

**Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan Project
Central Lower Michigan Stakeholder Listening Session
Issue Areas Comments/Feedback
July 13, 2006
Frankenmuth, MI**

“Top Four Issues” vote:

Industry Organization and Leadership (11)
Collaborations and Partnerships (30)
Funding (37)
Research and Market Segmentation (18)
Public Policy and Government Relations (23)
General Promotion (Media) (29)
Training/Leadership (7)
Visitor Experience (31)

1.) Industry Organization and Leadership

- 1.) Where are CVB's in the organization structure?
- 2.) Where will champions be developed... regionally? Locally?
- 3.) Are the Travel Commission and Travel MI the same thing?
- 4.) Communication system between industry leaders in Travel Commission, and other state agencies needed (a website for this?)
- 5.) Serious problem with private sector businesses and the MDNR communications about revenue generating opportunities... (ex. Permit reissues) – need open communications
- 6.) Background and experience of Travel Commissioners – how selected
- 7.) Do we need a Travel Commission?

2.) Collaboration/Partnership

- 1.) Challenge: natural competitiveness at home (in MI) for our markets
- 2.) How can everyone win by working together? (With a shared voice?) – Benefits?
- 3.) Retain local and regional perspective
- 4.) Make sure all parts of the state are included in the plan!
- 5.) What elements (segments) of the industry are included in the plan? (Retailers?) – Do they know they're part of tourism?
- 6.) Are other states more unified than we are in Michigan? How has it benefited them? (ex. IL CVB's get funding from the state, KY tourism director is part of governor's council, "IL tourism and travel council" – supports legislation)
- 7.) Is info about Canadian travel into Michigan being collected? – Should we collaborate more with Canada?
- 8.) Michigan is a state that really has to work at tourism. There should be collaboration and cooperation from tourism between state agencies. Governor's "core values" should be communicated.
- 9.) Re-emphasize "day trips" by residents within Michigan.

- 10.) Look at other states/countries that collaborate with cruise line visitors – what can we learn and apply? Apply to drive-in tourists, too.
- 11.) Develop more marinas and slips for transients; infrastructure issues need to be addressed.
- 12.) Partner large corporations with small businesses (mentor, i.e. restaurants, hotels)
- 13.) Educate our residents (ambassadors) about opportunities for tourists in Michigan
- 14.) Educate villages and chambers of commerce that “any” tourists are good
- 15.) Advocacy for state tourism at the local level, coordinated statewide – very important

3.) Funding

- 1.) Bed and Breakfasts should be included (all commercial lodging) in tourism funding opportunities
- 2.) Lodging properties with fewer than 10 rooms can contribute to CVB assessments
- 3.) P.A. 59’s can be put in place anywhere in the state (see Destination Marketing Organization Handbook)
- 4.) Focus on tourism economic development in the state – state should provide technical support, funding, etc. just as is done to recruit businesses in other industries
- 5.) Look at successful funding programs in other states for tourism promotion (balance Travel Michigan and CVB efforts)
- 6.) Should some local tourism tax/assessment money go to the state to broaden our promotion reach? (ex: Missouri Model)
- 7.) Assessments are “local money,” taxes go to the state
- 8.) Have we considered “tolls” to come into the state” (perhaps Michigan residents would not pay)

4.) Research and Market Segmentation

- 1.) Macro level – identify regional markets that are similar and can work together – (regional market comparisons)
- 2.) We need “the numbers” to take to legislators to show the impact of tourism.
- 3.) Knowing “the numbers” can help with economic development
- 4.) Publicize the regional impacts of tourism, not just the statewide impacts – emphasizes the impact on local jobs!
- 5.) Museums, etc. are always looking for impact data when applying for grants – where can they get these numbers?
- 6.) Eco-tourism businesses need to network with hotels and others to develop markets
- 7.) Develop a centralized system where tourism businesses can communicate with one another

- 8.) Identify the members of our industry – who are we? – what is the “trickle down” that tourists have on everybody in a community (hospitals, restaurants, etc.) ? – How do we measure/track this?
- 9.) Is it safe to come here? How do we communicate that to (potential) visitors? – perception/image research
- 10.) How can communities communicate about events going on? (i.e. – soccer fields, golf courses, hotel room availability) – Educate event planners about local resources (facilities) so they can work together and avoid conflict
- 11.) What about some type of an “event registration” or “calendar”? (Some exist, but not everyone uses)
- 12.) Research “how to eliminate schedule conflicts”

5.) Public Policy/Government Relations

- 1.) Awareness about anything that can affect us (ex. minimum wage increase)
- 2.) How do we brand our public policy efforts? (Post Labor Day schools, TIME Coalition...too many messages.....stick with one name)
- 3.) Lobbying partnerships (ex. Shopping malls, etc.)
- 4.) FAM tours for politicians – to expose them to what’s here
- 5.) How do we organize our voice and get more unified – to have impact in Lansing? Critical to our future funding! Need more clout!
- 6.) Model what Illinois has done in the past. (see Jerry Preston)

6.) General Promotion (Media)

- 1.) Advertise what is special/unique in Michigan, not just an overview
- 2.) FAM Tours for travel writers
- 3.) Perhaps entire state should use “Say Yes to Michigan....Again” – bring it back
- 4.) Give everyone access to Travel Michigan’s media resources (film clips, photos, etc.)
- 5.) Travel Michigan’s website needs to be more tourist friendly
- 6.) More integration with new technology (GPA, cell phone ads, etc.)
- 7.) Ask Michigan residents to help us out – stay home and help yourself out! Michiganders for Michigan.
- 8.) Lack of coordinated directional signage for tourists (not just brown Ag signs)
- 9.) Coordinated effort between HAL and Travel Michigan (MEDC) – much overlap of resources exists

7.) Training/Leadership

- 1.) Develop programs for all aspects of tourism and hospitality training to take out to cities, etc.
- 2.) Make known what training resources already exist (for small businesses, too)
- 3.) Tourism education portal (web)

- 4.) What is the state offering? What are associations offering? Have you made yourself available to access their resources? ... And to promote yourself - Training leaders to understand their role in the industry.
- 5.) Marketing available in multiple methods (DVD, etc.)
- 6.) Use something like TICOM (Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan) video to educate leaders about what “tourism” is
- 7.) Research what other states/communities are doing with training – what has been created, and where can it be accessed?

8.) Visitor Experience

- 1.) What’s it mean?
 - i. Customer satisfaction
 - ii. Would visitor return
 - iii. Expectations fulfilled or surpassed or not met
 - iv. Emotions
 - v. Memories
 - vi. Survey for feedback
 - vii. Leave happier than when coming
- 2.) Negative feedback should be taken advantage of – capture as testimonials – share with marketing (what can be done with negative feedback?) – not just positive – make lemons into lemonade
- 3.) Travel logistics – coordinated highway construction is needed! (ex: I-69/I-75 – Fourth of July shutdowns)
- 4.) Do visitors get “warm fuzzy” experience?
- 5.) Travel Michigan’s phone counselors should be able to visit Michigan.
- 6.) Take ownership of what you can control.
- 7.) State-level routing (like AAA offers) around construction should be available
- 8.) Contact-sensitive design in line with communities wishes/values
- 9.) What are expectations of changing demographics of visitors?
- 10.) Educate our tourists about future attraction interests.

Other Issues:

Who’s missing and why... (what travel groups/markets)?

Comment Cards:

- 1.) To encourage regional collaborations, organize tourism industry networks at regional levels. This might foster partnerships and lead to tourist packages.
- 2.) If you want collaboration, first create the infrastructure for building networks.
- 3.) Bring MEDC programs and funding into tourism initiatives. We (state government) don’t encourage tourism business development.
- 4.) Include Department of Agriculture regarding organization and leadership
- 5.) What’s missing? Believe we need to address product development and infrastructure as a primary work issue

- 6.) Could Travel Michigan maintain a statewide calendar of events so that people looking for activities could see what's happening by date? Hilton hotels did something like this to create destinations at their hotels. "Destination Calendar."
- 7.) We are made up of many small businesses – establish organizations we can all belong to, get volume deals on healthcare and other benefits.
- 8.) Feedback incentive on travel website (i.e. coupons or discounts).
- 9.) How can we be included in destination information? Example: We are a teaching house with writing workshops and tours of Roethke's childhood home in 1920's era. Tours and summer picnics. We could be an outing during a convention. Possible day trips based on WP depression era that commissioned writers and wrote a book on tourism with day trips collaborating tourism industry.
- 10.) Call on educational resources to interpret sites in Michigan. To draw tourists: talks, explanations, demonstrations, hands-on. Educate our tourists (families,) increase "drive for education" in state.
- 11.) Visitor experience - build on it – what did you learn/experience and what do you want to return to find out more about?
- 12.) Now is the time to link to the federal WIRED grant – we must be opportunistic! Go!
- 13.) There needs to be a total commitment on tourism development investment and reinvestment. We can get information on a declining manufacturing base – not on developers who would be interested in investing. Destination development focused on shoreline.
- 14.) Should develop a "skunk works" for tourism.
- 15.) Michigan Economic Corp. needs/must be totally and deeply involved in travel development as well as DNR/DEQ.
- 16.) Travel Commission should be industry based, not political.
- 17.) Funding: 1% increase of sales tax legislated for funding tourism.
- 18.) Standardized figures on the economic impact of tourism so all are talking the same story.
- 19.) Promote events and festivals. They capture the flavor of a region, create a deadline for people to travel by, and add even more to do than visit permanent attractions.
- 20.) Focus on/encourage grants, both state and federal, and funding from federal government.