

## **South Bend targets central Indiana for more visitors**

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Tourism officials in the South Bend area are making a pitch to central Indiana residents that the northern Indiana city is not as far away as it used to be.

Visit South Bend Mishawaka, the brand name used by the Convention and Visitors Bureau of St. Joseph County, is hoping the half-hour that major projects on U.S. 31 have shaved off the previously 2-1/2- to 3-hour trip will create a windfall for the area's hotels, restaurants, museums and retailers.

"It gives us a chance to reintroduce our destination to a market that's been overlooked for a long time, primarily because the drive wasn't easy," Visit South Bend Mishawaka executive director Rob DeCleene told the South Bend Tribune.

Visit South Bend Mishawaka has paid the Indianapolis-based digital marketing firm The Basement \$125,000 for a summer advertising campaign.

The tourism group secured \$5,000 contributions from the South Bend Cubs, Studebaker National Museum, The History Museum, South Bend Chocolate Co. and the Morris Inn at Notre Dame and paid the remaining \$100,000 from hotel/motel tax revenue.

The campaign follows the state's \$1.2 billion reconstruction project for U.S. 31 linking Indianapolis and South Bend. Major components are a new bypass around Kokomo, a 20-mile section of a divided four-lane highway between South Bend and Plymouth, and an interstate-standard road upgrade in the northern Indianapolis suburbs.

The faster drive on U.S. 31 isn't the only factor driving the South Bend effort.

"This is a pretty transformative time in our community and we need to tell that story to potential visitors," DeCleene said, pointing to increased construction at Notre Dame, road improvements in South Bend and restoration work being done in the Renaissance District where Studebakers formerly were made.

Because the campaign is all digital, the messaging can change quickly to identify current events and promotions, DeCleene said.

It also can change within the four-month campaign based on whether certain types of ads are achieving results, said Todd Bolster, vice president of client services for The Basement.

The firm is buying ads on mobile apps, such as Pandora, Facebook and Instagram in the Indianapolis area and Google's Ad Words.