

**Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan Project**  
**NW Lower Michigan Stakeholder Listening Session**  
**Issue Areas Comments/Feedback**  
**July 19, 2006**  
**Traverse City, MI**

**“Top Four Issues” vote:**

Industry Organization and Leadership (5)  
Collaborations and Partnerships (16)  
Funding (24)  
Research and Market Segmentation (12)  
Public Policy and Government Relations (18)  
General Promotion (Media) (28)  
Training/Leadership (2)  
Visitor Experience (10)

1.) Industry Organizations and Leadership

- 1.) State needs a “tourism ombudsman”, a cheerleader and counselor
- 2.) Define what is the industry’s aim (vision) and what the organization (of the process) is
- 3.) Define what the goal (of this process) is first. Form the organization around the goal
- 4.) Consider all sectors (i.e., motorcycle riders, youth) when considering what the “base for a tourism strategy” is all about
- 5.) How so we re-image Michigan? Leadership needs to make sure this happens
- 6.) DNR and NFS needs more personable attitude towards residents and visitors
- 7.) Make sure front line people have access to information to implement the plan (CVB’s, etc.)
- 8.) Whatever plan is adopted, it needs to be a long-term plan (resource preservation)
- 9.) Consolidate tourism agencies within the state (MDA, HAL, etc.)
- 10.) Do we want a top down or bottom up plan?
- 11.) We need someone in the structure to take the lead in developing partnerships and collaborations

2.) Collaboration and Partnerships

- 1.) “Vegas Model” – work together strategically to get people here who will spend the most money
- 2.) Consider collaborating with other states (ex. Illinois and Michigan – share advertising)
- 3.) Goal-directed planning within the planning process
- 4.) Broaden the definition of “partner” – look at potential new industry partners

- 5.) Tourism promotion should be a line item in Michigan's budget (already in Travel Michigan's budget)

### 3.) Funding

- 1.) Rental car companies rent to many locals, not only visitors. Tax on rental cars would impact locals and insurance companies. (see recent Enterprise Rent-A-Car Kansas City Study)
- 2.) Use single business taxes to fund tourism promotion (lump it all together)
- 3.) Cannot have industry unity when one sector funds promotion (i.e. – hotel tax/assessment) – having it on the list introduces bias
- 4.) Research matching grant sources (seed money)
- 5.) Approach media for partnerships – percent of advertising money to fund tourism promotion
- 6.) TIME Coalition – (tisabouttime.org) working to get \$30 million
- 7.) Funding is needed for infrastructure improvements (i.e. restrooms)
- 8.) Look at general sales tax for funding tourism
- 9.) What do we want to fund?
- 10.) Revisit P.A. 59 legislation allowing for CVB assessments
- 11.) Look at DDA money as a funding source
- 12.) Recognize and legalize gambling as a good career option – treat gaming as any other business and get tax money from it

### 4.) Research and Market Segmentation

- 1.) See Detroit Free Press article (Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup> and Channel 4) about “tourism” being a solution to MI's economic problems
- 2.) Look at research identifying ways to minimize seasonality
- 3.) Research needed to help people understand the “impact” of tourism
- 4.) Focus on what will make people come to Michigan
- 5.) Brandenburg legislation about Michigan university to measure R.O.I
- 6.) Survey front line employees
- 7.) Are we going far enough to foster next generation of visitors
- 8.) Bring back Michigan geography in public schools
- 9.) Why aren't people coming here? (i.e. natural resources issues, etc. – ex. Lake County)
- 10.) Managers of welcome centers should be brought into planning process – excellent resource with frontline experience

### 5.) Public and Government Relations

- 1.) Reward political leadership who have a core support of tourism
- 2.) Recognize that tourism is broad and much policy affects it. – Monitor policy across the board that impacts tourism
- 3.) Tourism has been a loose confederacy until now. Who are the strongest players who can work together? Everybody will “run from” “tax (es)” ideas. Work together to get candidates in place who will support tourism. (ex: Wisconsin tourism)
- 4.) Need cabinet-level tourism person

