



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
1st Quarter Meeting  
February 21, 2025 • 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.  
Hybrid - Capitol Room G15 and Zoom**

**DRAFT AGENDA**

- |                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| <b>2:00 p.m.</b> | <b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>  | Housley/All   |
| <b>2:10 p.m.</b> | <b>Approve Today's Agenda &amp; Minutes from 11/21/24</b>   | Housley/All   |
| <b>2:15 p.m.</b> | <b>Commission Business</b>  |   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Budget Report</li><li>- Regional Meetings/Elections – Fall 2025</li></ul>   | Packet/Lewis/Miller<br>Miller   |
| <b>2:30 p.m.</b> | <b>National MRPC/Great River Road Technical Committee Reports</b>   |   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- MRPC Board</li><li>- Communications &amp; Marketing</li><li>- Culture &amp; Heritage</li><li>- Environment, Recreation &amp; Agriculture</li><li>- Transportation</li></ul>   | Housley/Anfinson/Lewis<br>Carlson/Miller<br>Anfinson/Kelliher<br>Karnowski<br>MacDonagh |
| <b>3:00 p.m.</b> | <b>MN Great River Road Information Tools</b>  |   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Update on Plans for Print Map, Plan Your Trip</li><li>- Discuss Digital Travel Guides/Story Maps/MN GRR Website</li></ul>   | Project Team/Miller<br>All  |
| <b>3:30 p.m.</b> | <b>Letter of Support Requests</b>   | All   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe National Scenic Byways Application<br/>GRR Rehab Project, Cass County<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Review preliminary letter provided by Chair,<br/>consider full support letter for project</li></ul></li><li>- Three Rivers Park District – Mississippi River Trail Expansion<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o FYI, review updated letter provided by Chair<br/>for project previously approved</li></ul></li><li>- Other</li></ul> |   |
| <b>3:50 p.m.</b> | <b>Commission Member Updates</b>  | All   |
| <b>4:20 p.m.</b> | <b>Other Business</b>   |   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Partner Recognition – Pat Mutter, Visit Winona</li></ul>  | All   |
| <b>4:30 p.m.</b> | <b>Wrap Up and Adjourn</b>  | Housley   |



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
4th Quarter Meeting – November 21, 2024  
Centennial Office Building Room 101/Zoom Hybrid  
MINUTES – Draft**

**Commissioners Present**

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids  
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings  
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border  
Sen. Karin Housley  
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture  
Lisa Havelka – Explore Minnesota  
David Kelliher – Historical Society  
Marni Karnowski – Transportation  
Anne Lewis – At Large

**Technical Advisors/Staff Present**

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

Megan Voelke - LCC  
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

**Members & Technical Advisors Absent**

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

**Partners/Guests Present**

Tim Wilcox, MnDOT

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The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by MN-MRPC Chair, Sen. Karin Housley, followed by introductions. 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 8/15/24 Meeting:** Motion by Sally Fineday and seconded by John Anfinson to approve the draft agenda and August 15, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

**Budget Report:** Secretary-Treasurer Anne Lewis referenced the year-to-date budget report in the meeting packet and called attention to the notes including an update that print maps are now out of stock. Chris Miller provided information on line items where funding is likely to be available after actual costs have come in, providing the Commission with flexibility to consider maps or other needs.

**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. This has been reviewed in the past by the MN-MRPC with discussion on options to remove the MN-MRPC from the list. Michelle Weber reported that LCC will not have a housekeeping bill during the 2025 session. Therefore, there will not be an opportunity to consider including MN-MRPC items in such a bill. Marni Karnowski reported that MnDOT timelines for consideration of 2025 session language have passed, but that the Office of Environmental Stewardship has funding from another source to continue MN-MRPC participation for the remainder of the fiscal year.

**Commission Needs and Priorities:** Commission needs and priorities are up for review now that the 2024 MRPC Annual Meeting and Drive the Great River Road Month are completed. Print maps, website updates and Plan Your Trip/digital travel guides are being discussed at today's meeting and could be likely next priorities for the Commission. Members were asked to consider an ad hoc committee to be referred to the Executive Committee.

**Proposed 2025 Meeting Dates:** Proposed 2025 Quarterly Meeting dates were listed in the meeting packet – February 21, May 29, August 14, and November 20. Members were asked to respond with any known conflicts. Confirmation of the dates will be sent out via email.

**2024 MRPC Annual Meeting, Winona – Review and Follow Up:** Thank you to MN-MRPC members, our host community of Winona, Visit Winona, the Minnesota Marine Art Museum and Winona County Historical Society for a

great Annual Meeting! The efforts were above and beyond, on a short timeline. The National MRPC included evaluation results in their most recent e-newsletter and noted many positive comments.

**MRPC Communications and Marketing Committee:** Kate Carlson reported on the November 20 meeting of the committee. The committee is interested in gathering information from states to provide the best and most current content, events, and photos for use by the National Office. Kate Carlson and Megan Christianson, offered to help with this for Minnesota. The committee also discussed the National Scenic Byways grant application being prepared for the National Great River Road. The funding request will focus on a Great River Road app with up-to-date navigation and capacity for push notifications on any route changes, detours, etc.; and companion efforts including a new website. Efforts will focus primarily on the U.S. and Canadian travel markets. The FIFA World Cup will be held in the U.S. in the summer of 2026 providing an opportunity to promote Mississippi River travel to international visitors. The quarterly Great River Road marketing report is available at [www.mrpcmembers.com](http://www.mrpcmembers.com).

**MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee:** David Kelliher reported that the November 19 meeting focused on discussion around Great River Road Interpretive Centers, especially those that have not confirmed their data or responded to requests for information. States were encouraged to step up their outreach to the Interpretive Centers. The committee discussed the America 250 initiative coming up in 2026 and ways to connect with the celebration. The Great River Road's All-American Road designation is a great hook. Each state has an America 250 Commission and other organizations are partnering at the national level. David Kelliher will be gathering additional information for the committee to consider.

**MRPC Environment, Recreation & Agriculture:** The most recent meeting was cancelled, and the committee will meet again in early 2025.

**MRPC Transportation:** Peter MacDonagh reported on two main committee priorities – inventorying and mapping wayfinding signage to Great River Road Interpretive Centers, and the process to obtain and utilize the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) logo and trademark. More details will be coming on information/participation needed from states.

**Plan Your Trip and Digital Travel Guides – Status and Needs:** Marni Karnowski provided an update on status of the Great River Road Plan Your Trip and online digital travel guide applications. They will need to be moved from Arc Map to Arc Pro by December 2025, as Arc Map is being phased out and will no longer be supported. This will require a complete rebuild which is a significant commitment in time and expertise. Preliminary estimates are that the most basic rebuild would take approximately 30 – 40 hours, and digital travel guides would take an additional 60 – 70 hours. Staffing for this will not be available prior to December of 2025 with the possible exception of the most basic rebuild. Ongoing hosting and updating/maintenance of the information are additional considerations. Assistance from the MN-MRPC is likely needed for this rebuild. Commission discussion followed with comments summarized below.

- Plan Your Trip and the digital travel guides currently provide much of the content for the MN Great River Road website, which along with the print maps provides the MN Great River Road's visual presence.
- It would be helpful to have a cost estimate.
- The print map and online presence are two parts of the same puzzle and need to be coordinated. An ad hoc committee was suggested to review and make recommendations.
- The original data sets (700+ things to see and do) came from Kimley-Horn as part of the Corridor Management Plan project, and then MnDOT SEEDs/student workers developed the current Plan Your Trip online mapping and digital travel guides.
- Safety is a consideration. The print map helps travelers stay on the route regardless of cell signals or missing signage.
- Route details on Plan Your Trip are used to determine proximity to local projects, transmission lines that the Commission sometimes comments on, etc.

Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Sen. Housley to designate an ad hoc committee to discuss the print map and online needs and develop recommendations. Motion carried. A committee will be convened including transportation, tourism, and agriculture representatives from the MN-MRPC, and led by Anne Lewis.

**Itasca State Park GRR Interpretive Panel Review Results:** Carol Zoff provided information on a recent review of Great River Road Interpretive Panels at the Mary Gibbs Visitor Center in Itasca State Park. DNR partners

have notified us that all interpretation within Itasca State Park was recently reviewed and evaluated for appropriate and up-to-date content, including content related to Native American history and storytelling. Some signage has been recommended for removal, there will be a project phase for development of new interpretation as needed and then a final phase to invest in new signage. This review included Great River Road signage outside the Mary Gibbs Visitor Center. The review allows the Ten-State "Treasures"/GRR Interpretive Center sign to stay in place, along with the MN Great River Road "Headwaters" regional content sign. The other five regional panels will be removed for now since three of them require updated content. The two signs not needing updates will be placed in storage for reinstallation when the others are complete.

Interpretation was discussed as a possible legacy project related to the America 250 celebration. Past reviews of other MN Great River Road Interpretive Panels indicated many need replacement due to regular wear and tear. David Kelliher offered assistance from MNHS and noted that other state agencies have tribal liaisons as well. Sally Fineday asked to be kept in the loop and Carol Zoff will connect her with the project contact at DNR. A question was raised about content of other Great River Road Interpretive Panels, both on existing signage and in the Roadside Storybook plan awaiting installation. A full review of content is needed before any of the panels are replaced or new installations are made. This is currently on a list of MN-MRPC priorities for consideration when resources and leadership are available. Discussion on the Itasca State Park panels continued, with a question on whether all the previous panels will be re-installed and stressing the importance of maintaining the Great River Road logo, branding, and content. The current plan is to re-install all six regional panels in the future with maintenance of the Great River Road information.

**Drive the Great River Road Month:** A report on the 2024 "GO with the Flow on the Great River Road" campaign was included in the meeting packet. Thank you to the DNR for sponsoring Drive the Great River Road Month this year! The itineraries developed remain available for download at <https://www.mnmississippiriver.com/order-maps/> and members were encouraged to use and promote them. Chris Miller noted that suggestions are now needed for the 2025 theme and that after reviewing past themes and sponsors, history might be one to consider. David Kelliher said that MNHS is game to help coordinate a history theme, working with local partners and the MNHS communications team, and requested ideas from all members – including local and county historic sites along with MNHS sites. A suggestion was made to use this content to move forward into America 250 in 2026, i.e. The Power of Place.

**Transportation Alternatives Funding Applications:** Carol Zoff provided an overview of the funding source and process and directed attention to the details and project summaries in the meeting packet. MnDOT received 45 letters of intent to submit applications, six projects are in Great River Road communities and two were determined to benefit the Great River Road. Summaries of the projects, located in the City of Brainerd and City of St. Cloud, were included in the meeting packet.

**National Scenic Byways Grant Applications:** Tim Wilcox, MN Scenic Byways Coordinator from MnDOT, provided an overview of the program and interest that has been noted in Minnesota. States and tribal governments are the eligible applicants and are able to partner with other entities on projects. Final details for partners working with MnDOT are due December 2, including letters of support. Projects seeking letters from the MN-MRPC include the Point Douglas Park Trailhead Project in Washington County, Lum Park Trailway Access Project in Brainerd, and Downtown Riverwalk in St. Paul. Project summaries were included in the meeting packet. In addition, the National MRPC will be asking for letters of support from all state commissions, and other partners, for their application that will focus on a navigation app and website. The Tennessee Department of Transportation will be submitting the application on behalf of the ten-state MRPC.

