



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Executive Committee Meeting
November 10, 2020 • 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Virtual via Zoom

DRAFT AGENDA

- Welcome & Review of Agenda
- MN-MRPC Operations
 - Budget Update
 - Roster Status/Regional Meetings
 - National MRPC Technical Committee Representation
 - Timing of 2021 Quarterly Meetings
- Ambassador Development
 - Revised Recommendations for FY 21
- MN GRR Website
 - Phase 2 Recommendations
- Improving Access and Welcoming Environment along the Mississippi River
 - Work Group Overview
 - Update on Outreach
- General Updates/Other
- Adjourn



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Executive Committee – September 2, 2020
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

NOTES

Members Present: Sen. David Senjem, Anne Lewis, Lisa Havelka, Cordelia Pierson

Technical Advisors & Staff Present: Carol Zoff, Tim Wilcox, Diane Henry-Wangensteen, Chris Miller

Meeting called to order by Chair Senjem at 10:35 a.m. A quorum was present.

FY 21 Budget: The activity budget in the packet was discussed. Updates will be made to reflect carry-forward funds from FY 20 and changes may be needed as plans for the year are modified due to COVID 19 impacts. Committee members discussed the fluid situation, possible budget reductions at some point, and status of travel and group meetings.

Recommendation was to plan for virtual MN-MRPC quarterly meetings in fourth quarter 2020 and first quarter 2021, leaving the option open for an in-person second quarter 2021 meeting.

MN-MRPC Regional Meetings/Elections: Metro and Bluffs Regional Meetings/Elections are due to be held before the end of 2020 in keeping with the past rotation for regional meetings. Options include holding off on the meetings until in-person group meetings are more certain; holding the meetings virtually; or holding email elections to fill the Regional Commissioner positions.

Committee recommended moving forward with plans for virtual meetings, offered examples of other meetings/registration processes, noted importance of worthwhile content in addition to the elections, and suggested sharing notices with local media. Invitation and call for applications will be sent to the MN-MRPC regional stakeholder lists, with encouragement to share, as well as to LCC's ethnic councils.

Ambassador Development: The launch plan included in the meeting packet is now in need of adjustment away from in-person workshops in the near future. Background on the intent for the program was discussed and the committee considered paths forward. Travel and in-person workshop costs made up over half of the project budget. Target audiences for the launch were to be Great River Road Interpretive Centers and Community Tourism Offices. Topics for the workshops would include an overview of the Great River Road and available information tools; confirming/updating traveler resource inventory listings and photos; and gathering feedback for future materials and training. MnDOT is beginning work on videos to assist people in utilizing the Plan Your Trip online mapping features. Committee discussed shifting to a virtual format but there is still uncertainty on appropriate timing for the target audiences as they work on reopening plans and challenges. The project budget is set to expire June 30, 2021 but Diane noted there might be carry forward options due to the unique circumstances.

Committee recommended preparing materials and tools for the workshops and requesting deferral of part of the project budget with plans to roll out the workshops in fiscal year 2022 either in person or virtually. Suggestions included an instructional Power Point presentation that anyone can use as an introduction and expanding outreach after the first phase to include interested groups beyond the river.

Improving Access and Welcoming Environment: An overview of the MN-MRPC discussion at their recently Quarterly Meeting was provided by staff.

Suggestions from Committee

- Upcoming American Indian Tourism Conference is virtual and offers an opportunity to connect, Audubon Society is an example of setting up subgroups based on interests.
- Outreach could take place to LCC's ethnic councils to explore partnering options, including offering to have an MN-MRPC member speak at virtual meetings of the councils to share information. The MN Indian Affairs Council is another group to contact.
- Consider inviting ethnic council representatives to speak as panelists at Bemidji MRPC meeting.
- Look at partnering with the new school in Cass Lake – possibly providing GRR maps for students (work with Sally).
- Consider expanding distribution locations for MN Great River Road maps to reach additional audiences; also review distribution list for news releases.
- Ask the people we are trying to reach how best to proceed.
- Expand outreach on ten state initiatives such as the Flavors of the Great River Road promotion.

