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Final

Thank you very much for this honor—and for all those wonderful things people said about me on the video. Must have been heavily edited.

I am incredibly proud to have worked with so many dedicated people in our industry over the past three years.

Our success truly has involved a cast of thousands -- too many to be named -- but I am honored to have been a part of it all.

Our work is not yet done. Congress will reconvene after the election to work on ways to provide much needed stimulus to the economy.

The Travel Promotion Act would bring in millions of new visitors, billions in economic revenue, and hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

If Congress doesn't get it done this year, then our next President must make Travel Promotion the centerpiece of getting our economy back on track.

Let's keep the pressure on Washington to get this program up and running.

Tonight I want to talk about what is next for our industry.

When I was notified about this award, I thought back to the first speech I delivered as Chairman of TIA...the one where we called for an “Apollo Project” for the industry.

And I tried to imagine what that speech might say if I had to deliver it today.

What if we took the same passion, creativity and unity of purpose that we brought to international travel – and focused it on the next big idea?

With that in mind, I’ll share some observations with you.

The first observation has to do with an old cliché that we’ve seen a million times on t-shirts and bumper stickers.

“Life is a journey, not a destination.”

Okay, I admit, it sounds pretty obvious. After all, we are in the travel business!

Getting from point A to point B is a vital part of the traveler’s experience. It colors how they remember their vacation long after the trip is over. In fact, their experience during the journey has a lot to do with their feelings about the destination, their inclination to come back, or their recommendations to friends.

We at Disney think about this a lot. We’re best known for creating great attractions. But we realized long ago that we needed to devote just as

much brainpower and creativity to all other aspects of the guest experience – including how they get around, how they plan their trip, and how long they stand in line.

We're not alone in thinking this way. Many of you are making similar strides toward improving the process of travel.

But if we step back and take a macro look at travel, we see a different story.

Destinations and attractions are in the midst of a golden age of innovation, providing ever more compelling offerings to the traveler. Heavenly beds, better websites, unique dining experiences, faster check-outs and, in Disney's case, better attractions -- all sorts of little things that we believe are strategic and important to our business.

But at the same time, the process of getting there is getting ever more painful.

Just consider the hassles and fears people must be prepared to accept: the lines that wrap around airports, the security gauntlet, the flight delays, the cancellations, the hours stranded on the tarmac, the extra fees, the lost baggage.

By the way, I heard a comedian once say that the rings of Saturn are made up of lost baggage.

Not one U.S. airport is on the list of the top ten best airports in the world. Yet five of the top ten *busiest* airports *are* in the U.S.

I can read you the newspaper headlines that tell the horror stories. You know them:

“Trapped on the Tarmac”

“Air Rage: Chaos at the Airport”

“Glitch strands 20,000 at LAX”

Let me be clear. I am not singling out the airlines for this problem. Much of it is beyond their control. Nor are the airports entirely responsible. Or the FAA. Or the TSA.

And the issues go way beyond just air travel. Our rail and road systems are woefully behind what you’ll find in many other parts of the world.

The problems plaguing our transportation system are so big, so complex and so multi-faceted, that they are beyond any one stakeholder’s ability to solve.

And that brings me to my second observation: We’re all in this together.

Let's face it, if the journey becomes a hardship, people will say "to heck with it." Despite all the great destinations, the amenities and things to do, people may just decide to stay home.

This summer, a TIA study estimated that frustration with the travel process caused people to avoid 41 million trips over the previous 12 months. More than 100,000 travelers each day are choosing to avoid trips.

What does that tell you? One thing it tells you is people don't *have* to travel. They have options. Technology makes it easier to videoconference and collaborate online. And now with the economy in hard times, cost constraints on business travel will accelerate this trend.

The study was careful to note that travelers are most irritated about the air travel *process*, not the airlines. The airlines took it personally, though.

Someone from their trade association had this to say: "If the idea of this study was to verify that our customers are dissatisfied, then I don't know that they needed to spend the money; it's kind of a waste."

