



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting
November 16, 2023 • 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Hybrid – MN State Capitol Room 123 and Zoom**

DRAFT AGENDA

- | | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| 2:00 p.m. | Welcome & Introductions | Housley/All |
| 2:10 p.m. | Presentation of MRPC Stewardship Award to Minnesota Grown/Minnesota Department of Agriculture | |
| 2:20 p.m. | Approve Today's Agenda & Minutes from 8/17/23 & 10/16/23 | Housley/All |
| 2:25 p.m. | Commission Business
- Budget Report
- MN-MRPC Priorities/Planning | Packet/Lewis/Miller
Miller |
| 2:35 p.m. | National MRPC
- MRPC 2023 Annual Meeting
- Operation Pollination Resolution
o Consider MN-MRPC Endorsement
- Committee Updates
o Communications & Marketing
o Culture & Heritage
o Environment, Recreation & Agriculture
o Transportation | Attendee Reports
Anfinson/All

Committee Members |
| 3:05 p.m. | Commission Project Updates
- Drive the Great River Road Month 2023 Recap
- MN Great River Road Ambassador Program | Carlson/Christianson
Miller |
| 3:15 p.m. | Public Utilities Notifications – Projects Near Great River Road
- Consider MN-MRPC Comments - Northland Reliability Project (Electric)
- Consider MN-MRPC Next Steps - Dairyland Wabasha Relocation Project (Electric)
- FYI - Lotis Environmental Bowstring Project (Telecommunications Tower)
- Discuss Commission Process for Future Notifications | All |
| 3:50 p.m. | Transportation Alternatives Projects
- Review Listing of Possible Funding Applications along Great River Road
- Consider MN-MRPC Letters of Support | Zoff/Miller/All |
| 4:15 p.m. | Commission Member Updates
- Refer to Written Updates in Packet
- Brief Highlights or Action Requests | All
All |
| 4:25 p.m. | Other Business | |
| 4:30 p.m. | Wrap Up and Adjourn | |



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting – August 17, 2023
Capitol Room 123/Zoom Hybrid
MINUTES – Draft**

Commissioners Present

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
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. John Hoffman
Rep. Leigh Finke
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
Marni Karnowski – Transportation Appointee
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Peter MacDonagh - Transportation
Diane Henry Wangenstein – LCC
Megan Voelke - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members Absent

Sen. Karin Housley
Rep. Sydney Jordan
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

Guest Present

David Senjem, Past MN-MRPC Chair

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by Vice Chair Anfinson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Marni Karnowski of MnDOT was welcomed back to the Commission after serving in a temporary assignment.

Approve Agenda and Minutes from 6/1/22 Meeting: Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Paul Hugunin to approve the draft agenda and June 1, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried with a roll call vote noting all present voting in favor.

Budget Report: The draft fiscal year 2024 activity budget (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) in the meeting packet was referenced by Anne Lewis and Chris Miller. Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Sally Fineday to approve the budget as presented. Motion carried.

Authorize Chair to Sign MN-MRPC Contracts: Motion by Marni Karnowski and seconded by Sally Fineday to authorize the MN-MRPC Chair, currently Sen. Housley, to negotiate and execute contracts on behalf of the Commission with concurrence of the Executive Director of the Legislative Coordinating Commission as fiscal agent for the Commission, and in keeping with approved Commission budgets. Motion carried.

MRPC 2023 Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting is planned for September 20 – 22 in Alton/Collinsville, Illinois. John Anfinson and Anne Lewis will be attending in their National MRPC leadership roles, and the MN-MRPC has approval to send Sen. Housley, Sen. Hoffman, and Sally Fineday. Peter MacDonagh of MnDOT also plans to attend. John announced that Minnesota Grown/Minnesota Department of Agriculture will be receiving a National MRPC Stewardship Award for their sponsorship and leadership of the 2022 Fall Harvest promotion for Drive the Great River Road Month. There was discussion about the process for a representative to attend and accept the award. Chris Miller noted that for the state reports portion of the agenda, each state will be asked to share 1 – 2 success stories, in keeping with the overall theme of the meeting. Chris will work with the Minnesota team of attendees on this report and is also available to help with questions on registration and travel reimbursement.

MRPC Communications and Marketing Committee: The committee has not met since the last MN-MRPC meeting.

MRPC Culture and Heritage Committee: John Anfinson reported that the committee is working on review of two new Great River Road Interpretive Center nominations and gathering information on which Interpretive Centers have pollinator gardens/habitat on their grounds. There is interest in developing a podcast or promotion of some sort for Interpretive Centers and the committee is looking for innovative ways to tell the stories of Interpretive Centers. Suggestions can be forwarded to John Anfinson or Anne Lewis.

MRPC Environment, Recreation and Agriculture Committee: Anne Lewis reported that the most recent meeting focused on pollinator efforts including a possible partnership with Rotary. Others were asked for feedback on things happening in Minnesota. Carol Zoff mentioned that MnDOT has set a goal of 75% native plant pollinator seeding for construction projects, and additional goals within the Office of Environmental Stewardship. They are also working with the Department of Agriculture Nursery Task Force to encourage Minnesota growers of seed. In Minnesota, 40% of the Great River Road is on the state trunk highway system. Information sharing among DOTs from Great River Road states would be helpful. Marni Karnowski mentioned the Nationwide Monarch Conservation Agreement and Highways for Habitat funding. John Anfinson noted that some states have CRP program requirements for pollinator habitat and asked about status in Minnesota. Paul Hugunin offered to check into it. There was also discussion about the PCA's AmeriCorps/Green Corps Program as a possible partnership, with potential projects such as development of a podcast on pollinators for Interpretive Centers.

MRPC Transportation Committee: Peter MacDonagh reported on discussions from the July meeting including EV charging stations along the Great River Road and possible adoption of the EPA information and guide; and a presentation on signage and step-by-step directions to Interpretive Centers by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Interpretive Center Visits - Report: John Anfinson visited Great River Road Interpretive Centers north of the Twin Cities in July. He mentioned the importance of in-person visits and provided summaries of the visits to the Oliver Kelley Farm, Charles Lindbergh House and Museum, Forest History Center, Itasca County Historical Society, and Itasca State Park. John also met with the Itasca County Historical Society Board and will be speaking at an upcoming event for them. Paul Hugunin suggested the Oliver Kelley Farm as a location for a future MN-MRPC meeting, as an opportunity for all members to visit an Interpretive Center as was done at Historic Fort Snelling in November 2022. Sally Fineday mentioned a past visit to Itasca State Park and plans to visit again.

