



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting
June 11, 2025 • 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Hybrid - Capitol Room 120 and Zoom**

DRAFT AGENDA

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 10:00 a.m. Welcome & Introductions | Housley/All |
| 10:10 a.m. Approve Today's Agenda & Minutes from 2/21/25 | Housley/All |
| 10:15 a.m. Commission Business | |
| - Election of Officers | All |
| - Executive Committee Appointments | Miller/All |
| - Legislative Updates | Legislative Members/LCC |
| - Regional Meetings/Elections | Miller |
| - Budget Report | Packet/Lewis/Miller |
| 10:45 a.m. National MRPC/Great River Road | |
| - 2025 Annual Meeting, Baton Rouge, Sept. 10-12 | All |
| - National Mississippi River Day – June 2 | Anfinson |
| - Communications & Marketing | Carlson/Miller |
| - Culture & Heritage | Anfinson/Kelliher |
| - Environment, Recreation & Agriculture | Karnowski |
| - Transportation | MacDonagh |
| 11:15 a.m. Roadside Storybook | |
| - Status of Existing Interpretive Panels | Zoff |
| - Discuss Needs/Next Steps | All |
| 11:30 a.m. MN Great River Road Information Tools | |
| - Update on Print Map, Plan Your Trip, Story Maps | Project Team/Miller |
| 11:45 a.m. Letter of Support Requests | All |
| - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe National Scenic Byways Application
GRR Rehab Project, Cass County | |
| o Review preliminary letter provided by Chair,
consider full support letter for project | |
| - Other | |
| 12:00 p.m. Commission Member Updates | All |
| 12:20 p.m. Other Business | |
| 12:30 p.m. Wrap Up and Adjourn | Housley |



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
1st Quarter Meeting – February 21, 2025
Capitol Room G15/Zoom Hybrid
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources
Marni Karnowski – Transportation
Anne Lewis – At Large

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Amanda Dirnberger – Natural Resources
Peter MacDonagh - Transportation
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Diane Henry-Wangenstein – LCC

Megan Voelke - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members & Technical Advisors Absent

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Sen. Karin Housley
Sen. John Hoffman
Rep. Huldah Momanyi-Hiltsley
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture
Lisa Havelka – Explore Minnesota
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

Partners/Guests Present

Tim Wilcox, MnDOT

The meeting was called to order for general information updates at 2:05 p.m. by MN-MRPC Vice Chair, John Anfinson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present at 2:20 p.m. and the Commission proceeded with routine business items at that time. Other Commission action will be tabled until a full roster is in place. The meeting packet and recording are available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/>.

Approve Agenda and Minutes from 11/21/24 Meeting: The agenda and minutes were reviewed, and a vote was taken upon arrival of a quorum. Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by David Kelliher to approve the draft agenda and November 21, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried. Carol Zoff called attention to the recognition of former Minnesota Scenic Byways Coordinator Holly Slagle, and shared Holly's appreciation of the letter sent by the Commission in honor of her retirement and service to Minnesota Byways.

Budget Report: Secretary-Treasurer Anne Lewis referenced the year-to-date budget report in the meeting packet and called attention to the notes. Chris Miller provided additional details. A map reprint project is being pursued due to funds remaining after the 2024 Annual Meeting, less than anticipated travel for quarterly meetings, and carry-over from FY 24 being placed in the printing line item in anticipation of need for maps. More discussion on this will take place later in the agenda.

Regional Meetings/Elections: Terms for Regional Commissioners in Headwaters/Northwoods, Crossings and Scenic Regions end on December 31, 2025. Regional Meetings/elections will need to be scheduled prior to the November 21 MN-MRPC meeting. The recent change in statute to staggered four-year terms also clarified the process in that regional committees make recommendations back to the MN-MRPC, and the MN-MRPC then appoints the member. Terms for Metro and Bluffs regions are scheduled to end on December 31, 2027 and so regional meetings will be needed in the fall of 2027. MN-MRPC officer elections generally take place every two years and, following that pattern, would be due at the May 2025 Quarterly Meeting. Chris Miller requested feedback on format for regional meetings – in-person or Zoom. Responses indicated a preference for hybrid meetings if possible. Suggested timeframe was October – November since September includes the MRPC Annual Meeting and is also Drive the Great River Road Month.

MRPC Board: John Anfinson reported that the 2025 Annual Meeting is tentatively planned for Louisiana, September 10 – 12 but is still being confirmed. The 2025 Annual Meeting of the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI) will be September 16 – 18 in the Twin Cities. John also noted the recent passing of Rep. Martin Graber, Chair of the Iowa MRPC, who will be greatly missed.

