

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan  
Product Development (PD) Committee Meeting  
Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort, 10am – 3pm, January 31 2014**

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introductions – All
2. Review of June 28 2013 Meeting Notes – All
3. Update from September 20, November 8 and January 24 Travel Commission Meetings –  
Travel Commissioner Mike Busley
4. Objective Three: Enhance the visitor’s in-state travel experience –
  - a. Accessibility/mobility
    - i. ‘The Disabled Traveler’ – Sarah Nicholls
    - ii. Presentation – Cindy Burkhour, Access Recreation Group
  - b. Technology
5. Objective Two: Support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a  
diverse, extensive and high quality network of motorized, non-motorized and water-  
based routes and trails
  - a. Sub-group meeting – Sarah Nicholls and Nancy Krupiarz
  - b. Biennial Trails Summit – Jim Radabaugh and Nancy Krupiarz
  - c. Session at Governor’s Conference – Sarah Nicholls, Jim Radabaugh and Nancy  
Krupiarz
  - d. PMC committee’s bike tourism marketing plan – Sarah Nicholls and Nancy Krupiarz
6. MI Tourism Competitiveness Index – Sarah Nicholls
7. Next Steps and Next Meeting – Sarah Nicholls
  - a. Meeting before Governor’s Conference (March 9-11, Grand Traverse Resort)
  - b. Report at Governor’s Conference (afternoon of March 11)

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**Meeting Notes**

**In attendance:** Mike Busley (Co-Chair), Chris MacInnes (Co-Chair), Nancy Krupiarz, Jim Radabaugh, Sarah Nicholls, Louise Smith. Also present: Cindy Burkhour, Access Recreation Group.

**Absent:** Debbie Alexander, Gordon Mackay, Patricia Mooradian, Michelle Plawecki, Larry Schuler, AJ Singh.

**Introductions** – Made by all.

**Review of June 28 2013 Meeting Notes** – Notes reviewed and approved, no changes or additions made.

**Update from September 20, November 8 and January 24 Travel Commission Meetings** – Provided by Mike Busley.

Travel Commissioner Mike Busley updated the group on the TC meetings held since June 28 2013. Four new TC members as of September 2013. Most significant development = ongoing discussions re. governance and funding of MTSP. The MTSP gives the TC a purpose, and the TC is keen to take real leadership of this effort and to continue to align the industry. A TC subcommittee has been formed to discuss leadership and oversight, Chair Curtis presented this subcommittee's proposals re. a governance process and the structure of a funding mechanism to the TC for a vote on January 24. The final outcome will be presented at the meeting of all eight committees on March 11.

**Brief Review of PD Goal/Objectives** – Provided by Sarah Nicholls.

*Goal:* Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.

*Objective One:* Support the improvement and increased awareness of the quality, connectivity and diversity of tourist transportation options into and throughout the state.

*Objective Two:* Support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a diverse, extensive and high quality network of motorized, non-motorized and water-based routes and trails.

*Objective Three:* Enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience.

*Objective Four:* Increase access to capital for travel-related businesses. Sarah suggested that the PD committee might consider sponsoring/organizing some kind of investment forum similar to the one held in May 2004 (Sarah and AJ could take the lead in organizing). Chris recommended Jim Burba, founder of the Burba Hotel Network and producer of multiple hotel investment forums (<http://burba.com/conferences/>) as a speaker/contact. As an aside, Sarah came across this as she was researching Jim (Things are Going Up For Hotel Investors in the US: <http://burba.com/things-going-hotel-investors-us/>).

### **Focus on Objective Three: Enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience –**

Reminder that this is a very broad objective that could pertain to issues including the quantity, quality and variety of accommodations, events and attractions; ease of information retrieval during a trip; ease of way finding; Welcome Centres, rest areas, kiosks, signage, and mobile apps; accessibility; and, broadband/ wireless access. With the ultimate goal of providing seamless, immersive experiences to all travellers. The breadth of the objective results from the combination of multiple more specific objectives that were identified after the summer stakeholder meetings in 2012. For today, we will focus on two topics, accessibility and technology.