MN Great River Road Ambassador Program: Chris Miller provided an update on recent activities including two Ambassador Orientations via Zoom for MN-MRPC members in July, and a session provided in August for Community Tourism Offices as a launch for the Drive the Great River Road Month arts theme. Feedback received from these sessions will be used to plan future offerings, including orientation sessions once or twice per year for new staff at Convention and Visitors Bureaus/Chambers and other partner organizations.

Drive the Great River Road Month 2023: September marks the annual celebration of Drive the Great River Road month and a summary of plans for the Minnesota Great River Road was referenced in the meeting packet. The 2023 theme focuses on the arts in MN Great River Road communities. A webpage has been developed using content provided by community partners. The content will also be featured on Facebook throughout September. All MN-MRPC members were asked for help getting the word out. Kate Carlson noted that a kick-off event is being held at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum on August 31 and mentioned the helpfulness of having a theme like this to promote locally. Megan Christianson reported on how Visit Grand Rapids promoted Drive the Great River Road Month last year and plans for this year including a sweepstakes connected to Drive Month.

Northland Reliability Electric Transmission Project: Marni Karnowski provided an overview of the Northland Reliability Transmission Project, which could impact the Great River Road with proposed crossings of the Great River Road at Itasca County Road 3 and Crow Wing County Road 11. Discussion followed. It was noted that the mission of the MN-MRPC and National Scenic Byway Intrinsic Qualities are often the base for Commission comments; comment periods provide an opportunity for the Commission; agency members including the DNR may be submitting comments on their own; feedback from Regional Commissioners is important because they know the areas best; it would be helpful to see scale references with the proposed new tower diagrams.

Members suggested that the next step be a briefing for the Regional Commissioners in the area and requested their recommendations on comments for consideration by the full MN-MRPC at a future meeting. The DNR will also likely be providing comments and offered to share information with the Regional Commissioners as part of the briefing.

What's Next for the MN-MRPC? Priorities Review & Discussion: John Anfinson provided an overview of current and potential priorities referencing material provided in the meeting packet and the Corridor Management Plan (CMP). Questions to consider include – What's required of us? What provides the greatest return? What provides the greatest rewards? Status of the four initial implementation priorities from the CMP was reviewed. 1) Wayfinding signage has been completely re-done and is now in a maintenance phase (which requires ongoing attention); 2) Ambassador Program has been implemented with defined groups and is an ongoing process; 3) Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping was

implemented and continues to be offered for travelers, updating is needed along with overall maintenance/hosting of the system; and 4) Plan Your Project approach has evolved and much of the information is available within Plan Your Trip.

Preliminary discussion followed on priorities and available resources/participation.

- Carol Zoff noted that MnDOT will continue with Plan Your Project though it might function under the umbrella of Plan Your Trip rather than as a separate online tool.
- Plan Your Trip will need updating of the 700+ things to see and do. This could potentially be an MNIT project for an electronic update system and MnDOT is looking to review options in early 2024 – staff time is needed along with time of MN-MRPC members and partners. The goal is to develop an automated update system to function long term. Plan Your Trip is the primary information tool for MN Great River Road travelers and should remain a priority.
- Drive the Great River Road month partnerships and theme should continue.
- Roadside Storybook is currently on the list of possibilities but funding and a lead agency to manage the project would be needed. A team met last year to recommend next steps and defined a two-part process – review and revision/updating of content, and then fabrication and installation of interpretive panels at partner sites. MnDOT could potentially offer help later in the process with construction contracts, etc. depending on availability of staff time and resources.

Priorities discussion was referred to the Executive Committee for further review. A suggestion was made to develop a poll that would allow members to rank priorities.

Member & Guest Updates

- Sen. Hoffman noted that the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) Annual Meeting will be in Bemidji in September. He will be in attendance and is looking for ways to partner with this group such as through a Mississippi River Compact. Dave Senjem mentioned the Mississippi River Caucus under the umbrella of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, and Anne Lewis followed up noting that this group received a Stewardship Award last year from the National MRPC.
- Sally Fineday will also be attending the MRCTI meeting.
- John Anfinson will be the featured speaker on a 1 Mississippi online event on September 26 (The Long Journey of the Great River).
- Dave Senjem mentioned the topic of EV charging stations and the importance of having enough of them available and publicized along the Great River Road.
- Marni Karnowski reported that MnDOT has submitted comments on the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Travel and Tourism Strategic Plan and supported inclusion of National Scenic Byways in that plan. Marni also reported that she plans to resume her position on the MRPC Environment, Recreation and Agriculture Committee.

Next Meeting

November 16, 2023, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment

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



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Special Meeting – October 16, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
Capitol 123/Zoom Hybrid
DISCUSSION NOTES – Draft**

Commissioners Present

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. John Hoffman
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Marni Karnowski – Transportation Appointee
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Peter MacDonagh - Transportation
Michelle Yurich – LCC
Megan Voelke – LCC

Sally Olson - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members/Technical Advisors Absent

Megan Christianson, Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Karl Samp, Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson, Elk River to Hastings
Sen. Karin Housley
Rep. Sydney Jordan
Rep. Leigh Finke
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

Members in attendance participated in general discussion related to the agenda with no action taken. The topic will be forwarded to the November 16 Quarterly Meeting of the MN-MRPC.

Northland Reliability Project Overview

The Northland Reliability Transmission Line's proposed route would cross the Great River Road at Itasca County Road 3 and Crow Wing County Road 11. As recommended at the August 17 MN-MRPC meeting, a briefing was held for Regional Commissioners closest to the proposed Great River Road crossing areas. The recommendation was to prepare comments for MN-MRPC consideration. Draft content was defined.

Review Draft Comments

Draft comments were provided for review. Public meetings and a written comment period were announced by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Minnesota Department of Commerce on October 10, the announcement includes a series of questions to consider, and the comment period closes November 21. Discussion followed.

- A recommendation was made to add a comparison point (person, vehicle) for scale on the graphic showing sizes of transmission line towers.
- The National Scenic Byway Foundation held a Protecting Scenic Viewsheds webinar on October 11. Questions were raised about multi-state responses to proposed transmission lines with no examples noted by others on the webinar. An example of a finish treatment on towers to better blend with background areas was shared by a participant. <https://www.natina.com/project-item/natural-looking-lattice-towers-in-virginia/>
- A suggestion was made to clarify that All-American Road designation is part of the Federal Highway Administration National Scenic Byways Program.
- Focus was confirmed to be on MN-MRPC comments only since each member agency will be following their own processes.
- A question was raised on possible impact to tribal lands including 1854 ceded territory. Sally Fineday offered to request information on this, to be shared back with the commission.
- A question was raised regarding maintenance of the tower structures over time, including degradation of ground areas around towers. The Department of Natural Resources might have information on what they have seen with other projects and/or this can be included in the commission's comments.
- It would be helpful to have past examples of commission comments and a comparison of how the proposed towers of the Northland Reliability Project compare to the towers constructed for CapX2020.