**Action on Requested Letters:** Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by David Kelliher to authorize letters of support for the City of Brainerd and City of St. Cloud Transportation Alternatives projects if the applicants decide to move forward with the full applications. Motion carried.

Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Kate Carlson to authorize a letter of support for the National Scenic Byways Grant application to be submitted by the National MRPC and Tennessee Department of Transportation, with final review and approval to be provided by the MN-MRPC Chair when details are available. Motion carried.

Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Anne Lewis to authorize letters of support for the City of Brainerd, Washington County and City of Saint Paul National Scenic Byways Grant applications. Motion carried. A second motion was made by John Anfinson and seconded by Anne Lewis, authorizing the Chair to review information if any new requests are received. Motion carried.

**Member and Partner Recognitions:** Carol Zoff shared a tribute to Holly Slagle, recently retired MN Scenic Byways Coordinator, and her 30-year career at MnDOT. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by John Anfinson, to acknowledge Holly Slagle's service to all Minnesota byways including the Great River Road. Motion carried. Chris Miller noted that Kelli Bruns, DNR's technical advisor to the MN-MRPC, has moved on to another position. Thank you to Kelli for her service to the Commission.

**Commission Member Updates:** John Anfinson reported on an upcoming interview with a German travel podcast and invited ideas and possible content from members about life on the Mississippi River in Minnesota. Thank you to Explore Minnesota for making this connection.

**Next Meeting:** 2025 schedule will be confirmed soon via email.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

## MN-MRPC FY 25 Activity Budget

2/10/25

<u>Activity/Item</u>	<u>FY 25 Funds</u>	<u>Spent 1/7/25</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Remaining</u>	<u>% Spent</u>
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,500.00	\$110.00		\$4,390.00	2%
Commission Members - other meetings travel & per diem	\$2,500.00			\$2,500.00	0%
Dues & Memberships (MRPC - \$15,000; NSB Foundation \$150)	\$15,150.00	\$200.00		\$14,950.00	1%
National Meetings (sponsorship, member/staff attendance, planning)	\$14,900.00	\$8,523.35		\$6,376.65	57%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Zoom, Constant Contact, etc.	\$1,600.00	\$252.06	\$321.56	\$1,026.38	36%
Website Regular Maintenance Updates & Minor Changes	\$2,500.00	\$150.00		\$2,350.00	6%
Shipping	\$550.00	\$252.40		\$297.60	46%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$2,514.25			\$2,514.25	0%
Admin Contract	\$38,400.00	\$16,000.00	\$6,400.00	\$16,000.00	58%
Professional Technical Services - including additional staff hours, web services, graphic design services, etc.	\$3,350.00	\$800.00		\$2,550.00	24%
<b>Total Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$85,964.25</b>	<b>\$26,287.81</b>	<b>\$6,721.56</b>	<b>\$52,954.88</b>	<b>38%</b>
Notes:					
FY 25 funds column includes \$78,000 annual base allocation, plus \$7,964.25 in carry over from FY 24					
MN GRR map printing/shipping project under consideration utilizing funds remaining from FY 24 carry forward after Annual Meeting, Quarterly Mtgs, etc.					
National MRPC dues invoice expected soon - \$15,000					



**MN Great River Road Map & Website Committee**  
**January 29, 2025 • 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.**  
**Zoom**

**Notes**

Attendance: Diane Henry-Wangenstein, Lisa Havelka, Paul Hugunin, Marni Karnowski, Chris Miller

**Overall Question for Consideration**

- What can be done prior to the end of the current fiscal year (June 30), and do we want to keep everything (print map, Plan Your Trip, Story Maps & website)?

