



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting
February 23, 2022 • 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

DRAFT AGENDA

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2:00 p.m. | Welcome & Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lauren Bennett McGinty, Executive Director – Explore Minnesota- Kelli Bruns, DNR Technical Advisor to the MN-MRPC | Senjem/All |
| 2:15 p.m. | Approve Today’s Agenda & Minutes from 11/18/21 | Senjem/All |
| 2:20 p.m. | Informational Presentation – Mississippi Headwaters Board <ul style="list-style-type: none">- River Signage & Events | Tim Terrill
Executive Director |
| 2:35 p.m. | Commission Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Budget Report- Regional Meetings/Elections Update- Executive Committee Report- Senate Committee Presentation | Handout/Miller
Miller
Handout/Committee
Senjem |
| 2:55 p.m. | National MRPC <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Committee Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Communications & Marketing▪ Culture & Heritage▪ Environment, Recreation & Agriculture▪ Transportation | Christianson
Anfinson/Kelliher
Karnowski
Wilcox |
| 3:20 p.m. | Commission Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GRR Roadside Storybook- Ambassador Program- Drive the Great River Road Month 2022- Improving Access and Welcoming Environment along the Mississippi River | Zoff/Wilcox
Miller/Zoff/Wilcox
Miller/Huginin
Miller |
| 3:50 p.m. | Partner Projects/Letters of Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Transportation Alternatives Program Letters – Update | Miller |
| 3:55 p.m. | Commission Member Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">- River Learning Center- Refer to Written Updates in Packet- Brief Highlights or Action Requests | Anfinson
All
All |
| 4:25 p.m. | Other Business | |
| 4:30 p.m. | Wrap Up and Adjourn | |



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting – November 18, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Jennifer Weaver – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Rep. Emma Greenman
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Marni Karnowski – Transportation Appointee
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Tim Wilcox – Transportation
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service
Diane Henry Wangenstein – LCC
Kasey Gerkovich - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members Absent

Sen. David Senjem
Rep. Kristin Robbins
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Anfinson. Roll call was taken with the members listed above present. There was a quorum. Thanks were expressed to Gina Bonsignore, MN DNR Technical Advisor to the MN-MRPC who has retired, and to Craig Hansen, who served as interim Technical Advisor from the National Park Service. Tucker Blythe is the new Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and was welcomed to the group.

Approve Agenda: The agenda was revised to include an update on the MRT. Motion by Grant Wilson and seconded by Anne Lewis to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Approve Minutes from 8/19/21 Meeting: Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Lisa Havelka to approve the August 19, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Budget Report: Treasurer Anne Lewis referenced the report in the meeting packet and provided comments. Spending is for the first four months of the fiscal year. This fiscal year is the first year of the biennium and so unspent funds may be carried into the following fiscal year. Chris Miller noted that the invoice for National MRPC dues is expected in early 2022. Motion by Sally Fineday and seconded by Grant Wilson to approve the budget report. Motion carried.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Chris Miller reported on upcoming regional meetings - Grand Rapids to Brainerd (Nov. 30) Brainerd to Elk River (Dec. 2); Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids (Dec. 7). Regional Commissioner elections will be held, and applications will be accepted until Nov. 22. MN-MRPC members are welcome at any of the meetings. RSVP to Chris and the access link will be provided.

MN-MRPC Statute Review: Minnesota Statute 161.1419 defines the MN-MRPC. A copy was included in the meeting packet. Members are asked to review in advance of the 2022 legislative session and let Sen. Senjem or Chris know if there are questions or any recommended modifications. The statute was reviewed during the Corridor Management Plan process, and it was recommended that the sunset date be removed, for reasons including pursuit of multi-year grants. That change was made in 2019. The CMP also recommended revision of MN Statute 161.20 Sub. 3 (topic is use of funds by MN Dept of Transportation) to delete "Mississippi River Parkway Commission" from the list of organizations that do not serve a transportation purpose since 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. After discussion, motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Sally Fineday recommending that the MN-MRPC Chair pursue conversations with MnDOT and LCC on possible removal of the MN-MRPC from the list of organizations not serving a transportation purpose. Motion carried.