Public Testimony

There was no pre-registration received for public testimony. 5

Next Steps

Suggested edits will be made to draft comments and the updated version will be included in the next meeting packet for consideration. It was noted that additional projects coming soon may also be of interest to the commission related to possible Great River Road impacts, including the Xcel Energy Mankato – Mississippi River Transmission Project and the Alexandria to Big Oaks Transmission Project. Any comments the commission may choose to make on the Northland Reliability Project could serve as the model for other project comments. Comments made in the past on similar types of projects will be summarized as resource material.

Next Meeting

November 16, 2023, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.
Capitol Room 123 and Zoom

Adjournment

Discussion was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

MN-MRPC FY23 Activity Budget - Final for Year Ending 6/30/23

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>Total FY 23 Budget</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,000.00	\$981.04	\$3,018.96	25%
Other Meetings - incl. Travel & Per Diem	\$1,000.00	\$213.89	\$786.11	21%
Dues & Memberships (MRPC National Dues, Natl Scenic Byway Foundation)	\$15,000.00	\$15,150.00	-\$150.00	101%
National Meetings	\$12,000.00	\$5,714.31	\$6,285.69	48%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Zoom, Constant Contact, etc.	\$1,400.00	\$1,225.35	\$174.65	88%
Website General Updates	\$1,200.00	\$1,815.50	-\$615.50	151%
Shipping (including 10-state maps Interpretive Centers)	\$3,000.00	\$274.34	\$2,725.66	9%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$823.88	\$158.31	\$665.57	19%
Admin Contract	\$38,400.00	\$36,400.00	\$2,000.00	95%
Professional-Technical Service including additional staff hours, web services, graphic design services, etc.	\$7,000.00	\$4,260.00	\$2,740.00	61%
Ambassador Program*	\$5,000.00	\$5,380.00	-\$380.00	108%
Access-Welcoming Environment*	\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00	0%
GRR Info/Promotion*	\$3,000.00	\$566.35	\$2,433.65	19%
Total Operating Budget (\$78,000 base + \$16,823.88 carry forward from FY 22)	\$94,823.88	\$72,139.09	\$22,684.79	76%
Notes:				
Some carry forward funds placed in recent MN-MRPC priority areas				

MN-MRPC FY 24 Activity Budget - Status as of 11/7/23






Activity/Item	FY 24 Allocation	Spent 10/12/23	Pending	Remaining	% Spent
Quarterly Meetings	\$5,500.00	\$481.09		\$5,018.91	9%
Other meetings including travel & per diem	\$1,500.00	\$932.72	\$672.27	-\$104.99	107%
Dues & Memberships (MRPC - \$15,000; NSB Foundation \$150)	\$15,150.00			\$15,150.00	0%
National Meetings	\$10,000.00		\$3,722.94	\$6,277.06	37%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Zoom, Constant Contact, etc.	\$1,300.00	\$50.50	\$50.74	\$1,198.76	8%
Website Regular Maintenance Updates & New Arts Page	\$2,400.00	\$1,025.00	\$75.00	\$1,300.00	46%
Shipping (incl. Ambassador kits and maps)	\$1,000.00	\$93.85	\$150.39	\$755.76	24%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$750.00	\$143.87		\$606.13	19%
Admin Contract	\$38,400.00	\$6,400.00	\$6,400.00	\$25,600.00	33%
Professional-Technical Services - including additional staff hours, web services, graphic design services, etc.	\$2,000.00	\$3,360.00		-\$1,360.00	168%
Total Operating Budget	\$78,000.00	\$12,487.03	\$11,071.34	\$54,441.63	30%
Notes:					
Beginning 1-1-24 a limited supply of maps will remain on hand for individual mailings and small group distribution.					


-Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership

between












Rotary District 6250; Mississippi River Parkway Commission; City of La Crosse, WI; North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix Heritage Area; Pollinator Partnership; Monarch Joint Venture; Pollinator Friendly Alliance; Homegrown National Park; Operation Pollination; and ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group).

The undersigned, all having an interest in protecting natural resources in the ten state Mississippi River corridor, recognize the critical importance of pollinator habitat both restored and maintained on public and private lands, particularly found within our geographic area. Through cooperation, collaboration and outreach resulting from this non-binding Pollinator Partnership, an interconnected mosaic of pollinator habitat may be developed to help restore and maintain populations of pollinator species throughout this region.

-  WHEREAS, pollinators include butterflies, bees, some birds, bats, and other insects that play a crucial role in flowering plant reproduction, and
-  WHEREAS, more than 85% of the world's flowering plants and many of the world's food crops depend on pollination to be successful, and
-  WHEREAS, given the breadth, severity, and persistence of pollinator losses, it is critical to expand efforts to reverse these losses and restore populations to healthy levels, and
-  WHEREAS, all organizations of this Partnership have a goal to help increase pollinator habitat/education throughout the Mississippi River corridor, and
-  WHEREAS, working together, we can increase capacity to reach out to

-  organizations and individuals throughout our region with information and education about pollinators and their need for protection, and

ROTARY and ESRAG

-  WHEREAS, the leadership and impact of Rotarians volunteering to improve communities is a hallmark of Rotary, and
-  WHEREAS, "Support for the Environment" is Rotary's 7th Area of Focus, and
-  WHEREAS Rotary districts/clubs are well positioned to consider supporting this *Operation Pollination* Partnership as a 7th Area of Focus environmental framework, and
-  WHEREAS, the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (*ESRAG*) supports the goals of *Operation Pollination*, and,
-  WHEREAS *Operation Pollination* is built on Rotary's 4-way test and it is a district/club's choice to participate, and
-  WHEREAS once a district signs this *Operation Pollination* Partnership, all Clubs are included in it AND it is the sole decision of individual clubs whether they will engage in pollinator projects, and
-  WHEREAS, more than 65 Rotary Districts worldwide are already part of *Operation Pollination*, and
-  WHEREAS, Rotarians are known throughout the world to be leaders willing to address some of the world's most pressing issues, including critical environmental issues, and
-  WHEREAS, Rotarians are exemplary networkers and community partners, and
-  WHEREAS, Rotary accomplishes much good work by partnering with like-minded organizations, and
-  WHEREAS, Rotary Leaders Jennifer Jones, Gordon McInally, and Mark Maloney have all signed *Operation Pollination* Partnerships either as President, President-Elect, or Past President (as a witness) as well as leaders from districts across the planet, and

