



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting
June 2, 2022 • 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom**

DRAFT AGENDA

2:00 p.m.	Welcome & Introductions	Senjem/All
2:05 p.m.	Approve Today's Agenda & Minutes from 2/23/22 & 4/8/22	Senjem/All
2:10 p.m.	Informational Presentation - Three Rivers Park District - Plans, Projects & Programs along the Mississippi River Boe Carlson, Three Rivers Park District Superintendent	
2:25 p.m.	Commission Business - Budget Report - Regional Member Terms	Handout/Miller Miller/LCC
2:35 p.m.	National MRPC - Annual Meeting, Memphis - Committee Updates ▪ Communications & Marketing ▪ Culture & Heritage ▪ Environment, Recreation & Agriculture ▪ Transportation	Lewis/All Christianson Anfinson Wilcox
3:05 p.m.	Drive the Great River Road Month 2022 - Promotion Plan Overview - Requests for Commission Member Feedback & Involvement	Project Team
3:30 p.m.	Commission Projects - GRR Roadside Storybook	Project Team
3:40 p.m.	Letter of Support Requests - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, National Scenic Byway Grant Wild Parsnip Mitigation Project Application - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, National Scenic Byway Grant Tourism & Interpretive Center Project Application - National Loon Center, Federal Funds for New Construction	Fineday Christianson Samp
4:10 p.m.	Commission Member Updates - Refer to Written Updates in Packet - Brief Highlights	All All
4:25 p.m.	Other Business	
4:30 p.m.	Wrap Up and Adjourn	



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting – February 23, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Jennifer Weaver – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem
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

Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources

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

Rep. Kristin Robbins
Rep. Emma Greenman
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chair Senjem. A quorum was present. Sen. Senjem welcomed Lauren Bennett-McGinty, Executive Director of Explore Minnesota followed by comments from Bennett-McGinty. Kelli Bruns of the Department of Natural Resources was welcomed to the group as a new technical member.

Approve Minutes from 11/18/21 Meeting: Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by John Anfinson to approve the November 18, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Informational Presentation – Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB): Tim Terrill, Executive Director of the Mississippi Headwaters Board, provided an overview of their River Signage and River Events (Resource Retention) initiatives. The River Signage project is designed to help facilitate paddling trips on the river by providing information on the time and distance to the next landing. MHB has partnered with communities to offer paddling events and is launching a new webpage to provide information on events happening in the area with links that download details to smartphones. A large event is being planned for July 30 in partnership with several Brainerd area organizations including the YMCA. MHB is interested in partnering with the MN-MRPC to promote events as well as explore other opportunities.

Discussion followed. Suggestions included individual commission members participating in MHB events; inclusion of MHB river assets on the Great River Road Plan Your Trip online map; connecting to MN-MRPC Regional Commissioners in the MHB area (which runs from Lake Itasca to Little Falls/Royalton); and utilizing the DNR Mississippi River State Water Trail information including a pdf map system that does not require internet after being downloaded.

Budget Report: The budget report in the meeting packet was referenced followed by discussion. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by John Anfinson to accept the budget report as presented. Motion carried.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Chris Miller reported on regional meetings and elections. Zoom meetings were held on November 30 (Grand Rapids to Brainerd); December 1 (Brainerd to Elk River); and December 7 (Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids). Congratulations and thank you to Megan Christianson, Karl Samp and Sally Fineday who were all elected to new terms as Regional Commissioners.

Executive Committee Report: The Executive Committee met on January 12. Meeting notes were referenced and provided in the meeting packet. Topics of the meeting included MN-MRPC/GRR related statute recommendations and the Roadside Storybook project. Draft statute amendment language has been prepared by LCC and is currently planned for inclusion in the LCC housekeeping/policy bill.

Senate Committee Presentation: Sen. Senjem reported on his request to the Senate Transportation Committee to provide a brief informational presentation on the MN-MRPC and Great River Road. Volunteers/presenters from the MN-MRPC would be appreciated and anyone interested was asked to notify Chris.

MRPC Marketing Committee: Chris Miller reported for Megan Christianson and noted thanks to Lisa Havelka for representing Minnesota on this committee in 2021. The National Great River Road Map will be updated and reprinted for distribution by summer 2022. States will be asked to review for route/information errors and new Interpretive Centers will be added. Preliminary planning is underway for development of a new website and update to the downloadable mobile app. National Scenic Byway funds will be sought to help cover the cost. State commissions may be asked for letters of support to include with the grant application.

MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee: John Anfinson reported that the committee has been working on a revised MRPC Interpretive Center checklist with additional questions to better gather feedback on how the MRPC can connect with and assist the centers. The goal is to have all checklists completed by the 2022 Annual Meeting so the committee can review the feedback received. David Kelliher noted the importance of connecting with Interpretive Centers and providing information since they provide direct public contact for the Great River Road. The committee plans to work on a model Interpretive Center nomination to assist those interested in the designation.

Sen. Senjem invited discussion on new Interpretive Center nominations from Minnesota. Comments included a recommendation to look at stories we are currently missing and sites not directly on the river but focused on river stories such as Mayo & the Mississippi in Rochester. Native American sites tell important stories. David Kelliher noted the "Our Home – Native Minnesota" exhibit at the Minnesota History Center, which is a GRR Interpretive Center. Lisa Havelka recommended reaching out to Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway for information on how they tell the stories of the U.S./Dakota War.

MRPC Environment, Recreation & Agriculture Committee: Marni Karnowski and Carol Zoff reported that the main topic for the committee has recently been pollinator habitat. States have discussed what they're doing, and a survey was suggested to gather information from states not represented at recent meetings. Examples of current activities include Tennessee doing interpretation related to their pollinator efforts and Wisconsin holding events. The committee will be looking at ways to involve all states in a unified approach.

MRPC Transportation Committee: Tim Wilcox reported that the committee discussed use of Google Maps for GRR navigation and ways to potentially get each state's alignment included in Google Maps. This is likely a long-term goal. Minnesota has route navigation within Plan Your Trip mapping. A question was raised about the possibility of having story tours for mobile phones – related examples included story downloads available at National Parks and the Rail to Trails Program that will be starting up again with MNRRA park rangers involved in providing step-on information to rail travelers. It was also noted that the MRPC is planning to seek funding that will include revamping their mobile app which would provide updated information for travelers.

GRR Roadside Storybook: Carol Zoff provided background on the project, which involves a plan and content for a series of interpretive panels in each Mississippi River county. The current project has two phases – repair/replacement of existing panels and content updating, fabrication and installation of new panels. The Executive Committee recommended seeking funding for this project. The first step is development of an updated cost estimate to reflect revisions needed to the draft content as well as development of new content as noted in the Corridor Management Plan. A team has been convened to begin this task and met for the first time in early February. Next steps include review of the draft content currently on file and examples of existing panels as a base for developing a cost estimate.

Ambassador Program: Chris Miller summarized status and plans. Ambassador orientation sessions were held for five Interpretive Centers from September to December 2021; Interpretive Center checklists were completed & submitted to the National Office. Outreach will be done to invite the remaining eight Interpretive Centers to participate in spring/summer 2022, followed by development of sessions for Community Tourism Offices, MN-MRPC members and possibly Minnesota Grown members. Marni Karnowski noted the time requirements for this approach and recommended modifications such as group sessions or recordings to increase efficiency.

Drive the Great River Road Month 2022: A theme focused on harvest/agriculture for Drive the Great River Road Month 2022 was suggested at a recent MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting. This type of theme has not been featured over the past several years, would be a good fit for Drive Month, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture/Minnesota Grown has indicated interest in participating. Categories such as orchards, wineries, farmers markets, pumpkin patches and farm

tours could provide a structure for the promotion. Minnesota Grown members within a few miles of the Great River Road are included on Plan Your Trip mapping and this promotion could help build on that. Chris Miller recommended proceeding with this theme. Paul Hugunin shared comments about the opportunities to drive traffic both directions on websites and social media, noted that September is a peak time for many Minnesota Grown members, rich content would be available, Minnesota Grown has a robust social media following, there would be opportunities to promote activities, and could be discussions on how Minnesota Grown locations can be visitor resources for Great River Road information. Mallory Forseth, Program Manager for Minnesota Grown, was introduced and will be part of this effort if it moves forward. Commission suggestions included weaving in Native American wild rice harvest and pollinator connections. Commission members supported the theme. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by John Anfinson to proceed with the Ag/Harvest/Minnesota Grown theme for Drive the Great River Road Month 2022. Motion carried.

Improving Access and Welcoming Environment along the Mississippi River: Chris Miller provided an update and shared that the agency inventory and list of examples are being prepared for consideration by the work group.

