



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting – November 17, 2022
Historic Fort Snelling/Zoom Hybrid
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Jennifer Weaver – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources
Carol Zoff – Transportation

Diane Henry Wangensteen – LCC
Carol Bisbee - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members Absent

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Rep. Emma Greenman
Rep. Kristin Robbins
Marni Karnowski - Transportation Appointee
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

Speakers & Guests Present

Nicole Bartelt, Department of Transportation
Christina Iliev, Department of Agriculture

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chair Senjem. A quorum was present. Special thanks to Historic Fort Snelling and the Minnesota Historical Society for hosting today's meeting and providing a tour.

Approve Minutes from 8/11/22 Meeting: Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Megan Christianson to approve the August 11, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Budget Report: The budget report in the meeting packet was referenced by Chris Miller and Anne Lewis. The report includes columns identifying the FY 23 base allocation along with carry forward funds remaining from FY 22. Report approved by consensus.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Regional Meetings and elections of Regional Commissioners are coming up on November 30 (Metro Region) and December 1 (Bluffs Region). Meetings will be held via Zoom and MN-MRPC members are always welcome.

2023 Quarterly Meetings: Quarterly meeting dates for 2023 are to be determined and will be announced in December. Meetings will likely be in a hybrid format with the in-person location being somewhere within the Capitol Complex. Due to high demand for hybrid rooms during the legislative session, the first quarter meeting could be scheduled on a Friday instead of the usual Thursday. Legislative appointments to the MN-MRPC will be made in early 2023, sometime prior to the first meeting.

Election of At-Large Member: The At-Large Member of the MN-MRPC is appointed by the other 14 members every two years. Nominations for the position were requested by email. Chair Senjem announced that three nominations for Anne Lewis were received and called for any additional nominations with none noted. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Grant Wilson to close nominations and elect Anne Lewis as At-Large Member for a new two-year term. Motion carried.

Member Updates: Member updates were included in the meeting packet.

National MRPC Annual Meeting and Updates: Anne Lewis noted the handout in the meeting packet, a summary prepared by the National MRPC Office. She congratulated John Anfinson on his election as Pilot Pro Tem (Vice Chair) of the MRPC and congratulated Sen. Senjem on receiving the MRPC Distinguished Service Award. Technical committee work was the main focus of the meeting, the first in-person ten state meeting since 2019. Sen. Senjem reported that the meeting also involved some joint activities with the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, who were meeting in the same venue. Karl Samp asked about future national meetings and locations, including if Bemidji is still being

considered as a possible location. The MRPC Board will be discussing future meeting formats soon and will be deciding on whether there will be one or two in-person meetings annually.

Drive the Great River Road Month 2022 Report: Christina Iliev from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture reported on results of the Fall Harvest promotion for Drive the Great River Road Month 2022. She provided a recap of the campaign components including the State Fair kick-off event, webpage, itineraries, Pick of the Month newsletter, traveler kits with survey, photo contest and social media. Thanks were expressed to all Commission members and agencies that assisted with information, kit items and communications. Chair Senjem and members applauded the enthusiasm and leadership of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Grown Program and thanked them for the outstanding promotion. A request was made for a copy of today's presentation. It will be emailed to members and is also available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/Meetings22-23.html> with other November 17 meeting materials.

Transportation Alternatives Projects – Letters of Support: Chris Miller provided background on the process the Commission has used in recent years to consider letters of support for this funding source. The Commission considers information from letters of intent to apply for the funding, and then if the Commission approves support letters, staff reaches out to project applicants to offer letters if they move forward with the full application. This process allows the Commission to act at a regularly scheduled meeting and still meet the application deadline. Carol Zoff shared information on the letters of intent received by the Department of Transportation and referenced the summary of projects from Great River Road communities she provided for the meeting packet. 10 projects are from Great River Road communities and five of the projects have direct benefit to the byway and byway traveler and help implement the MN Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. The applicant organizations for those projects are Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association, City of Rice, City of Little Falls, City of Red Wing and City of Brainerd. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by David Kelliher to authorize letters of support for the five projects as recommended. Motion carried.

Lower St. Anthony Falls/Lock & Dam #1 Disposition Study – Scoping Comments: John Anfinson provided a draft letter for Commission consideration, included in the meeting packet. The letter asks that byway intrinsic qualities and the MN-MRPC mission be considered as part of the scoping process for the Lower St. Anthony Falls/Lock & Dam #1 disposition study that will be completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A public comment period for this purpose is now open. Members discussed the letter and suggested an addition clarifying that byway intrinsic qualities are defined by the Federal Highway Administration. Motion by Megan Christianson and seconded by Anne Lewis to authorize the letter, as amended, for submittal to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Motion carried.