MRPC Communications & Marketing Committee: Kate Carlson reported that the committee's recent meeting focused on discussion related to the upcoming America 250 celebration and ways the Great River Road could connect with this effort. Ideas included developing and promoting a list of 250 things to do along the Great River Road. Minnesota could start thinking about content/storytelling that might be a fit. The quarterly Great River Road marketing report is available at www.mrpcmembers.com.

MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee: David Kelliher shared information on America 250 activities in Minnesota, in follow up to the Communications & Marketing Committee discussion. The Culture and Heritage Committee has also discussed how the Great River Road could play a part in the celebration. Each state has a committee. MNHS is providing administrative support for the Governor's America 250 Minnesota Committee. Anne Lewis suggested reaching out to the committee to indicate interest in participating as a primary partner for Mississippi River content, since the Mississippi River is central to the history of the nation. Anne offered to draft a letter of interest and David volunteered to help with the MN-MRPC connect with the committee. John Anfinson shared information on a project to inventory and develop wayfinding signage to Interpretive Centers, led by the Transportation Committee. Reporting documents are available on the MRPC members website. The Culture & Heritage Committee is also working on a virtual meeting for Interpretive Centers in May.

MRPC Environment, Recreation & Agriculture: Marni Karnowski reported that there has not been a recent committee meeting, more to come after the next meeting.

MRPC Transportation: Peter MacDonagh reported on progress to date on the Interpretive Center signage project. Turnout at recent committee meetings has been low recently and most states have yet to complete the signage form. It will be a significant project for Minnesota, since there are 13 Interpretive Centers. More discussion is needed to determine how best to move forward. Peter also noted that the MRPC continues to pursue the trademark and logo rights for the Mississippi River Trail (MRT), with movement on that expected soon due to expiration of the trademark ownership in March.

MN Great River Road Information Tools: An ad hoc committee was convened as requested at the last MN-MRPC quarterly meeting. Recommendations and next steps were included in the meeting packet, with the main points being 1) proceeding with a reprint and shipping of the MN Great River Road map using funds currently available in the budget with project completion by June; 2) proceeding with a basic rebuild of Plan Your Trip with a goal of launch in early fall, but no later than December (thank you to MnDOT!); 3) removal of Story Maps from the MN GRR website after discussion of the full MN-MRPC. The Story Map content would be retained for possible future use, and 4) Develop a cycle for review of different areas of the MN Great River Road website over time. Another committee meeting will be scheduled after today's discussion by the full MN-MRPC.

Marni Karnowski shared additional background on the Plan Your Trip rebuild. Discussions have taken place within MnDOT and the go ahead has been given for the project. Andrew Kurth in the Office of Environmental Stewardship will be handling the rebuild with a goal of completion prior to Drive the Great River Road Month (September). A kick-off or relaunch could then coincide with the Drive Month campaign. Chris shared the MN Great River Road website on screen, noting which content is part of the site managed through the MN-MRPC and where Plan Your Trip and the Story Maps are included, with links going to MnDOT.

Discussion –

- Members confirmed the need for print maps and the plan to move forward with a print run this spring.

- If possible, Story Map content should be held somewhere for future review and use either of portions of content/photos or a full rebuild.
- Keep the regional section on the MN Great River Road homepage. One suggestion was to link to photos from the regions.
- MN Great River Road videos could potentially still be used as links for the regions. Though the videos are old, much of the information is still correct.
- Keep the regional Story Maps up for now and take them down when Plan Your Trip is ready for relaunch, that way everything would be new at the same time.

Letter of Support Requests: The Commission reviewed two letter of support requests received since the last quarterly meeting.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is seeking National Scenic Byway funds for a road rehabilitation project in partnership with Cass County and Beltrami County. Sen. Housley provided a letter indicating receipt of the request and noting plans for review at the next meeting of the MN-MRPC. Since the Commission is currently awaiting additional appointments, action will be tabled until the next meeting when a full roster is in place.

Three Rivers Park District is seeking RAISE grant funds for the Mississippi River Trail Expansion project. The MN-MRPC reviewed this project and authorized a letter of support for application to another funding source in 2022. Chair Housley provided an updated letter of support for this new funding application, under authority documented by the MN-MRPC in 2024 for previously approved projects. No further action is required at this time.

