

**Yellowstone-Teton Regional Transportation Cooperative
Steering Committee Meeting #1
Marketing Team Minutes
7/9/2009 – West Yellowstone Holiday Inn**

Participants present: Jan Brown (YBP facilitator filling in for Kim Billimoria), Chris Larson (The Software Ranch in Victor, ID), Ingrid Eickstedt (Powell Valley Community Education in Powell, WY), Jan Leach (West Yellowstone Foundation Chair in West Yellowstone, MT) and Amy Randolph (Catch & Release Graphics in Bozeman, MT). Also in attendance were Diane Gasaway (Executive Director, Northwest Cooperative Development Center in Olympia, WA) and A.D. Bunn (YBP Administrative Director). Not present, but requesting to be part of this team is Bob Everhart of the Idaho Falls Convention & Visitors' Bureau.

The group introduced themselves, their interests, and what they feel they can contribute to the co-op marketing plan and implementation. All shared their special passion for the region and feel transportation options should be both eco-friendly and marketed as a return to the "traditional" way to see and experience Yellowstone. Others to consider for inclusion on this team:

1. David Robinson from Lava Creek who is involved in an ecotourism initiative in West Yellowstone.
2. Claudia Wade, marketing director of the Park County Travel Council in Cody, WY
3. Frank Tobey of First Transit and/or the marketing director from START to get a provider perspective
4. Someone connected with a regional media outlet – Perhaps YBP Director Jack Brady who also is on the board of The Post Company?

A.D. Bunn will research non-profit board lists in other communities so that we can get more people involved.

Regarding how the team will conduct its work:

1. The group agreed to make decisions based on "general agreement" where a substantial majority is required for group consensus. Those who agree to disagree in order for the group to make progress will be given an opportunity to have their reasons for dissent recorded in the minutes.
2. The facilitator will record any assignments to or commitments made by a team member and a reasonable time will be granted for their accomplishment. The facilitator will follow up with the team members on their assignments and responsibilities, especially if needed information is pertinent to a pending decision. A weekly task list posted on the team webpage would be a helpful tool. Additional notes:
 - Diane Gasaway stated the importance of appropriately citing any data that the team collects.
 - If a team member donates professional time or service that needs written acknowledgment, please provide documentation so that official in-kind contributions are recorded properly.
3. All official team recommendations need to be proposed in writing prior to full group discussion and approval. Each meeting agenda will list the actions proposed by the responsible team members.
4. The facilitator will record any decisions made by the group with draft minutes distributed first among the participants for clarity and accuracy. Final meeting notes posted in an accessible place (project website).

Step 1 – Marketing the Project Itself to Raise Visibility and Recruit More Volunteers (July/August)

Start on brand/name/logo design – It is not too early to start this process as the group feels our current co-op name is too long and burdensome. We will need a catchy name to garner more regional interest and recruit more volunteers. Chris spoke about the importance of multi-lingual logos and branding, and Ingrid suggested the name Linx or LinX, which was found to be an available domain name (linx.coop). Jan agreed to test the name against some straw men to get an initial, gut response from the entire Steering Committee at the end of the session. (Note: LinX outdid the "straw man" competition, but generally the group feels the branding and name selection needs more time and development).

We soon will need a dedicated website, so we'll need to register our co-op name with the National Registry and secure a domain name (estimate \$1,000). Amy is interested in donating the logo design work (WPA "30s" design is quite popular now) and Chris is ready to do the domain registration. Both need to have a final determination on the name to go forward with their assignments, however.

Start on ITS - Central Information/Reservations

- Chris believes that “revolutionary” ITS design should not be ruled out (as opposed to conventional or evolutionary as proposed by Lisa Ballard). While cost of complex software and systems might be high, the proprietary system that could be developed might generate future revenue in the form of a product and/or consulting to others.
 - Need to consider what intellectual property will be developed and the level of copyright protection to get from an operational perspective.
- The team wants to help with appeal/ease of use of the ITS system – can help research to what extent we can partner with Google travel.

Elevate Project Visibility (YBP tasks)

- *Written Letters and Follow-Up Briefings*
 - All Tribal Business Councils
 - All Congressional Delegations
 - Each Governor’s Office
 - Key Local Officials and Media in Major Communities – team is willing to give feedback on briefing packets
- *Formal News Releases*
 - Late July – announce signing of ITD Grant Agreement and hiring of YBP staff
 - Mid-August – YBP will tailor sub-regional releases so to acknowledge volunteer Steering Committee members participating from specific circulation areas
 - Write releases targeted to appropriate state and federal agencies; ask their internal communications staff to distribute through internal newsletters and websites
- *Informational E-Grams to Media list (Bimonthly between news releases)*
 - Immediately - Thank all for coverage to date and ask them to stay tuned for late July release
 - Early September – Announce Roundtable date and meeting details
 - Early November - Update following October Roundtable
 - January 2010 – Go/No Go decision and next steps
- *Social Media Outlets*
 - Develop strategy for Facebook, Twitter etc.
 - Start a Co-op Blog
- *Articles and Coverage by Others*
 - Article for Northwest Co-op Development Center newsletter
 - New Catch and Release Graphics publication – article for later in year

Step 2 – Develop the Marketing Plan (September/October for Input into Feasibility Study by November)

- Obtain an online marketing plan template as a starting point for discussion
- Research cost of copywriter
- Secure funds to hire a marketing analyst for needed assistance (possibly Mercury Advertising)
- Design a strategy for each media mode
- Initially target major investors in the January-March timeframe – individual shareholders, provider companies and large potential customers (e.g. hospitals)
- Focus selling memberships and getting committed riders in the April – May time frame (consider cost of another contracted firm for this mass media blitz and intensive part of sales campaign)
- Include in the plan and budget a major launch at YBP’s annual conference on May 24th as the kick off to the pilot phase
- Encourage riders to document their summer 2010 experiences for media purposes (You Tube)

The next meeting was set for **August 5th at 10:00 a.m.** as a team conference call facilitated by Kim Billimoria.