Transportation Alternatives Funding Application Letters: The MN-MRPC provided letters of support as authorized at the November 2021 meeting. Three applicants received letters and planned to proceed with the full application. Two applicants received letters but did not complete the full application – one is postponing for a year and the other was able to access local funding for their project.

Commission Member Updates:

- John Anfinson noted that Friends of the Falls is holding a series of meetings to engage the public. The process includes intense outreach to Native American representatives to ensure that the American Indian voice is first and foremost as plans are made and stories are presented. More information is available at <https://thefalls.org>.
- Tucker Blythe reported on developments related to the River Learning Center. Funding for the center is currently in the bonding bill. The project is led by the City of Saint Paul. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area would make the center their headquarters and provide educational components for local, nationwide, and worldwide audiences. Schematic designs are currently in development as a result of \$600,000 in fund raising for the project.
- Jennifer Weaver shared highlights from her report in the meeting packet including information about the We Are Water traveling exhibit that will be hosted at the Winona County History Center beginning next month. Information is available at www.winonahistory.org/wearewater
- Sen. Senjem discussed the possibility of preparing a list of bonding projects in river communities to be shared with MN-MRPC members as an FYI.
- John Anfinson recommended a Land and Water Conservation Fund overview for Minnesota at a future meeting. The federal funds are handled by the DNR in Minnesota. Grant Wilson agreed that it would be a good topic for a future update to the MN-MRPC and will facilitate.
- Karl Samp reported that the Mississippi Trailhead project continues to move forward in Brainerd and there will be a groundbreaking this spring. Expansion of the trail system at the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area continues. Two shore trips to Itasca State Park for American Queen passengers will be offered in September. Karl will serve as step on guide for one of them and Kris Vonberge of Visit Little Falls will be serving as guide on the other trip.
- Anne Lewis shared information about a project led by Macalester College funded by the Mellon Foundation, to develop Mississippi River related curriculum. Five hubs will be designated along the length of the river. The work may be of interest to the MN-MRPC and MRPC.

Next Meeting: June 2, 2022, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Special Meeting – April 8, 2022 via Zoom
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. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Rep. Emma Greenman
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society 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
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members Absent

Rep. Kristin Robbins
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Senjem. A quorum was present.

Consider and Act on Letter of Support Requests – Three Rivers Park District

Letters of support were requested for two projects: West Mississippi River Trail from Trunk Highway 169 to Douglas Avenue, and from Douglas Avenue to 109th Avenue. Project descriptions and maps were referenced in the meeting packet. Ann Rexine of Three Rivers Park District provided an overview of the projects, which will result in an off-road, ten-foot wide trail primarily along West River Road. Design would take place in 2026 with construction in 2027. Discussions have been initiated with MnDOT to consider routing the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) on the new trail. If funded, the trail will provide a safe, off-road, contiguous corridor. Commission questions and discussion followed.

Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Anne Lewis authorizing MN-MRPC letters of support for the West Mississippi River Trail projects from TH 169 to Douglas Avenue and Douglas Avenue to 109th Avenue. Motion carried.

Update on National Scenic Byways Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity

\$22 million in federal funds are available. Eligible applicants are state Departments of Transportation and Tribal Governments. Local entities can partner with the eligible applicants. If they receive multiple applications from along the Great River Road, MnDOT will likely be asking the MN-MRPC to prioritize the projects and consider letters of support. Timelines and processes are continuing to evolve. Letters of Intent are due to MnDOT on April 18 and to the Federal Highway Administration on April 25. Applications for National Scenic Byway Grants are due to FHWA June 20, with information due to MnDOT by June 6. Commission members recommended consideration of any Great River Road projects at the June 2 Quarterly Meeting unless changes to the process require a different timeline. Information will be provided in advance for review. A suggestion was also made to consider and develop MN-MRPC projects for future funding opportunities. Anne Lewis shared information on the National MRPC's plans to submit an application to fund development of a new website and mobile app for the ten-state Great River Road. The website will include an increased focus on interpretation and storytelling. Letters of support will be requested from state commissions and input from states will be needed if the project is funded.

Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Karl Samp authorizing the MN-MRPC Chair to proceed with a letter of support for the National MRPC application to fund a new website and mobile app. Motion carried.

