



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting – November 29, 2012
State Office Building, St. Paul MN
MINUTES - Draft**

Commissioners Present

Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Mark Anderson – At-Large Member
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres-Ray

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Greg Hubinger – LCC

Diane Henry-Wangenstein - LCC
Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Adam Johnson – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Rep. Branden Petersen
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Paul Huginin – Agriculture Appointee
Jim Lucachick – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Keith Parker – DNR Appointee
Paul Labovitz – National Park Service
Cynthia Wheeler - DNR

Guests Present

Scott Bradley - Transportation
Tony Wotzka – Transportation
Andy Trcka – Transportation
Len Price – Conservation Corps

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 by Chair Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

Special Topic – MN GRR Corridor Management Plan Project

Chairman Johnson introduced Carol Zoff, Technical Advisor from the Department of Transportation, who provided an overview of the project and requested feedback from Commission members. A summary of the discussion is attached.

Approval of Meeting Agenda and Minutes from 8/23/12 Meeting

Motion by Frank Pafko and seconded by Mark Anderson to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried. Motion by Frank Pafko and seconded by Karl Samp to approve the 8/23/12 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Commission Business

FY '13 Budget: Treasurer Mark Anderson referred to the budget summary showing FY '13 budget, expenditures to date, and proposed line item revisions for FY '13 reflecting requests and project needs. The most significant change is moving additional funds to printing/advertising for a possible reprint of the MN Great River Road map/travel planner and possible ordering of lapel pins, both as recommended by the Marketing Work Group. Discussion followed. Motion by Frank Pafko and seconded by Sheronne Mulry to accept the budget revisions. Motion carried.

Authorization of Chair to Approve Requests for Proposal and Contracts: There was discussion on timelines for upcoming requests for proposal and contracts. These items will likely require action between regularly scheduled Commission meetings. Motion by John Schaubach and seconded by Frank Pafko to authorize the MN-MRPC Chair to approve RFPs and contracts on behalf of the Commission. Motion carried.

Travel and Reimbursement Requests/Forms: Chairman Johnson referred to forms in the meeting packets, representing best practices for Commission travel and expense documentation. Commission members were asked to email the completed travel request form to the Chair, with a copy to the MN-MRPC office, one week prior to events. The post travel brief should be submitted with the expense

reimbursement request form following the event/activity. The forms are not required for regular quarterly Commission meetings. Out-of-state travel requests require additional lead time and approvals.

National MRPC Updates

MRPC Board: The next board conference call will be in December. Karl Samp served as proxy at the board meeting held during the MRPC Annual Meeting and reported that nine states were represented.

2012 Annual Meeting Report: The MRPC 2012 Annual Meeting was held in Louisville, Kentucky, September 27 – 29. Presentations included information on mobile applications (BarZ Adventures); the Kentucky Trail Towns Program; MAP-21 and impact to scenic byways (co-presented by Carol Zoff); community mapping (by Adeel Ahmed, U of M); the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (currently co-chaired by Mayor Kleis of St. Cloud and hoping to increase membership); partnership activities in Tennessee; and an update on the Iowa CMP project. It was announced that in the last round of National Scenic Byway Grants (2012) – 8 Great River Road states were awarded grants totaling just over \$8 million. Ideas for celebration of the Great River Road 75th Anniversary (2013) were discussed. There are limitations to activities that can be fully coordinated by the MRPC, but partnerships should make certain activities possible. Multiple standing committee meetings were also held, with Minnesota representation on each committee. Karl Samp received the 2012 MRPC Distinguished Service Award. The 2013 Semi-Annual Meeting will be held in Bettendorf, Iowa, April 25 – 27.

MRPC Committee Updates: Carol Zoff reported the Transportation Committee is recommending that state and local partners share information on MAP-21 with Departments of Transportation, local and county road agencies to better understand opportunities under the new bill. Sheronne Mulry reported that the Culture and Heritage Committee approved layout of banners for Great River Road Interpretive Centers and approved the Winona County History Center for designation as a new addition to the national Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers.

Tasty Traditions Contest: Chris Miller shared a reminder on the National MRPC's Tasty Traditions contest, which is running until January 11. All were asked to encourage local partners and stakeholders to submit information. All entries are posted for viewing, providing an opportunity for communities to highlight local favorites.

