



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
3rd Quarter Meeting – August 28, 2014  
State Office Building, St. Paul MN  
MINUTES – Draft**

**Commissioners Present**

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River  
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings  
Anne Lewis – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Mark Anderson – At Large Member  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson  
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray  
Sen. David Senjem

**Technical Advisors & Staff Present**

Cynthia Wheeler – DNR  
David Kelliher – Historical Society  
John Anfinson – National Park Service  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Commissioners & Technical Advisors**

**Absent**

Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee  
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee  
Colleen Tollefson – Explore MN Tourism  
Adam Johnson – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
Rep. Mike Benson  
Carol Zoff - Transportation  
Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids  
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border

**Guests/Speakers Present**

Liz Walton – MnDOT  
Brian Smalkoski – Kimley-Horn  
Ashley Ver Burg – Kimley-Horn  
Bryan Anderson – Mn DOT District 1

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The meeting was called to order at 2:35 by Chair Sheldon Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Chair Johnson welcomed Anne Lewis, new Commission member representing the Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region, and congratulated John Anfinson on his new position as Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

**Review of Minutes from 2/6/14 and 5/15/14 Meetings**

Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the May 15 meeting minutes as printed. Motion carried. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the February 6 minutes as printed. Motion carried.

**Review of Agenda**

Request by Karl Samp to add the topic “press releases” under new business. Motion by Cordelia Pierson and seconded by Mark Anderson to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

**Agency and Regional Updates**

**Brainerd to Elk River:** Karl Samp mentioned two Great River Road public open houses he attended (St. Cloud and Brainerd). Brainerd-Baxter Riverfront Planning efforts continue. A public input process was recently conducted, which gathered online rankings of amenities. Results will be unveiled by the University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design at a meeting on October 2. Popular topics include trails, access, sculpture, and an outdoor amphitheater.

**Elk River to Hastings:** Cordelia Pierson thanked the Chair for recognizing the need for preparation of MN-MRPC comments on the draft Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Rules. Thanks were noted for the recent installation of Mississippi River Trail signs in the region. Comments have been received requesting clarification of what MRT is, and regarding the possibility of at least one sign somewhere spelling out the words and ten-state context. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board continues work on an ecological system plan and central riverfront plan, with Cordelia serving on the citizen advisory group.

**Historical Society:** David Kelliher reported on funding approved during the last legislative session for visitor center renovations at the Oliver Kelley Farm. All MN-MRPC members were invited to the kick-off celebration scheduled for September 13.

**Natural Resources:** Cynthia Wheeler provided an update including information on the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Take a Day OFF (Outdoor Family Fun) held at Mississippi River Regional Park near Sartell on August 2. The DNR is a partner on this event and turnout was great again this year. Efforts continue to manage invasive carp. St. Anthony locks will be closed next spring. Upgrades recently completed on the Coon Rapids dam should provide a 90% barrier to invasive species. Two female invasive carp were recently found between Hastings and St. Paul. The rulemaking process for the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) continues. Listening sessions have been held, changes are being made to the draft and the deadline for public comment has been extended to September 30, 2014.

**Transportation:** Scott Bradley provided information on the recent Scenic Byway Grant solicitation from MnDOT, for FY '15 projects. Applications were due in June. Up to \$1.5 million was available for infrastructure projects. Six proposals were received. Three projects along the Great River Road were funded (Pine Bend Bluff Overlook, Mississippi River Regional Trail – Rosemount West, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe/Cass County Multi Use Trail). This grant opportunity was intended to help transition byways into the new MAP-21 and transportation alternatives funding structure. More projects are likely to be competing for less funding in the future, and byway applications will be considered by area transportation partnerships. Regional Development Commissions are currently working on updating Corridor Management Plans for Minnesota Scenic Byways. A question was raised about involvement of byway organizations in future grant applications – will letters of support be required as in the past?

**National Park Service:** John Anfinson reported that a meeting will be coming up soon with a coalition of agencies and the Army Corps of Engineers to discuss invasive species issues. Concern was voiced over the invasive carp that were caught and the likelihood that many more are present if two were caught. Closing of additional locks could help but would also create other concerns including portaging. NPS and Friends of the Mississippi River recently took Rep. Ellison canoeing on the river, and also provided a similar experience for a staff member from Rep. Paulsen's office. Both expressed the importance of seeing the river from this vantage point.