Other Business: Megan Christianson shared an update from the MRPC Marketing Committee. The National Great River Road website has had a surge in visitors recently. Itineraries are important, popular, and allow people to make them their own. Enewsletter and Facebook likes are also up. The committee is looking into new opportunities for local entities to place digital ads/banners on the National Great River Road platform.

Closing Comments: Sen. Senjem recognized departing members Jennifer Weaver and Sen. Torres Ray. Both shared comments with their fellow members. Sen. Torres Ray encouraged the Commission to consider partnering with the MSP Film Society and local theaters in river communities. Sen. Senjem shared parting comments with the Commission. He chose this group when he was first elected to the Senate and stayed with it for 20 years, not wanting to give it up because of the unique partnerships and nature of the work. David Kelliher thanked the MN-MRPC for coming to Historic Fort Snelling, expressing thanks to outgoing members, and he presented a plaque to outgoing Chair Senjem in honor of his outstanding service. Discussion and good wishes followed.

Next Meeting: 2023 meeting dates have not yet been set.

Adjournment: There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC)

Full Commission

- Comprised of 15 voting members as defined in [Minnesota Statute 161.1419](#), along with staff from agencies (also known as technical members).
- Quorum is achieved by attendance of 8 voting members (50% of members plus one). If vacancies exist on the Commission roster, the number of attendees to achieve quorum will adjust accordingly.
- The Commission meets quarterly at a minimum. Generally each meeting is 2.5 hours in length.
- State Commission meetings are open to the public, to the extent required by Minnesota Statute Chapter 13D, and audiotapes are posted online following the meetings.
- Meeting agendas, packets, minutes and audio are available at <http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/mrpc.html>.
- Staffing support provided by MN-MRPC Director, MnDOT Great River Road Program Manager, and Legislative Coordinating Commission.
- The Commission is a member of the ten-state national Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

Executive Committee

- Comprised of five members as authorized by the MN-MRPC. Membership to include the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. Two additional members will be selected by the MN-MRPC. Overall composition of the Executive Committee should include one House or Senate member, one agency representative and one regional representative. Membership term is two years, with the committee membership elected by the MN-MRPC every other spring.
- Quorum is achieved by attendance of 3 voting members.
- Executive Committee meetings are open to the public, to the extent required by Minnesota Statute Chapter 13D, and audiotapes are posted online following the meeting.
- Meeting agendas, packets, minutes and audio are available at <http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/mrpc.html>.
- Staffing support provided by MN-MRPC Director, MnDOT Great River Road Program Manager, and Legislative Coordinating Commission.
- Generally meets twice per year (such as at the change of the fiscal year, and prior to the Legislative Session) and as needed between full Commission meetings.
- Maintains Commission membership – appointment/election process, recruitment, orientation. The full Commission elects the at-large member.
- Maintains affiliation with National MRPC including staying current on dues payments, ensuring National Meeting and National Committee representation from MN-MRPC.
- Monitors Corridor Management Plan implementation progress and leverages resource needs.
- Facilitates coordination with House and Senate.

Approved by MN-MRPC
8/11/16

MN-MRPC FY23 Activity Budget

4-7-23

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Total FY 23 Budget</u>	<u>Spent 4-6-23</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,000.00	\$242.50		\$3,757.50	6%
Commission Members - other meetings travel & per diem	\$1,000.00	\$213.89		\$786.11	21%
Dues & Memberships (MRPC National Dues, Natl Scenic Byway Foundation)	\$15,000.00	\$150.00		\$14,850.00	1%
National Meetings	\$12,000.00	\$5,714.31		\$6,285.69	48%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Zoom, Constant Contact, etc.	\$1,400.00	\$937.32	\$25.31	\$437.37	69%
Website General Updates	\$1,200.00	\$690.50		\$584.50	57%
Shipping (including 10-state maps Interpretive Centers)	\$3,000.00	\$86.68	\$9.00	\$2,904.32	3%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$823.88	\$142.72		\$681.16	17%
Admin Contract	\$38,400.00	\$23,600.00	\$3,200.00	\$11,600.00	70%
Professional-Technical Service including additional staff hours, web services, graphic design services, etc.	\$7,000.00		\$660.00	\$6,340.00	9%
Ambassador Program*	\$5,000.00			\$5,000.00	0%
Access-Welcoming Environment*	\$3,000.00			\$3,000.00	0%
GRR Info/Promotion*	\$3,000.00			\$3,000.00	0%
Total Operating Budget	\$94,823.88	\$31,777.92	\$3,894.31	\$59,226.65	38%
Notes:					
* Carry forward funds tentatively placed in recent Commission priority areas					



