

FACT SHEET

FRIENDS OF THE MOUNTAIN-TO-SEA TRAIL MARKETING STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

Thanks to grant support from the NC Department of Commerce, the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST) is developing a marketing strategy to help promote North Carolina's premier, statewide, 1150-mile hiking trail that extends from the Great Smoky Mountains to the Outer Banks.

This initiative is in response to a recommendation and request by a group of 77 tourism, economic and government leaders from 22 counties and 21 towns who attended an FMST conference on "trail towns" in September 2014. After sharing information about the MST and other successful trails across the country, FMST asked the attendees for advice and help to promote the trail. The group then requested that FMST develop a marketing plan to help potential hikers understand what the trail is and create awareness that it can be hiked now.

FMST is excited to work with stakeholders throughout the state in the coming months to create a unified marketing strategy for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.



ABOUT THE CONSULTANT

To facilitate and develop this plan, FMST has retained Destination by Design (DbD), an NC-based economic development, planning, and promotions firm that works throughout the southeast to both create and promote destination-quality trails, greenways, parks, and Main Streets.



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning consultant team will lead a four-part planning process that will conclude in spring 2016:

- 1 Direction Setting and Project Launch | August - Sept. 2015**
Conduct a situational analysis and assess the "state of the trail," including its opportunities, challenges, tourism resources, etc. through a series of interviews with FMST and state-level stakeholders.
- 2 Marketing Plan Framework | Oct. - Jan. 2015**
The marketing plan framework will include four (4) key elements: 1) Objectives; 2) Situation Analysis; 3) Marketing Strategy (Target Market and Marketing Mix); and 4) Implementation. This framework will help determine key questions to ask during the subsequent Consumer Research and Testing phase.
- 3 Consumer Research and Testing | Oct. - Dec. 2015**
The consultant team will survey FMST's current contact list along with out-of-state hiking groups less familiar with the MST to test framework marketing plan concepts. In addition, the consultant team will facilitate focus group sessions throughout the state with pertinent tourism development authorities, destination marketing organizations, and local government and land managing agency partners.
- 4 Finalize Plan | Dec. - April 2016**
The final plan will include all consumer and stakeholder research findings, provide for a clear brand position, and provide insights for improving FMST's website, print materials, social media sites, trail signs etc. The plan will highlight where to concentrate marketing efforts to best reach potential hikers and provide clear recommendations for how partners and other stakeholders can assist with marketing the trail.

CONSULTANT CONTACT

Eric Woolridge, AICP
Destination by Design
Eric@dbdplanning.com
828.386.1866 | www.DbDplanning.com



DESTINATION by DESIGN
planning + promoting quality of life