MRPC Stakeholder Report: Anne Lewis, National MRPC Pilot, referenced the 2021-21 Stakeholder Report that was presented at the MRPC Annual Meeting. The document is available in an online interactive format and a pdf file. Anne presented highlights from the report and asked for guidance on distribution in Minnesota. Suggestions included MN Congressional delegation and all MN-MRPC member state agencies. Sally Fineday suggested the MN Indian Affairs

Council, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Prairie Island Indian Community; and offered to assist with contacts. Anne welcomed additional recommendations for report distribution and members were invited to email her directly or send suggestions to Chris.

MRPC Marketing Committee: Lisa Havelka reported. The committee met during the virtual Annual Meeting and there was discussion on projects for 2022 and potential for pursuing grants. The next meeting of the committee will likely confirm direction for next year. Chris Miller referenced the report on Drive the Great River Road Month 2021 and the MN-MRPC's current digital campaign with River Travel Magazine, included in the meeting packet.

MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee: John Anfinson reported on recent review of an Interpretive Center nomination. The committee received a nomination from the Louisiana Great River Road Interpretive Center & Museum, which is a 30,000 square foot newly developed/enhanced facility. After review, the committee requested additional information and then after receiving an updated nomination, approved addition of the site to National Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers. David Kelliher participated in the review process as a member of the committee and provided comments on the process. The committee will be looking at ways to clarify and strengthen the nomination form, and development of a sample nomination to serve as a model for sites interested in becoming a GRR Interpretive Center. All would be focused on reflecting an All-American Road level experience for visitors.

MRPC Environment, Recreation & Agriculture Committee: Marni Karnowski reported that the committee's meeting during the Annual meeting focused on pollinator habitat initiatives and preliminary discussions on related projects that could work in all ten states. MnDOT will be happy to play a role as plans are developed.

MRPC Transportation Committee: Tim Wilcox reported. He provided a demonstration of the MN Great River Road Plan Your Trip interactive map at the most recent Transportation Committee meeting, including the new videos recently launched to familiarize users with the features of the map and resource listings.

New Great River Road Interpretive Center – Itasca County Historical Society: Chris Miller reported for Megan Christianson. The Itasca County Historical Society held a grand opening event for their new River Room exhibit on October 21. Visit Grand Rapids posted a video overview of the exhibit provided by the Executive Director just prior to the grand opening. The Itasca County Historical Society was recently added to the Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers and is featured on both the Minnesota and National Great River Road websites.

Interpretive Panel Condition Review: Carol Zoff provided background on the Roadside Storybook concept, followed by Tim Wilcox sharing details about the condition review of the existing interpretive panels. The Roadside Storybook plan (MN GRR Interpretive Plan) includes content for sets of six Interpretive Panels in each county. There are also Mississippi River Trail (MRT) kiosks in seven communities, aligned with the same overall design. Great River Road panels currently exist at 22 sites in five counties. The full Roadside Storybook would include panels in 16 additional counties, plus three tribal communities as defined in the Corridor Management Plan. Tim Wilcox and Jack Flom recently completed a condition review of the existing panels. Some are 30 years old and showing significant wear. Cost estimates have been developed and were shared for repair and replacement of existing panels as well as development (content review, revision, design, and new build outs) of the remaining panels to complete the full Roadside Storybook Plan. Content review and revision would include, but not be limited to, consideration of Native American story content in the county panels, addition of tools such as QR codes to link to more detailed information, and an overall consideration of how best to move the intent of the project forward whether continuing with the current style of panels or using another method.

Discussion followed and topics included responsibility for cleaning and maintenance of the panels, process for ensuring appropriate inclusion of native stories, possibility of developing a full project scope and cost estimate for use when funding opportunities may be available, and development of a work group to flesh out a plan. MN-MRPC member and agency involvement will be needed to move forward with details for a potential project. A work group and/or initial referral to the Executive Committee was suggested. Grant Wilson noted that DNR is also working on sign updates. He and John Anfinson offered to participate via work group or informal feedback as things continue.