**Information Gathered Since Last Meeting**

- Lisa recommended MN River Valley Scenic Byway website and mapping as examples for review. Chris shared the website onscreen along with information she requested and received about their website and mapping – the mapping is handled by their web development company and the recent redo of their site was funded by a grant. Information provided by MN River Valley lists a few different mapping options they considered, which could be helpful if a new mapping option is needed for the MN GRR.
- Google Analytics reports from mnmississippiriver.com were sent out to the committee in advance. They do not include specifics on the use of Plan Your Trip and Story Maps due to those being different URLs, but the visits to “page not found” on the MN GRR site are likely going to these maps. It doesn’t appear that visitors are spending enough time on the MN GRR site to indicate full viewing of the Story Maps, but they could be spending more time once they leave the MN GRR site.
- As recommended by the committee, Chris has requested an estimate from the MN-MRPC’s web developers on removing story maps, possibly temporarily until a new plan can be worked out.
- On January 27, Diane and Chris met with GIS experts, Chris Cantey from LCC and Andrew Kurth from MnDOT, to talk about the specific technical needs and options for Plan Your Trip and the Story Maps. The consensus from that meeting was that a straight rebuild of Plan Your Trip would be the most feasible option going forward, if MnDOT would be able to do so or it could be outsourced to a consulting firm. Story Maps are very labor intensive on the front end and more work to maintain over time. Chris M’s evaluation was that neither the MN-MRPC nor MnDOT have the resources at this time for a full rebuild of the Story Maps, and that there isn’t data supporting significant utilization of them. The current platform for Plan Your Trip and the Story Maps will no longer be supported after the end of 2025, but it won’t go immediately dark on January 1. It will be unsupported and continue to become less functional over time.

**Discussion**

- Marni indicated that MnDOT would be willing to dedicate Andrew’s time needed for the basic one to one rebuild of Plan Your Trip. She will also check on the status of the request that has been submitted to MNIT for development of an ongoing data updating tool/process for Plan Your Trip – this is in addition to the rebuild and would address future data updates. Lisa asked for information on what that form or process will look like, to assist others who may be able to help with the process (MN-MRPC member agencies, MN-MRPC web developers, etc.). There could be a need for third party help from outside MnDOT on these future updates. Paul shared information on how the Dept. of Agriculture provides Minnesota Grown data updates on a regular basis.
- Timelines were discussed. It would be ideal to have the rebuild done by August, in time for a relaunch for Drive the Great River Road Month. The campaign could reintroduce people to Plan Your Trip and all its features. The bottom line is to make sure it’s done before January 1.
- The committee discussed the removal of the Story Maps from the MN GRR website. Story Map content should be reviewed and information that remains current should be retained and used in other ways if



possible. This could also help to drive more visitors back to Plan Your Trip as the main focus. The review of Story Map content could be done after it is removed from the MN GRR website, if the URLs remain and could be accessed directly. Options include removal of the entire section from the homepage, keeping the regional tiles without links, keeping the regional tiles with links to new information (such as Explore Minnesota stories related to the Mississippi River/GRR) or linking each region to that area of Plan Your Trip after the rebuild. A suggestion was made to redirect the links in the top menu bar to regional tiles on the homepage, to preserve the menu listing for now. The exception would be the state park guide, which would likely need to be removed – or linked to another information source.

- Print maps are an important component of the overall communication package and should be reprinted using funds currently available in the MN-MRPC budget. Funds are available due to carry over into the second year of the biennium and costs related to the National MRPC Annual Meeting and MN-MRPC Quarterly Meetings coming in under budget.