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION

- WHEREAS, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, as well as multiple counties and cities along the Mississippi River have a goal to protect the natural resources along the River, and
- WHEREAS, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission has made the strategic decision that helping protect pollinators is a project that members can support, and
- WHEREAS, the Environmental, Recreational, and Agricultural Committee of the Commission fully supports this effort, and

NORTH WOODS AND WATERS OF THE ST. CROIX HERITAGE AREA

- WHEREAS, National Heritage Areas are regional connectors and conveners with the capability to bring a large number local partners to a project, and
- WHEREAS, the National Heritage Areas, located along/near the Mississippi River share a common goal of conserving our nation's natural resources, and
- WHEREAS, National Heritage Areas throughout the country are already demonstrating that protecting and enhancing pollinator habit is an important part of their mission, and

CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

- WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse, WI supports the goals of this Partnership, and has a conservation goal to protect the Mississippi River's and our Nation's natural resources, and
- WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse, WI is a leader in this effort, and
- WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse, WI will consider examining its activities as they relate to pollinator protection and will consider modifying those activities if warranted, and

POLLINATOR ORGANIZATIONS

- WHEREAS, the pollinator organizations of this Partnership have a pollinator conservation goal and pollinator education goal, and
- WHEREAS, the pollinator organizations of this Partnership have a national (and even international) reach that can influence all levels of government and the private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, as well as all residents of the Mississippi River corridor, and
- WHEREAS, these pollinator organizations are well-positioned to help educate the other collaborators of this Partnership, and
- WHEREAS, the organization Pollinator Partnership, has offered to provide appropriate pollinator education and habitat restoration training at a later date (tbd).
- WHEREAS, this Partnership helps all pollinator organizations achieve their goals (as well as Operation Pollination Goals).

Operation Pollination Goals

- **Increase and improve pollinator habitat** by identifying existing pockets of pollinator habitat and helping develop a nectar corridor for migratory and non-migratory pollinator species.
- **Develop strategic partnerships** for improving or creating habitat for pollinators and providing educational opportunities.
- **Encourage action** through voluntary, collaborative, and locally led conservation actions such as planting pollinator gardens, building bee blocks and avoiding or limiting pesticide use.
- **Provide education** to those interested in increasing their knowledge of pollinators and improving pollinator habitat.
- **Promote community science** opportunities to track key pollinator species populations and share research and resources about restoring pollinator habitat.

*THEFORE, we, the signers of this **Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership**, declare that it is our goal to support the conservation and education goals of **Operation Pollination**, and to collaboratively and strategically protect and enhance pollinator species and their habitat on public and private lands throughout our geographic area.*

Signed _____
Rotary International (District 6250)
Michelle McGrath, District Governor

Signed _____
Mississippi River Parkway
Commission (Sherry Quamme,
Wisconsin Commissioner)

Signed _____
City of La Crosse, Wisconsin
Mayor Mitch Reynolds

Signed _____
North Woods and Waters of the St.
Croix Heritage Area (Marty Harding,
Board Member - past Chair)

Signed _____
Environmental Sustainability Rotary
Action Group (ESRAG); Karen
Kendrick-Hands, co-founder.

Signed Sara Wittenberg
Pollinator Partnership;
Bee Friendly Gardening Coordinator
(signed electronically at
<https://esrag.org/pollinators>)

Signed _____
Pollinator Friendly Alliance
Laurie Schneider, Executive Director

Signed _____
Operation Pollination
Marlene Gargulak, co-founder

Signed _____
Monarch Joint Venture
Wendy Caldwell, Executive Director
(signed by Chris Stein for Wendy)

Signed Brandon Hough
Homegrown National Park®
Brandon Hough, Executive Director
(signed electronically at
<https://esrag.org/pollinators>)

Witness
Signed _____
Roz Schnick, Mississippi River
Advocate (visionary of the *Mississippi
River Operation Pollination
Partnership*)

Signed _____

Signed _____

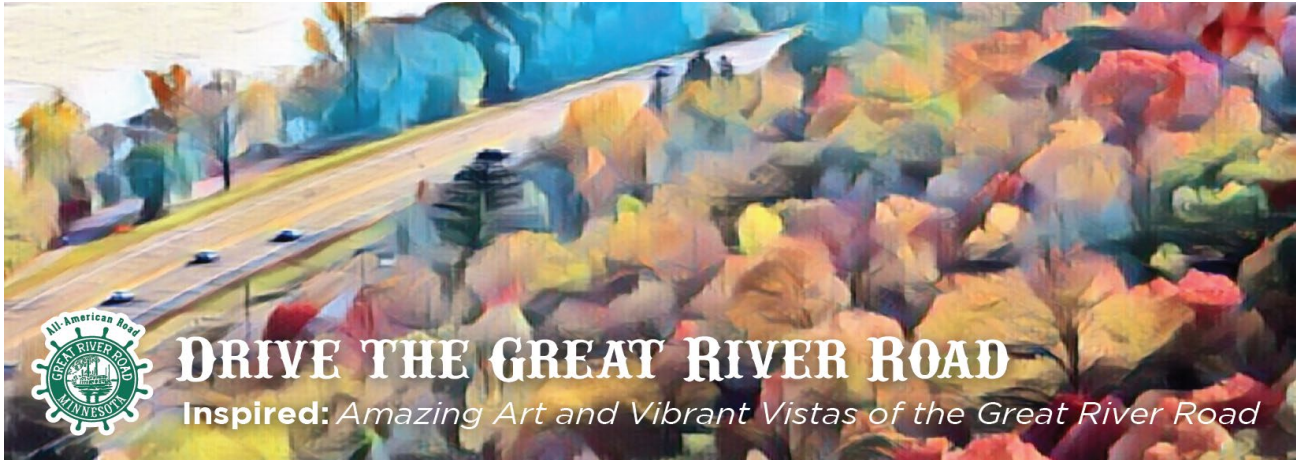
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Signed _____



Drive the Great River Road Month 2023 - Minnesota

Goals

- Raise awareness about the Great River Road as part of National Drive the Great River Road Month
- Encourage travel to MN Great River Road communities especially in the fall shoulder season
- Raise awareness of art destinations along full MN GRR route in communities small and large
- Build relationships with MN Great River Road Ambassadors

Content Development - Partnering with Communities

- Campaign concept developed and led by MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission Regional Commissioners Megan Christianson of Visit Grand Rapids and Kate Carlson of Visit Winona
- Requested "top 3" arts destinations information from MN GRR community tourism offices. Nine of 19 communities responded, and information was included on website and social media.