- a. Accessibility/mobility – As noted by Cindy, there are 1.9 million people with disabilities in Michigan and the proportion of those with disabilities across the nation = 17-20%. Plus, in the last few years, ~ 40,000 injured service people have returned from the Middle East. Factoring in family and friends, inaccessible destinations may lose 36-50% of the market. Also need to consider the baby boomers: (i) the size and wealth of that market and (ii) their mobility issues as they age. E.g., In January 2011, the oldest members of the baby boom generation celebrated their 65th birthday. Every day since, and continuing for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will reach age 65 every day. Baby boomers command the most substantial spending power in the country, but have the fewest financial obligations. By 2017, adults over 50 will control a full 70% of all disposable cash in the United States. Just over two thirds of baby boomers surveyed by Nielson said that they plan to spend more time on their hobbies post-retirement, spending at a higher rate as they do so. And, according to an August 2012 Nielsen study, less than 5 percent of advertising targets this most valuable generation (these factoids collated by Ron Wilmers – see (i), below). Message = opportunity: Michigan has the potential to establish itself as a leader in the provision of accessible recreation and tourism opportunities.
  - i. 'The Disabled Traveler' – Sarah and Don Holecek (Prof. Emeritus, MSU) recently met with Ron Wilmers (Ron has been in contact with Don for years, but he has more recently discovered the MTSP and has asked me to be added into his loop). Ron hosts The Disabled Traveler's Companion website; this site provides state/national park and hotel-related accessibility information that allows consumers to make better educated travel decisions (<http://www.tdtcompanion.com/>). Currently only Ron and his wife Kay post information, but this site could be expanded to allow other users to post information and to review/rate sites. They

have worked extensively with Bavarian Inn Lodge and other sites in Frankenmuth. In 2012 the web site received 40,000 visitors from 100 different countries. PD committee could recommend that Travel Michigan include a link to this site on michigan.org and/or tie to item (ii) below. Discussion of inviting Ron to a future PD meeting. Discussion of federal and state programs/sites with same desire, to develop and highlight accessible opportunities, e.g., National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (<http://ncpad.org/>), US Forest Service (Accessibility Guidebook for Outdoor Recreation and Trails: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility/htmlpubs/htm06232801/toc.htm>), MDNR ([http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10366\\_46403\\_63473-317621--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10366_46403_63473-317621--,00.html)). How to tie all of these together?

- ii. Presentation by Cindy Burkhour from the Access Recreation Group – PDF attached. Cindy reviewed her work on a \$15 million grant with the Kellogg Foundation designed to fund universally accessible recreation opportunities throughout Michigan, including at several Welcome Centres. It was intended that these venues be highlighted on michigan.org – using the ‘Access to Recreation’ logo – but that opportunity fell through. The PD committee could make a recommendation to Travel Michigan to reconsider this opportunity – all the necessary data exist. Cindy also identified the opportunity to show people with disabilities in Pure Michigan print & TV ads, in her words “in a subtle, dignified & respectful way being fully included in a universally accessible recreation experience.”
- iii. Sarah shared email from Michelle Plawecki re. various ongoing initiatives at DTW: On Board with Autism pre-flight travel program for families with children with autism; partnership with Paws With a Cause, a similar pre-flight training for clients who are training puppies who will become service animals; and, in the process of constructing an animal relief area inside of the McNamara Terminal (for service animals, but open to all pets) (“will be the Taj Mahal of animal restrooms in airports! The largest and most extravagant!”) (should be open next month). Discussion among those present of Pure MI PR opportunities related to the latter.