## **Recommendations**

- Proceed with a reprint of the MN GRR map, to be completed and distributed prior to the end of the fiscal year (June 30) or sooner. Utilize funds remaining in the MN-MRPC budget and move forward with quantity as budget allows. Timeline: February – June, 2025
- Proceed with the Plan Your Trip basic rebuild. Plan Your Trip is the main priority in terms of online GRR tools. Ideal Timeline: February – August, 2025 (end date can flex if needed, but no later than December 31, 2025)
- Discuss Story Maps with the full MN-MRPC at their next meeting. This committee recommends the removal of Story Maps from the MN GRR website, with discussion needed on if/what information or links should be included in that section of the homepage. Committee recommends utilization of content already existing either within the GRR site, or from member agency/partner sources. Committee also recommends pursuing the least costly plan after hearing back from our web developers – considerations include temporary changes vs. leaving information up until a final plan is in place. Timeline: to be determined based on Commission discussion and the availability of committee members to implement (no later than December 2025)
- Develop cycle for reviewing different areas of the MN GRR website over time, to allow for updates in manageable pieces.

## **Next Steps**

- Chris will work with the MN-MRPC Chair, LCC and distribution partners on the map reprint process.
- Marni will proceed with discussions on the rebuild of Plan Your Trip within MnDOT and will keep in touch with the committee and Commission members on assistance needed to verify/update information and make basic improvements to the app.
- Story Maps/Digital Travel Guides will be on the agenda for discussion at the next MN-MRPC meeting, along with updates on the plans for print maps and Plan Your Trip.
- Schedule another committee meeting as appropriate after the Commission's discussion.





## Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

56 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South, #283 • St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301

651-341-4196 • [info@MnMississippiRiver.com](mailto:info@MnMississippiRiver.com)

**Members of the House:** Sydney Jordan (60A); Leigh Finke (66A) **Members of the Senate:** Karin Housley (33); John Hoffman (34) **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, Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Anne Lewis

December 13, 2024

Office of Acquisition and Grants Management  
Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

Subject: Great River Road Rehabilitation Project in Cass County, MN

Selection Review Committee,

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) looks forward to reviewing information about the Great River Road Rehabilitation Project (Cass County State Aid Highways 9 and 91). This is the type of project the MN-MRPC would generally support, but unfortunately our meeting schedule did not allow for full review and action on this project prior to the December 16 submission deadline. The project applicants are long-time Great River Road partners, and we look forward to further discussion with them. 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.

The MN-MRPC will review the following details at their first meeting of 2025 and will consider formal support. This project proposes to improve County State Aid Highways (CSAH) 9 and 91 in Cass County, MN, which are part of the Great River Road All-American Road/National Scenic Byway. This 3,000-mile route follows the path of the Mississippi River from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The project area is also designated as part of the Mississippi River Trail (U.S. Bike Route 45) and is located within the Leech Lake Indian Reservation and the Chippewa National Forest. The project roadways have deteriorated to the point where pavement improvements are needed to maintain local mobility and support a quality scenic byway experience. The project would also include edge line rumble strips to reduce run-off-road crashes and widen shoulders wherever possible to improve safety for motorists as well as people walking and biking. Additional guardrail would be installed near the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Winnie Dam on CSAH 9 to protect the integrity of the roadway, which serves as the embankment for Lake Winnibigoshish.

If you have questions about the MN-MRPC or if there is additional information we can provide, please contact the MN-MRPC office at 651-341-4196.

Sincerely,

Sen. Karin Housley, Chair

For MN-MRPC information:  
Projected Total - \$8.5 million  
NSB Grant Request - \$6.8 million  
Cass County Match - \$1.3 million  
Beltrami County Match - \$400,000

cc: Darrick Anderson, PE, County Engineer, Cass County



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January 21, 2025

Kelly Grissman  
Director of Planning  
Three Rivers Park District  
3000 Xenium Lane N  
Plymouth, MN 55441

Re: Mississippi River Trail Expansion Project - Funding Request from the 2025 RAISE Grant Program

Dear Ms. Grissman:

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) supports the Three Rivers Park District as it seeks RAISE Program funding for the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) Expansion Project. 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.

