



The Roane County Visitors Bureau runs the tourism program for the county. The program of work includes initiatives and efforts that develop and advocate for the development of recreation and tourism assets; recruit visitors to visit, stay, shop local and enjoy community events; while also providing reports and data of the effectiveness of those efforts. Plans are re-evaluated throughout the year and may change if new initiatives or issues arise.

### **FY25 PROGRAM OF WORK**

*July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025*

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#### **Visitor Asset Inventory:**

Research, learn, and stay knowledgeable about tourism & recreational assets, community events & other visitor services in Roane, as well as surrounding counties/cities. Provide input and partner with county, cities and regional committees and groups to develop & grow new assets as opportunities arise with goal to increase overnight stays and visitor spending. Work with the marketing team to provide details and information on these assets to ensure marketing collateral, website content, and online calendars stay up to date and are promoted effectively.

- **TN Riverline Program:** Continue to support and grow this program and the assets that highlight activities on the Tennessee River, encourage kayakers and paddlers to enjoy, and promote local cities and businesses to bring them off the water to shop. This program has provided new assets and promotional opportunities for Roane not only on the Tennessee River but also on the Emory and Clinch Rivers. Stacey Wilson took the lead on this program beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2024.
- **Welcome & Wayfinding Signs:** Encourage and work with cities and counties to design and install welcome signs and directional signs where needed to promote assets and give a sense of place.
- **Three Star Tourism SMART Goal Implementation & Strategy:** Develop, market, and increase transformational Tourism events in Roane County.
- **Short-term Rentals (STR):** STRs have become a very popular lodging choice for many vacationers, especially in Roane County. They provide much-needed lodging opportunities on the water and in key visitor locations like Cornstalk Heights. They are now providing much-needed occupancy tax to the County and Harriman Per the recent state legislation, short-term rental occupancy tax is now collected by the State and returned to the cities/county. This should make it easier to identify those short-term rental properties located in Roane County.
- **Reporting & Data Collection:** Regular data collection and reporting is important to the tourism program to determine the effectiveness of marketing initiatives and campaigns. This includes obtaining and recording occupancy tax collections monthly, annual state tourism reports, and other ROI as available.

#### **Visitor Recruiting/Marketing Roane County:**

Potential visitors come from a variety of places: those looking for a day trip, within a 100-mile radius; key target markets, such as Illinois and New York; and those passing through or already visiting. Many times, future retirees are visitors before they decide where to move. Working with the marketing team, the following strategies will help ensure potential visitors receive updated and accurate information and have a good experience learning about or visiting the county.

- **Telling Roane's Quality of Life Story:** Growth is happening in Roane County, so writing and sharing content about what is happening is important to not only potential new businesses but also to our County leaders and stakeholders. Telling those stories on social media and in reports has become a focus of the Alliance team and will continue to be; along with in-person reports to City Councils, County Commission, and other organizations on a regular and as-needed basis.

- **Lead Response & RFIs:** Providing information to visitors, potential retirees, and even business owners looking to move, is one of the primary responsibilities of the Visitors Bureau. It is not hard to sell Roane County's quality of life, but it requires having branded collateral and handouts at the ready, as well as maps or being able to provide directions and contact information. Timely mailouts to leads received following trade shows or marketing campaigns are also a priority. We also get calls inquiring about events and attractions from future visitors, in addition to 2-3 visits on average per day during the summer months from people passing through or staying overnight. The kiosks in front of the Roane Alliance is important to have stocked on the weekends, as well as the offsite kiosk at the intersection of Hwy 70 and Pine Ridge Road.
- **Marketing Collateral & Campaigns:** Know and use current and regional campaigns and collateral to promote Roane County, ensuring we leverage all opportunities to promote Roane County's assets effectively and take advantage of any opportunity provided.
- **Visitor Bureau Lobby & Kiosks:** Keep lobby, kiosks and K-25 Overlook clean and well stocked with current marketing materials and displays, ensuring it is a positive experience for visitors.
- **Collateral Distribution:** Maintain stock of collateral used for leads fulfillment, working with the marketing team when re-orders are needed. Work with visitor services to ensure leads reports are kept updated and answered. Keep Roane County Visitors Guides stocked in the specific TN Welcome Centers and East Tennessee Chamber and visitor bureaus as requested and as collateral is updated.

