



Empire State Development

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NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

DIVISION OF TOURISM

I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus

**RESPONSE DUE DATE MAY 20, 2014,
3:00 P.M. EST**

Release Date April 30, 2014

DIVISION OF TOURISM – I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Economic Development, on behalf of the State of New York (“NYS” or “State”), is issuing this Request for Information (“RFI”) to identify options available to the State in connection with its anticipated procurement of a tour bus operator to provide transportation and tickets for the “I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus” from New York City, Grand Central Terminal area to New York State designated ski areas, craft beverage trails and events. For skiing, transportation should originate out of New York City and Toronto to a predetermined number of ski areas in New York State. For craft beverage trails, transportation should originate out of New York City to craft beverage trails located in the Finger Lakes, Mid-Hudson, Long Island, Niagara Escarpment, and Thousand Island regions. A schedule for additional New York State events will be determined. The tour operator will work with the Division of Tourism and NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets to develop the desired locations for the I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus. In turn, the Division of Tourism will connect industry partners to assist with ticket packaging and logistics.

This RFI is not a solicitation or Request for Proposal (“RFP”). No contract can or will be awarded based upon submissions. The RFI is exploratory, issued solely for planning and gathering information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit information for approaches and strategies to drive additional visitation throughout New York State ski mountain areas, craft beverage trails and other state events.

BACKGROUND

New York State is home to some of the best skiing in the East with 50+ ski resorts throughout the state. It also has an abundance of craft beverage trails located throughout five wine regions. There are many other great New York State events that happen all year round. Despite having these assets and vacation choices interspersed across the state, there is still a lack of general consumer awareness. In addition there are a lack of transportation linkages to and from these locations. The I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus is a solution to further promote the ski mountains, craft beverage trails and other New York State events, as well as provide the needed transportation to access these attractions.

The I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus will provide transportation from New York City, Toronto and other, yet to be determined, locations to allow travelers from across the region to experience ski mountains, craft beverage trails, and event options in the Empire State. The selected bus operator will provide a ticket to the selected destinations along with transportation. In some cases, an overnight stay option will be presented.

The economic impact of the I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus will result from the direct spending by consumers to experience New York State ski mountains, craft beverage trails or events who otherwise would not have made the decision to travel without the transportation option. This increased consumer spending in the regional economies that support ski mountains, beverage trails or events may include sales of tickets, food, shopping, lodging and basic necessities. The promotion and marketing of these singular trips will also generate awareness of the regional assets travelers can experience at another date either on the I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus or a separate trip on their own.

The total direct and secondary output effect of the ski resort industry in New York State is over \$700 million. The additional transportation options for visitors and residents to ski and snowboard New York State mountains will provide added opportunities for the ski resort industry to generate revenue. By offering easy transportation options, consumers will have more opportunities to experience these mountains across the state, raise the profile of NYS skiing and snowboarding, and create further awareness of the numerous winter activities found in the state.

The New York State agriculture industry generates over \$4 billion per year in economic activity. About 23 percent of the state's land area or 7 million acres are used by 36,300 farms to produce a diverse array of food products. Many NYS farms depend on agritourism to market their products and supplement their income. For example, The New York State Fair was created to provide a yearly event highlighting the industry's producers and their importance to the economy. Another example, the wine industry has formed wine trails throughout the state to provide consumers with clear destinations to explore New York State wines. Therefore, enhancing transportation from the New York City metropolitan area to these agritourism assets will bolster their impact on the New York State economy.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS RFI

- Understand the level of interest and availability of potential respondents that could provide transportation services to New York State ski areas, craft beverage trails and events.
- Gain a more comprehensive understanding of industry best practices for repackaging of transportation and ticketed events.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS / QUALIFICATIONS

Interested parties must possess the ability to transport people to designated areas and be connected to a distribution network to provide for ticketing directly with the consumer.

The Division of Tourism will work with the transportation provider to help promote the I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus on various mediums such as social, ILOVENY.com and potentially some paid media.

TIMELINE

- RFI Release 4/30/14
- Deadline to submit questions 5/16/14, 5:00 PM
- RFI Response Deadline 5/20/14, 3:00 PM

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RFI

Please send all questions about this RFI to RFIinfo@esd.ny.gov. Questions will be accepted until May 16, 2014, 5 PM. ESD will make questions and responses regarding this RFI available on ESD's webpage at:

<http://www.esd.ny.gov/CorporateInformation/RFPs.html> under the heading:

RFI: Division of Tourism- I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus

SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

In order to facilitate the review of the responses, please provide the information in the exact order as dictated in the RFI. Respondents should answer all questions. If a question cannot be answered, provide a brief explanation as to why the question cannot be answered (e.g., N/A outside the scope of available business offering). Respondents may also submit any existing material, or material prepared specifically in response to the RFI, which they believe may be of interest or use to the State.