Ten State Mississippi River Parkway Commission Technical Committees

Culture & Heritage Committee - <https://mrpcmembers.com/committee/culture-heritage/>

This committee explores methods to enhance the preservation and highlight cultural/historical aspects of the Mississippi River Valley as well as pursue the interpretation of the cultural/historical resources of the Valley. The committee prepares and submits to the Board of Directors an annual report that identifies accomplishments made related to these objectives.

Environment, Recreation & Agriculture (ERA) Committee – <https://mrpcmembers.com/committee/era/>

The committee addresses issues related to the environment and the agriculture of the Mississippi River Valley and projects that are designed to enhance the recreational opportunities within its boundaries. The committee prepares and submits to the Board of Directors an annual report of the environmental, recreational and agricultural condition of the Mississippi River Valley. The report includes comments on problems encountered and solutions offered which would guarantee compatibility of Parkway development with environmental safeguards.

Marketing Committee - <https://mrpcmembers.com/committee/marketing/>

This committee has primary responsibility for the website, newsletter, and protection of the copyright and printed materials for the organization. The committee also sets policy for materials related to the promotion of the organization, although promotion of actions of other committee will be retained by those committees, under policy set by this committee.

Transportation Committee – <https://mrpcmembers.com/committee/transportation/>

This committee addresses issues relevant to the transportation system within the Mississippi River Valley with special attention to the Great River Road. The committee prepares and submits to the Board of Directors an annual report regarding the status of Great River Road construction and maintenance. The committee has representatives from each member state and it meets at least 4 times per year, including the annual and semi-annual meetings.



February 2, 2023

Dear Business and Organization Leaders,

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Volunteer Association is asking for letters of support from organizations and businesses such as yourself. This is an important step in the approval process to proceed with plans to complete the trail. We hope that you will take the time to write a letter of support for the trail construction and we have provided a suggested text below if you should choose to use it.

An Overview of information to know.

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail expansion would connect the existing 9-mile paved section of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail from Riverton to Brainerd. The trail currently runs from Riverton to Deerwood, passing through Crosby-Ironton along the way. The new segment of trail would be asphalt paved construction and would be for non-motorized recreational use (biking, walking, running, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, etc.). The new portion that we are seeking to build would pass through portions of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and undeveloped Crow Wing County land. A large portion of this public land known at the Mississippi River Northwoods sits between HWY 210 and the Mississippi River was purchased through the MN Outdoor Heritage Fund to protect it from private development and turned over to Crow Wing County to manage several years ago. The dirt trails that currently exist on the property are already approved and used for snowmobile and seasonal ATV use managed by Crow Wing County.

Our plan is to create a new non motorized paved trail corridor with three objectives:

1. We would like to create a new corridor to make sure that we do not displace any current trail users and their existing rights to the trails that already exist.
2. We would like to make this beautiful land more accessible to area residents who prefer a non motorized experience.
3. We would like to have this new trail be as friendly to the environment as possible which is why there will be an extensive process of route planning and environmental approvals to make sure the trail has a minimal impact on the environment while providing more opportunity for residents to enjoy its beauty.

Our hope is that the funding for this project will come from multiple sources with the bulk of the money coming from State of Minnesota bonding if approved. We hope that you will give us your support by submitting a letter as outlined below.

Thank you for your time and support!

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Association

Contact Information To Send Letters Of Support

Please send your letters of support to **CLTA, P.O. Box 908, Brainerd, MN 56401**

Be sure to sign the letter and include the name and address of your business or organization on business letterhead if available.

Suggested Letter Of Support (please use business letterhead, if available)

Date

Dear Crow Wing County and MN Legislators,

We fully support the development of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail from Riverton to Brainerd. We understand the care that is being taken to have an environmentally friendly route planned and approved and the intent as well to not exclude other user groups from the land. We also support the trail for its recreational opportunities that it will bring to our region not only for the benefit of local residents and businesses, but also as a means of continuing to make the Brainerd and Cuyuna Lakes Regions a draw to tourists year-round.

We know that recreational trails such as this create a healthier community physically, emotionally, and financially and is a wise economic investment in our region.