Commission Member Updates:

- Lisa Havelka was unable to attend today but provided a link to the German interview that John Anfinson recently did about the Mississippi River/Great River Road - <https://audiotravels.podbean.com/e/audiotravels-am-mississippi-entlang-durch-minnesota/>, and thanked John for his efforts on this. Members were encouraged to take a listen.
- John Anfinson mentioned his involvement in an upcoming Minnesota Unraveled podcast through the Minnesota Historical Society.
- Grant Wilson reported on EPA grants now open for application through the DNR, and one-time investments underway as part of the Get out MORE initiative, including boating access sites and fisheries. He also noted upcoming meetings of the Upper Mississippi Basin Association (virtual quarterly meeting on February 25) and Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (80th Annual Meeting, March 18-20 in La Crosse).
- David Kelliher shared an update on a proposed new residential development adjacent to the Oliver Kelley Farm. MNHS continues to watch for possible impacts on the Kelley Farm and staff have attended recent planning meetings. The DNR is also doing a review related to the Mississippi River. A park is also part of the planned development.

Next Meeting: May 29, 2025, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

MN-MRPC FY 25 Activity Budget

5/7/25

Activity/Item	FY 25 Funds	Spent 5/6/25	Pending	Remaining	% Spent
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,500.00	\$369.00		\$4,131.00	8%
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	\$15,200.00		-\$50.00	100%
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	\$840.46	\$25.94	\$733.60	54%
Website Regular Maintenance Updates & Minor Changes	\$2,500.00	\$690.00		\$1,810.00	28%
Shipping	\$550.00	\$263.40	\$43.80	\$242.80	48%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$2,514.25			\$2,514.25	0%
Admin Contract	\$38,400.00	\$28,800.00	\$3,200.00	\$6,400.00	83%
Professional-Technical Services - including additional staff hours, web services, graphic design services, etc.	\$3,350.00	\$800.00		\$2,550.00	24%
Total Operating Budget	\$85,964.25	\$55,486.21	\$3,269.74	\$27,208.30	68%
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 agreement in place, to be completed by June 30, 2025, not to exceed \$15,000					



September 10-12, 2025

Baton Rouge, LA

[Register Now](#)

Join the Mississippi River Parkway Commission this fall in Louisiana's capital city for three days of engaging and informational sessions at our 2025 Annual Meeting, which will be held September 10-12, 2025, in Baton Rouge.

Hear from authors, river experts, and commissioners from all 10 states as we discuss what's happening along the Mississippi River now and how to leverage partnerships along the Great River Road and beyond to promote our amazing All-American Road.

We'll also celebrate the Great River Road's selection as [the Best Scenic Drive in America](#) in this year's USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards and discuss plans for the Great River Road as part of the country's 250th birthday celebration ([America250](#)) in 2025 and 2026.

Meeting Registration

Register for the 2025 Annual Meeting [here](#).

Meeting registration includes:

- Welcome reception and dinner (Wednesday night)
- All general sessions and materials
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner on Thursday

- Breakfast on Friday

Lodging Information

Lodging is available at the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center. Make your hotel reservation for the Hilton Baton Rouge [here](#) or call (800) 955-6962.

Room rate is \$110 per night.

The hotel cutoff date is **August 25**.



Meeting Schedule (Working Agenda)

Stay tuned for additional agenda updates throughout the summer.

Wednesday, September 10

- **All Day** Free to explore downtown Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Capitol, Louisiana Old State Capitol, Old Governor's Mansion, Third Street
- **Noon-2pm** Registration
- **3 pm** MRPC Board Meeting
- **6 pm** Welcome Reception
 - Tour Louisiana River Road Museum
 - Dinner at Houmas House

Thursday, September 11

- **7:30-8:15am** New Member Orientation
- **8:30am-5pm** General Sessions
 - **The Mississippi River and the Opening of Atlantic Trade (Susan Gaunt Stearns)**
 - In *Empire of Commerce*, author Susan Gaunt Stearns takes readers back to a time when there was nothing inevitable about the United States' untrammelled westward expansion. Her work demonstrates the centrality of trade on and along the Mississippi River to the complex development of the political and economic structures that shaped the nascent American republic. Stearns's perspective-shifting book reconfigures our understanding of key postrevolutionary moments—the

writing of the Constitution, the outbreak of the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Louisiana Purchase—and demonstrates how the transatlantic cotton trade finally set the stage for transforming an imagined west into something real.