MN GRR Website

- Developed new landing page featuring an overview of the arts theme and listing the destinations/events with photos provided by communities and partners.
<https://www.mnmississippiriver.com/arts-attractions/>
- Did not note significant traffic to page, but content was also used on social media with larger gain.

Launch/Information Session for Ambassadors

- Zoom Launch Session held for CVBs/Chambers/Interpretive Centers - combination Great River Road Ambassador overview and Drive the Great River Month launch. Possible model that could be continued in future years as an annual session for these Ambassador groups.

Promotional Items & Materials

- Maps, stickers, and lapel pins shipped upon request to partners and provided to MN-MRPC members for use during September and beyond.
- Digital assets available upon request, courtesy of Visit Grand Rapids.

Press Release

- Distributed to state and local media list, Interpretive Centers, Community Tourism Offices, state arts organizations and MN-MRPC members.
- Articles included – Grand Rapids Herald Review, Winona Post, Minneapolis River Current.

Governor's Proclamation

- Requested and received proclamation calling out September as Drive the Great River Road Month in Minnesota. Posted on MN GRR Facebook page.

Social Media

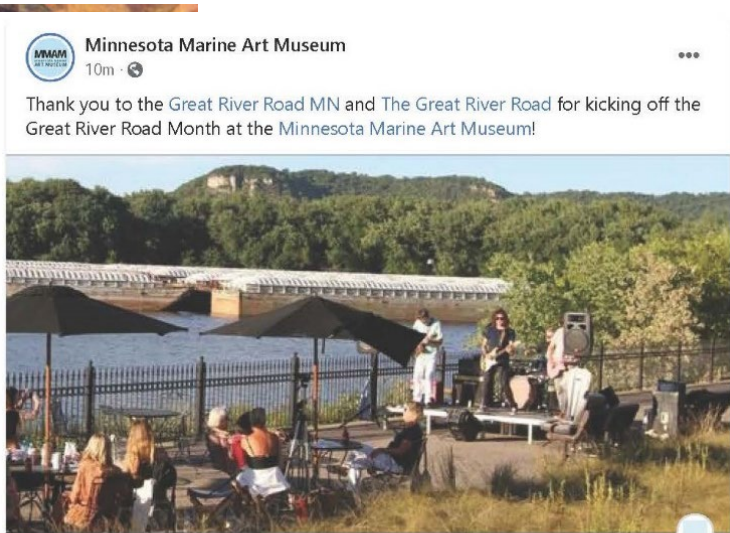
- MN-MRPC Facebook –25 posts throughout September using content provided by community partners, total reach of over 18,000. Highest unpaid reach for past Drive Month campaigns was 5,300.
- Top posts – Winona Smaczne Jablka Apple Fest, Lake City arts attractions, kick-off Drive the Great River Road Month announcement.
- Posts and shares from MN-MRPC member agencies and partner communities including Dept. of Agriculture, Explore Minnesota, Dept. of Transportation, Visit Lake City, Visit Little Falls, Grand Rapids Chamber, Visit Grand Rapids, Visit Winona and more.

Kick Off Event

- Drive the Great River Road Month announcement and booth hosted by Visit Winona at “Mississippi Sippin” event, Minnesota Marine Art Museum, August 31. Drawing for Great River Road prize package and giveaways from Visit Grand Rapids, Visit Winona, and MN Great River Road.

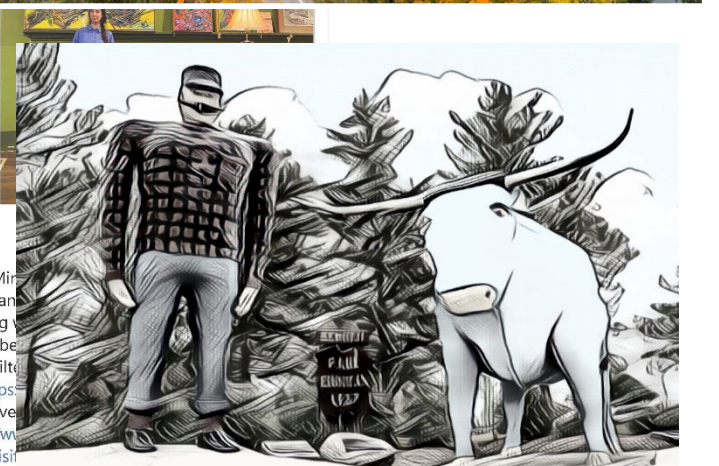
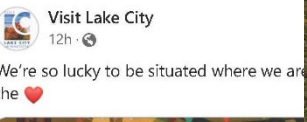
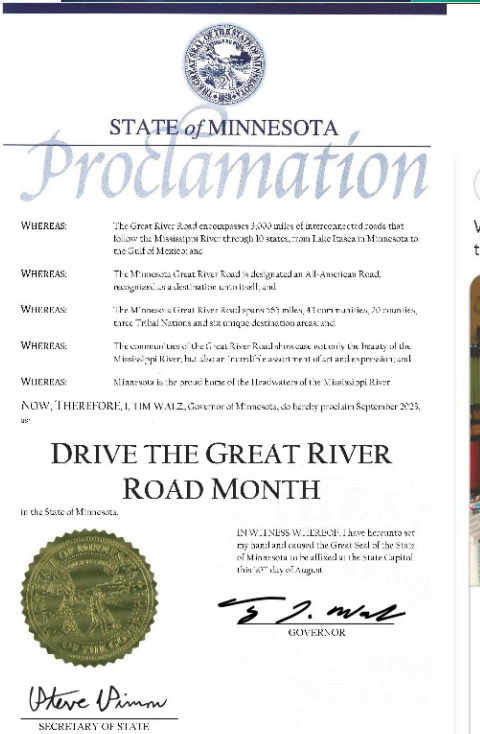


HOME > ARTS ATTRACTIONS



WINONAPOST.COM

Arts destinations abound along the Great River Road



DRAFT COMMENTS FOR MN-MRPC CONSIDERATION v2

(Changes from original draft underlined)

RE: Northland Reliability Project, PUC Docket No 22-415/416

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) has authorized the comments below regarding the Northland Reliability Project's current proposed route. Our comments focus on the mission of the MN-MRPC and National Scenic Byway Intrinsic Qualities as defined by the Federal Highway Administration.

As established under Minnesota Statute 161.1419, the MN-MRPC's 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, which holds All-American Road status under the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program. The Great River Road has achieved this esteemed designation because it possesses characteristics of national significance demonstrating intrinsic qualities in at least two of the following areas – archaeological; cultural; historic; natural; recreational; and scenic. We are charged with protecting the byway, its intrinsic qualities, and the river it celebrates for current and future byway travelers and residents.

