



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Executive Committee Meeting
January 12, 2022 • 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom

DRAFT AGENDA

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- Welcome & Review of Agenda
 - 2022 Legislative Session
 - Consider MN-MRPC/GRR Related Statute Recommendations
 - Other
 - GRR Roadside Storybook (Interpretive Panels)
 - Review History
 - Discuss Current Status & Needs
 - Consider Next Steps
 - Ambassador Program Update
 - Other Business
 - Adjourn

161.1419 MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION.

Subdivision 1. **Policy.** It is declared to be the policy of the state and to be in the best public interest for the promotion of public safety, recreation, travel, trade, and the general welfare of the people to cooperate with the federal government and with the interstate Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission. To carry out such policy and to aid in the promotion and securement of a scenic parkway and highway for the state of Minnesota and to aid in securing the location of federal parks within Minnesota a Mississippi River Parkway Commission is created. Such commission shall also work toward the planning, construction, maintenance, and improvement of the Great River Road or Mississippi River Parkway which is to follow generally the course of the Mississippi River and extend from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Subd. 2. **Members.** (a) The commission shall be composed of 15 members of whom:

- (1) one shall be appointed by the commissioner of transportation;
- (2) one shall be appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;
- (3) one shall be appointed by the director of Explore Minnesota Tourism;
- (4) one shall be appointed by the commissioner of agriculture;
- (5) one shall be appointed by the director of the Minnesota Historical Society;
- (6) two shall be members of the senate to be appointed by the Committee on Committees;
- (7) two shall be members of the house of representatives to be appointed by the speaker;
- (8) one shall be the secretary appointed pursuant to subdivision 3; and

(9) five shall be citizen members appointed by five citizen committees established by the members appointed under clauses (1) to (8), with each citizen committee established within and representing each of the following geographic segments along the Mississippi River:

- (i) Lake Itasca to but not including the city of Grand Rapids;
- (ii) Grand Rapids to but not including the city of Brainerd;
- (iii) Brainerd to but not including the city of Elk River;
- (iv) Elk River to but not including the city of Hastings; and
- (v) Hastings to the Iowa border.

Each citizen committee member shall be a resident of the geographic segment that the committee and member represents.

(b) The members of the commission shall serve for a term expiring at the close of each regular session of the legislature and until their successors are appointed. Successor members shall be appointed by the same appointing authorities. Members may be reappointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. The commissioner of transportation, the commissioner of natural resources, and the director of the Minnesota Historical Society shall be ex officio members, and shall be in addition to the 15 members heretofore provided for. Immediately upon making the appointments to the commission the appointing authorities shall so notify the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, hereinafter called the National Commission, giving the names and addresses of the members so appointed.

Subd. 3. **Chair, vice-chair, and secretary.** The commission may hold meetings and hearings at such time and places as it may designate to accomplish the purposes set forth in this section. It shall select a chair, a vice-chair, and such other officers from its membership as it deems necessary. The commission shall appoint a secretary who shall also serve as a commission member.

Subd. 3a. **Gifts, grants, and endowments.** The commission may accept gifts of money, property, or services; may apply for and accept grants from the United States, the state, a subdivision of the state, or a person for any of its purposes; may enter into an agreement required in connection with it; and may hold, use, and dispose of the money, property, or services in accordance with the terms of the gift, grant, or agreement relating to it. The commission may also make grants, gifts, and bequests of money, property, or services and enter into contracts to carry out the same. The gift acceptance procedures of sections 16A.013 to 16A.016 do not apply to this section.

Subd. 4. **Compensation, supplies, staff.** Compensation of legislative members of the commission is as provided in section 3.101. Compensation of the remaining members is as provided in section 15.0575. The commission may purchase supplies, employ part-time or full-time employees, and do all things reasonably necessary and convenient in carrying out the purposes of this section.

Subd. 5. **Staff from other agencies.** The commissioner of transportation shall designate one employee of the Department of Transportation who is an engineer or who has engineering experience and the commissioner of natural resources shall appoint one staff member who shall advise with and assist the commission in carrying out its functions and duties.

