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Memorandum

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

From: Tourism & Culture Subcommittee Chair David Rosenwasser

Re: April & May 2004 meetings

Date: May 21, 2004

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met April 19 and May 3, 2004 at the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. Present for the April meeting were subcommittee members Brown, Casale, Cerza, Cusack, Lawson, and Praetzel. Present for the May meeting were subcommittee members Rosenwasser, Cerza, Cusack, Lawson, O'Connor, Praetzel, and Virtuoso.

Cultural Tourism Directional Signage:

The redesign of the signs for the Buffalo pilot has been completed, and the Buffalo Department of Public Works is currently validating each location. From there, the budget will be finalized, the signs constructed, the brackets obtained, and the signs put up. The goal is for them to be in place this summer. Following this, the pilot will be analyzed, best practices will continue to be researched, an inventory of current locations will be conducted, and we'll move into route and attraction designation for the bi-county project.

Tourist Transportation:

The subcommittee continues to work with the Buffalo-Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau Cultural Tourism Committee on this project. The goal remains to have the three components of the system in place for summer 2005. It was stressed that in order for the service to be included in the two counties' visitors guides, the routes need to be in place by the fourth quarter of 2004. The subcommittee will continue to work toward ensuring a proper level of advertising; inclusion in tourism promotion agencies, hotels, and attractions efforts; and links to other existing and emerging services (rail, NFTA, etc.).

Front Line Training:

As mentioned in the tourist transportation section, the hotels are a critical part of regional tourism efforts. The subcommittee discussed in detail front line training for hotel clerks, concierges, housekeeping staff, and others. Existing efforts at both the BNCVB and the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation, as well as the Arts Council and Niagara University cultural concierge program, were mentioned. The mentality of the hotel industry and its workers needs to be changed to reflect more progressive and successful tourist destinations. A state organization found that we are the only region in New York whose properties don't attend training, even if it is offered in-house. A change in mindset can be done through reward or exclusion, but it must be done. **The Tourism & Culture Subcommittee requests concept approval to develop a forum with a cross section of properties to find out what they need to better implement front line training for tourism. As a first step, the subcommittee requests that the BNCVB and NTCC be prepared to discuss their current training efforts and strategic plans at the Monday, June 14, 2004 subcommittee meeting.**

Culture Development Area Legislation:

This is the legislation formerly known as "culture zones." The subcommittee continues to track this legislation's progress through the legislative committee system, and continues to examine how ENRP can help support and/or implement the area in our region should it be approved.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed include the success of the Seneca Niagara Casino's marketing efforts in penetrating other markets, educating our local community to take visiting friends and family to the area's attraction, better using our festivals as a tourism hook, and packaging how inexpensive it is to come to this region with a family for a vacation.