Much discussion of this topic, and of the opportunity for Michigan to establish itself as a leader in this area. Discussion of the difficulty that private enterprises have accessing the funds needed to implement universal accessibility. Suggested that the PD committee recommend the establishment of an awards program relating to accessibility (along the same line as the Governor's Awards for Innovative Tourism Collaboration, now managed by TICOM). At least two potential categories – actual infrastructural improvements made at a site, and communication/marketing of accessible opportunities. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Michigan Chapter) runs the da Vinci Awards (<http://www.davinciawards.org/about/overview/>): “The annual International da Vinci Awards® recognizes the most innovative adaptive and assistive technologies that enable equal access and opportunity for all people, regardless of ability. These innovations play an important role in helping people overcome physical

limitations.” Discussion of terminology: (i) how to refer to this market – disabled people, people with disabilities, people with impairments, all people of all abilities; (ii) keywords to access this market – accessible recreation/tourism/travel resources, barrier-free recreation/tourism/travel resources.

- b. Technology – Very brief discussion of the potential to increase/improve the adoption of technology at tourism attractions. This stemmed from the RE committee’s meeting on January 29, during which the results of the RE issues/threats survey were reviewed. Of the 13 issues/threats pre-identified for respondents to choose from, the need for better/faster adoption of technology at tourism sites was selected by 21% (n = 506). Given their choice to prioritise water issues and cultural/historic preservation, Sarah suggested to the members of the RE committee that they recommend PD take up this item since technology was commonly mentioned in the context of PD improvement during the summer 2012 meetings. Sarah/Louise will conduct a review of technology implementation/best practices in the tourism sector. E.g., GeLo (<http://gelosite.com>).

**Focus on Objective Two: Support the establishment and showcasing of Michigan as a state with a diverse, extensive and high quality network of motorized, non-motorized and water-based routes and trails –**

- a. Sub-group meeting – Sarah Nicholls and Nancy Krupiarz

Bobbi Welke, Nancy Krupiarz, Anne-Marie Bauer (for Jim Radabaugh) and Sarah Nicholls met to discuss the trails objective on September 16, 2013. The main topic of discussion was the need for a single statewide searchable and zoomable online trails portal, ideally including interactive maps of not only the trails but also nearby attractions, lodging, food/beverage options, etc., as well as multi-modal transportation connections. This would require the acquisition of consistent data for each trail throughout the state, with “consistent” including the geographic format of the data (same projection, coordinate system, etc.). MDOT has great maps and data, but they are in a regional format and focus on transportation rather than off-road trails. Travel Michigan’s site can only handle point data, not linear trails (currently, trails can only be entered as a ‘property,’ like a hotel or attraction). Unlikely that TM, MDOT or MDNR would house portal, though all three could promote/provide links to it. Realistic portal potentials: MSU RSGIS, Michigan Fitness Foundation. Even if TM does not house portal, still need way to highlight/showcase the trails system on their site – need some media fast facts that speak to the quantity and quality of trails resources in MI.

Review of Fishweb site (<http://www.fishweb.com/>) – huge volume of information, with regular update on conditions by local participants. Some did not find the site very aesthetically appealing. Who runs this site?

Review of alltrails.com site (<http://alltrails.com/>) – this site is visually attractive, searchable, and provides lots of relevant information about each trail (searchable by location, driving distance from a location, trail length, trail duration (time), trail difficulty, activities and features on trail). There are currently 12 MI trails listed, in

comparison to, e.g., 128 in CO. From their website: *AllTrails is the leading digital network focused on outdoor enthusiasts, providing 1 million people monthly with the information and tools to discover top destinations near them ... Founded in 2010, AllTrails is headquartered in San Francisco, California and operates industry leading websites and mobile applications that provide over 1 million outdoor enthusiasts with the tools and information they need to get outside, record their adventures, and share them with friends & family ... AllTrails is focused broadly on outdoor recreation and provides information on 22 different activities including hiking, mountain biking, skiing, and snowboarding. We help people rediscover the outdoors by providing them with innovative products powered by one of the most comprehensive databases of outdoor recreation information. Our mobile applications have been featured numerous times by Apple and are consistently ranked in the Top 50 in their categories.* Nancy's Board has looked into the possibility of using this site in the past, she will check with them re. their thoughts.