Old Business – Updates

Visual Resource Protection Plan: The timeline for public input has been extended. Public input on favorite Mississippi River views in the Metro is currently being requested and view submissions will be accepted through February 22. The top 50 views will be evaluated in April (leaf-off) and June (leaf-on) and volunteers will be needed to assist. Training will be provided. Notify the MN-MRPC office if interested. A project overview and link to the public input website will be emailed out to Commission members as soon as it becomes available.

Frac Sand Mining: Sheronne Mulry presented MN-MRPC information at a meeting of the Isaak Walton League in her region. She reported concerns from attendees related to frac sand mining, and noted that many emails and comments have been received from stakeholders. A letter has also been received requesting MN-MRPC assistance as a GEIS is considered, to ensure that socio-economic impacts are included. Maps and data documenting Great River Road assets were also requested. Discussion on options/available information included development of maps of GRR intrinsic qualities similar to those prepared for CapX 2020, and possible language to be included in a GEIS stating that Great River Road impacts should be considered as local decisions are made. Scott Bradley and Carol Zoff will follow up on options and gather information on any related activities within MnDOT. It was noted that frac sand mining was raised as an issue by Wisconsin at the Annual Meeting.

CapX2020: No new information was shared and the topic will be carried to future agendas in case of updates related to the Great River Road.

Mississippi River Trail: An update on recent activities was included in the handout packets, as provided by Liz Walton of MnDOT.

New Business

Marketing Work Group Projects and Recommendations: Work Group Chair Sheronne Mulry referred to notes from a recent conference call (included in the meeting packet). Based on the group's recommendation, a Minnesota Tourism Award Nomination was submitted for the MN Great River Road videos released this year. After discussion on marketing grant projects yet to be completed, an opportunity came up to participate in Explore Minnesota efforts related to the American Bus Association group travel marketplace in January 2013. The MN-MRPC will be a co-sponsor and will receive a two page profile in Minnesota's publication for the event. The two pages will feature the 75th anniversary of the Great River Road, and Minnesota's Great River Road Interpretive Centers.

The group is recommending a reprint of the Minnesota Great River Road Map/Travel Planner (last printed in 2011) and purchasing of lapel pins. Supplies of both are running very low. The maps would be shipped to the MN-MRPC partner list of 50 distribution sites, used for general meetings, public outreach during the CMP project, sent to fulfill orders received from the MN GRR website, and to fulfill requests from group travel operators resulting from the 2013 American Bus Association marketplace. Motion by Karl Samp and seconded by John Schaubach to approve the MN Great River Road map reprint and lapel pin purchase. Motion carried.

Great River Road 75th Anniversary Celebration: Carol Zoff referred to the Marketing Work Group notes listing possible activities being considered by the National MRPC, and requested ideas on celebration activities that could be implemented in Minnesota in addition to the any national activities that are selected. What "75's" could be promoted? Several ideas listed including 75 microbreweries, 75 famous folks along the river, 75 festivals, farmers markets, etc. Many lists are already available and should not be re-created, but utilized as appropriate. There was also discussion on the possibility of a multi-day effort – possibly designated by the Governor – featuring an event in each destination area, with dignitaries and a press conference. Regional Commissioners and state agency partners could share highlights from their areas/agencies. Cheryl Offerman will check into options. Suggestions were also made to do something on Earth Day; work with a Green Up initiative; request a Governor's Proclamation of Great River Road Week or Year; involve students in activities such as a photo contest or poster contest with many winners displayed at a public event. Other ideas should be forward to the Marketing Work Group. They will be asked to narrow the themes and options.

Agency and Regional Updates

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: John Schaubach reported that closing has been held for the Mississippi Northwoods Habitat Complex and a celebration is coming up; thanks were expressed to the Legislature for their support. The next step will be to turn the land into a destination for active recreation. The Upper Mississippi River Gathering 5 was held on October 6 in Crosby, sponsored by The Trust for Public Land, Nature Conservancy, Initiative Foundation and Mississippi Headwaters Board. Carol Zoff presented information on the Great River Road Corridor Management Plan project and Paul Labovitz spoke about impactful projects along the river. There is increasing evidence of the value of the river. Grand Rapids is now starting a project to look at the river. Usage of the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trail has increased from 15,000 in the first year to 25,000 in the second year. Adventure and active recreation are important branding considerations.

Brainerd to Elk River: Karl Samp reported that the Brainerd-Baxter group continues to meet and he hopes that the local group can partner with Corridor Management Planning regional meetings to align efforts where possible. A group visited the McDougall Barn south of Little Falls, and is working to promote and preserve this site, which was built in 1877 and listed on the National Historic Register.