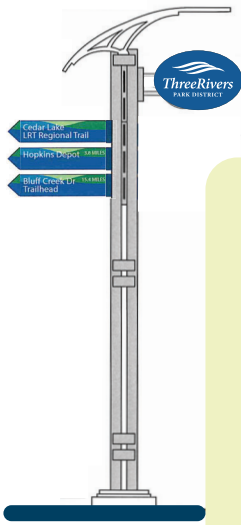
The Great River Road Corridor Management Plan includes a goal to provide integrated multi-modal travel options so travelers can focus on safely enjoying the journey, as well as active Mississippi River exploration that includes bicycling, walking, and hiking. Completion of this project will provide an off-road regional trail adjacent to West River Road, closing a major gap in the regional bicycle transportation system and supporting safe, non-motorized transportation access to and through the Great River Road All-American Road/National Scenic Byway. When complete, this project will create a safe, convenient option for travel by foot or bike adjacent to the Mississippi River. We appreciate the background work and preparation already completed by Three Rivers Park District for this project.

We look forward to the implementation of this project and the safety and experience it will provide for byway travelers 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, reading "Karin Housley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Sen. Karin Housley, Chair



# Mississippi River Trail Expansion Project

## New Trail Construction & Adjacent Road Improvements

### Project Description

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) Expansion Project will fill a critical 3.5-mile gap in Champlin, Minnesota of the 800-mile Mississippi River Trail, which runs from the Mississippi River headwaters at Lake Itasca State Park in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. The MRT Expansion Project corridor is currently unsigned/undesignated as the 'share the road' conditions are unsafe for people walking, biking and rolling due to traffic speeds and the lack of shoulders/designated space for the corridor's most vulnerable users. The project will construct a 10-foot-wide, paved, off-road, multi-use trail and include other multimodal improvements to increase safety and convenience for all right-of-way users. This project is significant at the national, state, and regional levels because it shares the same corridor as US Bikeway 45, Great River Road Scenic Byway and West Mississippi River Regional Trail, is located within the National Park Service's Mississippi National River Recreation Area, connects to several regional parks and trails within the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area, and is part of Three Rivers Park District's 180 mile Regional Trail System - the backbone of the active transportation network within the western half of the Metropolitan Area.

### Location & Route

Mississippi Point Park to 109<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. along Great River Road/West River Road (CSAH 12) in Champlin, Hennepin County, Minnesota

### Applicant

Three Rivers Park District

### Primary Contact

Kelly Grissman  
Director of Planning  
3000 Xenium Lane N  
Plymouth, MN 55441  
P: 763-694-7635  
Kelly.Grissman@  
ThreeRiversParks.org

### Tentative Funding Information

**Requested Award:**  
\$14,200,000

**Local Match:**  
\$3,550,000

**Total Project Cost**  
\$17,750,000

### Project Elements

- Construction of 3.5 miles of new trail including striping, regulatory signage, wayfinding, ADA compliant curb cuts and ramps, and road crossing enhancements.
- Development of ADA bus loading pads and designated places for transit users to wait outside of the trail footprint where right-of-way allows.
- One new roundabout at Winnetka Avenue (CSAH 103).
- 4,700 feet of travel lane conversion/reduction considerations to provide right-of-way for the Project (pending final design/approvals).
- 18 intersection improvements with turn and bypass lane modification (pending final design/approvals).
- New tree plantings and on-site stormwater improvements and storage.

### Project Benefits

- Fills a 3.5 mile trail gap in the greater existing MRT corridor through Hennepin County.
- Connects to 24 bus stops with express service to downtown Minneapolis.
- Constructs a safe, protected and consistently designed multi-use trail for people walking, biking, and rolling where no facility or designated space currently exists.
- Constructs intersection improvements and lane reconfigurations to adjacent CSAH 12 (Great River Road/West River Road) to ensure efficient and effective vehicular mobility.

### Existing Corridor Conditions



### Location



**Great River Road/West River Road (CSAH 12):** Currently this roadway is a two lane, rural county road section with varying shoulder widths. Posted vehicle travel speeds up to 50 MPH with an AADT up to 9,700.