Ambassador Program: Carol Zoff, Tim Wilcox and Chris Miller presented four Ambassador Orientation sessions in late September and outreach has been done for up to four more in December. Interpretive Centers are the first audience, to be followed by Community Tourism Offices. A session (or sessions) for MN-MRPC members will be scheduled in 2022, after upcoming Regional Meetings and Ambassador Sessions are completed. Resource materials for ambassadors are now posted on the MN GRR website on the Ambassador Program page (under the About Us tab). Materials include presentations in pdf form and a series of facts sheets on topics related to the MN-MRPC and Great River Road. Carol Zoff

shared comments on the sessions held and importance of the contacts with Interpretive Centers. She also shared information about the online collector survey being developed at MnDOT to gather updates for Plan Your Trip. The concept and draft have been shared during Ambassador sessions and feedback gathered will be used as the survey system is launched. Discussion followed including suggestions to consider periodic Zoom meetings of Interpretive Centers for sharing of ideas and networking as a follow up to the individual Ambassador sessions, identification of an annual project/focus for all 13 Interpretive Centers in Minnesota, and recommendation to consider adding "What do you need from the National MRPC" to the Interpretive Center checklist.

Improving Access and Welcoming Environment along the Mississippi River: Chris Miller provided an update. Information has been requested from state agency members and will be compiled before scheduling a meeting of the work group to discuss recommendations for MN-MRPC review and consideration.

EDA Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation Grants – Letters of Support: An ad hoc group was convened as requested at the last MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting. Details about the program were reviewed and discussed. It was determined that the MN-MRPC is not in position to pursue funding from this program at this time, but that others along the route may be able and ready to apply. The Itasca County Trails Project is seeking funding and the MN-MRPC chair authorized and provided a letter of support (included in the meeting packet) due to their submission timeline of late October and the benefit of the project to the MN-MRPC mission and Corridor Management Plan. There was discussion regarding general approval for other local projects that may come forward and meet the same criteria. The program has a rolling deadline into early 2022 and so there is no one date to plan for in terms of possible applications from along the Great River Road. Consensus was that rather than a general approval, the full Commission should review any future letter requests as defined in the MN-MRPC's regular process for letter and action requests.

Transportation Alternatives Projects – Letters of Support: A solicitation is currently open for Transportation Alternatives funding applications. Applications are due January 14, 2022. Area Transportation Partnerships make decisions regarding funding awards. Letters of intent to apply are submitted to MnDOT for preliminary review. Those letters have been received and Carol Zoff evaluated the information for potential benefit to the Great River Road. 42 projects submitted letters of intent and six were identified as benefitting the Great River Road. A summary list was provided in the meeting packet. Two projects identified their affiliation with the Great River Road, while the others were identified by Carol as providing benefit to the byway experience. Motion by David Kelliher and seconded by Sally Fineday to provide letters of support for the identified Transportation Alternatives projects that move forward with the full application and agree that the projects benefit the Great River Road. Motion carried.

Mississippi River Trail (MRT) Update: Kate Matusinec, Multimodal Planner from the Office of Transit and Active Transportation at MnDOT was introduced and welcomed to the group to talk about the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). An update process for the MRT (U.S. Bicycle Route 45) will be taking place over the next several months. This will include reviewing new infrastructure that has been built to potentially include in the route, especially if new off-road options are available, as well as updating the formatting of maps. Signage will also be addressed. The current route is approximately ten years old. MnDOT will be collaborating with local partners on any changes/improvements to the route. Input from MN-MRPC members was invited. Plans for outreach were discussed and an outreach is currently in development. Anne Lewis asked that updated route information be provided to the National MRPC for their mapping. Carol Zoff offered coordination with the Great River Road Plan Your Trip online map, and information from the past signage project. Kate's contact information will be sent to MN-MRPC members and reports will be brought back to the Commission when available.

Commission Member Updates: Karl Samp announced that groundbreaking will take place in spring on the Brainerd Mississippi River Trailhead Park. John Anfinson mentioned a new set of Mississippi River postage stamps coming soon.

Other Business and Discussion: Appreciation was expressed for Gina Bonsignore's outstanding service as DNR technical advisor to the MN-MRPC. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by John Anfinson to offer the MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission's sincere appreciation to Gina Bonsignore for her service and best wishes in her retirement. Motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2022 meeting dates and format are not yet determined. Information will be shared via email when available.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