Elk River to Hastings: A flyer was distributed and all were invited to attend a meeting to review the Minneapolis "Above the Falls" Plan. The meeting is scheduled for December 10, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. at the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board offices.

Hastings to Iowa Border: Sheronne Mulry reported that the Mississippi Queen came up the river again this fall, after several years. Red Wing was the northernmost stop and communities look forward to

future visits. There was discussion on the possibility of linking any 2013 visits to the 75th anniversary of the Great River Road.

Explore Minnesota Tourism: Cheryl Offerman announced that the 2013 Minnesota Tourism Conference will be held February 12 – 13 at the Minneapolis Hilton. The exploreminnesota.com website has been upgraded recently to offer more for travelers. Much recent effort has been focused on electronic marketing. The Red Bull Crashed Ice event will be returning to St. Paul in January 2013.

Minnesota Historical Society: David Kelliher distributed a brochure on the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 including information on a cell phone tour. A presentation on the cell phone tour could be included on a future MN-MRPC meeting agenda. Scenic byways have been applying for Legacy funds (Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants Program) through the Minnesota Historical Society. Projects need to have a historical focus. Information was distributed. Three levels of projects are defined. Available funding for 2013 and beyond will be determined by the Legislature.

Department of Natural Resources: A written report was provided in the meeting packet.

Department of Transportation: Carol Zoff reported that the final four historic wayside restoration projects have been advertised, bids will be opened on December 14 and construction is to be completed by July 1. Camp Ripley is working with the State Historic Preservation Office on context sensitive solutions for fences on the property. MnDOT continues to partner with the National Park Service on the Alternative Transportation System and Visual Resource Protection Plan in the metro area. The Transportation Alternatives program in MAP-21 has resulted in a consolidation of 30 formerly allowed funding categories down to six. Opportunities for scenic byways remain. Final versions of Great River Road interpretive panel designs are nearly completed for Itasca State Park and Sand Prairie Wildlife Management Area.

Conservation Corps

Len Price, Executive Director of the Conservation Corps - Minnesota and Iowa, distributed information about the organization and described possible opportunities for future partnerships. Next year will be the 80th anniversary and a recognition activity will be held during the State Fair. The Conservation Corps has worked with scenic byways, DNR, and Minneapolis Parks and Recreation, and is always looking for projects for young people. Crews work all over the state. They have completed river projects, shoreline restoration and a variety of other efforts. A partnership with the MN-MRPC would be welcome if there are projects needing to be completed. Chairman Johnson thanked Mr. Price for coming to the meeting and sharing information about opportunities.

Next Meeting

2013 meeting scheduled to be determined after January 1, 2013.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

MN-MRPC GRR Corridor Management Plan Project Discussion - 11/29/12 Draft Notes

Carol Zoff presented PowerPoint project overview and requested feedback.

Corridor Plan Leaders: MnMRPC, NPS – MNRRA, MnDOT, and LCC as leads, with potential partner coordination by Trust for Public Land.

Plan funders: FHWA National Scenic Byway grant 80% and NPS – MNRRA 20%. LCC serves as fiscal agent.

Current plan is to begin writing RFP after January 1, with contract(s) to begin in April and will inform the MnMRPC for the next 10 – 15 years.

Plan benefits: Great River Road (GRR) traveler benefits include increased enjoyment, ecological and economic sustainability, improved livability in 60 communities, preserved and enhanced intrinsic resources, context of a working river, engaging stories, technologically savvy, active lifestyle via transportation choices, experiences closer to and on the river, and a signed and marketed Mississippi River Trail (MRT).

Plan assumptions: 60 communities, 21 counties, 6 destination areas, ten state context. Should they remain?

- *John Schaubach – Ask local communities and then determine area.*
- *Mark Anderson – Is economic development included in the charge of the Commission and will economic development be included in the CMP?*
- *Carol Zoff – Mission is to improve quality of life, objectives are to develop and enhance the GRR and amenities, and to preserve and promote the Mississippi River valley and GRR.*
- *John Schaubach – noted October 6 Upper Mississippi Gathering – speakers included Paul Labovitz, “Conservation doesn’t cost, conservation pays.” All CMP issues are interconnected.*
- *Karl Samp - Discussion on connecting to local river initiative and plans, including possible alignment of regional meetings to meet local goals along with project goals.*
- *Cordelia Pierson – U of M interested in looking at impact of riverfront on a community – how do we foster and measure quality of life?*

Sen. Torres Ray – Has traveled the GRR all the way to New Orleans several times. In her district, the eastern side is more affluent than other areas. What is our capacity to assess the GRR route and tax capacity – has this been addressed in all ten states? Little towns are dying while other areas flourish – how can we build more level capacity when there is so much inequality now?