Other Business

Karl Samp described a request for federal funding by the National Loon Center in Crosslake. Details will be shared prior to the next MN-MRPC meeting, as part of a possible request for a letter of support. Anne Lewis noted that the 2022 National MRPC Annual Meeting is being planned for early September in Memphis and encouraged members to consider attending. Each state will be asked to share information on a project or initiative that could be of benefit to other states. Chair Senjem called on all members for feedback and comments about the MN-MRPC.

Adjournment - There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

MN-MRPPC FY22 Budget Report

5-19-22

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>5/4/2022</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,500.00	\$165.00		\$4,335.00	4%
Commission Members - other meetings travel & per diem	\$1,000.00	\$149.20		\$850.80	15%
Dues - MRPPC and National Scenic Byways Foundation	\$15,000.00	\$15,150.00		-\$150.00	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	\$1,224.91	\$23.73	\$751.36	62%
Website Edits and Updates	\$2,500.00	\$1,157.50	\$67.50	\$1,275.00	49%
Shipping	\$500.00	\$129.71	\$36.00	\$334.29	33%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$600.00	\$64.77		\$535.23	11%
Admin Contract	\$26,400.00	\$19,800.00	\$2,200.00	\$4,400.00	83%
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	\$11,055.00	\$1,375.00	\$2,570.00	83%
Marketing - MSP Airport Program	\$0.00	\$450.00		-\$450.00	
Total Operating Budget	\$78,000.00	\$49,751.09	\$3,702.23	\$24,546.68	69%
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)					



Drive the Great River Road Month Minnesota Plan - 2022

Theme

Working titles (suggestions encouraged!):

- Fall Harvest on the Great River Road
- Harvest Fun for Everyone on the Great River Road
- Take the Harvest Highway on the Great River Road

Goals

- Promote driving the Great River Road and exploring communities and farms along the route
- Encourage travel along the GRR to find Minnesota Grown products, experiences, and members
- Build and expand upon partnerships with other organizations who work on the Commission and have natural synergy with Minnesota grown (State Parks, Explore MN, etc.)
- Minnesota Grown members along the Great River Road become more familiar with the Great River Road to cross-promote/market.

Promotional Avenues

- MN-MRPC news release, communications with partners along the route, request for Governor's proclamation, etc.
- Social Media -Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Drive the Great River Road kits - distribute in August as folks gear-up for the month
- Themed itineraries for various types of outings, along various sections of route, and various lengths
- Minnesota State Fair press event - joint w/ MDA Commissioner, Explore MN, DNR/State Parks. Fun activity or contest integrated? (e.g., Name that Veggie contest or GRR Trivia)
- MN Grown Pick of the Month (MN Grown consumer e-newsletter)
- MN Grown Member newsletter - Invite members to get involved/promote
- Commissioner video- Possibly Governor or Lt Governor video also

Social Media Campaign Ideas

*Minnesota Grown followers: 35,862 on [Facebook](#), 4,523 on [Instagram](#), and 32k on our [Pick of the Month](#) newsletter

- At least 15 Facebook posts
- At least 5 Instagram posts
- Contract with 1 social media influencer
- Have MDA staff create some of the same itineraries and document/report back on social media
- Utilize MDA Facebook and twitter for reposting
- Encourage cross promotion of Commission members posts

Asks of Commission: Send MDA content suggestions and look for opportunities to share posts.

Drive the Great River Road Kits

*MDA will distribute up to 250 kits to the first 250 people to sign up on our website.

*We promote it on social media and link to sign up page on our website until we hit our maximum number of kits

*Affiliated organizations encouraged to share or create content on social media to promote the kits linking to MDA's sign-up page

- Shopping tote bag co-branded Great River Road + Minnesota Grown (ordered)
- Road trip themed items with logos representing Great River Road & Minnesota Grown. -Travel mug, sunglasses clip, license plate frame, sanitizer, window clings, water bottle, sunscreen, fanny pack?
- NFC Chip Magnets - MN Grown will develop GRR landing page on MinnesotaGrown.com

Items provided by affiliated organizations:

- GRR maps
- GRR Stickers

Asks of Commission: Is there anything you could provide in quantity? Section specific items from regional reps? Send to MDA by July 15th.

Sample Itineraries

- Burn off some energy with the kiddos: apple picking, farm tours, corn mazes, bike trails, family friendly festivals
- Romantic weekend getaway: you pick First Kiss apples, farm to table restaurants, farm stay, wineries, B&Bs
- Foodie tour: farm to table restaurant, farmers' market, farm winery, local meat counter, cheese shop, Oliver Kelly Farm, Mill City Museum
- Get your hands dirty: garden centers, hike in a state park, you-pick farms, corn mazes, river recreation and fishing, foraging guides, etc.

