



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting – August 14, 2025
Capitol Room 120/Zoom Hybrid
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture
Sen. Karin Housley
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture
Grant Wilson- Dept of Natural Resources
Marni Karnowski- MN Dept of Transportation
Anne Lewis- At Large
Amanda Dirnbirger- DNR

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Amanda Dirnberger – Natural Resources
Peter MacDonagh - Transportation

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

Members & Technical Advisors Absent

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Rep. Huldah Momanyi-Hiltsley
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 PM by MN-MRPC Char Sen. Karin Housley, followed by introductions. The meeting packet and recording are available at <https://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/mrpc/>.

Approve Agenda and Minutes from 6/11/2025 Meeting: Motion by Sen. Karin Housley and seconded by Karl Samp to approve the agenda and June 11, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Budget Report

Anne Lewis asked about payment for the maps and looks like a cost overrun but may not be, Chris said there are 2 budget reports. The fiscal year ended June 3, and the hard close at LCC will be August 15th and at year end there was 94% of budget spent. Several items were well under spending so the maps were printed. Year over year, maps are only printed if money remains. Budget was near final report for the past year. Pg 7 reflects projected budget for 26. No reports yet available. The national meeting line will move.

Regional Meetings/Elections Process

Regional meetings are coming up this fall. Commissioner terms are 4 years and are recommended by regional citizen committees with the new statute change. People recommend candidates and full committee will vote on candidates.

3 regional elections this fall, with the three regional commissioners running again:

- Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
- Grand rapids to Brainerd
- Brainerd to Elk River

We are documenting the process a little with the staff transitions.

Someone on the capitol campus can be in their office to satisfy the in-person statute need with public meetings. Chris is working on cleaning up lists for citizen's committee to get notices out. The invitation to the meeting and the openings in the regions will be sent by Diane. Ann noted the huge strength that Minnesota has up and down the river.

Staffing Transition

Chris and Andrew have been meeting and starting to transition work to Andrew. Andrew has been learning the behind the scenes work that has been done to plan each meeting and attended the networking meeting for regional ambassadors. Things may look different than you're used to. We should hear more from Andrew for the November meeting.

National Great River Road

Call on committee participants for reports and tasks for the MN-MRPC.

2025 Annual Meeting, Baton Rouge – John Anfinson, Anne Lewis, Chris Miller

- Meeting dates are September 10 – 12. Anne Lewis, John Anfinson, Sen. Housley, Karl Samp, and Peter MacDonagh are planning to attend. These meetings are the chance to see the scope of who we are as a 10-state commission.
- America 250 is coming up and the river holds so many stories.
- David Kelliher and Marni Karnowski will also be going.
- Sally and Sen Hoffman spots are open.
- Chris and Andrew will provide a state report for MN.
- Discuss plans and Minnesota coordination for the meeting as needed. Anne and John may have more details to share from the National MRPC Executive Committee.

Communications & Marketing Committee

We have not had another marketing meeting since we last met.

National office inviting ideas for America 250 - we are starting to promote that with our partners.

Culture & Heritage Committee

John mentioned that Iowa had submitted an interpretive center nomination the Fairport Fish Hatchery and that the Culture and Heritage Committee would vote on it when in Baton Rouge. John also noted that Tennessee was pushing for Tom Lee Park, in Memphis, to become a Great River Road interpretive center but that it didn't fit the criteria. The Commission then discussed how outdoor sites, like river parks, could have as much interpretation as indoor sites, using QR codes and other, modern means. The Minnesota Historical Society and DNR already feature outdoor sites with substantive interpretation. He related that Mud Island, in Memphis, may reopen as an interpretive center with outdoor exhibits. John said this would be a topic for the Baton Rouge meeting. John pointed out that there are some 80 river parks just the Twin Cities metro area and hundreds, if not thousands, of river parks along the whole river. With becoming Pilot at the Baton Rouge meeting, John said the Co-Chair position for the Culture and Heritage Committee will be open as of September.