### **Commission Business**

**FY '15 Budget:** Chris Miller referred to the FY' 15 budget in the handout packet. The budget reflects the \$63,000 operating budget for the year as well as approximate grant balances. Line item allocations were made based on spending in FY '14, needs for the CMP project, 2015 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting, etc. There will also be funds carried forward from FY '14 after all fiscal year end records are finalized. Mark Anderson discussed the need to begin looking forward to FY '16 and possible projects. Motion by Rep. Johnson and seconded by Scott Bradley to adopt the FY '15 budget as presented. Motion carried.

**Staffing Contract for MN-MRPC 2015-16:** Rep. Johnson reported that a contract is in place with The Odyssey Group and Chris Miller will continue to provide staffing services for the Commission for fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

### **National MRPC Updates**

Rep. Johnson noted that Karl Samp is currently National MRPC Pilot Pro Tem (President Elect).

**2014 Annual Meeting:** The 2014 MRPC Annual Meeting will be September 17 – 20 in Memphis. Karl Samp, Nancy Salminen, Carol Zoff and Chris Miller will be attending.

**2015 Semi-Annual Meeting:** Minnesota will host the 2015 Semi-Annual meeting and discussions are underway with potential locations in St. Cloud. Karl Samp mentioned that the River's Edge Convention Center is the preferred location for meeting rooms but cost is a concern. The St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau would serve as a sponsor to help bring down costs, and has also been extremely helpful in securing information on meeting space and lodging. National Office will make a final decision on meeting location soon. MN-MRPC member assistance will be needed to plan the agenda and hospitality room. The theme is likely to be "Planning for the River (Road)" and might feature information on statewide planning, large city, midsize city and small city riverfront/byway plans. Several possible presentation topics were mentioned including – "Take a Day OFF," Kelley Farm visit, Little Falls visit, NPS Enjoy the View project, and Minneapolis Central Riverfront Planning.

**Committee Assignments:** MN-MRPC members are needed for National MRPC Standing Committees. The Culture & Heritage Committee is currently co-chaired by Sheronne Mulry but having another member would be helpful; Sheldon Johnson and Karl Samp currently serve on the Environment, Recreation & Agriculture Committee; 1 - 2 MN-MRPC members are needed for the Marketing Committee (Sen. Senjem serves as alternate); and Carol Zoff chairs the Transportation Committee which could use another member. Staff will make individual contacts to fill committee rosters. Work sessions are held during MRPC Annual and Semi-Annual Meetings and work is handled via periodic conference calls outside of those meetings. The time commitment is generally quite minimal.

### **Corridor Management Plan (CMP) Project**

**Overall Project Status Update:** Chris Miller reported that an additional \$35,000 in grant funds has been approved by the National Park Service, to be used for MRT signs. Special thanks to NPS for this assistance. MN-MRPC and CMP project staff have participated in National Park Service "Enjoy the View" project work this week. Information will be incorporated into the CMP. Project Management Team meetings are held monthly involving project managers and the consulting team. Carol Zoff and Chris Miller participated in all public open houses held in July.

**MRT Update:** Liz Walton reported that signs are up in the Metro region (with a few gaps where work continues). The ribbon cutting event for the Metro MRT will be held in June 2015, potentially in conjunction with National Trails Day. Work is underway to finalize the plan for Elk River to Lake Itasca. Meetings have been held and municipal agreements are being developed. Route adjustments have been suggested and some have been implemented. Bids will be let on December 19. Nice Ride bike stations were recently installed in Bemidji and a group of 20 rode Nice Ride bikes on the MRT from Big Lake to Bemidji to mark the occasion. Parks and Trails Magazine recently featured the Mississippi River Trail and Great River Road. "Mr. B's Joybox Express" (a piano pulled by bicycle) will be traveling the MRT soon and Liz will send a link to details. A presentation on the MRT is on the agenda for the Rail-Volution Conference in September. There was discussion on the process for sign review in the future. What happens if signs are missing or need to be replaced? The MRT is the first state bikeway and management policies and plans are being developed. Work is underway to get all MRT sign locations in an electronic database for future reference.

**Corridor Management Plan Project:** Brian Smalkoski and Ashley Ver Burg of Kimley-Horn and Associates shared project updates.