*Native food & history: Not a separate itinerary but something to add if possible

Asks of Commission: Suggest activities or resources in your region that we can include.

Press Event:

- On-site press event at Minnesota State Fair?
 - Joint w/ Commissioners from Ag, Explore MN, DNR/State Parks, Gov office, others?
 - Fun activity or contest integrated? (e.g., Name that Veggie contest or GRR Trivia)
 - Featuring MN-MRPC Commissioners, State agency Commissioners, local celebs, or media members
 - MDA has a large booth space in the Ag/Hort Building and can host
 - MDA can have GRR information in our booth the entire fair and cross promote GRR partners who also have space at the fair

Asks of Commission: Feedback? Who do you picture participating? How can you help get them on board? Let us know if you have a booth at the State Fair! 😊

Requesting Letter of Support from Great River Road Commission

Byway

Lady Slipper Scenic Byway

Requestor

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Bryan McCoy, Tribal Planner
Bryan.mccoy@llojibwe.net

Funding

Total Funding For Project: \$20,000

Local Match for Project: \$4,000

Federal Request: \$16,000

Funding Summary

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is applying for \$20,000 from the 2022 FHWA Scenic Byway Grant. Money from this grant will go toward the purchase of a machine that will be able to remove wild parsnips along the byway. Wild parsnip is classified as an invasive species by the MN Department of Natural Resources. It is also highly toxic to humans as it can cause severe chemical burns when the sap contacts human skin. A significant amount of this plant is located within the Lady Slipper Byway, making it dangerous for visitors to explore the area on foot. The project benefits Great River Road as it will cover 6 miles of roadway along the route and it will be available to use in other areas within Beltrami County.

Besides manual pulling, the only options to eliminate the plant is by chemicals or widespread burning. Lady Slipper Byway committee members have identified a device that is able to control the plant using a more sustainable method. The machine, currently only available in Germany, eliminates wild parsnip through concentrated heat which destroys the roots. Estimated cost is \$15,000 plus an additional \$5,000 in shipping. The required 20% match will come from Beltrami County.

How it fits into the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan

Objective 7.1

Develop byway design guidance to encourage federal, state, and local authorities as well as private landowners to promote use of native vegetation, control exotic and invasive species, screen or bury utility structures, establish setbacks and landscape screening, etc. to protect and enhance scenic views from the byway, bikeway, and blueway



Multi M

The all-purpose machine for two operators – also for graffiti removal.

Photo of machine

Requesting Letter of Support from Great River Road Commission

Byway

Avenue of The Pines Scenic Byway

Requestor

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Bryan McCoy, Tribal Planner
Bryan.mccoy@llojibwe.net

Funding

Total Funding For Project: \$745,401

Local Match for Project: \$149,080

Federal Request: \$596,321

Funding Summary

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is applying for \$596,321 from the 2022 FHWA Scenic Byway Grant.. The proposed project is to construct a Tourism and Interpretative Center along the Avenue of the Pines Scenic Byway in the City of S-Lake on land owned by the band. The facility will include public restrooms, event space for cultural events, local tourism information, and an interpretive center that highlights the history of Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe using tribal language. Additional amenities of the site will be bicycle parking, EV charging station, picnic areas, and an outdoor trail that incorporates Native American art. Placement of the building is approximately 14 miles from the State Highways 49 & 9 intersection of the Great River Road, making it an easy to reach destination for visitors.