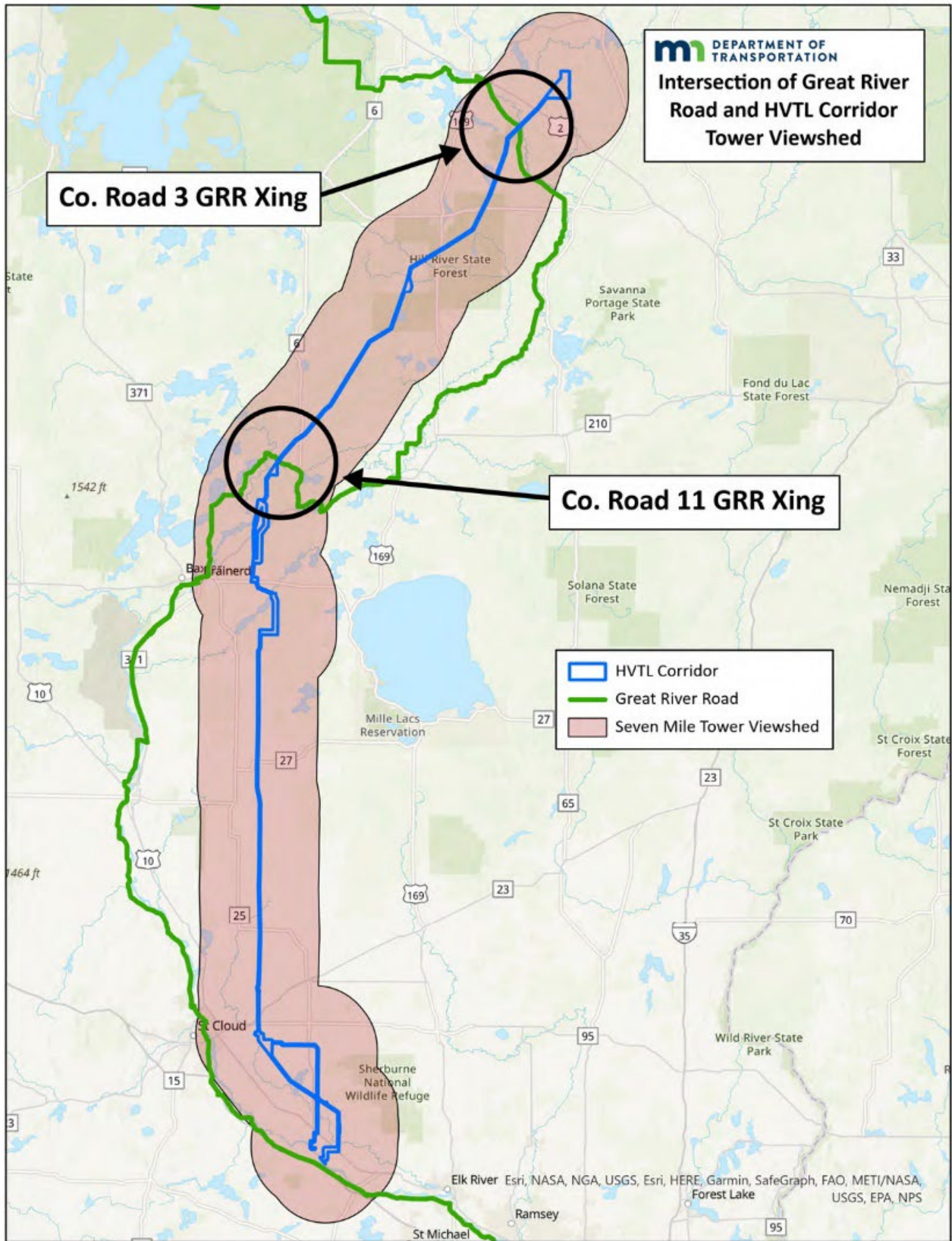
The Northland Reliability Project proposed route has potential impacts to the Minnesota Great River Road, which is part of an All-American Road and National Scenic Byway in ten states. Our initial review indicates that the proposed 345 kV power line route will alter intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road. We ask that decision makers and project applicants utilize all possible strategies to avoid, minimize and mitigate any impact to the Great River Road and Mississippi River corridors; and exercise due diligence in assessing potential impacts to the Great River Road.

Specifically, the MN-MRPC requests the following:

- Less visible options such as underground lines in the areas crossing the Great River Road.
- A video/photo visual impact simulation of the proposed lines and associated vegetation impact where the proposed route crosses the Great River Road or is within 7 miles of the byway.
- Add figure the size of a person or vehicle for scale comparison to graphic showing 115 kV, 230 kV and proposed 345 kV towers.
- Minimization of tree and vegetation removal.
- Restoration of disturbed areas with native/shrubby vegetation.
- Information on how structures will be maintained including addressing potential degradation of ground area surrounding poles.
- Poles set back as far away from the road as practical.

A map is attached showing the proposed crossings of the Great River Road and a seven mile viewshed.

We appreciate your consideration and offer our commissioners and technical advisors to provide further information as the process continues. Please add the MN-MRPC to your stakeholder list for communications as this project continues and keep us informed of actions taken.



Subject:

Dairyland Wabasha Relocation Project - Project Intro and Meeting Request

Attachments:

DPC_MN_FactSheet_20231020.pdf

Good afternoon Chris,

Dairyland Power Cooperative (Dairyland) is proposing to relocate approximately 14 miles of 161-kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line (HVTL) and construct a new substation in Wabasha County, Minnesota (Project). The Project starts in Plainview Township, northeast of the Town of Plainview, and traverses northeast through Highland, Watopa, and Greenfield Townships, ending east of the City of Kellogg near the Mississippi River. The Proposed Route would primarily follow State Highway 42 and would also involve a crossing of State Highway 61 (Great River Road, Designated Scenic Byway) southwest of Kellogg.

The Project is a reroute of approximately 10.4 miles of the existing Dairyland LQ34 161-kV transmission line located on the existing CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-LaCrosse 345-kV structures. In July 2020, the Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO) approved a long-range transmission portfolio including a new Wilmarth-North Rochester-Tremval transmission line. This new 345-kV line would utilize the double circuit capability of the CapX2020 system between North Rochester and Alma, Wisconsin. Therefore, Dairyland's existing 161-kV circuit must be removed and relocated to make room for a new, second 345-kV circuit on the existing CapX2020 structures.

Dairyland is currently gathering information in preparation for filing its route permit application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, which it plans to submit in early 2024.