Thank you,

Name

Business or Organization

Address

City of Sartell Request for Letter of Support

The City of Sartell will be acquiring the former Paper Mill property on the east side of Sartell. The Paper Mill property is located along the Mississippi River west of Benton Drive. The city is seeking grant funding to complete trail and park enhancements along the Mississippi River.

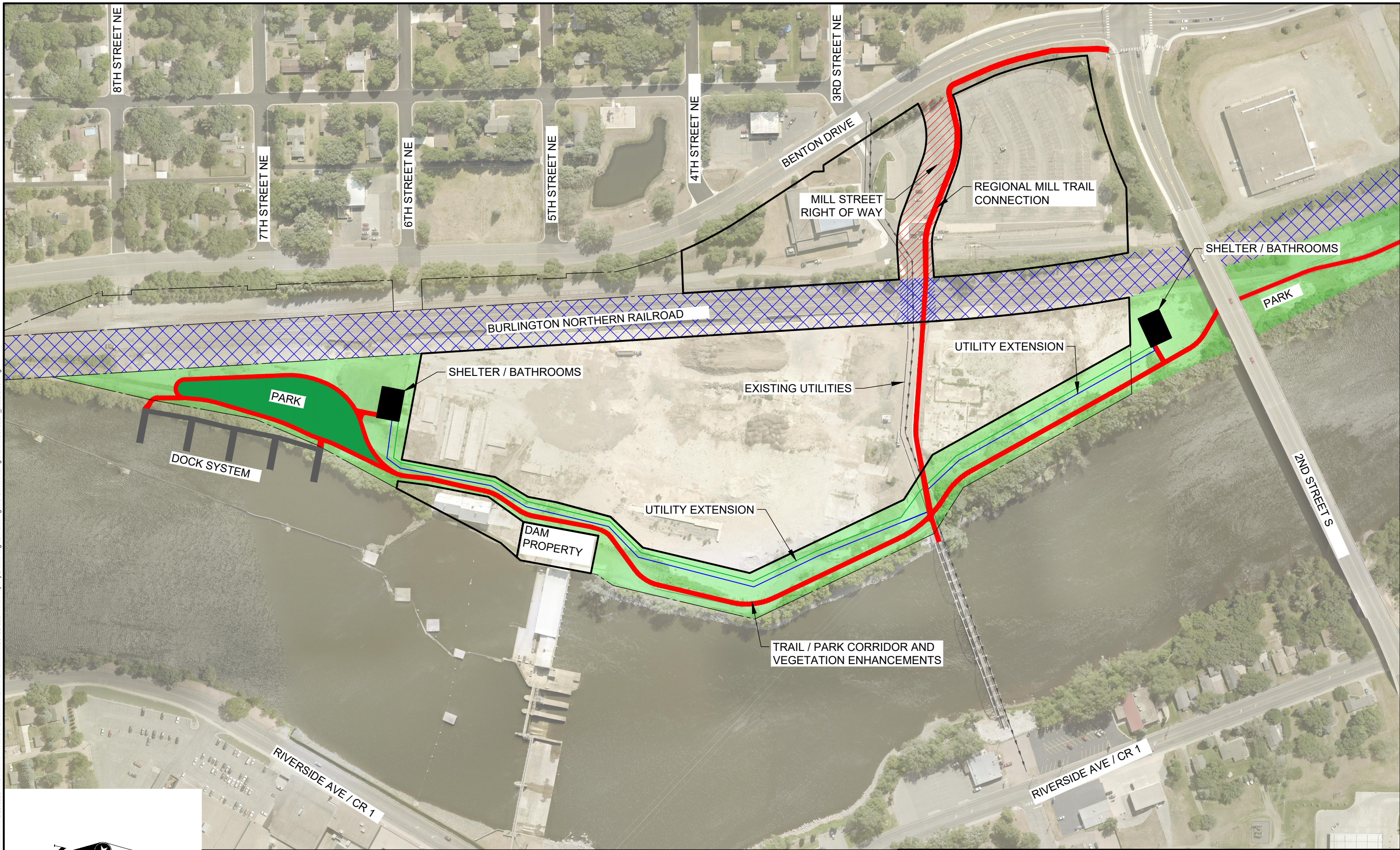
The project desires include trail connections to and along the Mississippi River, design and construction of a green trail/park corridor, berm screening, parkway, boardwalk, docks, shelter/gazebo, utility extensions, bathrooms, vegetation enhancements, and other park amenities. Our main goal is to enhance this property for community members and visitors to embrace the Mississippi River in Sartell. With the opening of the pedestrian bridge, we would love to have a loop from County Road 1 – over the bridge – to these new trails along the river on the former Mill Site.