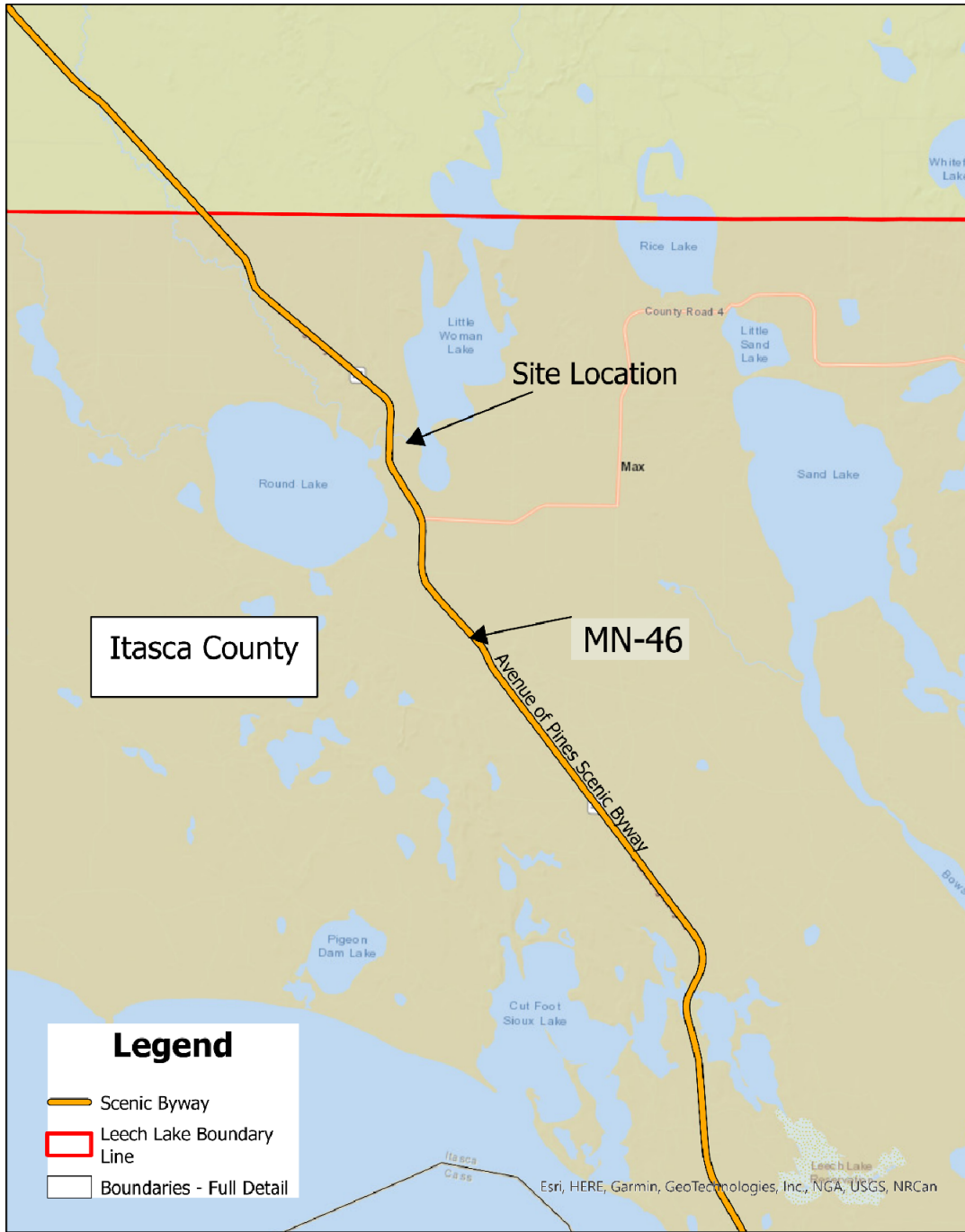
How it fits into the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan

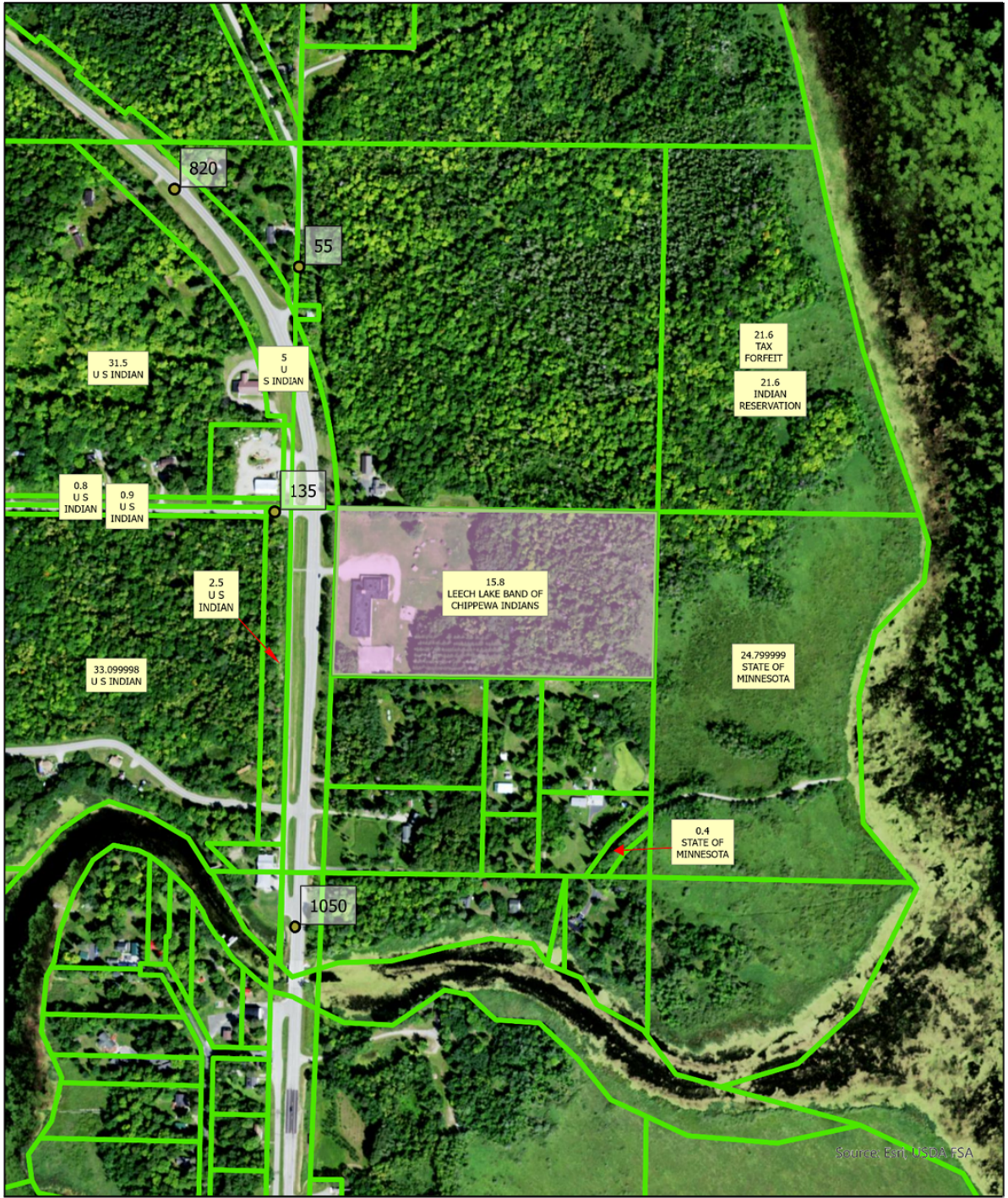
Objective 5.1

Encourage tourism and resource management that sustains or enhances the geographical character of the Mississippi River and the byway—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of resident

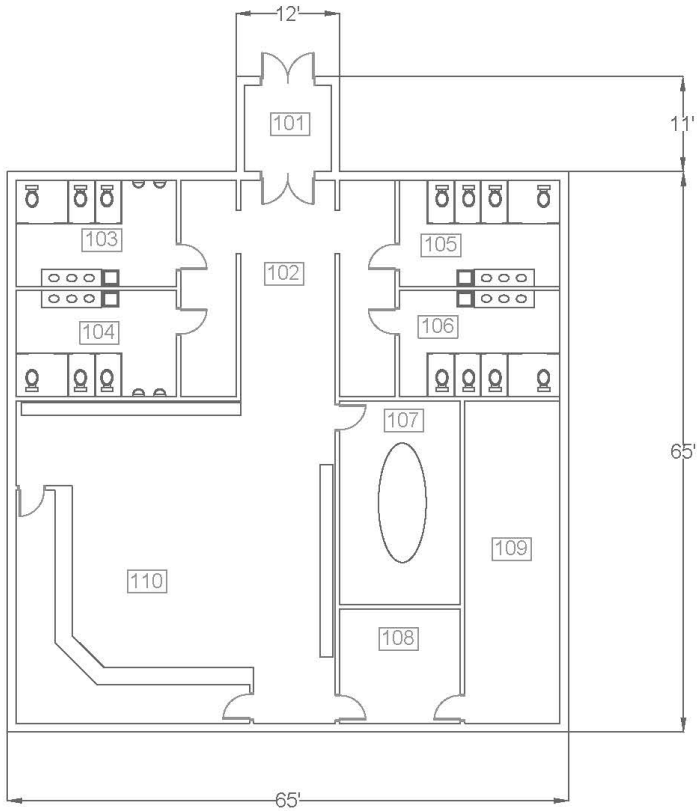
Objective 11.1

Partner with tribal nations to promote the sharing of culture through oral history and storytelling