Next Steps

- Chris will work with Cordelia on a definition/task statement for a work group. Main topics would be building awareness of and partnerships with the MN-MRPC, improving sharing of information about the Mississippi River/Great River Road, and expanding storytelling. Identify 5 – 10 things that can be done.
- Chris will reach out to potential work group members including those who have indicated interest.
- Work group will be convened to prepare recommendations for the full MN-MRPC's consideration.

MRPC 2021 Annual Meeting – Bemidji: The Bemidji Annual Meeting originally planned for September 2020 was canceled due to COVID 19 considerations. The MRPC will be holding its first ever virtual National Meeting of the Great River Road on September 17. The MN-MRPC offered to host the 2021 MRPC Annual Meeting in Bemidji. Committee discussed if and how to move forward. Recommendation was to proceed as if the in-person Annual Meeting will take place in fall of 2021 and reconvene the planning team in late 2020 or early 2021 if members are willing to participate again. Content prepared for 2020 will serve as the base for 2021 planning.

U of M Tourism Center: The University of Minnesota Extension Tourism Center focuses on research and education for the Minnesota tourism community. An MN-MRPC member has suggested inviting a presentation at a future Quarterly Meeting. Committee agreed and recommended an invitation to the November virtual meeting. Lisa will forward information on upcoming virtual events offered by the Tourism Center, for sharing with Commission members.

Other: An update on the All-American Road designation timeline was shared recently with the MRPC Transportation Committee – designations are likely to be announced this fall with information posted online by the end of 2020. States were asked to consider how the designations, if received, could be celebrated and marketed. Carol noted the opportunity to thank partners for their work and support, whether the designation is received or not.

Sen. Senjem suggested considering the Mayo Historian as a speaker about the "Mayos and the Mississippi" display in Rochester, possibly as part of a regional meeting or other future event. Another speaker idea – "Hope on the River" voyage, undertaken to raise funds for a non-profit but likely also resulting in many river stories.

Anne encouraged participation in the first ever virtual National Meeting of the Great River Road on September 17. Registration is now open for all sessions and is free of charge.

Next Meeting: Committee requested another meeting date a few days prior to the November MN-MRPC Quarterly Meeting. Details to be confirmed.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.

MN-MRPC FY21 Activity/Project Budget

10-30-20

Activity/Item	Estimate	Spent 10-5-20	Pending	Remaining	% Spent
MN-MRPC Operating Budget					
Quarterly Meetings	\$4,600.00	\$282.00	\$55.00	\$4,263.00	7.00%
Other Commissioner meetings travel & per diem	\$1,200.00			\$1,200.00	0.00%
Executive Committee Meetings (2 @ \$300)	\$600.00			\$600.00	0.00%
MRPC Dues	\$15,000.00			\$15,000.00	0.00%
Admin Contract	\$26,400.00	\$4,400.00	\$2,200.00	\$19,800.00	25.00%
Communications including website hosting, phone, Constant Contact, etc.	\$9,000.00	\$240.16	\$23.97	\$8,735.87	0.00%
Map Shipping & Storage	\$3,000.00	\$4.60	\$48.00	\$2,947.40	2.00%
National Meetings	\$5,000.00			\$5,000.00	0.00%
Regional Meetings/Elections	\$900.00			\$900.00	0.00%
Additional Staff Hours for CMP Implementation Activities with Partners & Stakeholders - Ltrs of support, regional meetings, etc.	\$15,000.00	\$2,530.00	\$1,320.00	\$11,150.00	26.00%
Professional/Technical Services	\$6,889.26			\$6,889.26	0.00%
Website Edits and Updates	\$2,000.00		\$75.00	\$1,925.00	4.00%
Drive the Great River Road Month Promotional Campaign	\$4,500.00	\$4,150.00		\$350.00	92.00%
General Material Printing & Supplies	\$800.00			\$800.00	0.00%
Total Operating Budget (78,000 base + 16,889.26 carry forward from FY20)	\$94,889.26	\$11,606.76	\$3,721.97	\$79,560.53	16.00%
Special Projects - Funding for implementation during FY20 and FY21					
Website Updates for Map Tools, Mobile Devices	\$3,642.24			\$3,642.24	0.00%
Ambassador Development	\$28,000.00			\$28,000.00	0.00%
New Print Map	\$9,307.90		\$783.52	\$8,524.38	8.00%
Total Special Projects	\$40,950.14	\$783.52		\$40,166.62	2.00%
FY21 Operating Budget Allocation	\$135,839.40	\$12,390.28			



**National Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Technical Committees
10-30-20**

Committees meet at Annual and Semi-Annual Meetings and ongoing via conference call or Zoom.