MN-MRPC FY22 Budget Report

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>2/8/2022</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,500.00	\$110.00		\$4,390.00	2%
Commission Members - other meetings travel & per diem	\$1,000.00	\$149.20		\$850.80	15%
MRPC Dues	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	100%
National Meetings	\$5,500.00	\$0.00		\$5,500.00	0%
Ambassador Program	\$5,000.00	\$405.00		\$4,595.00	8%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Zoom, Constant Contact, etc.	\$2,000.00	\$428.57	\$23.75	\$1,547.68	23%
Website Edits and Updates	\$2,500.00	\$900.00	\$55.00	\$1,545.00	48%
Shipping	\$500.00	\$102.35	\$9.36	\$388.29	22%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$600.00		\$64.77	\$535.23	11%
Admin Contract	\$26,400.00	\$13,200.00	\$2,200.00	\$11,000.00	58%
Staff Hours for CMP Implementation Activities with Partners & Stakeholders including letters of support/comment, regional mtgs and elections, ambassador program mgmt, work groups	\$15,000.00	\$8,415.00		\$6,585.00	56%
Marketing - MSP Airport Program	\$0.00	\$450.00		-\$450.00	
NSB Foundation Membership	\$0.00		\$150.00	-\$150.00	
Total Operating Budget	\$78,000.00	\$24,160.12	\$17,502.88	\$36,337.00	53%
Notes:					
No travel estimated for Executive Committee or Regional Meetings/Elections - virtual meetings					
Remainder of map storage/shipping agreement will be covered by LCC carry forward funds (approx. \$6,800)					



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission Executive Committee – January 12, 2022 via Zoom NOTES

Members Present: Sen. Senjem, Anne Lewis, John Anfinson, Lisa Havelka **Technical Advisors & Staff Present:** Tim Wilcox, Carol Zoff, Chris Miller, Diane Henry-Wangensteen, Carol Bisbee

Chair Senjem called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

Consider MN-MRPC/GRR Related Statute Recommendations: The committee reviewed the statute defining the MN-MRPC (161.1419) as well as 161.20 which includes the MN-MRPC on a list of organizations not fulfilling a transportation purpose. Consideration has been given in the past to requesting a change in term length of regional members, from two-year terms to four-year staggered terms. Committee members felt there would be benefit to this. Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Anne Lewis to proceed with draft language for four-year staggered terms for regional members. Motion carried. The committee also suggested wording that would place final appointment of regional members under the authority of the MN-MRPC or its Chair, following recommendation by a regional committee. At the November 2021 Quarterly Meeting, the MN-MRPC recommended pursuing discussions on removal of the MN-MRPC from the list of non-transportation organizations in 161.20. The Executive Committee agreed. Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Anne Lewis to proceed with a draft of language removing the MN-MRPC from the non-transportation list in 161.20 for potential inclusion in the LCC housekeeping bill and discussions with MnDOT before moving forward with the bill. Motion carried. LCC will consult with counsel and prepare draft bill language.

Legislative Session: Sen. Senjem asked the committee to consider if they would be interested in presenting information on the MN-MRPC and Great River Road to Senate or House Committees if there is an opportunity to do so. Consensus of the committee was yes, especially given the recent All-American Road designation for the Great River Road.

GRR Roadside Storybook (Interpretive Panels) Project: Carol Zoff provided details and referenced the materials in the meeting packet, especially the overall cost estimate for the Roadside Storybook Project. The project includes two phases – 1) rehabilitation of existing Great River Road Interpretive Panels, and 2) content development/build/installation of panels for 16 more counties and three tribes to complete the original project. The content on file was developed approximately 25 years ago and is likely to need review, revision and more inclusive stories and content. Tim Wilcox described the condition assessment of existing panels and showed examples of damage and wear. A work team is recommended to refine the content development estimate. Options for seeking project funding and sources of past funds were discussed. Committee members considered if/how to proceed with this project. Responsibility for future maintenance and cleaning was discussed. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by John Anfinson to proceed with seeking funding for the Roadside Storybook project in the most expedient manner possible, as the next step in implementing the Corridor Management Plan. Motion carried.

Ambassador Program Update: Five ambassador orientation sessions were held via Zoom for MN GRR Interpretive Centers from September to December 2021. Carol Zoff noted that interest was indicated in future group Zoom conversations with Interpretive Centers and John Anfinson offered to help facilitate, potentially in fall or prior to Drive the Great River Road Month. Interpretive Center ambassador sessions will continue in 2022.

Other Business: Diane Henry-Wangensteen provided information on Respect in the Workplace Training and Policy Review that will be required of public and agency members of the MN-MRPC. Members will be asked to participate in online or recorded training and return a document.