We will be applying for multiple different grant opportunities.

Project Contact: Anna Gruber, City Administrator

Map of project area attached.

Save: 3/20/2023 1:44 PM I:\land Plot: 3/20/2023 1:45 PM P:\PT\S\SART\EScommon\General Numbers\G0132 2021 AIM Property\5-final-dsgn\5-1-drawings\10-Civil\cat\dwg\shh\G0132EX_2023.3.20.dwg



8TH STREET NE

7TH STREET NE

6TH STREET NE

5TH STREET NE

4TH STREET NE

3RD STREET NE

BENTON DRIVE

MILL STREET RIGHT OF WAY

REGIONAL MILL TRAIL CONNECTION

SHELTER / BATHROOMS

PARK

BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD

UTILITY EXTENSION

SHELTER / BATHROOMS

PARK

DOCK SYSTEM

EXISTING UTILITIES

UTILITY EXTENSION

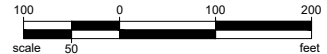
DAM PROPERTY

TRAIL / PARK CORRIDOR AND VEGETATION ENHANCEMENTS

2ND STREET S

RIVERSIDE AVE / CR 1

RIVERSIDE AVE / CR 1



- EXISTING RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY
- RAILROAD CROSSING
- TRAIL / PARK CORRIDOR AND VEGETATION ENHANCEMENTS
- TRAIL



PROJECT NO.
G0132
DATE:
3/20/2023

TRAIL AND PARK IMPROVEMENTS
SARTELL, MINNESOTA

FIGURE NO. 1



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

56 33rd Avenue South, #283 • St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301
651-341-4196 • info@MnMississippiRiver.com

Members of the House: Emma Greenman (D-63B); Kristin Robbins (R-34A) **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R-25); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-63) **State Agency Appointees:** Paul Hugunin – Agriculture, Marni Karnowski – Transportation, Lisa Havelka – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Grant Wilson – Natural Resources, David Kelliher – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings, Jennifer Weaver – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Anne Lewis

June 3, 2022

Bryan McCoy, Tribal Planner
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Cass Lake, MN 56633

Re: Letter of Support – Tourism and Interpretive Center Project

Dear Mr. McCoy:

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) supports the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's National Scenic Byways funding request for construction of a Tourism and Interpretive Center. The project aligns with the mission and Corridor Management Plan of the MN-MRPC, byway organization of the Minnesota Great River Road All-American Road/National Scenic Byway.

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. This project will help implement the Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Plan by encouraging tourism that sustains or enhances the character of the Mississippi River and partners with tribal nations for sharing of culture. The history of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and its connections to the Mississippi River are rich and significant. This center would be a tremendous asset for the Great River Road, easily accessed just a few miles off the route, and would provide an important and unique experience for byway travelers. We appreciate the background work already completed by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the partnership with the Avenue of Pines Scenic Byway on this project.

We look forward to the implementation of this project and the opportunities it will provide for visitors and residents alike. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Senjem".

Sen. David Senjem, Chair

MEMORANDUM

Date: 04/12/2023

To: Andrea Weber PLA, Manager Historic Properties & Waysides, Site Development Unit (SDU)
Carol Zoff PLA, Supervisor Environmental Planning & Design Unit (EPDU)

From: Peter MacDonagh PLA FASLA, Sr. LA EPDU. MnDOT Technical Advisor, Minnesota's Great River Road.

RE: Review of TH 2 Parcel Conveyance from MnDOT to the City of Grand Rapids; by Environment and Planning Design Unit (EPDU)

Andrea Weber PLA, Manager Historic Properties & Waysides within SDU MnDOT, presented questions below related to a potential conveyance of a Class IV Rest Area in Grand Rapids to MnDOT's EPDU Unit which technically manages the Great River Road in Minnesota. MnDOT's 2004 Rest Area Streamlining study recommended the property be offered to the City of Grand Rapids local government unit, and for that local government unit to work with the Byway group to consider byway enhancements.

