

**DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM HIGHLIGHTS**

The Economic Impact of Tourism

A meeting of DVRPC's Regional Community and Economic Development Forum (RCEDF) was held on Tuesday, June 27, 2017, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Michael Boyer, Associate Director of Planning at DVRPC, welcomed the speakers and participants and briefly discussed the meeting's agenda. Karen Cilurso, Manager, Community Revitalization at DVRPC, moderated the panel.

Mary Bell, Manager of Demographic and Economic Analysis at DVRPC, was the forum's first speaker. The 2015 FAST Act encourages Metropolitan Planning Organizations like DVRPC to "enhance travel and tourism." Mary presented the findings of an upcoming Data Snapshot that provides an overview of the region's hospitality and tourism economy. More specifically, Data Snapshot 2:4 highlights the locations and scale of the region's tourist destinations as well as the number and job locations of employees working in the hospitality and tourism-retaliated sector. This economic analysis will serve as a background for DVRPC's future work on travel and tourism. Data from various sources—including from 2013 National Establishment Time Series (NETS) and Econsult Solutions—show that while the City of Philadelphia continues to bring in record numbers of visitors, the majority of the impact is on indirect areas such as restaurants and hotels. Tourism-related employment accounts for 19% of Montgomery County's employment and 37% of Philadelphia County's employment.

Karen Cilurso then started the panel discussion. The first panelist was Jake Buganski, CDME, Acting Director of the NJ Department on Travel and Tourism. Tourism in New Jersey is \$44.1 billion industry and accounts for 16.8% of the state's employment. The state department works with the designated tourism areas, otherwise known as Destination Management Organization (DMOs), on promotion of the state's tourist attractions. Tourism marketing is handled by region with a fixed budget that comes directly from hotel revenues. Tourism in New Jersey occurs organically because the state's 130 miles of beach but recent events—the 2008 recession and Superstorm Sandy—both caused a dip in tourism revenues. The State of New Jersey has a top-down approach for tourism activities. A few new priorities include Arrivalist training and international efforts. The state is now conducting information about product development with Destination NEXT, an effort DVRPC is involved in.

Mr. Buganski was followed by Paul Bencivengo, Vice President, Visit Bucks County, the official county tourism promotion agency, founded in 1960. Mr. Bencivengo started his presentation indicating that 662 million hours of vacation time are left unused, which equals a loss of \$236 million to the economy. This is a campaign angle that Visit Bucks County uses to entice day trippers or overnight guests to Bucks County. Bucks County is 662 square miles. There are 12,000 tourism-related jobs in the County and the industry accounts for \$937 million dollars. Some of Bucks County's selling points include location, small towns, mix of attractions, and a product for all seasons. Visit Bucks County concentrates on product development that improves the visitor experience. They also offer a small grant program to Bucks County organizations and communities for tourism-related activities.

The panel's final presenter was Devon Perry, Executive Director of Visit South Jersey. Visit South Jersey (VSJ) is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Burlington, Camden,

Gloucester, Mercer, and Salem counties, and markets the Outer Coastal Plan American Viticultural Area as a destination. The Outer Coastal Plan covers of 2.5 million acres and was established by the federal government in 2006. VSJ cultivates beverage tourism, one of the greatest economic drivers in South Jersey and includes vineyards, breweries, and distilleries. A study conducted by Frank, Rimerman & Co. LLP, indicated that total economic impact of the beverage industry was \$231 million. It is responsible for 1,462 jobs and \$58 million in employment wages. Wine-related tourism expenditures totaled \$20 million. Approximately 100,000 tourists have visited the region for it wineries since 2013. Most of VSJ promotional efforts are online and include a responsible website and mobile application. Advertising is included for the state of New Jersey as well as portions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware.

The Vintage Atlantic Wine Region is the newest campaign. This area covers arbitrary political boundaries and advertises areas of South Jersey, southeastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware as one tourist destination. Efforts include partnerships with hotels and creating an environment for a more skilled workforce.

After a 30 minute question and answer period, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm. Copies of the Power Points slides presented by Ms. Bell, Mr. Buganski, Mr. Bencivengo, and Ms. Perry can be viewed on DVRPC's web site at <http://www.dvrpc.org/Committees/RCEDF/>.