



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

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Members of the House: Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 25); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL – 63) **State Agency Appointees:** Paul Hugunin – Agriculture, Scott Bradley – Transportation, Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Keith Parker – Natural Resources, Andrea Kajer – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Mark Anderson

June 7, 2016

Ms. Elaine Koutsoukos
Transportation Advisory Board
Metropolitan Council

Re: Bruce Vento Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge Project - TAP Grant Application

Dear Ms. Koutsoukos,

This letter expresses the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission's (MN-MRPC) support for the Bruce Vento Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge project. The MN-MRPC is a statutory commission whose mission is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway.

The Bruce Vento Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge would be an important new amenity with the potential to substantially enhance the byway traveler experience by providing a direct connection from the Samuel H. Morgan Regional Trail into the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and beyond to the Bruce Vento Regional Trail. The bridge design carefully negotiates a set of very complex site conditions and artfully integrates a new trail link into this significant cultural, historic and natural landscape.

Byway visitors will be able to bicycle from downtown Saint Paul and pass over the Warner Road segment of the Great River Road Scenic Byway and numerous busy railroad lines into the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. With the planned future addition of the Wakan Tipi Interpretive Center, educational opportunities will be available to learn about the geology, natural history and early native settlements within the site, still regarded as sacred to the people of the Dakota Nation. The presence of other cultural historic eras will also be visible and the sanctuary provides the ideal setting to gain a deep understanding of Saint Paul and the region.

The users' view from the bridge will include downtown, the Mississippi River barge and boat traffic, nearby airport activity, road and rail transportation links that continue to draw energy from other parts of the world.

Many important elements of the Great River Road Scenic Byway will be greatly enhanced with addition of the bicycle and pedestrian bridge and we are pleased to support and partner with the City of Saint Paul to continue the development and construction of this important connection. If you have questions about our support or if there is additional information we can provide, please contact the MN-MRPC office at 651-341-4196.

Sincerely,

Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair