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Memorandum

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD

From: Tourism & Culture Subcommittee Chair David Rosenwasser

Re: September 2004 meeting

Date: October 1, 2004

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met September 22, 2004 at the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation. Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Rosenwasser, Casale, O'Connor, and Praetzel.

Cultural Tourism Directional Signage:

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk met with representatives from USA Niagara Development Corporation to discuss their signage proposal for Niagara Falls in an effort to determine the viability of unifying elements of our proposals. The Niagara Falls project is significantly different from the Buffalo pilot in that the Niagara Falls signage is layered, and meant to draw visitors to districts first, then attractions. The Buffalo pilot is directional toward attractions. There may be an opportunity, however, to make the signs look similar visually to provide some degree of uniformity with between projects. Following the analysis of redesigning the signs, we will once again move forward in securing engineering specifications and a written commitment from the City of Buffalo.

Several members of the subcommittee voiced concern with the Niagara Falls district idea, noting that visitors may not understand what attractions are located in each district, and may therefore become confused. The Buffalo pilot will not adopt this system.

Tourist Transportation:

A pilot centered on the National Buffalo Wing Festival was executed to provide free shuttle service to Niagara Falls. The NTCC provided the service, nominal advertising through the Festival and through press efforts. This was to be done in conjunction with a survey determining the need (or lack thereof) for an ongoing shuttle.

That survey did not occur, as staff efforts to secure questions from the relevant members was not successful.

Going into the pilot, it was thought that there were three main options for providing such tourist transportation: 1) use existing public transportation, revised or advertised as needed; 2) create new service on an event-based schedule; or 3) create new service over the length of an entire tourist season. Following the pilot, it seems safe to eliminate option 2, as not one person rode the shuttle from the Festival to Niagara Falls.

A revision of option 2 might link major events between counties, but simply offering service from an event to the other city seems not to work. This leaves us with options 1 and 3. The subcommittee believes that more research should be done to determine which to pursue, although the nature of our drive-in market coupled with lack of success in other areas provide some preliminary evidence. We also need to determine the BNCVB and NTCC's commitment to providing some sort of transportation between cities.

Subcommittee Chair Rosenwasser has offered to include transportation questions in their current conversion study. The subcommittee would ask the BNCVB to do the same.

Thanks to the NTCC for this, as well as for funding our pilot.

Communication:

Subcommittee Chair Rosenwasser noted the difficulty of getting press coverage for the shuttle as well as for other tourism efforts, stating, "We haven't engaged the critical forces we need to convey our message." The subcommittee discussed the related issue of convincing area leaders of the importance of tourism and culture to economic development. While these issues appear repeatedly in master plans and priority lists, in reality they are not given their due. Many electeds don't see tourism as a major issue, and don't perceive it as an economic development engine capable of creating good jobs.

There are many others sharing this belief, as groups like the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, a studio on arts and economic development at UB, and the Buffalo Theatre Alliance can attest. Over the next month, we will try to find as many as possible to inform our efforts.

The question is posed – what can ENRP do to help convey this message? We have a potent collection of leaders in the fields of tourism and culture, economic development, business, and government; just the people to convey this message, if we so choose.

To help us understand the issue, we should hear from someone who has first hand experience in trying to bring events to both this and other areas. **The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Tourism & Culture Subcommittee recommends that ENRP invite Albert Nocciolino to be our keynote speaker at our first 2005 general meeting.**

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed include the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative and the need to reconnect it to the cultural community upon release of the final plan, Niagara University College of Hospitality and Tourism's Management Convocation on November 4, 2004 (286-8779), a recent winery event in Niagara County, and the importance of culturals increasing earned revenue.