Subd. 6. **National Commission.** The commission shall be an affiliate of the National Commission and as a member of the National Commission may pay an annual fee for its equal share of the planning program of the National Commission.

Subd. 7. **Program review.** The commission may review the programs of the various interstate compacts, studies, planning groups and commissions involved in water and land use activities along the Mississippi River in Minnesota.

Subd. 8. MS 2018 [Repealed, 1Sp2019 c 3 art 3 s 140]

History: 1963 c 875 s 1; 1969 c 1129 art 3 s 1; 1971 c 653 s 1-5; 1973 c 35 s 34; 1976 c 166 s 7; 1983 c 260 s 44; 1985 c 285 s 9; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 312 art 1 s 26 subd 2; 1987 c 384 art 3 s 2; 1987 c 404 s 148; 1993 c 337 s 11; 1996 c 407 s 46; 1997 c 7 art 2 s 24; 1997 c 192 s 27; 2001 c 161 s 27,28; 1Sp2003 c 4 s 1; 1Sp2003 c 23 s 11; 2005 c 10 art 1 s 27; 1Sp2005 c 1 art 4 s 33,34; 2007 c 148 art 2 s 46; 1Sp2011 c 10 art 3 s 32; 2013 c 142 art 3 s 31; 2015 c 77 art 2 s 51

Minnesota Great River Road Roadside Storybook Project Background - Nov. 18, 2021



The Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program invites travelers to *Come Closer to America's heart and soul...*

FHWA's program codified how to manage a byway for travelers and residents who respond to their invitation by including byway interpretation as a primary responsibility, in addition to safeguarding intrinsic resources and the byway experience.



The **2000 Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Plan** implementation resulted in significant interpretation accomplishments:

- ✓ Developed 2001 Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Plan, with **Roadside Storybook**
- ✓ Fabricated and installed **Roadside Storybook** in four+ counties
- ✓ Developed 2004 10-state Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit
- ✓ Designated 13 Minnesota Great River Road National Interpretive Centers



The **Roadside Storybook** describes the river's stories, with a chapter in each of the 21 counties along the river in Minnesota. The design carries forward frames and panel layouts MnDOT used at Rest Areas and overlooks previously. Each county chapter included six panels which provided:

- ✓ 10-state and statewide overview, and county map of intrinsic resources (one panel)
- ✓ Hydrology and geology (one panel)
- ✓ Flora and fauna (one panel)
- ✓ River-related human and natural history and sometimes its present or future story (three panels)



The current [Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Plan](#) includes specific **Roadside Storybook** strategies that respond to public and partner engagement that told the Parkway Commission to focus on

- ✓ Add more interpretation along the byway,
- ✓ develop White Earth, Leech Lake and Prairie Island community content,
- ✓ apply technology (QR codes, website, interactive map/YouTube, digital travel guides), and
- ✓ maintain existing roadside interpretation.

The CMP field survey revealed visitors desire more interpretation on the Great River Road itself so they can understand what they are seeing and experiencing. Example responses stated: "Need more signage and interpretive areas," "Would like to see more information on the Ojibwe tribe," and "Need more signs to talk about history and area. Did not know it was a scenic byway until the survey people told us." This sentiment was repeated at open houses and local meetings.

CMP "An interpretive sign turns facts into an experience that captures visitors' interests, provokes their curiosity, and makes them emotionally and actively involved so they feel a part of the story and understand the significance of a site. While existing interpretive panels, Interpretive Centers, visitor centers, local museums, and Minnesota Historical Society sites, our visitors, MN-MRPC, PAT and public outreach tell us more interpretation directed specifically to Great River Road travelers is needed." Using MnGRR Plan Your Trip map information can also encourage revisitation with so much left to see, and cross promotion to other destination areas, or even ten states.



Currently there are 63 interpretive panels, in 32 frames, on 22 sites along the river from the headwaters to the Iowa boarder. MnDOT field analysis of existing Great River Road interpretive panels indicates approximately

- ✓ 31 are in good condition, but need cleaning;
- ✓ 30 need repair
- ✓ 18 need replacement

In addition, a complete **Roadside Storybook** develops 16 more counties and three Tribal communities (6 panels ea.)