Diane notified the committee that the current MN-MRPC staffing agreement will expire June 30, 2022. LCC will begin work soon on the process to secure staffing services for the period beginning July 1. They will keep in touch with the MN-MRPC Chair and Executive Committee regarding details. Carol Zoff mentioned that Marni Karnowski assisted in reviewing proposals during the last cycle and may be willing to do so again.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

GREAT RIVER ROAD NETWORK OF INTERPRETIVE CENTERS VISIT CHECKLIST

State commissioner visits annually or bi-annually by making an appointment with the I.C. Director or other appropriate personnel.

The goal is to develop a stronger relationship between the Interpretive Centers (I.C.) and the MRPC.

During the visit, the commissioner will review the checklist and share new or ongoing information about the MRPC. These talking points should include benefits of being an I.C. (e.g., featured on website, printed maps, social media, itineraries and more.)

Comments

What other Interpretive Centers do you communicate with regarding Great River Road activities?

Name of interpretive center

Visiting commissioner's name

Date of visit

Name, title, email and telephone number of I.C. personnel interviewed

What are your regular hours?

What is your admission pricing?

How many visitors do you see annually?

Does I.C. have a website?
Please provide the url link.

Do you have a button on your website with the Great River Road logo and link to the experiencemississippiriver.com website?
Please provide url link to page where it is located. If not, when will you be adding logo and link?

Does your I.C. have a Facebook page?
Please provide url link.

Do you carry GRR maps or rack cards for sale, distribution or on display? Yes No

Do you display a Great River Road banner or other signage? Yes No

Are your frontline personnel knowledgeable of the Great River Road? Do they receive any formal training? Yes No

Do you have photos or video of your I.C. to share for promotional use? Yes No
Please send photos, video or other media to the National Office.

Commissioner's Signature

I.C. Personnel Signature



GREAT RIVER ROAD NETWORK OF INTERPRETIVE CENTERS VISIT CHECKLIST CONTINUED

How could the state or national MRPC help your interpretive center? _____

What do you need from us? _____

How have you worked with the MRPC in the past? _____

How does being affiliated with the Great River Road help your visitation? _____

Do many people visit your IC because they are travelling the Great River Road? Yes No

Has the status as an All American Road led to more visitation? Yes No

Do people know about this designation and why it matters? Yes No

How does your organization currently connect visitors to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road?

Are the descriptions for your listing on the National Great River Road website and, Yes No
if applicable, on your state's Great River Road website up to date?

Please send updated information as needed, along with a photo (or photos) that you'd like us to use for promotional purposes.

What are you doing to engage diverse audiences? _____

Is the contact information on you website up to date and include a phone number and email contact? Yes No



GREAT RIVER ROAD NETWORK OF INTERPRETIVE CENTERS VISIT CHECKLIST CONTINUED

COVID-19 IMPACTS

How has Covid affected your staff and visitation at your IC over the past two years? _____

How are you planning to adjust or how have you adjusted in 2022? _____

What do you see as the long-term impacts? _____

How can MRPC help with regard to the impacts of Covid? _____





Member Update to MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Commissioner: Jennifer Weaver

Representing: Hastings to Iowa Border & GRR Interpretive Center

Quarter: 1st Quarter 2022

We Are Water MN Traveling Exhibit at the Winona County History Center March 3 - April 25, check out winonahistory.org/wearewater for more information and schedule of related activities. The exhibit host partners are Winona County and the City of Winona in coordination with One Watershed, One Plan (<http://bwsr.state.mn.us/one-watershed-one-plan>).

Spring into History: Museum Open House will be March 20, 12 - 4 p.m. The event will feature:

- Free Admission
- Spring crafts
- Museum Activities
- Treats
- Membership Deals
- Info and Demo Booths
- Behind the Scenes Tours
- Archives Research & Genealogy Tips
- Door prizes on the hour
- And More!

Plus...check out the Minnesota Marine Art Museum's Seasonal Saturday March 19! It is a weekend of family fun around Winona.

World Water Day is March 22 and we will be celebrating with extending Free Admission from March 20 - 22. The Winona County Historical Society's **History on the River** educational cruise series will return on the third Thursdays of May - September this season aboard The Cal Fremling.

- Educational Cruises Celebrating Our Heritage! Experience the history, culture, arts, science, stories, music, and more that make Winona Minnesota so unique, on the Mississippi River. Visit winonahistory.org/to-do to learn more.

It was also a pleasure to help with the National MRPC Interpretive Center checklist revisions and to provide winter travel ideas to MnDOT as they developed a winter themed story map for the GRR Bluffs Region.