



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting – August 15, 2024
Centennial Office Building Room 101/Zoom Hybrid
MINUTES – Draft**

Commissioners Present

Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. Karin Housley
Sen. John Hoffman
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture
Lisa Havelka – Explore Minnesota
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources
Marni Karnowski – Transportation

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Peter MacDonagh - Transportation
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Diane Henry-Wangenstein – LCC

Megan Voelke - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members & Technical Advisors Absent

Rep. Sydney Jordan
Rep. Leigh Finke
Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Anne Lewis – At-Large Member
Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

Partners/Guests Present

Tad Erickson – Region 5
Austin Hauf - WSB
Lauren Peck – Natural Resources

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m. by MN-MRPC Chair, Sen. Karin Housley, followed by roll call. A quorum was present. The meeting packet and recording are available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/>.

Approve Agenda and Minutes from 5/30/24 Meeting: Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by David Kelliher to approve the draft agenda and meeting minutes as amended to specify that Winona-Dakota Unity Alliance will be invited to give a welcome at the MRPC Annual Meeting. Motion carried.

Informational Presentation – Regions 5 and 7E Long Range Transportation Plans: Commission Member Sally Fineday mentioned long-range transportation planning in her area at the May 30 MN-MRPC meeting, and the Commission requested action to reach out to the planning group and request that byways be included in the planning process. Tad Erickson of Region 5 Development Commission and Austin Hauf of WSB provided an overview including details on how byways will be addressed. Their PowerPoint presentation is available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/Meetings24.html>.

Budget Report: Chris Miller referenced reports in the meeting packet, including a near final report for fiscal year 2024 and a new allocation form for FY 25. Unspent funds from FY 24 have not yet been carried forward into FY 25 but will be available after final close out of FY 24.

MN-MRPC Classification in Transportation Funding Statute: 2023 Minnesota Statute 161.045 includes the MN-MRPC on a list of organizations that do not fulfill a transportation purpose. Diane Henry-Wangenstein provided an update. The Legislative Coordinating Commission facilitated initial legal reviews of statutes mentioning the MN-MRPC and Great River Road. A team met in June to go over findings and discuss possible next steps. Additional review will be taking place and the MN-MRPC will be updated on any recommendations prior to the next legislative session.

Interpretive Center Ambassador Outreach: A Zoom meeting was held for Interpretive Center partners on July 31. This was a group session rather than the single site sessions held in the past, as requested by partners. Time was set aside for sharing and discussion including ways to partner and cross promote.

National Great River Road – Review of Committee Voting Process: The process for voting and Minnesota representation on National MRPC Technical Committees was reviewed. Designated voting members or alternates on the committees are authorized to vote on behalf of Minnesota but should feel free to reach out to other MN-MRPC members for review and comment on various topics as needed. Several members of the MN-MRPC often receive information on committee meetings, due to National MRPC leadership roles and general interest. Carol Zoff reminded members of the MRPC Policies & Procedures available at <https://mrpcmembers.com/>. A suggestion was made to confirm Minnesota's

voting committee members with the National Office. Committee representation will be included on the roster provided to the National Office with the Annual Report.

MRPC Communications and Marketing Committee: Chris Miller reported that the Summer Fun on the Great River Road events promotion is underway, including the opportunity for local communities to upload their events information; and noted that the committee is planning to work on regional itineraries and might be requesting information from states.

MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee: John Anfinson reported that the committee recently reviewed and accepted the Interpretive Center application from the Muscatine County Conservation Environmental Learning Center, with minor edits. The committee is also working with the Memphis River Parks Partnership on their application for Tom Lee Park, which would be a new type of Interpretive Center, setting a precedent for others.

MRPC Environment, Recreation & Agriculture: Marni Karnowski reported on discussions at the most recent meeting which centered on pollinator initiatives. She noted the need for more involvement at committee meetings. Grant Wilson suggested possible interest from other multi-state groups such as the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association and Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program. Carol Zoff mentioned the Pollinator Playbook developed by Mike McClanahan of the Tennessee Department of Transportation, which could serve as a guide to help build partnerships - <https://mrpcmembers.com/mississippi/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Pollinator-Playbook-9.20.23.pdf>. A ribbon cutting event was held on June 22 at the Brice Prairie Visitor Center, newly designated as a Great River Road Interpretive Center.

MRPC Transportation: Peter MacDonagh reported that the committee will meet again at the MRPC Annual Meeting. The committee is focusing on developing and signing the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) at a ten-state level and is working to obtain rights to the logo that was created and owned by an organization no longer in existence.

National MRPC 2024 Annual Meeting – September 18 – 20 in Winona: Members reviewed the draft agenda, discussed details and needs, volunteered for tasks, and confirmed giveaway items for welcome bags. Content and flow for the Effective Partnering panel of state agency members was discussed. Everyone was encouraged to register if they had not already done so and to keep in touch with each other and Chris as the meeting dates approach. Peter MacDonagh commended Senators Housley and Hoffman for their attendance at the 2023 Annual Meeting.

Drive the Great River Road Month: Lauren Peck of the DNR shared updates on plans for Drive the Great River Road Month 2024, with special focus on the details of the State Fair kick-off event scheduled for August 29 at 3:00 p.m. at the DNR Building's Outdoor Stage. Feedback and discussion followed. Details on the campaign will be sent to members via email and all were asked to help share information and promote the Great River Road in September.

MN GRR Program Record Archive Project: Peter MacDonagh reported that 24 boxes of records were inventoried, representing decades of foundational Great River Road information. One box of records will be digitized, and the remainder will be archived in hard copy at the Minnesota Historical Society. Records will be available to the public. Special thanks to MnDOT and the Minnesota Historical Society for their work on this important project.

Northland Reliability Project Update: The environmental assessment, schedule of public meetings, details on the comment period, and past comments submitted by the MN-MRPC were emailed to MN-MRPC members on July 2. The comment deadline was August 5 and there were no requests received from members for new comments. Additional information on this project will be shared as available if it appears to impact the Great River Road.

Commission Member Updates:

- David Kelliher noted that 2024 is the 175th anniversary of the Minnesota Historical Society as an organization. He also shared information on a land purchase at the Forest History Center in Grand Rapids that will allow for a buffer area, grazing/expanded animal area, protection of archaeological resources and expanded programming. Forest History Center is also planning for accessible on the water experiences. Information was also shared about a development planned adjacent to the Oliver Kelley Farm that may impact the site and riverfront.
- Grant Wilson reported that Fort Snelling State Park has reopened after being closed due to flooding this summer. He also noted that the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Board held their latest quarterly meeting in St. Paul. MN-MRPC came up in discussion at this meeting and also in meetings of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program.

Next Meeting: November 21, 2024; 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.; location to be announced.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.