Communications & Marketing

- MN Voting Member – Vacancy after Anne Lewis became MRPC Pilot
- Alternate/Additional MN Representation – Sen. Senjem
- Topic Examples – Promotions including Drive the Great River Road Month, maps, app, website

Culture & Heritage

- MN Voting Member – John Anfinson, Committee Co-Chair
- Alternate/Additional MN Representation - Vacancy
- Topic Examples - Interpretive Centers, oral histories, themed itineraries

Environment, Recreation & Agriculture

- MN Voting Member – Vacancy
- Alternate/Additional MN representation – Vacancy
- Topic Example – Agritourism inventory

Transportation

- MN Voting Member – Tim Wilcox
- Alternate/Additional MN Representation – Carol Zoff
- Topic Examples – All American Road nomination process, ten state CMP, route shape files

MN Great River Road Ambassador Development

Revised FY 21 Plan & Feedback Request – November 2020

Summary

- Goals of Ambassador Development are to 1) provide potential Ambassadors with resources, materials and training; 2) strengthen byway attraction partnerships with the MN-MRPC; and 3) confirm/revise Great River Road attraction information included in Plan Your Trip and other tools.
- Initial target audiences are defined as Great River Road Interpretive Centers and Community Tourism Offices.
- The remainder of fiscal year 2021 (ends June 30, 2021) will focus on developing tools and products for use online or in person in FY 22 and beyond; and a pilot online training session to begin the rollout process.

Tools and Products

- Plan Your Trip Instructional Videos: Videos are being developed by MnDOT. They will be placed on Plan Your Trip to assist users with the features of the online tool – navigation, resource sorts, etc.
- Driving Directions: In process of being reviewed and revised.
- Test Promotional Items: Confirm with Ambassadors which items like lapel pins, key chains, window clings, etc. are preferred by travelers and drive visitation, and that they would distribute. New ideas included masks, hand sanitizers, and buttons/nameplates, “Welcome to the Great River Road” (to help identify Ambassadors).
- Ambassador Packets: Develop and mail information packets including the new MN GRR map and test promotional items in advance to those who register for an online workshop.
- Website: Consider addressing online needs as part of MN GRR website phase 2 project. Technology needs may have evolved away from a laptop and projector, to possible addition of a collector app being placed on the MN GRR website where changes to Plan Your Trip listings could be submitted.
- MN GRR Overview Video: Consider development of a short video for placement on the website that could be viewed by the public and used as a core tool for ambassadors. Maybe also a video explaining the benefits of being a GRR ambassador, for use on a partner resources page.
- Story Map: Develop additional Story Map to highlight MN Great River Road Interpretive Centers.

Pilot Online Training Session

- Content: Edit content currently on file to reflect today’s realities, things that can be done to help sites as they continue to transition into opening, different ways of operating etc. Focus on outdoor themes. Listen to ideas and needs from audience.
- Delivery: Likely would use a PowerPoint via Zoom or other platform and demonstrate content and features of website and maps. Do a pilot online training session by invitation and gather feedback to improve delivery and usefulness.
- Archiving: Arrange for closed captioning, post event transcription and saving on YouTube for Ambassadors to review online at their convenience.
- Timeline: Potentially Spring 2021, after gathering info on status of Interpretive Centers/target audiences in early 2021.
- Future Plans: Update the content and develop delivery plans for FY 22 after pilot session.

