



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
3rd Quarter Meeting
August 26, 2010
Heartwood Conference Center - Crosby, MN**

MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River

Others Present

Miranda Anderson – Brainerd Lakes Chamber
Todd Holman – The Nature Conservancy

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

David Kelliher – Historical Society
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee
Senator Sandy Pappas
Representative Greg Davids
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism

Following lunch, meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Andrea Hart-Kajer, appointee from the Minnesota Historical Society, was welcomed.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Schaubach provided an overview of special portions of the agenda, including guest speakers from the region and a visit to the Cuyuna Country Recreation Area to view new amenities along the Great River Road. Commissioner Golfis made a motion seconded by Commissioner Mulry to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from May 27, 2010

Minutes from the 2010 Second Quarter Meeting (May 27, 2010) were distributed via email in advance and hard copy at the meeting. Commissioner Samp made a motion and Commissioner Pafko seconded to approve the May 27 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Commission Business – Financial Report and Authorization to Sign Commission Contracts

A financial report showing FY '10 final status was distributed and discussed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion to approve the FY '10 final financial report, seconded by Commissioner Schaubach. Motion passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed a resolution authorizing the Chair to sign contracts on behalf of the MN-MRPC, in consultation with LCC as fiscal agent. It was noted that this is recommended documentation of current practice. Commissioner Kajer made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, that the MN-MRPC authorizes the Chair to negotiate and execute contracts on behalf of the Commission with concurrence of the Executive Director of the Legislative Coordinating Commission as fiscal agent for the Commission, and in keeping with approved Commission budgets. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion also took place regarding MRT (Mississippi River Bicycle Trail) maps currently under development at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Commissioner Pafko made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, to request that Mn/DOT include the Great River Road on MRT maps and all other public maps produced. Motion passed unanimously.

National MRPC Updates

2010 MRPC Annual Meeting: The 2010 Annual Meeting will be held in La Crosse, Wisconsin on September 10 – 11. This will be the only opportunity to attend a National MRPC Meeting in the current

fiscal year, since a Semi-Annual meeting will not be held on the spring of 2011, as a one time change to the regular meeting schedule. MN-MRPC members discussed one versus two national meetings per year, with varying opinions from the group. The MN-MRPC has received authorization to fund six attendees for the La Crosse meeting. Don Frerichs, Andy Golfis, Sheronne Mulry, Rep. Johnson, Paul Labovitz and Sen. Senjem will attend. Carol Zoff will also be in attendance. The MN-MRPC submitted two nominations for National MRPC awards, Karl Samp, for his outstanding service to the Commission including serving as chair for the 2009 Annual Meeting, and Tine Thevinin, for long term dedication to river related causes in the Bluffs Region.

Future MRPC National Meeting Host States: 2011 Annual Meeting – Arkansas; 2012 Semi-Annual Meeting – Illinois; 2012 Annual Meeting – Tennessee; 2013 Semi-Annual Meeting – Iowa; 2013 Annual Meeting – Missouri.

Committee Updates: Culture & Heritage – Louis Intres of Arkansas State University is working on the oral history project, and was in the Twin Cities earlier in August to conduct interviews. He met with Andy Golfis and Nina Archabal at the Mill City Museum. Thanks to both for their help, and also to the Minnesota Historical Society for providing the meeting space and help arranging interviews. Marketing – the 2010 National Great River Road Geocaching Contest is running from August 1 – December 31. This is a later end date than originally discussed to give more time for entries. Prizes will again be needed for a Minnesota basket, including an overnight stay. Please notify the MN-MRPC office if you can help.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Chairman Johnson reminded everyone to request approval prior to attending events to be reimbursed by the MN-MRPC. An email serves as sufficient documentation. The requests assist in budget planning. Special authorization must be obtained in advance of any out-of-state travel or reimbursement/per diem cannot be approved. Expense reimbursement forms and instructions were distributed.

Commissioner Mulry reported that the Nina and Pinta recently traveled up the Mississippi with stops in Winona and Lake City.

