

**2012-2017 Michigan Tourism Strategic Plan
Product Development (PD) Committee Meeting
Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa, 10am - 4pm, June 28 2013**

Agenda

1. Welcome – Sarah Nicholls, Chris MacInnes and Mike Busley
2. Introductions – All
3. Review of Plan Process and PD Goal/Objectives – Sarah Nicholls
4. MI Tourism SWOT + US/Global Travel/Tourism Competitiveness – Sarah Nicholls and AJ Singh
5. Consideration of Prioritization of PD Objectives – All
6. Consideration of Formation of PD Subcommittees – All
7. Identification of Metrics for the PD Objectives – All (or by subcommittee?)
8. Review of Suggested Strategies and Identification of Additional Strategies – All (or by subcommittee?)
9. Preliminary Identification of Funding and Research Needs – All (or by subcommittee?)
10. Next Steps and Next Meeting – Sarah Nicholls

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Meeting Notes

In attendance: Mike Busley (Co-Chair), Chris MacInnes (Co-Chair), Debbie Alexander, Nancy Krupiarz, Gordon Mackay, Patricia Mooradian, Michelle Plawecki, Jim Radabaugh, Larry Schuler, AJ Singh, Sarah Nicholls, Anna Popp.

Absent: none.

Welcome – Provided by Sarah Nicholls, Chris MacInnes and Mike Busley.

Introductions – Made by all. Committee members' introductions highlighted a wide range of interests and expertise, including lodging, food/beverage, golf, ski, trails, public and private transportation, attractions, retail, the visitor experience and real estate development/investment.

Review of Plan Process and PD Goal/Objectives – Provided by Sarah Nicholls. Committee comments/concerns re. each item are described below.

- *Goal: Enhance infrastructure to support the delivery of a world class Pure Michigan travel experience.* Discussion regarding reference to 'world class' experience. Is this realistic? Purpose of the goal is to be aspirational, a stretch. MI is attracting more out-of-state and international visitors, need/want to be able to compete on the global stage. Reminder that goal relates to the expansion/renovation of existing product as well as the identification and development of new product.
- *Objective One: Support the improvement and increased awareness of the quality, connectivity and diversity of tourist transportation options into and throughout the state.* This objective pertains to public and private, as well as motorised and non-motorised, modes. Much emphasis was placed on the role of green and efficient transportation during the input phase of the planning process. Overall desire to develop seamless connections to and within destinations, to create a system in which available transportation options/connections are convenient, seamless, comfortable, economical, and that people will choose to use. Need for representation from MDOT on committee – two invitations were extended but no response received as of yet – various other suggestions re. potential members from MDOT made (see action items).
- *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.* This objective pertains to both motorized and non-motorized land- and water-based trails, as well as auto-based driving routes. The topics of packaging

and themed itineraries were frequently associated with these topics during the input phase of the planning process. Some driving routes are already highlighted on michigan.org, as road trips (<http://www.michigan.org/road-trips/>). There are currently six themes: city, fall colour, foodie, heritage, maritime, wine.

- *Objective Three: Enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience.* This is a 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.
- *Objective Four: Increase access to capital for travel-related businesses.* How can we increase access to MI capital for existing tourism enterprises, as well as attract new capital into tourism (from non-traditional sources) and/or into Michigan (from rest of US and other nations)? What opportunities exist to the economic development arena, to leverage MEDC resources/support? Potential ROI = critical question.

General discussion regarding intended longevity of committee. It is hoped that the committee will work together for the life of the plan, i.e., through 2017. Reminder by Mike that the purpose of the committee is to assist in implementation of the plan, i.e., that we are beyond the development of the plan. The goal and objectives are established, the focus of the committee should be on implementation strategies and other actionable items. Also the identification of metrics so as to measure success. Committee members as the stewards of the plan and its implementation.

General discussion regarding the availability of data/research. TM purchases some state-level research (e.g., from Longwoods, Smith Travel and Shifflet) but in general there is limited (access to) data/research, especially at finer spatial resolutions and especially since the MSU TTRRC closed.

Question re. primary drivers/motivations of travel/travellers to the state. Question re. gaps – what/where are the gaps? Answering this question – identifying gaps in information and in infrastructure (transportation, trails, accommodations, attractions, etc.) – is critical to achieving progress on all four PD objectives.

MI Tourism SWOT + US/Global Travel/Tourism Competitiveness – The SWOT items that featured in the final version of the plan were reviewed. Discussion items are highlighted below. The SWOT has been and will continue to be updated periodically (see action items).

- Role of regional airports, currently viewed as a weakness and an opportunity. Could better promote the number of airports that we have and their convenience and quality.

Airports should be transportation hubs, with multi-model connections out to destinations; currently most are not.