Feedback Questions

- What information and tools do you feel are most useful to help our partners serve as Minnesota Great River Road Ambassadors? Maps, edits/additions to website (and if so please specify), GRR overview/FAQ sheets for the full route or by region, online general MN GRR informational videos, taped training presentations, other?
- Would promotional items or Ambassador identification items be helpful and if so, what do you recommend? Preliminary ideas above included pins, window clings, key chains, face coverings, hand sanitizer, and MN GRR badges/pins to wear.
- Would you be willing to volunteer to appear on a video?
- Would you be willing to volunteer to help with outreach to partners to confirm capacity and availability to participate in the pilot, and identify specific invitees?



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MN-MRPC Work Group on Improving Access and Welcoming Environment

CMP Goal: Education and Engagement Engage diverse populations of all ages, locally and afar to experience the Mississippi River. Objective 9 (p. 04-9)

- Partner with tribal nations to develop itineraries; leverage CMP Project Advisory Team agency efforts; provide opportunities for traveler feedback; encourage people of all ages to explore.

CMP References

- MN-MRPC Business Plan: Tribal Participation (p. 04-24)
- External Communication Target Audiences (p. 04-33)
- Increase Ethnic Storytelling (p.04-46)

Tasks/Needs

1. Be intentional about inclusivity in MN-MRPC operations and building long-term partnerships with diverse groups.
 - Build awareness of and partnerships with the MN-MRPC among more diverse audiences.
2. Expand storytelling to invite diverse peoples to share their stories and highlight more complete history and cultural connections with the Mississippi River.
3. Invite diverse travelers to share their Great River Road experiences and the interactions they want.

Identify 5 – 10 strategies overall, with 1 - 2 priorities for each need.

Bring recommendations forward to full MN-MRPC for consideration and keep topic on MN-MRPC meeting agendas.

Suggestions from Executive Committee (9/2/20)

- Upcoming American Indian Tourism Conference is virtual and offers an opportunity to connect, Audubon Society is an example of setting up subgroups based on interests.
- Outreach could take place to LCC's ethnic councils and MN Indian Affairs Council to explore partnering options, including offering to have an MN-MRPC member speak at virtual meetings of the councils to share in. Sally).
- Consider expanding distribution locations for MN Great River Road maps to reach additional audiences; also review distribution list for news releases.
- Ask the people we are trying to reach how best to proceed.
- Expand outreach on ten state initiatives such as the Flavors of the Great River Road promotion.

Member Questions, Discussion & Feedback from MN-MRPC (8/13/20)

- Karl Samp asked if we are telling stories of indigenous people enough.
- Sally Fineday has made connections with storytellers in preparation for when an MRPC Annual Meeting is held in Bemidji. She also offered to work with Aitkin County on their Interpretive Center nomination to include the story of the Sandy Lake Tragedy; and offered to work with others from the MN-MRPC as discussions on this topic continue.
- Anton Treuer was noted as a resource by Sen. Senjem.
- Sen. Torres Ray noted increased park visitation, especially to local parks. Is there way to find out if more people are visiting the river and small towns, and are there people doing this who have not done so before?
- Grant Wilson expressed the importance of listening to input on experiences and interactions that people want. Outreach and more complete historic and cultural connections are things to consider.

- Lisa Havelka offered the Minnesota River Scenic Byway and their storytelling as an example of fostering relationships, especially their partnerships with the Upper and Lower Sioux Agency and story of the US-Dakota War.
- Anne Lewis suggested that the Plan Your Trip inventory of resources be reviewed for inclusivity and content.
- Carol Zoff noted that importance of storytelling was discussed during development of the Corridor Management Plan. There is a strategy to expand interpretive panel content to include stories from the three tribes along the river and review/add stories to existing panel content for counties. If National Scenic Byway funding is restored it could potentially provide resources for these types of projects if there are listed as eligible activities. The Commission might want to consider providing feedback on eligible activities if/when legislation continues to move.
- David Kelliher offered that the Minnesota Historical Society will be happy to be part of the conversation and share how they have worked to share more complete stories.
- Sen. Senjem described his observations along the river and suggested we consider additional locations for distribution of Great River Road maps.
- Sen. Torres Ray discussed the importance of being intentional, including finding the appropriate organizations to connect with and how to partner.
- Keep this topic on the agenda.