- **America 250**
 - **Partnerships (America's Watershed)**
 - **Navigation of the Mississippi River (Mississippi River Pilots Association)**
 - **Tips on Grant Writing**
 - **Technical committee meetings:** Transportation; Marketing; Culture, Heritage, & Environment; Recreation & Agriculture
- **6pm** Pilot's Banquet and Awards

Friday, September 12

- **8:30am-Noon** General Sessions
 - **Corridor Management Plan: IC Signing Standards**
 - **US Bike Route and Mississippi River Trail**
 - **Operation Pollination**
 - **Interpretive Center Highlights**
 - **Mastering AI for Productivity**
 - *Presenter: Krista Neher, CEO of [Boot Camp Digital](#)*
 - AI is changing the way we complete tasks. It's a powerful tool that can accelerate results. We'll learn practical and tangible ways to use AI to get better results faster.
 - Krista Neher is a six-time bestselling author, having written six books on digital marketing, including a textbook and a "Dummies" book. Krista is an international speaker and an award-winning entrepreneur. She has worked with companies like Facebook, Nike, Procter & Gamble, GE, Macy's, Google, Morgan Stanley, and the U.S. Senate and has been featured as an expert in the New York Times, CNN, Wall Street Journal, NBC, CBS, Entrepreneur, and the Associated Press.



Hello, Friend!

Big news: June 2 is now National Mississippi River Day! One Mississippi established this new day of recognition to shine a spotlight on our beloved River. It's a great opportunity to honor the people, land, water, and wildlife that make the Mississippi River a vital part of our lives. We hope you'll celebrate with us annually.

With the support of our 75+ Mississippi River Network member organizations and partners, One Mississippi is working to unite towns, cities, states — and even the nation — in recognizing the importance of the River and its power to connect and sustain us. **We've been asking local, state, and federal officials to proclaim June 2 as National Mississippi River Day.** We're just getting started, and the response has been inspiring. Visit the [National Mississippi River Day webpage](#) to learn more about this growing movement.

As a River Citizen, we know you step up for the River year-round, so we hope you'll mark June 2 in your calendar and take some time to celebrate. National Mississippi River Day kicks off **River Days of Action (June 1–15)**, a two-week window of events, activities, and opportunities to connect with the River and make a difference (read more below)! If you are excited about National Mississippi River Day, please [let us know by email!](#)

Also, featured below in your May newsletter:

- celebrating a record-breaking advocacy turnout, speaking up for a vital restoration and science monitoring program,
- we spoke up for clean water and wetlands,
- Mississippi River named America's Most Endangered River®,
- and more!

Together, we can ensure the Mississippi River remains a thriving lifeline for generations to come. **Together, we are One Mississippi!**

-Michael Anderson, Director of Outreach and Education



Join us for River Days of Action June 1-15!



Connect with the Mighty Mississippi and take action to protect our vital waterway during **River Days of Action June 1-15, 2025!** Join thousands of people for in-person and online events ranging from habitat restoration and outdoor recreation to engaging webinars and local tours. All events and activities are designed to make a positive impact for the people, land, water, and wildlife of our treasured River!

No matter where you are, you can take part and make a difference. We are thrilled to share that 16 events have already been added to the events calendar and interactive map located on the [webpage](#). More events are coming this month as well as additional actions anyone can take!

Learn more and register for River Days of Action events

This is What People Power Looks Like on the Mississippi River



Our latest action alert to protect funding for the **Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program** was a true community win, and our fastest ever to 1,000+ actions. In just five days, **1,060 people sent 3,048 emails to Congress** in support of this vital restoration and monitoring program. You didn't stop there—the alert was shared **500 times on social media**, reaching nearly **75,000 people**. That's a huge spotlight on the River, thanks to you.

We're so grateful for your energy and impact. While we celebrate this record-breaking turnout, we're also keeping the pressure on—tracking next steps from Congress and the White House, and continuing outreach with our Mississippi River Network partners. We know you're ready to keep showing up, and we'll be in touch as opportunities develop. Go team!

Watch this one-minute video on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), or [Facebook](#) to learn more about the impact we made together!

Speaking Up for Clean Water

MORE DESCRIPTIVE, LONGER TEMPLATE VERSION:

Proclamation Recognizing June 2nd as National Mississippi River Day

Synopsis: The Mississippi River is at the heart of our nation's history, culture, and economy, shaping the communities along its banks and connecting people across its vast watershed. From the wild rice beds at the Mississippi's headwaters in Minnesota to the oyster reefs at the Mississippi's mouth in Louisiana, the River sustains millions of people, provides critical habitat for diverse wildlife, and is a vital artery for commerce and recreation. As we recognize its significance, we must also acknowledge the challenges it faces and reaffirm our commitment to protecting and restoring this vital natural treasure for future generations.