I have attached a Project fact sheet along with a map that shows the current location of the transmission line and the initial Proposed Route. We would appreciate any input the MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission may have on the Project and the proposed route and crossing of the Great River Road, and would like to propose a pre-application meeting to introduce the Project and review the initial route with interested Commission staff. Would there be a good time in the next few weeks?

Let us know what works best for you.

Thank you,

Kristin



Wabasha County Relocation Project

Project Overview

Dairyland Power Cooperative (Dairyland) is proposing to relocate approximately 13.7 miles of 161-kilovolt (kV) high voltage transmission line (HVTL) in Wabasha County (Project). The Project will make room for a second 345-kV circuit to be attached to the existing CapX Hampton-Rochester-LaCrosse (CapX) structures, which extend diagonally northeast from the Town of Plainview to the City of Kellogg, Minnesota. The Project will allow Dairyland to maintain its transmission system, supply the Wabaco Substation, and provide power to the Town of Plainview and neighboring areas. Once the 161-kV transmission line has been relocated to the new right of way, the existing transmission circuit located on the CapX 2020 345-kV structures will be transferred to Xcel Energy.

Structures would consist of 70- to 110-foot steel monopoles with spans of 400 to 800 feet apart. Dairyland will seek a 100-foot-wide right-of-way – 50 feet on each side of the centerline.

This Project also includes the construction of a new substation proposed near the City of Kellogg. This substation is required because the new CapX 345-kV circuit across the Mississippi River will eliminate Dairyland's existing 69-kV transmission line crossing and connection to the Alma Station in Wisconsin. The new Kellogg Substation will supply power to Dairyland's existing north-south 69-kV transmission line supplying the Weaver Substation, which provides power to communities within the southeast Minnesota area.

Permitting and Public Involvement

Dairyland plans to submit a Route Permit Application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) in early Winter 2024. During this process, the public and regulatory agencies will have several opportunities to review and provide input on the Project, including public meetings hosted by the Commission and the Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (DOC-EERA). DOC-EERA will also prepare an environmental assessment for the Project that will be available for public review. Once the Commission issues a Route Permit decision, Dairyland will finalize the Project route and obtain any additional permits needed from federal, state, and local agencies.

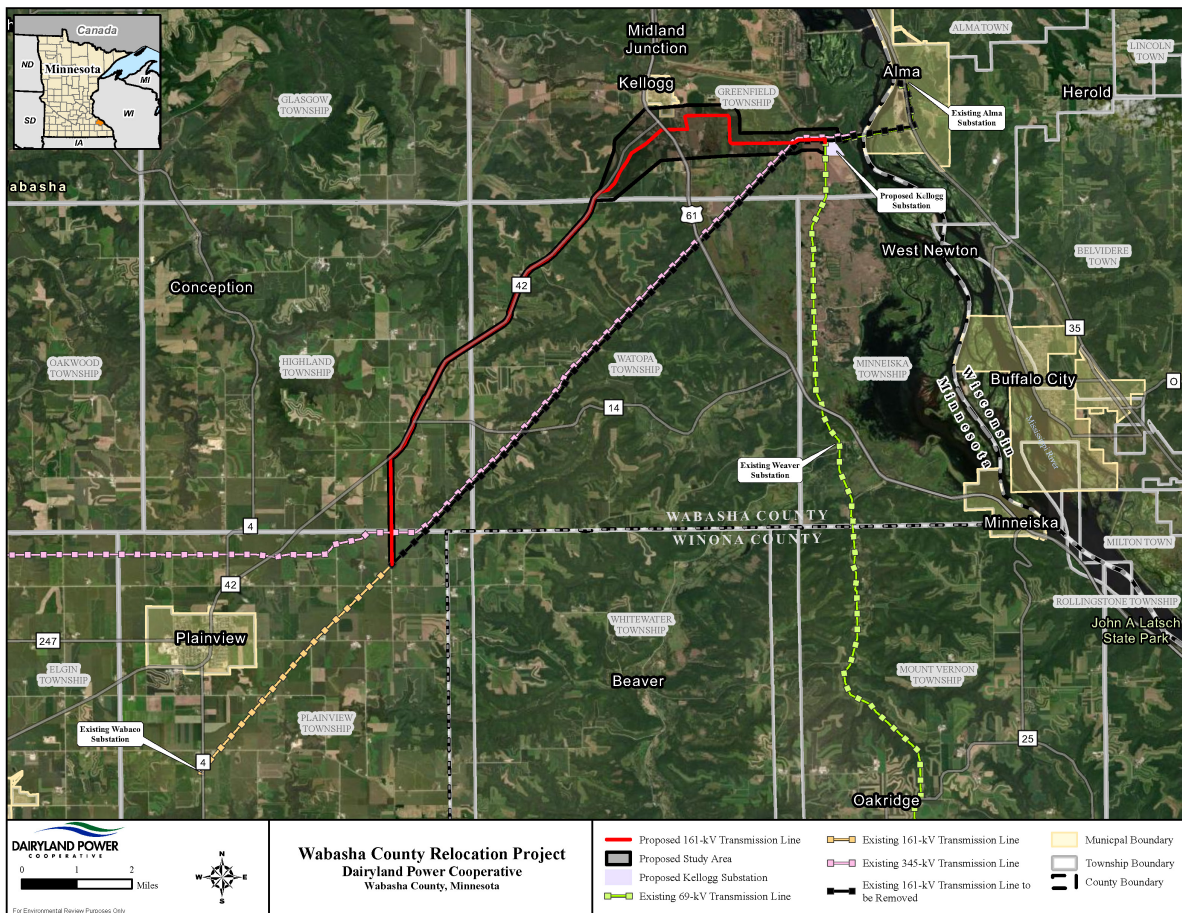
Landowner Coordination and Easement Negotiation

After Dairyland submits the Route Permit application to the Commission, a representative from Dairyland will contact property owners to discuss access to the Proposed Route and the process for acquisition of easements. Dairyland will continue to engage with landowners throughout the permitting process to answer any questions they may have regarding the easement process or the Project, including those with respect to the transmission line construction practices or operations of the transmission line.

About Dairyland

Dairyland is a Touchstone Energy Cooperative formed in December 1941 and based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Dairyland provides wholesale electrical requirements to more than 700,000 people through its 24 distribution cooperatives and 27 municipals in a four-state area including Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois.