Review of Map2HealthyLiving ([www.map2healthyliving.org](http://www.map2healthyliving.org)) – Nancy has since corresponded with Michael J. Maisner, Vice President of Active Communities, Michigan Fitness Foundation, and asked that this text be shared with the group:

“At our recent Tourism Product Development Committee meeting we spent some time talking about mapping. As a follow up to that conversation, I wanted to share some information and a link to a mapping tool that has been developed by the Michigan Fitness Foundation. This site could accommodate statewide trails data and create a nice tie in between health, tourism and trails. Map to Healthy Living (M2HL) is a service of the SNAP-Ed programming of the Michigan Nutrition Network at the Michigan Fitness Foundation. It allows users to efficiently find, visualize, and share useful information about food, nutrition and physical activity resources in the communities where they live, work, learn and play. A quick look at the link will give you a feel for how both mapping and data related to trails could be added to this platform. When you enter the map, you first select what you would like to find by clicking on one or more of the categories in the “What to look for” section. You can specify a location (e.g., county, city, zip code) in the next section - “Where to look.” Note the default option is “statewide,” so if you'd like to search statewide, you can leave this as is. Finally, click “Go” to start your search and see the results. If you are on a laptop and do not see steps 2 or 3 (“Where to Look”, “Go”), click the “What to look for” heading so that the window collapses. You should then see steps 2 and 3 on your screen. Map2HealthyLiving was funded in part by the State of Michigan with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by way of the Michigan Fitness Foundation.”

b. Biennial Trails Summit – Jim Radabaugh and Nancy Krupiarz

The first Biennial Trails Summit took place in Acme on Tuesday January 21, 2014 (link to program here: <http://www.michigantrails.org/first-biennial-trail-summit-scheduled-january-21-2014>). More than 140 in attendance. Various facilitated sessions revealed three priority areas: signage/wayfinding, maintenance, and marketing.

- c. Session at Governor's Conference – Sarah Nicholls, Jim Radabaugh and Nancy Krupiarz

Sarah will be moderating a session at the Governor's Conference called "Plug into Michigan's Recreation Trails" – Jim and Nancy are panelists, along with Jonathan Campbell from the Grand Traverse Conservation District. Good opportunity to highlight Michigan's trails to the tourism community.

- d. PMC committee's bike tourism marketing plan – Sarah Nicholls and Nancy Krupiarz

The PMC committee conducted a survey of the state's CVBs, to identify the currently most popular – and the most rapidly emerging – niche markets. Bike tourism was on both lists. The PMC has therefore decided to develop a bike tourism marketing plan – in conjunction with the biking community – to (i) highlight bike tourism opportunities and (ii) offer to other niches for use as a model approach. Clear overlap with the trails objective, so Sarah will be tapping Nancy, Jim and Bobbi for assistance with identifying participants, etc. Suggestion to contact the Trans-Canada Trail people in Ontario, they are apparently eager to partner with Michigan on bike tourism opportunities (<http://tctrail.ca/>, <http://www.tctontario.ca/>).

Note: at the PPGS committee meeting on February 10, Dave Lorenz (with TM) did mention that TM is "being encouraged to do more trails promotion" (discussed in the context of the Governor's proposed budget for 2014-15 and the \$2.5 for trails).

**MI Tourism Competitiveness Index** – Brief update by Sarah Nicholls. Action item attached.

**Next Meeting** – Co-Chairs Busley and MacInnes would like to convene again prior to the Governor's Conference. An afternoon timeframe (1-5pm) was suggested, location Mount Pleasant or Lansing.

#### **Action Items –**

- Follow up with Michelle re. animal rest area (Sarah)
- Follow up with AJ and Don re. the 2004 MI Tourism Investment Forum (Sarah) (note: Don is out until late Feb)
- Consider inviting Ron Wilmers to a future meeting
- Forest Service contact for Ron (Jim will send to Sarah)
- Investigate other accessibility awards (Sarah + Louise)
- Review of technology implementation/best practices in the tourism sector (Sarah + Louise)
- Investigate the Fishweb site (Sarah + Louise)
- Potential to post more trails on alltrails.com (Nancy)
- Review/add to competitiveness index variable list (all)