- **Q: *Is it on the Great River Road Scenic Byway?*** A: The Grand Rapids Wayside Rest Area on TH 2 is on the Minnesota State designated Great River Road (GRR). The GRR is designated by the Federal Highway Administration Authority (FHWA) as an *All American Road*. The GRR is across the Mississippi River on Co. Rd. 76 and 23, adjacent to the Forest History Center. The Forest History Center is one of Minnesota's Great River Road designated Interpretive Centers.
- **Q: *Would the Scenic Byway group be interested in working with the City of Grand Rapids on any enhancements if the Wayside were to be conveyed to Grand Rapids?*** A: Minnesota's Mississippi River Parkway Commission (Mn MRPC) is the GRR Scenic Byway's governing body. Mn MRPC encourages the preservation of ecological resources such as wayside areas with ecologically important tree plantings, such as these ~4 acres of Red & White Pines (*Pinus strobus*, *Pinus resinosa*) ~90 years old (YO), to aid byway travelers' experience with traffic calming, community entryways, pollinator habitat, stormwater management, and other ecosystem services along the Mississippi River in Minnesota.
 - The Minnesota MRPC meets four times annually, and their next quarterly meeting is April 21, 2023.
 - A written request was submitted (4/4/23) by EPDU's Supervisor Carol Zoff to the Mn MRPC's Director to discuss this Grand Rapids Conveyance matter at the Mn MRPC's next quarterly meeting. It's been confirmed by the Mn MRPC Director, that this Conveyance issue will be discussed by the Mn MRPC Board at their next quarterly meeting.
 - After Mn MRPC meets and discusses this Conveyance issue at their official Mn MRPC meeting (4/21/23), potential actions or recommendations may emerge. Those relevant items of business will be relayed to MnDOT's Conveyance Office staff.

-Regional Mn MRPC members from the area that may be interested in working with the City of Grand Rapids and MnDOT are:

-Ms. Megan Christianson, Mn MRPC: Representing the area from Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region

-Ms. Sally Fineday, Mn MRPC: Representing the area from Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids Region

Any relevant matters discussed with Mn MRPC members will be relayed to MnDOT's Conveyance Office staff.

- **Q: Does that affect the potential conveyance?** A: As part of the public engagement and discussions with the City of Grand Rapids, it is timely and appropriate to consult with the Mn MRPC as these Wayside facilities (in particular the ~4 acres of ~90 year old Red & White Pine plantings) are a part of the GRR Scenic Byway experience. Whether ownership is transferred or not, sustaining these ecological functions and traffic calming for transportation of these Red & White Pines for users described below, should be continued at this location on TH 2.

TH 2 Grand Rapids Wayside Trees' Ecological Significance

- 1) TH 2 is and has traditionally been an important gateway for the city of Grand Rapids, a well-known logging community in two phases, first were old growth Pine saw logs used for timber construction, and second (more recently) softwood pulp logs for paper. Currently, the pulp logging operation of UPM Blandin Paper Mill is located on the Mississippi River. Starting in the 1850s, the rapids of Grand Rapids became the northernmost Mississippi River raft logging launch area for White and Red Pines saw logs.
- 2) The TH 2 Wayside Rest Area is an orientation for driving travelers. Please see SDU's Memorandum for more details of this issue.
- 3) This Wayside has a large stand of living White & Red Pine, almost a century old, which are of special importance for bird, bat & pollinator habitat, and provide a *traffic calming* aid to the driving public for adhering to the posted speed limit.
- 4) **EPDU Q: Can this Wayside be an Ecologically Significant Landscape if it is a New Deal Era public works White and Red Pine plantation "Shelter Belt" of approximately 4 acres, and not an "old growth" pine forest?**
 - a. A: Although this parcel is 4 acres in size, it is located adjacent to the Mississippi River and immediately adjacent TH 2. These mature evergreen White and Red Pine plantations are small islands/patches of habitat for "*specialist*" animal species like woodpeckers, bats, and pollinators; in what was once an ocean (pre-1850) of White and Red Pine that stretched unbroken around and through the Great Lake States to Maine since the Altithermal (~5,000 years BP). Many of these "*specialist*" animal species populations in Minnesota, are currently hovering between rare, threatened, and endangered (Coffin & Pfannmuller, 1988). According to Dramstad, Olson and Forman's *Principles of Landscape Ecology*, this Wayside is a mature needle evergreen "*specialist* habitat patch" located adjacent the Mississippi River - which functions as Minnesota's largest "*specialist* habitat corridor". This "*specialist* habitat patch" on this '*specialist* habitat corridor' sits within the urban/ agricultural matrix of Grand Rapid's environs. This *ecological matrix* is a depauperate "*generalist* habitat matrix" of pigeons, sparrows, starlings, non-native pest insects, etc. The rarity of this habitat island/patch, makes it a particularly valuable "source" habitat location for these "*specialists*".
 - b. Based on observed size of the on-site White & Red Pines (>50' in height & >20" DBH) this was likely planted as a *Shelter Belt* by one of the "New Deal" Era public works agencies of the 1930's (CCC, WPA, NYA, etc.) to prevent crop growing soils in this area from blowing away (Crow 2023).