The 2010 Minnesota Scenic Byways Conference will be October 26 – 27 at the Gunflint Lodge, hosted by the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway.

CapX 2020 Update

Technical Advisor Zoff provided background on the August 2 meeting and van tour focused on the Monticello – St. Cloud route, attended by representatives of the MN-MRPC, Mn/DOT, and CapX2020/Xcel Energy. Notes from the meeting/tour were distributed. Advisor Zoff described the high level of impact the new power transmission lines will have on the Great River Road in this area, including crossing the GRR in six locations. CapX 2020 is asking for the MN-MRPC's specific recommendations related to minimizing the impact on the Great River Road, and enhancing the Great River Road experience in general, including projected costs which could likely be covered by CapX 2020. Minimizing impact would involve maintaining trees and vegetation as much as possible where power poles are to be placed and putting in new plantings where practical and effective. Enhancements to help offset negative impacts could include plantings to better screen the Great River Road from I-94; road shoulder improvements and/or interpretive and MRT signage. Detailed maps of the area will be marked up to note specific recommendations and will be shared with MN-MRPC members and also the counties involved (Wright and Stearns).

Commissioner Mulry shared information on the Hampton – La Crosse route. She served on a task force to determine the scope of content for the Environmental Impact Statement to be developed for the route. The MN-MRPC Office has registered electronically to receive information updates as the process continues and will send dates/details out to the Commission as they become available. Technical Advisor Zoff noted the importance of aligning efforts with the Wisconsin MRPC, since the route will impact both states. Commissioner Mulry mentioned efforts to begin pursuit of Scenic Byway designation in the Zumbro Valley, an area also affected by the proposed CapX project.

Work Group Updates

Capital Improvement: Commissioner Golfis reported on the closed plank road portion of the Great River Road in Minneapolis. He attended a recent meeting of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board

advising the opening of the closed section as soon as possible; along with treatment to maintain the historic feel of the section. Technical Advisor Kelliher distributed copies of the Minneapolis Star Tribune article about the closed plank road. He also noted that the plank road is not an actual historic features but rather a replication to re-create the feel of a particular era. Maintenance, safety and noise issues have been noted. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has authority over the road section and had decided to remove the planks and replace with concrete, after considering cost and maintenance. It has been determined that a design in the concrete would be impractical, but planks will be kept in the sidewalk to maintain some of the character.

Economic Development: Commissioner Pafko reported on status of the 35W bridge debris in Bohemian Flats Park. An order has been issued by a judge allowing the debris to be removed. Work will begin after Labor Day and will likely take around one month to complete. Debris will be moved to a Mn/DOT storage area near I-94 at Lakeland. Mn/DOT has an obligation to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to restore the current site. The associated clean up and restoration will take place in the summer of 2011. Three FHWA Scenic Byways projects have been on hold but now will re-start: a picnic shelter; restrooms; and parking.

Marketing: The map tablet project was recently completed, with six different designs produced, one for each Minnesota Great River Road destination area. Regional Commissioners received copies for their areas. Maps were available at the meeting for anyone else interested, and can also be accessed at www.mnmississippiriver.com. A question was raised about the possibility and cost if businesses would like to use the maps as placemats, etc. Cost information can be gathered upon request. The MN-MRPC has received positive comments about the maps, along with notification of an omission. Along with the positive comments, we've also been contacted about an error. Unfortunately, after all of the drafts produced and multiple reviews/proofing by many, Historic Fort Snelling was inadvertently left off the Metro map. The group discussed options including a reprint of the Metro maps. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kajer, to revise and reprint the Metro maps. Motion passed unanimously. All Commissioners were asked to review the Metro map for items to be included in the current revision, as well as all other maps for any corrections to future printings or other related projects.

Agency and Regional Updates

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler referred to the attached report and highlighted an August 14 event held on the Mississippi River in the St. Cloud area, involving a number of partners.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff reported that Mn/DOT has hired someone on a part-time, temporary basis to work on the MRT project. Signage is being planned for trunk highway segments of the MRT, with another phase later for additional signage. Zoff and Labovitz noted that the MN-MRPC's concerns and recommendations for the MRT should be considered as part of the process. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing the MN-MRPC to send a letter noting concerns. Motion passed unanimously.

