

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

First and foremost, we thank you for your past support of regional tourism. We recognize the serious challenges caused by the ongoing state budget crisis. We respect the work and difficult choices you will have to make to resolve this problem.

We hope you look at tourism spending as an investment and revenue generator not an expense. According to a recent state study, tourism in Western Connecticut resulted in over \$2.8 billion of direct spending, employed 25,416 people and generated local and state tax revenues over \$591 million. The Western Connecticut region hotels consistently exceed the state of Connecticut as a whole when it comes to hotel occupancy, average daily rate and revenue per available room. This is, in part, what your support helps to generate in the 65 towns of the Western Connecticut region.

In FY2015, your investment in regional tourism in Western Connecticut resulted in:

- Promoted our region's attractions and activities with over **100 travel writers** generating articles for Western CT including AAA Magazines, Boston Globe, New York Times and Yankee Magazine, Carolina Woman, Travel 50 and Beyond, Just Luxe and many others
- **Website visitors** grew by 20% and page views grew by 23%
- Distributed over **75,000 Unwind Brochures**
- Promoted our region's attractions and activities by publishing a total of 715 posts on **Google**, 704 posts on **WordPress**, 548 posts on **Hearst Publication Blog**, 300 articles and 60 slide shows on the **Examiner**, and 323 articles (some have been published nationally) on **Star Patcher**.
- **Social Media**: Twitter 10.7K tweets and 688 followers...mostly travel press and media contacts, Pinterest - 53 tourism related boards, 1,082 pins with websites on area attractions and Facebook continues to grow organically with average of 188 people engaged per unboosted post.
- Held two **B2B Networking and Marketing Meetings** in Litchfield Hills and Fairfield County to improve communication, outreach and to better understand the needs of constituents.
- **Research and Survey programs** have been designed to help constituents evaluate and assess the effectiveness and impact of projects and events. Did surveying and research for six major events/projects in the region last year.
- **Group Tour Assessment** program (GTA) to help constituents develop Group Tour business. Conducted four GTAs in the last few months and have several scheduled going forward.
- Provided **Event Services** and management help to 14 events in the region in the past year
- Conducted one half day **Group Tour Workshop** and have two more planned in the coming year.
- Attended the National Tour Association Convention (NTA), the American Bus Association Convention (ABA), New Jersey Motorcoach Marketplace and the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA). Did a booth sponsorship with the other districts at NTA.
- Distributed over **130 group tour leads** (NTA/ABA/OMCA/NJ Motorcoach) as well as 14 meeting RFPs generated through the website

And this is just a sampling of the impact your investment has made.

Regional tourism has, for many years, been a partner with the state central tourism agency in generating the revenues and jobs associated with tourism in the state. The regional agencies have provided a local and diverse complement to the more overarching and general efforts of the central office. That partnership and its shared responsibilities should be maintained for the good of the whole state and its individual towns and various regions.

We look forward to your support and thank you for all your hard work on behalf of tourism in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Dan Bolognani
Chairman, Board of Directors



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