



**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.