



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Executive Committee – January 23, 2024 – 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.  
Zoom and Centennial Office Building Room 101  
NOTES**

**Members Present:** Sen. Housley, John Anfinson, Anne Lewis, Lisa Havelka, Sally Fineday

**Technical Advisors & Staff Present:** Carol Zoff, Chris Miller, Diane Henry-Wangensteen, Yuki Kawahara

Chair Housley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

**Letter of Support Requests:** The committee agreed to add this to the agenda after receipt of a request yesterday. The City of Sauk Rapids is requesting letters of support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Pedestrian Railroad Crossing Safety Project and CSAH 3 at 6<sup>th</sup> and Summit Avenues Pedestrian Improvement Project, as they seek funds from the Active Transportation and Safe Routes to School Programs. These projects were approved by the MN-MRPC in November 2023 for letters of support related to possible Transportation Alternatives applications. Committee members were in favor of approving new letters because of the prior approval for the same projects and advised bringing this topic to the MN-MRPC to discuss and formalize Executive Committee authority for approvals between full Commission meetings in the future. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Sen. Housley to approve letters of support for the two Sauk Rapids projects described. Motion carried.

**FY 24 Budget Status Review:** A report showing year-to-date budget status was referenced in the meeting packet and background was provided. The current fiscal year ends June 30 and is the first year of the budget biennium so remaining funds can be carried forward into fiscal year 2025 which begins on July 1. There will be some funds remaining in the National Meetings (out of state travel) line item that could be re-allocated to other areas. Needs were discussed including maps, costs related to possible Annual Meeting hosting, Drive the Great River Road Month, and Interpretive Center visits. Questions were raised on whether print maps should continue to be a focus or if electronic information is a better focus. A smaller print piece with a QR code was also suggested. The committee recommended that additional discussion on print maps take place at an upcoming MN-MRPC meeting. Sen. Housley requested information on past costs involved with hosting an Annual Meeting.

**MRPC Annual Meeting:** John Anfinson shared that as of the last National MRPC Board Meeting, a host location had not been identified for the 2024 MRPC Annual Meeting. Since then, the National Office has noted that they would welcome Minnesota as a location for 2024. The committee discussed general timelines and tasks, along with MN-MRPC member schedules and commitments in the coming months. The committee recommended that the MN-MRPC offer to host the MRPC Annual Meeting in 2025 and will bring this recommendation to the February 9 Quarterly Meeting. 2024 could be considered if no other states are able to host. John will contact the National Office with this information requesting a response prior to the February 9 Quarterly Meeting to allow for consideration by the full MN-MRPC.

The committee discussed content and agenda structure of recent annual meetings, September timing, and need for sponsors. Alignment with the MN Drive the Great River Road Month theme was suggested (outdoor recreation for 2024). Site ideas were mentioned with considerations including proximity to Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge since they are celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**MN-MRPC Priorities & Projects:** The Committee reviewed the priorities listing and feedback received at the August 2023 meeting, along with new topics that have come up including potential hosting of the MRPC Annual Meeting, and public utility/transmission line projects impacting the Great River Road.

Discussion –

- Need to consider the time impacts and needs of projects.
- Drive the Great River Road Month promotions should continue.
- Regional Commissioners could be asked to complete Interpretive Center checklists/visits.
- A map reprint is directly connected to Interpretive Centers, as they are primary ambassadors and distribution locations.
- Interpretive Centers have indicated interest in the MN-MRPC convening joint group meetings periodically.
- Hosting a national MRPC meeting is a good opportunity to connect with and involve partners.

- Keep GRR Ambassador activities going but be mindful of the capacity to implement.
- It worked well to connect with CVBs and Chambers as Ambassadors in connection with Drive the Great River Road Month – continue and build on these efforts, also including Interpretive Centers.
- Important to review and comment on public utility/electric transmission line projects impacting the GRR – need to continue. There was discussion on scenic easements and how these might fit into MN-MRPC comments and recommendations. MnDOT is currently reviewing how to include this information on GIS mapping. An update will be provided at the February 9 MN-MRPC meeting.

Recommendations –

- Focus on list of current priorities at levels determined by capacity including commission members' availability, staff time and budget.
- Continue to respond to and comment on public utility projects impacting the Great River Road.
- Plan to host MRPC Annual Meeting in 2025, or 2024 if necessary. This will become a top priority and focus for a time.
- Revisit list of on-hold items later, as capacity and funding opportunities allow.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.