Carol Zoff – As a part of the Project task to update the GRR GIS database property value could be considered as a data field. We will need to identify what we want the information to inform and how other data relates. An example we are hoping to apply is from the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership which includes some tax and property value data in their Riverfront Vitality Indicators (see slide with various fields). The National MRPC could also consider addressing this as a ten-state Strategic Plan implementation task if the Minnesota Commission suggests it.

Cordelia Pierson – Maybe U of M could look at comparable types of communities and help them learn from each other.

Communication Framework: Likely utilize existing web developer to build project-related pages hosted within the current site www.mnmississippiriver.com . Feedback supported this approach.

Fabricate and install MRT signs statewide: Sign plans are complete and signs will be installed starting spring 2013 through 2015. *Feedback was to encourage possible installation of MNRRA signs earlier than 2015 and as soon as possible.*

Project Advisory Team: List of potential Project Advisory Team members shared – need input from Commissioners on how to best populate with members who have shared missions to help others add value to their work.

MRT/GRR and MNRRA maps: Task includes printing 30,000 MNRRA Mississippi River Companions (which show GRR and MRT) and develop printed or web-printable statewide GRR/MRT maps.

Cordelia Pierson – Right now it's very difficult to find the actual GRR route in the metro area – no drivable map and difficult to find on Google Maps.

GIS Inventory of GRR Resources – Carol placed posters of the six Mn GRR Destination Area maps around the room that illustrate much of the current GIS data. The maps show GRR as highlighted with MRT as red dash line that reads through when co-located on GRR. Also includes a legend showing intrinsic resources (parks, boat landings, historic sites, etc.) These can be the basis of new online maps to be further developed, used to conduct needs and opportunity analysis, and illustrate return on investment and change.

The Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership Vitality Indicators could be used as a starting template for additional data aimed at performance measure info to be gathered and analyzed corridor wide.

Cordelia Pierson – Provided background on the Riverfront Vitality Initiative. Idea is to determine – what is important, and what should we measure? A large list was developed for consideration but not all items will be included. Determining what has the most meaning. Seems to be a lot of alignment with language from the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment.

Carol Zoff – Noted that the Mississippi Headwaters Board is undertaking a GID database effort focused on water quality – this could align well with the CMP project, as could the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area's Alternative Transportation Plan and their GRR Visual Resource Protection Plan.

Visual Resource Protection Plan – Input needed on favorite Mississippi River views in the Metro area as well as volunteers for leaf off view point evaluations in April, and leaf on evaluations in June. Discussion on applying this project to the full length of the GRR as part of the CMP project.

Karl Samp - advised doing evaluations during peak fall color season.

Commission Business Plan will be developed – what needs to be done to assure organizational and resource sustainability and maximize return on investment? Input/advice requested.

Communication and Public Relations Plan will be developed to communicate and build community – input/advice requested.

Multi-modal transportation – MNRRA Alternative Transportation System is an example – “increase visitation without increasing congestion.”

Cordelia Pierson – mentioned that MNRRA does project scoping for TOSP – looking for funding opportunities to fit projects. This could be valuable for GRR/MN-MRPC moving forward.

Sen. Torres Ray – Chaired committee to look at parks and trails. Mary Vogel from the U of M provided important information – mapping parks & trails and importance of connectivity. Funding was secured to

complete the mapping. Connection with the U of M (and/or other institutions) is essential – they have instruments and processes that are useful and can help us connect with other areas of the river. Also mentioned the House Environmental Committee will be looking at environmental impacts.

Carol Zoff – Would like to see the project description for parks & trails mapping. We can look into partnering with the U of M/DNR and will need to talk with LCC regarding procedures.

Community Meetings/Focus Groups – A statewide CMP framework can add value to local efforts. These meetings will help confirm alignment and value added. While originally including 18 community meetings (3 each per Destination Area), does the Commission think there is benefit for a larger gathering: state wide, by task, etc?

Other project tasks include confirming the content of the remaining GRR interpretive panels; a visitor impression survey; the byway assessment for route adjustments and opportunities to incorporate the GRR/MRT and intrinsic resource context into transportation, public works and community development planning and design; use technology to partner more effectively and to enhance the visitor experience; and assess and adjust for changes in Personal/Global Economies.

Commission members would like to see the RFP before it is released.