MEMORANDUM

To: Douglas Downtown Development Authority Board

From: Lisa Nocerini, City Manager

Date: November 18, 2026

Subject: Interurban Transit Authority Advertising and Promotional Video Partnership

Purpose

The purpose of this agenda item is to discuss potential advertising and promotional opportunities between the Douglas Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Interurban Transit Authority, including advertising on Interurban buses and exploring a partnership to produce a promotional video highlighting downtown Douglas and the transportation services available through the Interurban.

Both opportunities could provide additional exposure for downtown businesses, promote Douglas as a shopping and dining destination, and encourage residents and visitors to utilize the Interurban to access our downtown.

Background

As the DDA continues to explore opportunities to expand its marketing efforts and promote downtown Douglas, partnering with the Interurban Transit Authority may provide a unique opportunity to reach residents and visitors throughout the Saugatuck-Douglas area. The DDA has invested in various marketing initiatives, including downtown events, promotional materials, wayfinding, and business engagement programs. Advertising through the Interurban could complement these efforts by providing ongoing visibility for downtown Douglas.

In addition to traditional advertising, the DDA could explore working with the Interurban to produce a promotional video similar to those previously created for other area businesses.

1. Advertising Opportunities on Interurban Buses

Depending on the advertising options offered by the Interurban, the DDA could consider several approaches:

- **Exterior Bus Advertising:** Featuring the Distinctly Douglas brand and downtown promotional messaging on the exterior of one or more buses.
- **Interior Bus Advertising:** Placing advertisements inside buses promoting downtown shopping, dining, galleries, and upcoming events.
- **Seasonal Advertising:** Coordinating advertising campaigns with the summer tourism season, holiday shopping, and major DDA events.
- **Year-Round Advertising:** Maintaining consistent promotional messaging to increase awareness of downtown Douglas as a destination.

Advertisements could also incorporate QR codes directing individuals to information about downtown businesses, events, and attractions within the DDA district.

Specific advertising options, costs, and availability would need to be confirmed with the Interurban.

2. Promotional Video Partnership with the Interurban

Another opportunity would be to partner with the Interurban Transit Authority to produce a professional promotional video showcasing downtown Douglas and the convenience of utilizing public transportation to visit the area.

Similar promotional videos have been developed for other local businesses, and this could provide an opportunity to highlight the Douglas downtown district while also promoting the Interurban's services.
The video could feature:

- Downtown Douglas businesses, restaurants, galleries, and shopping opportunities.
- Visitors and residents enjoying downtown activities.
- The Interurban providing transportation to and from downtown Douglas.
- Popular DDA-sponsored events and community activities.
- The Distinctly Douglas branding and messaging.
- Information about how residents and visitors can utilize the Interurban to access downtown businesses.

The video could be used on the DDA's and City's social media platforms, websites, and other promotional channels. The Interurban could also utilize the video in its own marketing efforts.

Potential Cost-Sharing Arrangement

The DDA could approach the Interurban about sharing the cost of producing the video, potentially through a 50/50 partnership.
Because the finished product would promote both downtown Douglas and the Interurban's transportation services, a shared investment could benefit both organizations.

The DDA Marketing Committee could work with the Interurban to determine the scope of the project, obtain production estimates, and evaluate potential cost-sharing arrangements.

Any proposed financial commitment would be brought back to the DDA Board for consideration and approval.

3. Potential Benefits to Downtown Douglas

Both advertising initiatives could provide several benefits to the downtown district:

- **Increased Visibility:** Promote downtown Douglas to residents, seasonal visitors, and tourists traveling throughout the area.
- **Business Promotion:** Encourage additional shopping, dining, and visits to downtown businesses.
- **Transportation Awareness:** Increase awareness of the Interurban as a transportation option for accessing downtown Douglas.
- **Brand Recognition:** Expand the visibility of the Distinctly Douglas brand.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Explore shared marketing expenses with the Interurban, particularly for video production.
- **Long-Term Marketing Value:** Create promotional materials that could be reused for future campaigns and events.

4. Budget and Organizational Considerations

Before proceeding, the DDA should consider the following:

Advertising Costs: Obtain information regarding bus advertising rates, production costs, installation expenses, and available contract terms.

Video Production Costs: Request preliminary estimates for professional video production, including filming, editing, and final promotional materials.

Cost Sharing: Determine whether the Interurban would be interested in contributing financially toward a jointly produced video.

Marketing Coordination: Establish how the DDA Marketing Committee, City staff, and Interurban representatives would coordinate the development and approval of promotional materials.

Branding: Ensure that the DDA brand and appropriate organizational logos are incorporated into the advertising and promotional materials.

Legal and Financial Considerations: Confirm that any proposed DDA expenditures are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes, approved development and financing plans, and applicable budget requirements. Although Interurban buses operate beyond the DDA district, the advertising would be intended to promote economic activity within downtown Douglas. The City Attorney should review the proposed arrangement before any financial commitment is made.

5. Items for Board Discussion

The Board is asked to consider the following questions:

1. Is there interest in exploring advertising opportunities on Interurban buses?
2. Would the Board prefer exterior bus advertising, interior advertising, or a combination of both?
3. Should advertising focus primarily on the Distinctly Douglas brand and downtown shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities?
4. Would the Board support exploring a jointly produced promotional video with the Interurban?
5. Should the DDA approach the Interurban regarding a potential 50/50 cost-sharing arrangement for video production?
6. Should the Marketing Committee obtain preliminary advertising rates and video production estimates?
7. Would the Board prefer seasonal advertising or a longer-term promotional campaign?

8. How could these initiatives be incorporated into the DDA's overall 2027 marketing strategy?

No formal action is requested at this time. This item is presented for discussion and Board direction.