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River is one of our nation's most iconic and vital waterways, spanning approximately 2,350 miles from Minnesota to Louisiana and uniting ten mainstem states and 32 tributary states in its watershed; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River has been deeply woven into the lives of Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, sustaining communities through nourishment, travel, and trade while also holding profound cultural, spiritual, and ancestral significance; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River serves as a critical source of drinking water for over 20 million Americans, a vital habitat for diverse fish and wildlife, and a powerful economic engine supporting commerce, agriculture, tourism, and recreation; and

WHEREAS, the River is the heart of a migratory flyway for 60% of North America's bird species, provides habitat for at least 260 fish species, and sustains numerous amphibians, reptiles, and mammals, making it one of the world's most important ecological corridors; and

WHEREAS, the health of the Mississippi River is under threat from pollution, habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental stressors, which impact the communities, economies, and ecosystems that depend on it; and

WHEREAS, protecting and restoring the Mississippi River requires collaboration across states, agencies, organizations, individuals, and communities to implement sustainable and regenerative conservation practices, restore wetlands and floodplains, and reduce agricultural and urban runoff to improve water quality; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River connects millions of people, reflecting our shared history, culture, and responsibility to ensure its vitality for future generations; and

WHEREAS, One Mississippi and its network of 75 organizations and 20,000 River Citizens invite everyone to take action—whether through conservation efforts, advocacy,

or simply enjoying the River and building community—especially during the One Mississippi’s River Days of Action (June 1-15), when people across the region come together to restore, celebrate, and advocate for a healthier River;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, **[Name]**, **[Title]**, do hereby proclaim June 2nd as National **Mississippi River Day**, urging all people to celebrate, protect, and restore the Mississippi River and its watershed by participating in events, signing up as One Mississippi River Citizens, and taking action to safeguard this invaluable resource for generations to come.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of **[City/State/Office]** to be affixed this **[Date]**.

[Signature]

[Title]

ONE-PAGE, SHORTER TEMPLATE VERSION:

Proclamation Recognizing June 2nd as Mississippi River Day

The Mississippi River is more than just a waterway—it's a lifeline for millions of people, a haven for wildlife, and a source of inspiration, recreation, and connection. Spanning 2,350 miles and uniting ten mainstem states and 32 tributary states within its vast watershed, from the wild rice beds in Minnesota to the oyster reefs in Louisiana, the River nourishes communities, supports livelihoods, and brings people together. Today, we honor its importance and commit to protecting its future.

WHEREAS, for thousands of years, the Mississippi River has been deeply woven into the lives of Indigenous peoples, sustaining communities and holding profound cultural significance; and

WHEREAS, the River provides drinking water for over 20 million Americans, fuels local economies through commerce, agriculture, tourism, and recreation; and

WHEREAS, the River is the heart of a migratory flyway for 60% of North America's bird species, and home to hundreds of fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammal species, making it one of the world's most important ecological corridors; and

WHEREAS, pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change threaten the health of the River and the communities that depend on it, requiring collaboration across states, agencies, individuals, communities, and organizations to restore and protect this natural treasure; and

WHEREAS, One Mississippi and its network of 75 organizations and 20,000 River Citizens invite all to take action—through conservation efforts, advocacy, or simply enjoying the River and building community—especially during River Days of Action (June 1-15), when people unite to restore, celebrate, and advocate for a healthier River;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, **[Name]**, **[Title]**, do hereby proclaim June 2nd as **Mississippi River Day**, encouraging all to celebrate, protect, and restore this incredible River by participating in events, becoming a One Mississippi River Citizen, and taking action for a cleaner, healthier future.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of [City/State/Office] to be affixed this [Date].

[Signature]

[Title]

**If needed for your current local or state context,
here are general alternatives to climate change:**

- (increased) extreme weather events or extreme weather
- (increased or severe, extreme) flooding and drought
- increased impacts from flooding and drought, OR extreme weather

Here are two example alternatives:

WHEREAS, pollution, habitat loss, and increasingly severe flooding and drought threaten the health of the River and the communities that depend on it, requiring collaboration across states, agencies, individuals, communities, and organizations to restore and protect this natural treasure; and

WHEREAS, pollution, habitat loss, and extreme weather events threaten the health of the River and the communities that depend on it, requiring collaboration across states, agencies, individuals, communities, and organizations to restore and protect this natural treasure; and

-----**What this would replace**-----

Here is the current Shorter Form:

WHEREAS, pollution, habitat destruction, and **climate change** threaten the health of the River and the communities that depend on it, requiring collaboration across states, agencies, individuals, communities, and organizations to restore and protect this natural treasure; and

Here is the current Longer Form:

WHEREAS, the health of the Mississippi River is under threat from pollution, habitat loss, **climate change**, and other environmental stressors, which impact the communities, economies, and ecosystems that depend on it; and

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



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

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



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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission

56 33rd Avenue South, #283 • St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301

651-341-4196 • 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