.3 percent. The continued investment in the Web site includes online marketing, pay-per-click, search engine optimization and development. All of these efforts drive Web site visitors to our member listings and Web sites, generating referrals that ultimately lead to continued growth for local businesses.

## VISITOR GUIDE

A PRINTED VISITOR GUIDE IS STILL IMPORTANT



The 2014 Mat-Su Visitor Guide featured a cover shot of Denali, and new photography throughout. The Mat-Su CVB distributed 100,000 copies through targeted direct mailings to high potential visitors via the state of Alaska, to tour operators and travel agents, placement in Alaska visitor centers and other high-traffic areas. In FY14, we had a record number of inquiries through the Web site, another sign that our online marketing efforts are working, and that people want to receive a printed guide in addition to digital information. There are a number of low-cost advertising options for members in the Visitor Guide each year, maximizing your marketing budget.





# Groups, Media and Beyond

## MEETINGS MARKET

### MEETINGS AND RETREATS ARE A GROWING BUSINESS

In June, the Mat-Su CVB hosted a successful meeting planner workshop and luncheon, with top planners from Anchorage and the Valley attending. The luncheon highlighted the growing infrastructure in the Mat-Su, making it an ideal destination for meetings, corporate retreats and small conferences. This program will continue and expand in FY15.



## GROUP TOURS

### REACHING GROUP TOUR BUYERS DRIVES BUSINESSES

The group tour market is important, and the Mat-Su CVB reaches these key buyers in a number of ways. In FY14, we attended both the American Bus Association Marketplace and the National Tour Association Travel Exchange, with more than 40 appointments with buyers. We also worked with in-state wholesalers and small tour operators to showcase the Mat-Su Valley and have it included in their statewide itinerary packages, as well as participated in statewide familiarization trips, hosting group tour operators.



## INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

### INTERNATIONAL VISITORS STAY LONGER AND SPEND MORE MONEY IN ALASKA

Destination awareness is important, and the Mat-Su CVB took great strides in FY14 in international marketing. We attended the Down Under Sales Mission in Australia, and met with tour operators from Europe and Scandinavia at the Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar. During the summer, we hosted more than 60 tour operators on 8 familiarization trips, representing emerging markets such as China and India, as well as established markets like Germany, Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom. New in FY14, the Mat-Su CVB added Web site ads to the German and Japanese portions of TravelAlaska.com, linking to our translated pages.



## PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA

### GENERATING MEDIA COVERAGE RAISES AWARENESS

Editorial coverage is trusted by consumers, and they put value in what they read. At Alaska Media Road Show, the Mat-Su CVB met with more than 40 travel writers. Throughout the year, we assisted more than 35 writers with information, photos and more. Hosting writers is important as well, and through these efforts, the Mat-Su Valley was featured in publications such as the New York Times, USA Today, Country Living and a variety of online publications in FY14.

# Financial Position

## Statement of Financial Position (as of June 30, 2014)

### Assets

#### Current assets:

Cash	\$116,302
Memberships and grants receivable	\$6,982
Inventory	\$2,058
Prepaid expenses	<u>\$31,718</u>
Total current assets	\$157,060

#### Property and Equipment

Furniture and equipment	\$112,199
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(\$108,496)</u>
Net property and equipment	<u>\$3,703</u>
Total assets	\$160,763

### Liabilities and net assets

#### Current liabilities:

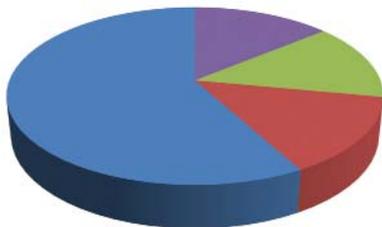
Accounts payable	\$31,270
Payroll liabilities	\$3,405
Deferred revenue	<u>\$40,740</u>
Total current liabilities	\$75,415
Unrestricted net assets	<u>\$85,348</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$160,763

*Per board policy, Mat-Su CVB's financial statements, accounting practices and reporting methods are audited every third year. The FY14 financial statements have not been audited.*

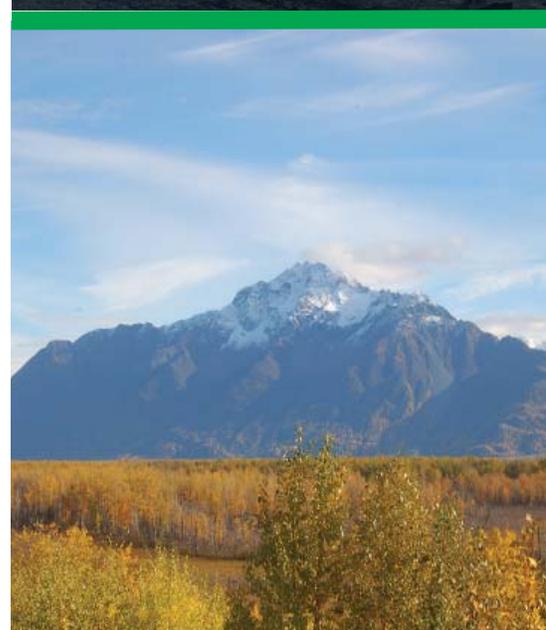
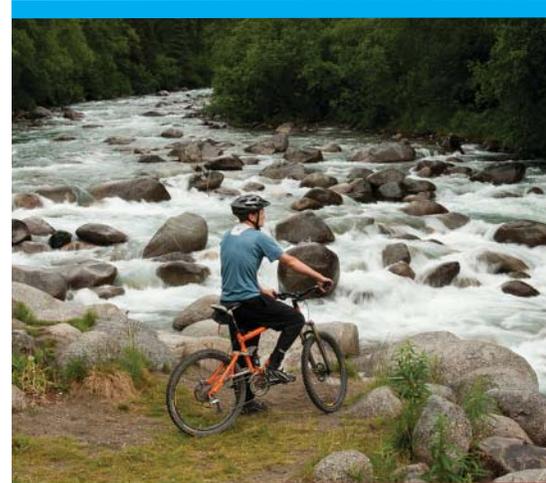
### FY14 Revenue Detail - \$881,813

Bed Tax Grant Revenue	\$721,632
Membership Dues	\$31,796
Advertising Sales & Marketing Programs	\$54,685
Special Events & Fund-raisers	\$28,759
Gift Shop	\$6,909
Interest	\$77
Other	\$2,555
In-Kind Contributions	<u>\$34,400</u>
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$881,813

### FY14 Expenses by Division



Marketing	\$519,908	58%
Administration	\$142,183	15%
Membership	\$132,872	14%
VIC/Operations	\$123,854	13%



# Gateway Visitor Center Project Progress Report



## Gateway Visitor Center Project Timeline

Phase I	Feasibility Study	Complete
Phase II	Purchase property (Former Homestead RV Park)	Complete
Phase III	Design development	Current
Phase IV	Secure construction funding	2015
Phase V	Construction/opening	2016/2017