- Proposed Byway Project Area
- Parcels
- Average Daily Traffic Count



ROOM NUMBER	ROOM NAME	AREA (FT^2)
101	VESTIBULE	100
102	HALL	623
103	MENS	228
104	MENS	228
105	WOMENS	228
106	WOMENS	228
107	CONFERENCE	330
108	CUSTODIAN	186
109	MECHANICAL	411
110	VISITING CENTER	1384



Karl Samp
Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation
Brainerd, MN 56401

RE: Senate Congressional Spending Request, National Loon Center Foundation (NLCF)

April 8, 2022

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar and Senator Smith:

The National Loon Center Foundation (NLCF) in Crosslake, Minnesota was established in 2017 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that aims to restore and protect loon breeding habitats, enhance responsible recreation, and serve as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. The National Loon Center (NLC) attracts 200,000 visitors annually and its new world-class facility, slated to open to the public in the spring of 2024, will be an interactive and family-friendly educational destination that transforms visitors into champions for loons and freshwater everywhere.

“The National Loon Center requests Senate Congressional Directed Spending for \$3,500,000 from the USDA Rural Development, Community Facilities account to help construct our new world-class facility to advance nationally significant loon and freshwater research and education.”

The new facility will be a nationally significant loon and freshwater research and education center on three levels totaling 15,000 square feet. The interior of the center will include interpretive and interactive exhibits including virtual reality components, active scientific research, a media center, a community education wing, and a three-level design that will highlight the air, land and water environments associated with loons and freshwater ecosystems. The plan includes a bird sanctuary on an adjacent point, five different outdoor exhibits and a floating classroom providing opportunities to engage in citizen science and learn about loons/lakes.

Timeline:

- **2019:** the NLC received a \$4 million grant from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota resources (LCCMR) for the project.
- **2021:** The NLC completed the installation of docks, boardwalks and some outdoor exhibits in the fall of 2021. It also completed a shoreline restoration project simultaneous to the dock installation. The work has been coordinated by the architectural and engineering firm Widseth, including a 25-year lease in place with the US Army Corps of Engineers.
- **2024:** Architectural design and plans for this net zero energy building are underway. The grand opening for the building is anticipated in spring of 2024.

Much like the Wolf Center and Eagle Center, this vital investment will add a unique enriching visitor amenity to the state as well as the Brainerd Lakes Area. It will advance nationally significant loon and freshwater research and education, promote responsible recreation and freshwater conservation ethics, celebrates the Common Loon – Minnesota’s State Bird in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, and bring valuable jobs while supporting local Brainerd Lakes Area businesses. Additionally, the NLC will incorporate many diverse educational initiatives to engage many audiences including the Ojibwe tribe and other underrepresented communities in metro and rural Minnesota. Our shared pride in loons and lakes will be reflected in the welcoming nature of the facility and organization.

We fully support this investment and your championship of this Congressional Directed Spending request will most importantly help educate the public, as well as connect and amplify loon and freshwater research and conservation efforts occurring across the nation.

In Gratitude,

Karl M. Samp, Executive Director
Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation

MN-MRPC Letterhead

June ____, 2022

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for the National Loon Center in Crosslake, Minnesota

Dear Senator Klobuchar and Senator Smith:

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) supports the National Loon Center Foundation as it seeks funding for completion of its new facility in Crosslake, Minnesota.

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. The Minnesota Great River Road spans 565 miles, 20 counties, 43 communities; three tribes and touches all eight Minnesota Congressional Districts. The Great River Road is an All-American Road with intrinsic qualities and attractions that are scenic, historic, archaeological, cultural, natural, and recreational.

The National Loon Center, a short and beautiful drive from the Great River Road itself, is a destination within a Great River Road county that enriches the experience of travelers and residents and is a good fit with the intrinsic qualities of the byway. The National Eagle Center in Wabasha is a specially designated National Great Road Interpretive Center, and we see the benefits it has brought to Minnesota and the Great River Road, as well as benefits to the public and to the eagle population. The National Loon Center is poised to be a similar success story, an attraction and educational center of national significance.

We look forward to this new world class facility and the unique opportunities it will provide for visitors. 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,

Sen. David Senjem, Chair