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Thank you and good afternoon.

At Disney, I speak to a lot of internal audiences—you know, mice, dwarfs, chipmunks. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to look out at an audience that doesn't have big ears or buck teeth. So, I'm delighted to be here.

I once heard a speech coach say that you should never start a speech by thanking people, because it doesn't leave a strong first impression. But the first impression I want to leave is that I am grateful. So I want to thank Jonathan Tisch for his long-standing efforts on behalf of the industry.

I want to thank Roger Dow for his unifying leadership of the TIA.

I want to thank Steve Porter for graciously agreeing to chair the Discover America Partnership.

I also want to recognize and thank our many friends from government who have joined us today. Ambassador Karen Hughes, who shares our mission of winning hearts and minds around the world. Ambassador Frank Lavin, who has been such a great advocate for our industry.

And Canadian Ambassador Michael Wilson, who reminds us that our borders are truly the engines of our prosperity.

The effort that I am going to discuss has been a partnership in every sense of the word, and we are grateful to address this challenge with the support and friendship of so many fine people from the administration and Congress.

Why is this partnership so important? Because we are all in this together. The challenge of improving America's welcome is not just an industry challenge or even a private sector challenge – it is America's challenge – one that both government and the private sector are addressing together.

These individuals and others too numerous to mention have brought us to the announcement we are making today—the announcement of the first comprehensive national strategy to attract foreign visitors.

Let me begin with an analogy.

When Disneyland opened 50 years ago, we called it The Happiest Place on Earth. And ever since we've devoted ourselves to making it that kind of place.

Now, I want you to imagine a fabulous theme park called America. Inside its gates are some of the most marvelous attractions in the world. The people inside the park are warm and friendly. Visitors have wonderful experiences creating memories for a lifetime.

So, why is the market share of Park America at an all-time low? Why has gate attendance declined by double digits since 2000?

One. The park gives the impression that it doesn't really like to admit people. It requires most people to apply for admission many months in advance and then travel to one of the park's offices and be interviewed in person by a park official, with no guarantee of success.

Two. The park's whole gate experience feels unwelcoming. The gate attendants do their best – but there aren't enough of them. So visitors often endure hours of waiting because ticket booths are abandoned with only a few windows open.

Three. Compounding the problem and in contrast with its competitors, the park doesn't advertise. In this vacuum, the park's brand message is: if you come, fine . . . if you don't, even better.

That would be no way to run a park, and it's certainly no way for a nation to attract foreign travel, which is one of the world's most important growth industries.

This basically is the situation I outlined when I was here last January. That was when we decided to do something about it. We challenged ourselves as an industry to come back with a blueprint to fix "America—The Destination."

A year ago, with many of you in attendance, I described this challenge as an "Apollo Project," for the industry. Now, a year later, we have created the plan – and I have good news: It ain't rocket science. It's common sense.

When it comes to security and ease of travel, people sometimes mistakenly believe we must choose one or the other – that we can't have both. Ladies and gentleman, we can do both, and the blueprint will show Congress how we can do it.

The plan we now have in hand is the single most important document our industry has ever created. Its fulfillment is the single most important action we can undertake as an industry. Never have we had such a plan and never have we been in such need of one.

The result will mean more long haul passengers for airlines, higher occupancies for hotels, more people on the bus for tour operators, more dollars on the bottom line for convention bureaus, for states, for the entire travel industry.

Before I tell you what the blueprint proposes, I'm going to tell you what it doesn't do.

First, it doesn't call for eliminating any of the policies that were put in place to make our country safer. In fact, it strengthens existing security policies, and recommends new ways to safeguard our borders. This is a plan, first and foremost, to make us more secure.

Second, this isn't a sweeping overhaul of our travel policies. It is, rather, a set of common sense solutions to adapt to the way that people are traveling today. It's using new technology and proven processes to make travel easier and more secure at the same time.

Finally, the funding requirements are not particularly high, when you consider the massive returns that this plan could generate. If these changes enable the U.S. to capture a little more than one percent of added share of the world travel market – which is still well below our high water mark in the mid-90s – we would generate

- \$16.4 billion in new expenditures
- 189,000 new jobs
- \$4.3 billion increase in payroll
- \$2.6 billion increase in federal, state and local tax revenues

That's huge return, when you consider that almost all of the blueprint could be implemented for about \$300 million.

The return is so good, we can't afford NOT to make the investment.

So, now that I've told what this plan is NOT – let me tell you what it IS.

It is a three-dimensional solution to the inbound travel experience.

The first dimension is the creation of a 21st Century visa system that will enable applications to be interviewed and processed within 30 days or less. After 9-11, personal interviews have been required of nearly every visa applicant, which has created major delays.

How do we reduce the delays? We increase staffing by 200 consular positions a year. We deploy rapid response teams to problem areas. For countries where distance is an obstacle for people completing in-person interviews, we recommend mobile consulates, teleconferencing and the use of trusted third parties, such as the American Chamber of Commerce.

We also should strengthen security in the Visa Waiver Program, and look to expand it. And we should accelerate proven security programs such as US-VISIT, which will allow visa officers to admit more legitimate travelers.

The second dimension of the blueprint addresses the need to modernize and secure our points of entry and make our airports world models. A visitor's arrival should be a positive, welcoming experience.

It is entirely within our reach to create a world-class entry system that is both friendly AND secure – and in which visitors are processed in 30 minutes or less.

Last year, just 12 airports nationwide accounted for almost 80% of all international arrivals. The first thing we do is clear: hire 250 new customs officers and deploy them to those airports with the greatest need.

The government also wants to fix the problem. Secretary of State Rice and Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff have announced a number of initiatives to improve the arrival experience. The initiatives include making Washington Dulles and Houston airports Model Ports of Entry. Many companies from the private sector have offered to help make this initiative a success.

We recommend rapidly completing the Model Ports projects at Dulles and Houston -- and then we should extend it to the next 10 busiest airports. We also support the full implementation of an international registered traveler program for frequent fliers.

To turn America's top inbound airports into world models, the Customs Border Protection and TSA should work with the travel industry to train its officials in customer service. And there is a very simple place to start: every foreign traveler into this country should be greeted at the inspection booth with the words, "Welcome to the United States." And when they leave, we should give them a form that asks, "What can we do better?"

These are simple words and gestures...they don't cost anything...but they will send a powerful message to visitors that we want them to feel welcome.

Once we have addressed the first two areas of visas and entry, we need to address a final, equally critical area. I'm talking about the negative perceptions that have been created among world travelers.

Negative perceptions have a funny way of lingering long after the reality has changed. It's not enough to fix the problem: we also have to tell the world we did it.

And that's the strongest argument I can think of for creating America's first nationally-coordinated program to get the message out that America is worth visiting – and that the process is now easier than people think.

In preparing this blueprint, we conducted quite a bit of research to understand why people are avoiding traveling to the U.S. And it was very clear to us that confusion and misperceptions about the entry experience play a significant role.

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative is a perfect example. This new law requires a passport for travel to and from Canada – and it is causing considerable anxiety and confusion among travelers.

The government agencies are individually doing what they can to communicate the changes, and so is the private sector. Many companies -- including Disney – are dedicating marketing and sales resources toward getting the word out. The Travel Industry Association has even set up a web site called “get a passport now,” which has gotten more than a million hits.

But none of this is any substitute for a well-funded, nationally coordinated program that speaks of these policies with a single voice. This will be particularly necessary when the new passport requirement goes into effect for land travelers...when the level of confusion may be an order of magnitude higher.

For years, the industry has called for such a program, but never has the need been greater. The blueprint gives us a roadmap for creating it.

We have done the necessary research and due diligence. We have studied the competition. We know who they are, where they spend their marketing dollars and the channels they use to communicate.

We also now know what our communications strategy should be. We know where we should spend the money. We know how we should spend it. We know what kind of return we will get.

The question is how do we fund it?

We have exhaustively looked at dozens of funding options—everything from industry self-assessment to the most humiliating, most desperate of ideas—asking for public donations and selling commemorative coins.

And out of this process, we are in a position to consider a wide range of good potential funding mechanisms – from a new tax credit bond, to user fees paid by the travelers who would benefit from a better system, to a fee for visa waiver travelers. This work will from the starting point for our first serious legislative effort in more than ten years.

We envision the creation of a new public-private entity – perhaps a federally sponsored non-profit corporation.

It would combine the expertise of the private sector with the oversight and coordination of the federal government. It would serve as the primary voice for all travel-related

policies, and it would also coordinate our national strategies to maximize the benefits of travel to America.

This marketing program is good for the travel industry and the economy, but it also serves a far larger national purpose. Such a campaign would advance America's public diplomacy—the public face we present to the world.

To see it is to believe in it...that's something we at Disney know very well.

Walt Disney once said he intended Disneyland to “encompass the essence of the things that were good and true in American life.” And that was truly illustrated in 1959, Nikita Khrushchev became the first Soviet leader to set foot on American soil.

Shortly before Khrushchev arrived in Los Angeles, he apparently learned that while his wife and children were scheduled to visit Disneyland, he was supposed to take a tour of public housing.

Well, naturally, Khrushchev wanted to visit Disneyland too, and he told his hosts to make it happen.

Unfortunately for him, the local police department was worried that it could not guarantee Khrushchev's safety – and they told him that he couldn't go to Disneyland.

Mr. Khrushchev didn't like that.

First, he turned what was supposed to be a friendly studio luncheon into an extended rant about the injustice that had been inflicted upon him.

And when it was time for that public housing tour, Khrushchev refused to get out of his car.

He complained that the whole affair was causing him “bitter regret.”

Adding insult to injury, the Soviet press contingent slipped away to enjoy Disneyland for the afternoon. They later said that they believed Mr. Khrushchev would have really enjoyed the park.

Khrushchev's disappointment became a major international story, and his bitter complaint -- “Why can't we go to Disneyland?” -- was displayed on front pages around the world.

At a time when the United States was engaged in a global battle of ideals, the leader of our greatest adversary revealed that he actually had something in common with ordinary Americans.

Where I work, we often talk about the magic of Disney, but there is also a magic to America. People simply need to visit here to feel this magic. Our research has found that 74% of visitors traveling to the United States are more likely to feel *extremely favorably* about this nation and its policies.

If we can get people through the gate, we can improve their perceptions of America. Think how important that is to our country at a time when winning hearts and minds around the world is a national priority.

The blueprint I have outlined is the first time in history that our industry has created a comprehensive and coordinated marketing strategy. It is a plan that can transform our industry.

And we will need your help to make it a reality.

It is going to take a huge effort to get all this done. But it is a wonderful feeling to be involved in something larger than ourselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have the chance to do something for our country. We can help change how America is perceived in the world.

Imagine the goodwill that will result if we simply let people know we want them to come.

Imagine the clarity of purpose we will feel if we approach the world with a unified message of welcome.

Imagine the benefits that will flow to our nation if other peoples around the globe know that America remains an open, friendly, pleasant place to visit.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us do our part so that the world once again understands and appreciates the goodness of this nation and its people.

Thank you very much.