Project Schedule	
Timeframe	Project Phase/Activity
Fall 2023	Notifications and Open Houses
Winter 2024 – Summer 2025	Route Permit
Summer/Fall 2025	Survey/Design
Winter 2025 – Fall 2025	Easements/Additional Permits
Spring 2026 – Summer 2027	Construction
Summer 2028	Energization



Dairyland Representatives	
Jessica Sandry	Sage Williams
Jessica Sandry, Real Estate and Right-of-Way	Project Manager, Transmission Operations and Development
608-792-3359	608-791-2993
Jessica.Sandry@DairylandPower.com	Sage.Williams@DairylandPower.com

PROPOSED PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Name: **Bowstring Lake**

Site Address: **near County Road 118
Deer River, Minnesota 56636**

Latitude/Longitude: **47° 18' 56.108" ±N / -93° 55' 49.771" ±W**

County: **Itasca County**

UTM: **Zone: 15T East: 429676 North: 5240655**

Legal Description: **Township: 144N, Range: 26W, Section: 2**

Consultant Information: **Company: Lotis Environmental, LLC (Lotis)
Consultant: Miles Walz-Salvador
Email: NEPA.NHPA@TheLotisGroup.com
Address: 8899 Main Street - Suite 107,
Williamsville, NY 14221
Phone: (716) 580-7000**

Project Description: **Proposed Construction of a 195' (199' including all appurtenances)' monopole telecommunication tower within a 100' by 100' lease area. A proposed 30' by ~330' access/utility easement will extend along the south side of the proposed lease area, and then south connecting with County Road 118.**

Project Impacts: **Excavation and grade work to install tower foundation, utilities and access easements.**

Project Area: **Square Footage: ~ 19,901.00 / Acres: ~ 0.457**

Present Land Use: **Forested land**

Past Land Use: **Forested land**



Site Location

USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map
VB BTS II, LLC
Bowstring Lake
near County Road 118
Deer River, Itasca County, Minnesota 56636

2019



MN-MRPC Activity Summary - CapX2020 Projects

Draft Reference Information for 11/16/23 Meeting (themes from file review, not fully inclusive)

Bemidji – Grand Rapids 230 kV Project

- Documents on file from 2010
- Permitting - MN Public Utilities Commission
- Environmental Review - MN Office of Energy Security/Dept of Commerce and U.S. Dept of Agriculture Rural Development/Utilities Programs
- MN-MRPC Activities – Provided written introductory comments including mapping prepared by MnDOT showing Great River Road, proposed transmission line routes, and byway amenities
- Route selected crosses the Great River Road but does not run parallel as included in some initial options.

St. Cloud – Monticello 345 kV Project

- Documents on file from 2009-2013
- Permitting – MN Public Utilities Commission with report from Administrative Law Judge/public hearings
- Environmental Review – MN Office of Energy Security/Dept of Commerce
- MN-MRPC Activities
 - Provided written introductory comments including mapping prepared by MnDOT showing Great River Road, proposed transmission line routes, and byway amenities
 - Met with permittees and Office of Energy Security
 - Took a van tour of impacted area
 - Developed mitigation plan/requests
 - Provided detailed comments and requests for information during various stages of the process
- The Great River Road was included in Environmental Impact Statement and listed in special conditions of the route permit
- Route selected runs parallel to Great River Road along CSAH 75 for approximately 20 miles in Stearns and Wright Counties. Some of the requested mitigation was included in the project, such as partial implementation of the Vegetation Preservation Plan (as possible given county permit and landowner constraints).

Hampton - La Crosse 345/161 kV Project

- Documents on file from 2010-2012
- Permitting – MN Public Utilities Commission with report from Administrative Law Judge/public hearings
- Environmental Review – MN Office of Energy Security/Dept of Commerce and U.S. Dept of Agriculture Rural Development/Utilities Programs
- MN-MRPC Activities
 - Provided written introductory comments including mapping prepared by MnDOT showing Great River Road, proposed transmission line routes, and byway amenities
 - Requested inclusion of specific language in permit related to the Great River Road
 - Meeting with Office of Energy Security
 - MN-MRPC Regional Commissioner/Vice Chair served on Advisory Task Force (MN Office of Energy Security)
- Route selected crosses the Great River Road but does not run parallel as included in some initial options.

CapX2020 Overall

- The MN-MRPC coordinated input with MnDOT including working with MnDOT Counsel
- Sen a letter to the Transportation Commissioner summarizing MN-MRPC positions and requesting that they be included as possible in DOT communications on the projects
- MRPC called out the cumulative impact of all three projects
- A Ten-State MRPC Resolution aligned with WI-MRPC and MN-MRPC comments and positions
- See attached introductory letter content

Core content was often included in initial comments regarding CapX2020 and other byway related projects (updated to reflect All-American Road status) –

The mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota 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 _____ includes potential routes directly impacting the Great River Road, an All-American Road and National Scenic Byway that runs through all ten Mississippi River states. Our Commission requests that the information below and attached map be included in analysis and decision-making processes for _____.

The Minnesota Great River Road has achieved the esteemed designation of an All-American Road because it possesses characteristics of national significance demonstrating intrinsic qualities in at least two of the following areas – archaeological; cultural; historic; natural; recreational; and scenic. The area of the proposed _____ includes these intrinsic qualities _____. It is imperative for our state to protect the byway and the river it celebrates for current and future byway travelers.

We ask that decision makers utilize all possible strategies to avoid, minimize and mitigate any impact to the Great River Road and Mississippi River corridors; and exercise due diligence in assessing potential impacts to the Great River Road. Cumulative impacts to the Great River Road and the Mississippi River throughout Minnesota should also be considered related to _____ being considered for approval. The MN-MRPC requests a video visual impact simulation of the proposed lines and associated vegetation impacts from the vantage point of both the car traveler and bicyclists in motion along the Great River Road prior to further consideration of the preferred alignment.

We appreciate your consideration and offer our commissioners and technical advisors to provide further information as the planning process continues. Please keep us informed of any actions taken on the Bemidji to Grand Rapids segment.

Projects

Our partners successfully built more than 800 miles of new high-voltage transmission infrastructure in the Upper Midwest.

The completed CapX2020 projects include:

- Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV project - Minnesota, 70 miles, completed in 2012 ([view overview map](#))
- Big Stone South-Brookings County 345 kV project - South Dakota, 70 miles, completed in 2017 ([view overview map](#))
- Brookings County-Hampton 345 kV project - Minnesota, 250 miles, completed in 2015 ([view overview map](#))
- Fargo-St. Cloud-Monticello 345 kV project - North Dakota, 238 miles, completed in 2015 ([view overview map](#))
- Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345/161 kV project - Minnesota, 156 miles, completed in 2016 ([view overview map](#))

We have no new projects planned at this time but are working together to be ready to meet future energy changes including the evolving transmission grid.

