



TO: Mr. Larry Hecker, Chairman, Pima County Bond Advisory Committee
Pima County Bond Advisory Committee Members

FROM: Brent DeRaad, President & CEO, Visit Tucson

RE: Visit Tucson's Support for Proposed Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Bond Project

DATE: Feb. 17, 2014

Thank you for your consideration of several very worthy tourism-related projects at your Feb. 21, 2014 meeting for possible inclusion in a 2015 bond package. One initiative that stands out is the proposal to develop two new exhibits at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum—Coast to Canyons: Journey of the Jaguar and the Desert Loop Trail Dome.

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is world-renowned and a primary tourism driver for Pima County. We found in our most recent visitor inquiry study that Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum ranked third as the primary reason why visitors recommend Tucson to other travelers.

Why recommend Tucson to other travelers?

- 30% -- surrounding natural environment
- 24% -- outdoor/desert activities
- 13% -- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- 13% -- dining/shopping
- 11% -- local attractions/museums

Source: Strongpoint Research, Visit Tucson's visitor inquiry study, November 2012

In reviewing the top five, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum fits within four of those categories.

Per the same study, visitors engage in the following activities while visiting Pima County: outdoor desert activities (60%); museums (57%); western culture and attractions (55%); and caves/desert attractions (54%). Again, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum fits within all of these activities.

We at Visit Tucson are working hard to increase tourism's economic impact within Pima County. Travelers spend \$2.1 billion annually in Pima County and the tourism industry employs 22,000 people in our region. I can't stress how important it is to continue investing in upgrading our attractions if we are going to increase the number of travelers coming to Pima County.

FREE YOURSELF.



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Adding high-quality exhibits, such as Coast to Canyons: Journey of the Jaguar, gives us at Visit Tucson an enticing story to promote to travel media throughout the world. Because this exhibit includes Mexico's portion of the Sonoran Desert and the Sea of Cortez, we will promote this heavily in Visit Tucson's "Vamos a Tucson" visitor centers in Hermosillo and Ciudad Obregon. Enhancing Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum gives travelers and area residents a reason to return.

We are also encouraged by the Desert Loop Trail Dome project. Proceeding with this project, along with the proposed Children's Museum Tucson expansion, would upgrade the experiences that we can promote to families in Pima County's top visitor markets, including Phoenix, Los Angeles, Mexico, Chicago and New York.

Thank you for considering placing Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's proposed two new exhibits on a bond election ballot for voters' consideration. Upgrading the museum's offerings will lead to more travelers visiting the facility and spending money in our destination.

Please contact me (520-770-2149 or bderaad@visittucson.org) with questions or if I can be of any assistance. Thank you.

cc: Pima County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator, Pima County
Mr. Hank Atha, Deputy County Administrator, Pima County
Mr. Tom Moulton, Economic Development & Tourism Director, Pima County
Mr. Craig Ivanyi, Executive Director, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum