



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Executive Committee – January 5, 2017
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES**

Members Present

Anne Lewis – At Large Member
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – Chair
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem

Technical Advisors & Staff Present

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Diane Henry-Wangentseen - LCC
Chris Miller – Staff

Members Participating by Phone

Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 by Chair Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. It was agreed that some topics would be deferred to future meetings as appropriate.

Commission Membership

Regional Member Elections – Review Fall 2016 Process & Plans for 2017: This will be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting in summer 2017.

Agency Appointments – Timeline and Process for Renewals: Agency appointments should be renewed and process/timeline will be discussed in summer 2017.

Open Positions - Plans to Fill: The Commission is currently in need of an additional House member to fill the voting member roster. This will be addressed within the current House committee assignment process, and it was confirmed there is interest in serving. The Commission is also in need of a new technical advisor from Explore Minnesota Tourism. Anne Lewis offered to assist in making contacts. Chair Johnson will provide support as needed. Although they provide technical assistance upon request, Department of Agriculture has not been present at meetings recently. Chair Johnson will follow up.

MN-MRPC Officers – 2017 Election: An officer election has not been held since prior to the Corridor Management Planning process, to allow for continuity throughout that process. A recommendation was made to hold an election at the June MN-MRPC meeting, at which time the Commission should have a full roster and the legislative session will be completed. A schedule should be included in by-laws for the Commission – officer election at the Second Quarter Meeting, every two years.

National MRPC Responsibilities

2017 Dues Status – Update: Chris Miller reported that an invoice will be requested from the National Office soon and funding is set aside in the Commission's FY '17 budget to cover the \$15,000 annual cost.

Standing Committee Membership – Review and Fill Positions as Needed: Committee recommended handling this at the MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting and asked staff to provide a list of current committees, members and needs.

Upcoming National Meetings – Plan for Attendance: The MRPC 2017 Semi-Annual Meeting is scheduled for April 19 – 21 in Paducah, Kentucky and the 2017 Annual Meeting will be September 19 – 21 in Marquette, Iowa. MN-MRPC participation is important. In the past, priority has been given to those who have not yet attended a National MRPC Meeting and to active members of MRPC Standing Committees. The MN-MRPC needs coverage at the four committee meetings. Priority used for past meeting attendance was confirmed for upcoming meetings. Staff will send out the April agenda when available and request responses from those interested in attending.

Corridor Management Plan Progress, Needs & Direction

Carol Zoff and Chris Miller provided background information. The Corridor Management Plan included four initial implementation areas - Wayshowing Signage; Plan Your Project Interactive Mapping Tool; Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping Tool and Great River Road Ambassador Development. Descriptions and cost estimates are on pages 05-1 to 05-8 of the CMP.

Wayshowing Signage – The CMP included a preliminary estimate of \$100,000 for sign fabrication, to replace missing and out of compliance signs. That estimate has been updated to \$120,000 plus the cost of shipping to local sites/districts for installation. Condition of existing signs needs additional confirmation before a cost estimate can be finalized. Carol recommended following past practice as defined in Great River Road route designation resolutions, which involves local installation rather than a statewide installation contract. Discussions within MnDOT have indicated that the agency is determining if existing resources and methods might be able to address this signage need. It was noted that the Commission would like to be advised of status as soon as possible so that opportunities to pursue other channels would not be lost.

Plan Your Project and Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping Tools – The CMP included cost estimates for Plan Your Project (\$50,000) and Plan Your Trip (\$250,000) development. MnDOT will be the keeper of data for these tools but all partner agencies will need to be involved in the development and maintenance of the data and tools. The Minnesota Great River Road website is old and in need of updating, which is included in the overall cost estimate for Plan Your Trip. A general estimate of cost to update the MN GRR website is \$20,000, which would also make it mobile device friendly. MnDOT is in the process of hiring a student worker with responsibilities to include building upon the CMP prototypes for posting online refined versions of the Plan Your Project/Plan Your Trip Tools. A recommendation was made to look into keeping the Plan Your Trip tool “live” on both MnDOT and MN GRR websites or make sure that visitors have a simple/automatic interface.