Environment, Recreation & Agriculture Committee

Amanda Dirnberger and Peter MacDonough attended this meeting. Pollinators were the main focus and highlighted a pollinator week map with tool kits and resources for people. There is a call to have interpretive centers have information on pollinators.

Transportation Committee

2 major topics covered were the same as the 2nd quarter. Mississippi river trail sign and logo are now under the purview of the 10 state MRPC. Trademark expired at the end of March and attorneys are going through process to see how it applies to 9 other states. 90 interpretive centers that are Great River Road interpretive centers. No state has completed the signage. A template is being worked on so everyone can use the same one. Turn by turn directions and pictures of the signage 5 will be miles out from the interpretive center.

Roadside Storybook

The Executive Committee discussed the Roadside Storybook Project history and current needs on July 17 and recommended designating a committee to continue planning work for this project. Resource information about the Roadside Storybook, including locations of current interpretive panels, is provided on pages 8 - 13. Executive Committee members can provide additional info on their discussion.

The money is a barrier because panels are not cheap. We will need to do them right. We are not trying to change the locations, just make better use of the current ones. Who is looking at the current signs? November 2021 was the last time someone had gone to each site and documented their condition. We need to reassess and update the database. Could it be the duty of an initial consultant?

David moved to establish an ad hoc committee, John seconded.

Members mentioned that prioritizing funding should be the first order of business.

Note: Members have limited capacity and may need a project manager.

Plan Your Trip Update

Marni Karnowski can provide an update on Plan Your Trip online interactive map, Chris will share information on the print map and digital travel guides, other team members may also have comments to share.

Andrew Kurth from MN DOT got the plan your trip app rebuilt. Goal to get it done before Drive the Great River Road month.

- Update to colors and symbology and some improvements to functionality
- More user friendly
- Link can be accessed from the Great River Road website

The Commission recommended a letter of commendation/thanks to Andrew Kurth at MnDOT for the rebuild of Plan Your Trip. Motion approved at MnDOT and the MN-MRPC to coordinate and complete the project, ahead of schedule. John motion to send letter from Sen Housley

Ambassador Program Update

Interpretive center Meeting happened August 6.

Chris will provide a brief update on the Ambassador session held on August 6, and will ask for comments from other team members. Lindbergh House interpretive center museum will be reducing open hours and the indoor experience will be much more limited. Overlooks, MRT, people are much more health conscious and people are using that. Guests want to stay outside more. Interpretive sights vs centers? How do we use that site for as a place on the river? Lindbergh is not as much of a household name anymore as in the past and with online stories people are not using the centers the same way as we used to.

Drive the Great River Road Month

2025 Plans to promote the new improved Plan Your Trip app. There will be a Governor's proclamation, Social media plan, contests and examples of things you can find in preparation for a bigger and better 2026.

It is a good plan considering the changes going on. You will see more coming out to committee members to get the work out. The Historical Society will wait until 2026. America 250 - what has happened in 250 years since the country was created? Great lead up to Great River Road month, and can be a part of 250 things to do on GRR. The river was the original roadway and communication system.

Commission Member Updates

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative Meeting

- Taking place the week after meeting in Baton Rouge
- 104 mayors will attend
- Mayors on the Mississippi should engage in partnerships
- Will honor Senator Hoffman in that meeting
- You must register, \$350

Grant - attending MRCTI meeting

- Upper Mississippi River Basin Association meeting discussed invasive carp mgmt.
 - MN-Missouri is upper basin
- Flood risk modeling in a resilience capacity. Mississippi watershed
- New state parks regional manager - Laurel Quell

MRPC will be having a presentation at the meeting in Baton Rouge by AWI - save the date try to make it in person.

Details are forthcoming to recognize Chris and the invaluable job she has done November 20.

Next Meeting: November 20, 2025, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.