

## **IV Recommendations**

### **1) Objectives**

The main objective of a standardized regional tourism signage system is to provide visitors to our region easy and understandable access to tourism-related destinations. A uniform region-wide system of tourism signs, instead of a multitude of local systems in addition to the dominant NYS DOT signage system, would make navigation for visitors easier.

As shown above, there are several different signage systems in our region that are intended to guide tourists through our region. But because of the uncoordinated nature of the existing tourism signage systems, visitors might be easily confused about what the potential destinations are and how to reach them.

There is a direct correlation between the effectiveness of a signage system and the satisfaction of individual tourists and groups traveling throughout the region. Only an effective signage system will guarantee that more visitors can enjoy the natural and cultural resources that our region offers. In return, an increase in visitors will also boost regional tourism-related revenues.

To ensure the effectiveness of a regional signage system, the counties in our region should define areas of recreational and cultural interest to be included in the signage system. This will help to guide tourists from major highways into areas of interests to final destinations and avoid a confusing and wasteful trailblazing system.

### **2) Principles**

The following principles should underlie a regional tourism signage system:

- safety: signs may not pose a safety hazard and an impediment to smooth traffic flow
- standardization: of sign size, location, color, and content in compliance with federal and state highway regulations
- trail-blazing: throughout the entire regional road network (including local, county and state roads) from the freeway exit into the area of recreational and cultural interest and to the individual attraction or business

- accessibility: the signage system should guarantee equal access for any attraction or business that meets predetermined eligibility criteria
- maintenance: each attraction or business is responsible for the maintenance of signs and surrounding vegetation
- self-finance: each attraction or business assumes the cost for sign erection and maintenance

### **3) *Destinations***

The regional tourism signage system includes both public and privately owned/ for-profit destinations:

- cultural/ institutional (museums, libraries, art galleries, theaters, colleges, government buildings, public markets, civic and convention centers, botanical gardens, zoos, etc.)
- historic (historic sites and districts, landmarks, etc.)
- recreational (trails, parks, stadiums, skiing areas, golf course, public beaches, rafting, windsurfing, marinas, bicycle rental, boat cruises, riding centers, theme park, etc.)
- transportation-related (transportation centers, railroad and bus stations, etc.)
- tourism-related (visitors and interpretation centers, hotels, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, arts and crafts shops, etc.)
- agriculture-related (orchards, vineyards, farm markets, fish hatcheries, etc.)

### **4) *Design***

There exist a variety of different systems of tourism-related signs. As explained above, in addition to the NYS DOT with its destination and service signs, other state, regional, and local sign systems also help to guide motorists to find tourism-related destinations.

The design for a regional tourism signage system should follow the federal provisions in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The NYS DOT has to comply with federal standards outlined in the new 2000 MUTCD. Because of the recent update of the federal manual, the NYS manual is in the process of being updated. The deadline for adoption of the new NYS manual is 2003.

Chapter 2H of the federal MUTCD introduces the category of "Recreational and Cultural Interest Area Signs." A new regional tourism signage system should use the destinations included in this category to the fullest extent. The category covers most destinations listed under 3), uses white-on-brown signs, and allows for directional auxiliary signs (arrows). The signs are similar to those used for the NYS DOT Historic Site, the NYS Heritage Area, and the NYS Scenic Byway programs, as well as to those used for the National Historical Park, the National Forest, and the National Wildlife Refuge programs.

In conjunction with the white-on-brown recreational and cultural interest area signs, existing white-on-blue tourist oriented business signs (TOD) could be used as part of the trail-blazing system to guide motorists from highways in the immediate vicinity of the tourism-oriented business to the final destination. Existing white-on-green destination signs could also be included in the system to direct visitors and residents to such transportation-related destinations as bus and railroad stations and airports.

As it is important to create an effective regional tourism signage system, it is equally important to retain those signs that are recognized by the public at large, such as directional signs for libraries, hospitals, or airports or such service signs as tourist-oriented business signs.

International symbols are usually not explicitly tourism-oriented, but rather of a more general nature. To a large extent, international signs for hotels, airports, or rest rooms are similar to those used in NYS or other states. Also, the available types of international signs might not be sufficient for creating a comprehensive regional tourism signage system that includes destinations ranging from art galleries to apple orchards. International signs may also not be suitable for conveying a regional identity.

## **5) *Implementation***

- define areas of recreational and cultural interest in the region/ each county
  - regional county tourism agencies cooperate with relevant tourism groups, business organizations, and NYS DOT
  
- hire consulting firm that is familiar with legal framework and traffic standards
  - contracted firm needs to know federal and state regulations concerning eligibility criteria for tourism-related destinations, attractions, and businesses and state engineering standards regarding sign design and location
    - apply to NYS DOT
    - hire highway sign company
    - implement standardized regional tourism signage system