Brainerd to Elk River Region: Commissioners Samp and Murray reported on recent St. Cloud area river planning meetings. Task forces have been created to focus on different topics and will be making recommendations to the overall planning group.

Elk River to Hastings Region: Commissioner Labovitz announced release of the Mississippi River Companion, a new guide to exploring the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA). Copies were available for all MN-MRPC members. MNRRA hosted an August 4 listening session for the White House Outdoors Initiative. Commissioner Labovitz attended a Corps of Engineers meeting in St. Louis and has been involved in discussions related to the future of the Coon Rapids dam.

Hastings to Iowa Border Region: Commissioner Mulry noted positive comments about the historic wayside restoration projects in the area.

Brainerd Mississippi River Revitalization Project

Commissioner Samp introduced Miranda Anderson of the Brainerd Lakes Chamber. Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the Brainerd-Baxter Area Mississippi Riverfront Vision Plan. The initiative grew out of the Blandin Leadership Program and recognition that awareness of the river was lacking for the

area, and that the different entities working on river related projects were not well aligned. SEH helped coordinate a six month project to start overall discussions on what role the Mississippi could play in the area. 120 organization and individuals have become involved. The following vision has been developed: The Brainerd-Baxter Area Mississippi River corridor should be a place where residents and visitors can easily access and enjoy year-round natural scenery along with a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities in harmony with a healthy river environment. Four main project areas have been identified: community gathering places; pedestrian/bicycle bridge; trail system; and environmental enhancement/protection. The next step involves master planning including possible partnership with the MN-MRPC on pursuit of a National Scenic Byways Grant.

Update on Potential Mississippi River Land Acquisitions

Commissioner Schaubach introduced Todd Holman from The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Holman shared information on an opportunity for land acquisition along the Mississippi River in the Brainerd area. Discussions began in 2004 regarding a 2,000 acre tract of land belonging to Potlach. A group of partners is exploring ways to secure funding for the acquisition of this land, which could protect over two miles of Mississippi River shoreline, a link to an additional seven miles of public shoreline, a development corridor for the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail, and an undeveloped buffer for the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport and Crow Wing County Landfill. Numerous statewide, county and local initiatives are consistent with and supportive of this project concept. Mr. Holman will continue to keep the MN-MRPC informed.

Visit to Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and Croft Mine Historical Park

Commissioner Schaubach provided background information on the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area (CCSRA) and shared maps depicting the lakes and trails. The CCSRA was created in an area of abandoned iron ore mines. The resulting mine pit lakes now feature fishing and scuba diving opportunities, and construction is underway on a new mountain bike trail sanctioned by the International Mountain Bike Association. The trail is already being recognized as world class, with 25 miles scheduled for completion soon, with additional length to be added in future years. The Commission departed in carpools to view the area, including stops at a scenic overlook, points along the bike trail, and the Croft Mine Historical Park. Commission members noted appreciation for the opportunity to visit this amenity along the Great River Road.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2010
2:30 – 5:00 p.m.
State Office Building, St. Paul, Room 500 North

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - August 2010

Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

An overview of the Mississippi River Renaissance project is attached. The DNR helped secure funding for it and has been partnering with other entities on its implementation.

A copy of a flyer is attached for an outreach and education event at Stearns County Mississippi River County Park that was held on August 14th. DNR was a partner in sponsoring this event. It is estimated over 650 people turned out for the event. Considering a storm ripped through the area the afternoon before, carrying straight line winds in excess of 75 miles per hour, and downing trees and power lines, it was an amazing turnout!

Another project the DNR is currently involved with is a design for a Mississippi Whitewater Park on the Mississippi River in Minneapolis in the vicinity of the Stone Arch bridge. This park would be for whitewater rafters, canoers, and kayakers. The Corps of Engineers is currently the lead on a (re)design of the project. The DNR is the local sponsor.