- Role of restaurants, difference between 5-star restaurants and the local/culinary movement. Relationship between latter and the notion of authenticity (which is a key component of the PM campaign).
- Role of accommodations and desirability of 5-star properties. There are currently no 5-star/ diamond properties in MI. The state does not have the capital or the customers to support these at present. However, offering a spectrum of accommodations options is desirable, especially if MI is to become a truly world-class destination.
- Trails – MI is already a leader in terms of trail mileage, but promotion thereof is lacking. Great opportunities for packaging, e.g., for high end bicycle tourism. Role of trail towns (e.g., North Country Trail Association Trail Towns Program, including Lowell, Petoskey, Mackinaw City, St. Ignace: <http://northcountrytrail.org/trail/trail-towns/>).

Discussion of World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013. Based on 14 pillars of travel/tourism competitiveness: policy rules and regulations; environmental sustainability; safety and security; health and hygiene; prioritization of travel/tourism; air transport infrastructure; ground transport infrastructure; tourism infrastructure; information/communications technology infrastructure; price competitiveness; human resources; affinity for travel/tourism; natural resources; and, cultural resources. National scale only. USA ranked 6th in 2013. Could a similar index be developed for individual states?

Identification of Metrics for the PD Objectives – Recognition that PD objectives are quite general, with no clear metrics identified or currently identifiable. Primarily a result of the wide range of input on this topic, and the desire on the part of the TC/AC to reduce the number of objectives. E.g., obj. 3 enhance the visitor's in-state travel experience could relate to accommodations, events, attractions, technology, way finding, universal access, etc. Need to devote additional thinking to develop of identifiable measures of success. Sub-objectives might be appropriate.

Consideration of Prioritization of the PD Objectives – Not considered at this point.

Consideration of Formation of PD Subcommittees – Group agreed that formation of subcommittees is premature at this point. Will reconsider this option at a later date as/when appropriate.

Review of PD Suggested Strategies and Identification of Additional Strategies – General discussion rather than full review of list of strategies already identified. Suggested strategies from the 2012 summer meetings could still be reviewed and discussed.

Gap Analysis – Suggestion to design and analyse sample MI trip itineraries in terms of transportation, trails, accommodations, attractions, etc. and to identify where gaps in locations and connectivity currently occur. Elements to include how tourists get to and get

around destination, how they access accommodations and attractions, packaging opportunities, etc. Potential case study sites: Marquette, Detroit, Traverse City.

Forum/panel – The desirability of meeting with representatives from MDOT and/or with experts in supply chain management was discussed. Target date of mid fall.

Other strategies mentioned/discussed:

- Transportation page(s) on michigan.org.
- Use of Google for transit connection information.
- Development of apps to provide transit information.
- Advocacy for improvements to road quality and for bike trails.
- Increase promotion of/improve signage for Detroit People Mover.
- Development of itineraries.
- Review of best practices from other states. Nancy shared this link to Travel Oregon's Product Development pages, note the sublinks to bicycle tourism development, culinary/agtourism development and scenic byways:
<http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/product-development/>

Preliminary Identification of Funding and Research Needs – Funding needs were not discussed. Two main researchable areas identified were (i) gap analysis and (ii) state-level competitiveness index. Funding and research = important agenda items for next meeting, especially if the group has any short-term funding needs. Funding committee is in process of preparing call for preliminary funding needs.

Next Meeting – Suggestion to conduct conference call in August, prior to forum discussed above. [Note: Next TC meeting is in Grand Rapids on Sept 20.]

Action Items and Their Status –

- General
 - Patricia contacted Kirk Steudle, Director of MDOT re. adding MDOT representation to the PD committee. Director Steudle has asked Bobbi Welke to fill this role (see updated committee list) and also indicated his willingness to attend PD meetings on occasion.
 - Sarah has updated the SWOT analysis (see attached). This will be a perpetual work in progress, there will always be new items to add in all four categories.
 - Sarah and Louise have collated a list of strategic/master plans from around the state that relate to tourism product development. This list also includes other states' tourism strategic plans.
 - Mobil Travel Guide (now run by Forbes) lodging rating criteria are attached for anyone who is interested.
 - AJ will contact relevant faculty in MSU Dept. of Supply Chain Management regarding their interest in/availability to meet with PD committee.

- Sarah and Louise will investigate the availability of state-level variables that might be incorporated into a state-level travel/tourism competitiveness index.
- Obj. 1 (transportation)
 - Generate a list of MI transportation options/providers and associated GIS layers (Sarah and Louise will do with help from Debbie, Bobbi, others?).
- Obj. 2 (trails)
 - Generate a list of MI trails and associated GIS layers (Sarah and Louise will do with help from Nancy, Jim, others?).