Note the proprietary way that they called air travelers "our customers." But, ladies and gentlemen, those are our customers, too—not just the airlines'. They're our customers because, once they get off the plane, they're heading to our hotels and theme parks and cruise lines and

restaurants. The air travel system is too important to be left to one component of the industry to figure out.

Some of you may be still be thinking, I run a hotel, how is this my problem? And what could I even do about it?

Which leads me to my third observation. If we are truly going to be an industry that takes on big issues and advocates big ideas, we are going to need to develop new capabilities.

I'm not just talking about the ability to lobby Congress – which we're getting better and better at.

I'm talking about developing the infrastructure, intellectual horsepower, and unity of purpose that will allow us to advocate comprehensive solutions to big global problems.

Dare I say it, I'm talking about an Apollo-like mindset.

Let's face it. Transportation is a huge, complicated, and messy problem. Solving it is going to be difficult, it is going to be expensive, and it is going to take an unprecedented show of unity from all members of the industry.

We collectively need to “own” the problem. We need to agree that transportation is a larger issue than airlines or airports or government agencies are capable of handling on their own.

Then we need to agree on the definition of the problem. Today, you hear all sorts of definitions depending on who is doing the defining. The problem is either oil prices, lousy infrastructure, too much competition, not enough competition, too much regulation or not enough regulation.

Meanwhile, nothing gets done.

This issue begs for a holistic approach that takes the entire travel experience into account. And that can only happen with the collective engagement of the entire industry.

And once we have defined the problem, we must be willing to advocate for comprehensive solutions with the same fervor that we brought to the international travel issue.

All of this takes work. It took us a year just to develop the blueprint that became the basis for the Travel Promotion Act. During that year, we did the research and engaged with stakeholders in the industry and in government.

To fund all that work, we needed to raise several million dollars from the industry. We had to create a new organization to execute it.

Imagine if we had this capability on a permanent basis, to deal not only with transportation issues, but a whole host of other big challenges.

Take climate change. Possible regulations are looming that could include carbon offsets or a carbon tax. Imagine if our industry developed a collective view on what our environmental options are beyond saying no.

Or take the regulatory structure. Every step of the travel process—booking, visas and passports, airports, airlines, security and immigration—each is governed by a separate regulatory agency. None of whose mission has anything to do with the needs of the traveler.

What if we ran a hotel that way? What if every aspect of a hotel's business was run by a separate entity? You'd have the valet concession, a separate bellhop business, the check-in company, the room company, the housekeeping company, the room service vendor. Imagine if the bellhop business only cared about the luggage, and the housekeeping company only cared about clean sheets, but no one cared about the guest.

It sounds absurd, but that's how our government looks at travel.

Imagine if we developed a comprehensive plan for what the regulatory system SHOULD look like? Imagine the changes we could advocate, and the benefits that would ensue.

The good news is that the Travel Industry Association is well on the path toward providing the industry the capability and the clout to make a difference.

Roger and his team have a vision for the organization that will allow the industry to rise to the occasion.

If you are wondering what that looks like, consider the manufacturers. They share many similarities with the travel industry. They are quite diverse, with members ranging from high tech companies such as Intel to steel producers to small mom and pop suppliers. Despite that diversity, they are able to come together quite effectively on common issues that affect the membership as a whole.

Their trade association, the National Association of Manufacturers, speaks authoritatively on any number of issues. No Administration would make a move on industrial policy without talking to them first.

That's what we should aim to become.

So, to recap my three observations tonight: First, we need to make the travelers' journey as worthwhile as their destination. Second, when it comes to the challenges facing the transportation system, we are all in this together. And third, our industry must continue to develop the capability to address these big issues in a meaningful way.

My final message is this: let's continue to be an industry that takes on big ideas and challenges for the benefit of all travelers.

In my day job, I tell my operations Cast Members around the world that they have the power to make someone's day at one of our parks Magical.

Well, the same is true of our industry. We are the touch point with people around the world. We connect travelers with new adventures and experiences. We possess the means to enrich lives and bring cultures together...not too many industries can claim that.

So, let's continue to stay active in our pursuit of what is right for travelers!

Thank you for your warm hospitality, thank you for your kind attention and thank you for this generous honor.