- This *Shelter Belt* initiative was coordinated by the then US Soil Conservation Service (USSCS), now NRCS. The Grand Rapids Wayside was likely constructed (paved, curbed, with a built structure) in the 1930's, as a Wayside Rest Area for TH 2, see SDU Memorandum for details.
- c. *The large stature of this Wayside's stand of Red & White Pine, based on observed trunk diameter (DBH), places these trees in the ~90 year age range. This estimate of age is based on growth rates previously observed via incremental borings within Itasca State Park (ISP) of similar White & Red Pine plantings, by the author. This memorandum's author, as a University of Minnesota professor instructing MLA students at the Itasca Field Station, age sampled those ISP White & Red Pines, with an increment borer. Itasca State Park's pine plantings are of the same New Deal era, and again planted by one of those agencies: CCC, WPA, NEA, etc... The age of the White & Red Pine trees at this Wayside location can be confirmed by sampling with an increment borer. The character and age of this Pine Tree Plantation makes this an Ecologically Significant Landscape Feature for "specialist" pollinator and "specialist" bird nesting habitat throughout the seasons.*
- 5) This Wayside site's pine plantings serve a suite of Minnesota Woodpecker Species (~5 Spp.) with Standing Snags. These living trees in combination with woodpecker cavity creation (*a landscape keystone species*) provide exceptionally important nesting habitat for Minnesota forest's cavity nesters, including several Owl species down to disappearing insectivores: Bluebirds/Tree Swallows, and Bats. The Forestry History Center describes the importance of *New Deal Era* plantations by CCC/NEA/WPA etc. In summary these White & Red Pines were planted as shelter belts that helped reduce *Dust Bowl* soil loss' in this region. Additionally, the Itasca County Historical Society (ICHS) has extensive records of the two CCC camps in the Grand Rapids environs (Crow 2023).
 - 6) This Wayside is not on the Mississippi River Trail (it follows the *All American Road* across the Mississippi), but some cyclists use TH 2 as a direct route into and out of the city of Grand Rapids.
 - 7) This Wayside location has a median separated bike trail along the length of the south side of the parcel.

Pros & Cons of Conveyance of 4 Acre Wooded Wayside Rest Area

- 1) **Traffic Calming:** A very important current function of this TH 2 parcel, includes the "*traffic calming*" service provided by the large ~90 year old pine trees (see #5 above), for the driving public, who would likely exceed the posted 45 mph speed limit in this rural to urban transition zone, without the *traffic calming* provided by these pine trees (2006 Michigan DOT data on 7-8 mph traffic speed reduction with large trees present on road shoulders).
- 2) **Driver Relief & Refreshment:** See MnDOT SDU (Site Development Unit's Memorandum).
- 3) **Preservation of Wayside Ecological Functions:** If Grand Rapids was to receive this parcel and designate it as a Veterans Memorial, EPDU strongly recommends a mechanism (e.g., Conservation Easement) that would preserve the White & Red Pine trees and manage the site into the future for its ecological and habitat functions, plus its *traffic calming* function provided to the driving public.

Possible Next Steps Suggested by Peter MacDonagh & EPDU:

- 1) Video conference with MnDOT District #1 Director of Operations.
- 2) Video conference with Grand Rapids staff re: City Council policy and plans regarding development plans (pine tree removal) for this Wayside parcel?
 - a. What is Grand Rapid's Plan for Existing Tree Protection of Wayside parcel's White & Red Pine plantation trees e.g., Conservation Easement?

- b. Will Grand Rapids provide Woodland Invasive Species Management of this White & Red Pine tree plantation? (Buckthorn & Asian Honeysuckle removal?)
- c. This Wayside is currently Sponsored by the Centennial Grand Rapids Rotary Club; what are the Rotary's long-term plans for maintenance of the trees in this Wayside?
- d. East end of parcel has a Vehicular Gravel Access; what/who is this for & will it be maintained?

APPENDIX: HISTORIC WAYSIDE GRAND RAPIDS

A.

Site evaluation can be found on the Historic Wayside Properties website:

[Publications - Historic Roadside Properties - MnDOT \(state.mn.us\). Volume II - B-15384006-v1.PDF](#)

Grand Rapids IC-GRC-115 Pages 161 & 162

See SDU Memorandum for more detail.