Ambassador Development – The CMP cost estimate was \$50,000 plus ongoing MN-MRPC and member agency time. First steps for implementation could include 1) confirming the wayshowing data and implementing corrective actions, and 2) reaching out to local contacts to confirm database content for 750+ byway resources on the Plan Your Trip tool, as well as overall relationship and capacity building with partners. Committee members noted that a detailed plan and timeline for Ambassador Development is needed before arriving at a budget. Anne Lewis and Sheronne Mulry volunteered to work with staff on the Ambassador Development plan with associated costs during 2017. Wayfinding signage and interactive mapping tools need to be in place before Ambassador Development begins.

Legislative Session

MN-MRPC Statute – Review Recommendation in CMP: The Corridor Management Plan recommended addressing the MN-MRPC sunset date in Statute 161.1419. Recommendation was to explore longer terms or establish the Commission in permanence to reduce uncertainties related to funding, staffing, multi-year projects, grants, and CMP timeline. There was discussion regarding feasibility of permanence versus longer timeframes. General recommendation was to pursue a new sunset date ten years out. Term length for agency, regional and at-large members was also discussed with four year terms being preferential to facilitate Commission continuity and work. LCC will work on a possible statute amendment draft for review by the MN-MRPC Chair.

MnDOT Statute Language – Review Recommendation in CMP: The Corridor Management Plan recommended, “Revise MN Statute 161.20 Subd. 3 to delete ‘Mississippi River Parkway Commission’ as the Commission actively and in an on-going manner does further a highway purpose and does aid in the construction, improvement or maintenance of the highway system.” This recommendation has been discussed with MnDOT upper management who indicated they would support the change but felt that the request should originate from the MN-MRPC. LCC will provide process options to Chair Johnson for consideration.

Biennial Budget – Discuss MN-MRPC Needs: Discussion included CMP needs as listed above. Needs that would be beyond the scope of the current operating budget level – development of new MN

GRR maps/print pieces including a drivable map to aid in traveler navigation; redesign of the MN GRR website as noted above, additional staff hours; interpretive signage; local match for potential grants, and overall marketing/advertising. Cost estimates were discussed as available. It was recommended that staff prepare a total list of budget needs for consideration by the Chair and LCC. Projects being handled by agencies will also be included on the list to demonstrate support provided by Commission members in addition to any requests that might be carried forward.

There was discussion about MN GRR maps for the 2017 summer travel season. Carol Zoff and Chris Miller have been considering development of a new drivable map that could potentially be designed by the MnDOT student worker and then printed using MN-MRPC operating funds. Committee members expressed concern over the timeline for development of a new piece and advised a reprint of the current MN GRR Map/Travel Planner with minimal necessary revisions. Staff will proceed with plans for a reprint and distribution of the Map/Travel Planner, as has also been discussed at recent quarterly meetings. There was agreement that plans for a new map should continue, to assure completion for the following travel season if necessary funding is secured. It was also suggested that the newly developed print piece be available when the MN GRR website is re-launched after being updated.

Letters to Congress

25th Anniversary of Scenic Byways Program: The 25th anniversary of the National Scenic Byways Program was celebrated in December 2016. It has been suggested that this provides an opportunity to highlight both the occasion and role of Scenic Byways, especially the Great River Road, to members of Congress. All agreed that a letter should be sent. Anne Lewis will work with staff on the letter, for consideration and approval of the Chair.

National Scenic Byway Discretionary Grant Program: This topic will be addressed via participation by MnDOT Commissioner Zelle, Carol Zoff and MRPC Representative Diana Threadgill of Tennessee on the National Advisory Committee for Travel and Tourism Infrastructure.

Next Meeting

Summer 2017 date to be announced

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.