- 5.) Need a PAC
- 6.) Stay focused – single issue lobbying
- 7.) Educate politicians – need a forum
- 8.) Educate public about importance of tourism to Michigan and about the importance of voting for supportive legislators
- 9.) Educate local officials
- 10.) All surrounding states have “helmet choice” laws – biker rallies travel from other state into helmet choice states. (ex: research what legislation supports tourism)
- 11.) Tourist industry doesn’t live in a vacuum – work with other partners at government level.
- 12.) Get involved in political action process. Amend political campaign finance legislation.
- 13.) Get government to understand that “tourism” is a job creator and an economic development engine
- 14.) Are tourism jobs low-paying and seasonal? There is perception of this.
- 15.) Problem informing about what “tourism jobs” are. (ex: managers, owners) – research needed to define
- 16.) Invite lobbyists on fam tours
- 17.) “Tip” positions are some of the best-paying jobs in the region (ex: restaurants, caddies)
- 18.) One of the last industries where people without college degrees can move into management
- 19.) Tourism trains larger workforce
- 20.) Many university programs in tourism/hospitality
- 21.) Industry should upgrade jobs – reality check
- 22.) Make everybody a tourism ambassador
- 23.) Redefine “quality job”

#### 6.) General Promotion (Media)

- 1.) Need tourism message to highlight Michigan’s uniqueness (ex: pure MI – Great Lakes promoted to Great Lake states?)
- 2.) Branding -> significant challenge as we move forward. Regionalize branding and promotion funding. Utilize matching local funds.
- 3.) Influence perception – primary role of “marketing” – market to MI public
- 4.) More user-friendly services needed in Michigan
- 5.) Stress that Michigan has clear, blue water all around it
- 6.) Develop a PSA campaign to promote travel by Michigan residents in the state (comprehensive plan across the state departments)
- 7.) We need to ask for people to come to Michigan

#### 7.) Training/Leadership

- 1.) Detroit Metro – example of first contact with travelers where training could be applied
- 2.) Educate public to be ambassadors – will help improve hospitality
- 3.) Develop a Michigan hospitality standard

- 4.) Earlier introduction of training – high schools level
- 5.) Recognize, celebrate excellent examples of Michigan hospitality (“stars” of industry)
- 6.) Tourism leadership program (certification program) for first jobs – build pride in high school seniors/college freshmen (ex: leadership Grand Traverse)
- 7.) Who will fund this training? (State doesn’t have money for existing programs)
- 8.) Why is there no tourism component in existing leadership training?

#### 8.) Visitor Experience

- 1.) What’s it mean?
  - i. Feedback
  - ii. Perceptions
  - iii. Value
  - iv. Satisfaction
  - v. Comfort
  - vi. Quality of experience
  - vii. Feeling of being welcomed
  - viii. Meeting/exceeding expectations
  - ix. Testimony from visitor (including negative)
  - x. Need to measure it better
- 2.) Educate/evaluation process to grade a community’s visitor experience is needed (“would you recommend?”)
- 3.) Is Michigan easy to get to?
- 4.) National Park Service does surveys every summer at every site (University of Idaho)
- 5.) Survey cards at rest stops could be used
- 6.) Michigan is really an island. – you have to be decisive about coming here.
- 7.) Survey at places outside the state to find out why people are there and not in Michigan.
- 8.) Assist people who have out-of-state license plates – focus on this. – Have communities buy into this.
- 9.) People in Michigan are under-utilized in providing hospitality. – When they’re there, they shine
- 10.) Measure value received by visitors

#### Other Issues

- 1.) Look at the long-term effects of what we’re doing (tourism). Are we planning for the future and for future generations?
- 2.) Signage/are billboards desirable?
- 3.) Understand the impact of meetings and conventions on local economies
- 4.) Exploit links in promotion (i.e. – alumni groups, and those who’ve moved to other states)
- 5.) Plan for disasters (i.e. – 9/11)

### Comment Cards

- 1.) “Visiting friends and relatives” market promotion
- 2.) Organize casinos to dedicate a percent of their advertising budget to statewide tourism promotion
- 3.) State theme “My Michigan”
- 4.) Train juniors/seniors at high school in the “Disney Way” of customer service, via a curriculum similar to leadership Grand Traverse. Make it very hands on. Give them a certificate of completion to put on their resume when finished. Sell them on the idea that they can make above minimum wage the second year they work in tourism by completing this leadership training at a resort, bed and breakfast, watercraft rental place, or even a storefront similar to Back Country Outfitters in T.C.
- 5.) Avoid focusing any media on what is already considered a negative
  - i. Detroit
  - ii. Cold (when promoting to outside the Great Lakes region)
- 6.) Speak/promote strengths
  - i. Water, golf, ideal summer climate
  - ii. Recreational opportunities for families