Please rename this document with the following naming convention:

NYS ILNY RFI Respondent Name.doc (.docx format is also acceptable) and submit according to the directions below. NYS reserves the right to engage in follow-up communications with respondents to the RFI.

Please submit your RFI response electronically via email no later than 3:00 PM EST on Tuesday, May 20, 2014, to Empire State Development: RFIinfo@esd.ny.gov.

GENERAL TERMS

- The State will not be liable for any costs of work performed in the preparation and production of any RFI response. By submitting a response to the RFI, respondent agrees not to make any claims for, or have any right to, damages because of any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the information, or because of any misinformation or lack of information in the RFI. The responses to the RFI shall become the property of the State of New York. The State has the right to adopt, modify, or reject any or all ideas presented in any material submitted in response to the RFI, and may incorporate such ideas in a future RFP on the subject.

- Respondents are requested to answer all questions included in Appendix A. This RFI is issued as a means for collecting market research. It is designed solely for information and planning purposes. A response does not bind or obligate the responder or Empire State Development to any agreement of provision or procurement of services referenced. No contract can or will be awarded based on submissions.
- Since this RFI is designed as a tool to collect information and will not result in a procurement contract, it does not fall under the requirements of State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k (the Procurement Lobbying Law) and there is no restricted period.
- Freedom of Information Law and Responses:
 - a) The purpose of New York State's Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL") requirement, which is contained in Public Officers Law Sections 84-90, is to promote the public's right to know the process of governmental decision-making and to grant maximum public access to governmental records.
 - b) Thus, a member of the public may submit a FOIL request for disclosure of the contents of the responses submitted to the State in response to this RFI. The responses of respondents are subject to disclosure under FOIL. However, pursuant to Section 87(2)(d) of FOIL, a State agency may deny access to those portions of responses which "are trade secrets or submitted to an agency by a commercial enterprise or derived from information obtained from a commercial enterprise and which if disclosed would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of the subject enterprise." Please mark clearly in your RFI response any information you claim as proprietary, copyrighted or rights reserved which you believe should be protected from disclosure under FOIL.
 - c) If there is information in your response which you claim meets the definition set forth in Section 87(2)(d), you must so inform us in a letter, by email, accompanying your response.
- The State reserves the right to:
 - a) Postpone or cancel this RFI upon notification to all RFI respondents.
 - b) Amend the specifications after release with reasonable notice to all RFI respondents.
 - c) Request RFI respondents to present supplemental information clarifying their responses, either in writing or in formal presentation.

APPENDIX A

COMPANY DEMOGRAPHICS

- Does your company currently offer repacked bus transportation with tickets to ski areas, craft beverage trails or other New York State destinations out of New York City?
- What ski areas, craft beverage trails and other New York State destinations are you currently serving? What is included in the ticket for the consumer?
- Please list out your potential distribution network that can assist in providing ticketing directly with the consumer.
- Do you have the ability and resources to operate out of Toronto, Canada?
- Are you an MWBE Firm or have relationships with MWBE firms?
- How many years have you been in operation?
- If your company originates tours out of another part of NYS, describe how you would be able to provide tour service from New York City and Toronto?

PAST EXPERIENCE

- What is your experience in providing bus transportation services outside of the Metro New York area?
- What is your experience in servicing rural areas of New York State?
- Based on your experience do you see any general areas the State should be wary of operating a bus tour of this nature?
- What is the structure of how you ticket and repackage offerings such as the one New York State is developing?
- Have you previously had transportation partnerships with other ski mountains, craft beverage trails or other attractions throughout the state?

TIME FRAME

- How much time would you need to get this program operational, from awarding of contract to when it is up and running ready to accept customers?
- What are your typical time frames to get a program like this operational?
- What is your experience in getting a program like this operational in three months?

CHARTER BUS FLEET

- What is the size of your bus fleet? How many buses do you have and what are the capacities?
- What services are available on your fleet? E.g., WiFi on board, electrical outlets, video capabilities, onboard or below storage capabilities, etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

- What type of insurance do you carry for your existing services?
- Is there additional insurance needed for a program such as this?

- Identify a range of services and options that might be made available by an operator of the I Love NY Get Outta Town Bus, and estimates of the corresponding prices of these services and options.
- Identify any potential risks or considerations, other than those described above, that the State should take into account when procuring a tour bus operator. Where applicable, provide attendant solutions to any problems identified.