B.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

CCC: Civilian Conservation Corps

WPA: Works Progress Administration

NYA: National Youth Administration

USSCS: United States Soil Conservation Service, currently the NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service)

C.

REFERENCES:

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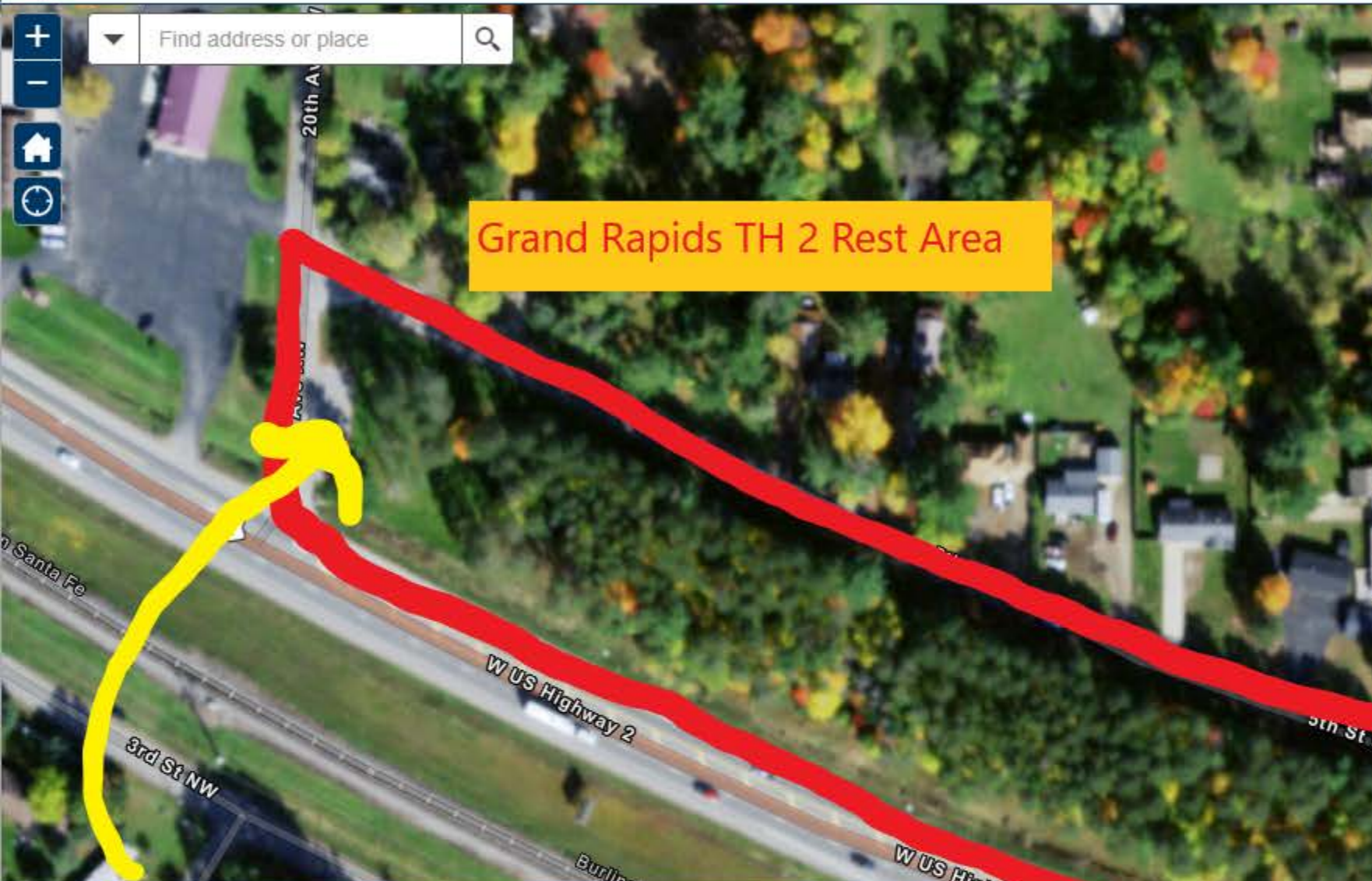
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Grand Rapids TH 2 Rest Area



Trail and pine stand

Parking, trail and pine stand





Map navigation controls: Zoom in (+), Zoom out (-), Home, Refresh, Search bar (Find address or place), and Full Screen icon.

Great River Road State Route

Edge of the Wilderness NSB

Grand Rapids Rest Area

Mississippi River Trail

Great River Road All American Road