#### **Tourism Partnerships, Programs & Associations:**

Advocate and partner with regional and state tourism organizations on regional and state promotions and marketing opportunities, as available. Also work to bring together city/county officials, tourism partners, lodging partners, etc. to regularly discuss needs and concerns; provide guidance and ideas to update existing assets; and better understand those assets to help with marketing campaigns and to help increase overnight stays and spending.

- **Retire Tennessee Program:** As a select county in the state's Retire Tennessee program, we are able to leverage our marketing dollars with the state's aggressive marketing campaigns to promote and market to affluent retirees in key target markets (Ohio, New York, Illinois, etc.).
- **Retire Roane Committee:** Working with local realtors, retirees, and other retiree-focused businesses/industry is a good way to ensure all of the marketing efforts are consistent across the county, and also targeted to the key markets trending.
- **Advocacy & Reporting to Ensure Economic Impact of Tourism Grows:** The Return on Investment (ROI) is more than \$380 per \$1 invested in the tourism program, when comparing Visitor Bureau's annual budget to the occupancy tax collections and visitor spending each year. And yet the tourism budget is usually the first to get cut by the County. Tourism is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry in the State and has proven to be a top industry for Roane. Advocacy & reporting to leaders and key stakeholders about the importance of tourism in Roane County and the amount of tax dollars, local spending and investment it brings is vital to maintaining a strong program that benefits the County and its cities. In addition, advocacy for other services and programs is important to grow visitor spending as well. The Green Team and Highway Department is one such example, as working on issues and projects that will keep the county litter free is important in recruiting and bringing in more visitors.
- **Commission Tourism Committee Meetings:** Reporting to the County Commission's Tourism Committee should be done at least quarterly and/or as needed/requested by the commission. The following should be kept up-to-date and provided as available:
  - Occupancy tax collections
  - Lodging & Short -term Rental Locations
  - Occupancy Reports from Smith Travel Research

*Specific Projects/Efforts Are Listed in a Separate Document*

## Specific Projects/Efforts:

- ▽ **New Tourism Marketing Plan utilizing ARP Grant Funding TNECD Three Start Grant Funding:** The focus of this marketing plan is to establish goals, audiences, and promotional plans for tourism in Roane County by leveraging its unique attractions and showcasing them for potential visitors on the best possible platforms.  
Continue to build brand awareness about Roane County as a tourist destination: Design new collateral from newly collected videos and photos with updated messaging, update the tourism website, develop an updated, localized asset library, and craft a new tourism campaign message that informs and attracts visitors.
- ▽ **Short Term Rental (STR) Identification:** The goal is to learn more about the STR in order to help promote to visitors and include on roanetourism.com as an option for unique lodging and to fill the gap for lodging on the water specifically.
- ▽ **Update RoaneTourism.com (aka VisitRoane.com):** recently, the website has been updated to ensure ADA Compliance & mobility, and now the content needs to be refreshed and updated, with a focus on highlighting and promoting locally-owned businesses by researching to ensure they all have vendor pages with details and photos and are promoted to visitors to encourage buying local.
- ▽ **Update TNVacation.com Partner Pages:** Review and update or add Roane County assets to ensure partner pages on tnvacation.com is available and up-to-date for visitors looking for information.
- ▽ **Buy Local Campaign:** Work with Cities to promote the locally owned businesses in their cities to visitors, using social media, retractable banners in hotel lobbies and other table-top displays around the county. Update the Shop Local yard signs as the campaign creatives get finalized and offer door decals to members and to non-members as well that will include a QR Code to send people to VisitRoane.com/BuyLocal. This should help increase sales tax and expand visitor stays once they learn about unique businesses and attractions.
- ▽ **Update Relocation Information:** Visitor guides, maps and other information important to people relocating to Roane County are packaged and provided to realtors and visitors requesting more information. Working with the marketing team, lead and ensure the relocation package materials are evaluated and updated annually with the most up-to-date information available, specifically updating the in-house flyer that is provided.
- ▽ **Attend Ideal Living Show:** This program requires a commitment to the State's official retiree recruiting program, including attendance at one trade show in the fall or winter of each fiscal year to recruit potential retirees. The two-day weekend trade shows are usually held in Washington, DC; Chicago, IL; Long Island, NY; Connecticut and New Jersey; with a team of 3-4 from other communities in the program.

### **New Transformational Events**

- TN BassNation Youth State Open / October 19-20, 2024
- SE Championship Bass Tourney / May 3, 2025