(Hubbard, Beltrami, Itasca, Aitkin, Cass, Morrison, Stearns, Benton, Wright, Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona)

Minnesota Great River Road Roadside Storybook Panel Content Development – Nov. 18, 2021



The **Minnesota Great River Road Roadside Storybook** describes the river's stories, with a chapter in each of the 21 counties and 3 Tribal communities along the river in Minnesota. The design carries forward frames and panel layouts MnDOT used at Rest Areas and overlooks previously.



Each chapter included six panels:

- One about 10-state and statewide overview, and county map of intrinsic resources
- One about Hydrology and geology
- One about Flora and fauna
- Three about River-related human and natural history, present or future story

The cost of designing interpretive panels can vary greatly, so at this time no cost estimate is provided for panel content development. ***A Commission working team is recommended to develop a content development estimate.***

This project per panel development costs may be less than average interpretation projects because of

- the scale of the Roadside Storybook,
- the format is established,
- draft county content is developed (2002), and
- stakeholders and partners can see existing examples of the panels in place.

The per panel savings may not be substantial, though, as

- the draft content, while vetted and refined, is 19 year old,
- CMP strategies include all new Tribal community content and integration throughout, and
- incorporating technology.

Factors that affect content development cost include:

- Themes. Do you have a theme established for your sign(s)? Can you articulate the interpretive objectives (what you want people to know, feel, or do as a result of viewing your panel)?
- Reference Material. How much time to identify information sources for the text and graphics?
- Graphics. How many photographs, illustrations, and/or graphics are currently available? How many will require research, creation, or purchase?
- Template. Do you have an established graphic style, or will our designers be starting from scratch? Is there a “template” (template would include colors, font styles, graphic look of sign panels) already established? Will there be multiple signs done from the same “template”?
- Maps. Are you going to need a map? If so, who will provide it?
- Review Process. Who will be the reviewers? Will their comments be compiled and approved prior to submittal?

Given these variables, design costs can range from \$2,500 – 3,500 per sign including:

- Template development
- Text research and development
- Image acquisition (finding photos, illustrations, etc. If images need to be purchased, plan on another \$50-100/image)
- Graphic layout and design
- File preparation for fabrication, development of specifications and COR services
- Project management



Minnesota Great River Road Roadside Storybook Preliminary Cost Estimate – Nov. 18, 2021



The **Minnesota Great River Road Roadside Storybook** describes the river's stories, with a chapter in each of the 21 counties and 3 Tribal communities along the river in Minnesota. The design carries forward frames and panel layouts MnDOT previously used at rest areas, overlooks, and partner sites.

Preliminary cost estimate for existing sign refurbishment is based upon the assumption to

- replace all sign and frames if multiple signs are on one site, and
- panel redevelopment to address updates from scans, add QR codes and/or add Tribal content such as dual language.

Existing Interpretive Sign Rehabilitation

Existing GRR Interpretive Sign Sites	22
Existing Sign Frames	32
Existing Sign Panels	63

Remaining New Roadside Storybook Build Out	Qty	Unit Cost	Estimated Total Cost
Counties (16 x 3 Frames X 2 Panels/frame)	48	\$8,000	\$384,000
Tribal Lands (3 sites x 3 Frames x 2 Panels/frame)	9	\$8,000	\$ 72,000
Counties (16 x 6 Panels content development)	96	\$4,500	\$432,000
Tribal Lands (3 sites x 6 Panels content development)	18	\$4,500	\$ 81,000
Subtotal			\$969,000

Existing MnGRR Interpretive Sign Rehabilitation	Qty	Unit Cost	Estimated Total Cost
Full Replacement (23 frames w/ 46 panels @ 12 sites)	23	\$8,000	\$184,000
Cleaning (9 frames w/ 17 panels @ 9 sites)	9	\$500	\$ 4,500
Modify Replacement Panel Content	42	\$2,000	\$ 84,000
Subtotal			\$272,500

Existing Sign Rehabilitation and Storybook Build Out	Total	\$1,241,500
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