An overview of information and results was provided on the public open houses held in July. Targeted meetings with cities and Regional Development Commissions were also held during the open house weeks. Commission members provided feedback on the meetings and structure, commented on the information received from the public and provided suggestions for future public outreach.

An online survey is currently being conducted to gather information from a broad audience. To date, 400 pins have been dropped noting favorite places. More feedback is needed. All members were asked to share the survey link with their networks, newsletters, etc.

The social media campaign continues, with the most success so far on Twitter. Facebook has the greatest market penetration and more "likes" are needed on the Great River Road – MN page. All were asked to like the page and share information with others.

Field work continues focused on completing a detailed inventory of intrinsic resources. Richard and Sherry of Paw Paw Partners started the process at Lake Itasca and have completed the inventory up to Fort Snelling. They will continue to the Iowa border and then will drive the full byway as a visitor would. They have met with groups along the way and participated in local events.

Meetings have been held in local communities to discuss locations of MRT community information kiosks. The purpose of these meetings was to identify the shipping location for the sign frames and establish contacts for work on panel content. Kimley-Horn will work with the local communities on panel content this winter.

An update was provided on the project schedule. The resource inventory and initial data collection will be completed by October. Winter tasks will include distilling themes, developing draft strategies and working with the Commission. Data and draft strategies will be shared with the National MRPC at the 2015 Semi-Annual Meeting to gather feedback. The next round of public open houses will be held in spring of 2015. The Corridor Management Plan will be finalized in fall of 2015.

The Project Advisory Team met in June and is scheduled to meet again in early September. A current membership list was shared. The GRR has broad statewide impact affecting more than 60 Minnesota communities, thus the project must seek broad input in the development of the CMP.

The focus of the Advisory Team is to:

- Advise the MN-MRPC on matters related to the development of the CMP from a broader agency/organization perspective to maximize its effectiveness in meeting shared goals
- Share data and other available resources to complement development of the CMP
- Build relationships and brainstorm ways to partner in the future to leverage additional value from efforts your agency/organization may already be providing
- Utilize existing networks to broaden the extent of CMP outreach
- Highlight related efforts or facilities that can contribute to successful byway management

Next steps in the project include data collection and processing; agency coordination and meetings with senior staff; strengthening of partnerships; and spreading the word about the project. Commission members asked questions and shared ideas.

### **New Business**

**Mississippi Corridor Critical Area Draft Rules:** The Department of Natural Resources is currently working on updated rules for the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA). Comments are welcome and are being accepted through September 30. The MRCCA is a land corridor along the Mississippi River in the seven county metro area where there are special land use regulations that guide development activity. The corridor extends for 72 miles from the cities of Ramsey and Dayton on the north to the cities of Hastings and Cottage Grove on the south. John Anfinson provided background on the critical area's history and its relationship to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Cordelia Pierson noted that this comment period is an opportunity to share information about the Great River Road and its intrinsic qualities. The Great River Road is a nationally significant resource. Commission members discussed whether comments should be provided and if so how such comments should be organized and the level of detail to be included. Cynthia Wheeler noted that she and Keith Parker will not be able to participate since their agency is developing the rules.

Motion by Cordelia Pierson and seconded by Karl Samp authorizing a subcommittee to develop comments on the Mississippi Corridor Critical Area draft rules, addressing issues that directly relate to the Great River Road and charge of the MN-MRPC, for consideration by the MN-MRPC. Motion carried. Cordelia Pierson and David Kelliher volunteered to serve on the subcommittee, and Carol Zoff also indicated interest. Comments will be developed and emailed to the MN-MRPC for review.

**Water Trails Tourism Summit:** Information on the Minnesota State Water Trails Tourism Summit was referenced in the meeting packet. Members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC office if interested in attending.

**Press Releases:** Karl Samp advised that the Commission prepare more press releases about MN-MRPC and Great River Road efforts and developments. All members were asked to send information to the MN-MRPC office on topics of interest for press releases.

### **Next Meeting**

The Fourth Quarter meeting will be November 20, 2014  
2:30 – 5:00 p.m., State Office Building 500 South

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota  
Agency & Regional Updates  
August 2014**

**Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Karl Samp**

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- Brainerd has completed the public input process for its riverfront planning efforts. They are now awaiting draft schematic design work from the University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design. If you wish to see results of the public process or the draft design work when it is in let Karl know.