



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202

Madison, WI 53703

2015-2017 Mississippi River Parkway Commission Strategic Planning Report

Mission statement: To lead in preserving, promoting, and enhancing the Great River Road (GRR) National Scenic Byway (NSB) along the Mississippi River benefiting communities and travelers.

Objectives:

1. To enhance and preserve the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and its amenities
2. To promote the GRR NSB and Mississippi River corridor communities
3. To strengthen the 10 state MRPC organization and its partners
4. To provide education on the intrinsic qualities of the GRR NSB and the Mississippi River corridor

Goals:

- Educate and advocate to policy makers about opportunities and threats to the GRR and its amenities.
- Continue involvement in the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (MRCC) Geotourism project.
- Expand existing partnerships and create new partnerships.
- Improve the name recognition (branding) of the GRR.
- Increase the economic impact of overnight travel in GRR communities.
- 10 states with full funding and full membership.
- Further develop the GRR network of interpretive centers (IC).
- Improve www.mrpcmembers.com as an archive and vehicle for strategic participation.
- Develop a 10 state Corridor Management Plan (CMP).



Strategies:

Legislative/Stakeholders

- Meet with governor and legislature between each meeting. (states, Board of Directors [BOD])
 - Coordinate local meetings prior to an organizational meeting in Washington DC.
 - Coordinate with Mississippi River Cities and Townships Initiative (MRCTI) and MRCC.
- Work with local leaders, elected officials and stakeholders to attend the National Geographic familiarization tours. (states)
- Invite local leaders, elected officials and stakeholders to MRPC Annual and Semi-Annual meetings. (states, BOD)
- Create legislative subcommittee by assigning a commissioner from the party in control from each state. (BOD)
- Create an annual report that can also be used for legislative meetings, as a press release, and an e-newsletter to stakeholders, legislature, and local media. (states, NO)
 - Get baseline room tax collection data from key GRR destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to show travel trends, economic impact of travel, and the importance of tourism in the region. (states, NO, Marketing, Mississippi River Country [MRC])
 - Survey ICs for visitation rates. (C&H, states)
 - Develop annual return on investment (ROI) reports. (states, NO)
 - Compile and summarize the state commission, MRPC and MRC accomplishments. (states, BOD, MRC, NO)
 - Provide letters acknowledging gratitude and benefit to those who helped us achieve each year's accomplishments (states)
- Invite Transportation, Natural Resource, Historical Society, Agriculture, and Tourism state agency leaders, area private sector partners, tourism professionals, IC staff and Geotourism sites to attend MRPC Semi-annual and Annual meetings. (states, NO)
- Train and inform DMOs, local businesses and ICs on the GRR and IC network through a front-line training session/kit available at www.mrpcmembers.com. Host trainings at interpretive center. Provide a certificate of appreciation/completion and photograph the event for a post-training recognition and press release (C&H, states)



Transportation

- Work with Departments of Transportation (DOTs) to compile GRR shape files for Mississippi River Trails (MRT) and GRR for use with MRC app and www.mrpcmembers.com. (NO, Transportation)
- Survey the ten-state route to determine if the GRR is signed in a consistent and continuous manner, assessing the sign locations, condition, effectiveness, and provide a cost estimate for needed improvements. (Transportation, states)
- Survey city/DMOs/IC/county/state/MRCC/MRT maps to determine if they incorporate the GRR route and logo in mapping. (Transportation, states)
- Educate and advocate to transportation policy makers about opportunities and threats to the GRR and its amenities. (BOD, Transportation)
- Develop a 10-state Corridor Management Plan (CMP) following Federal Highway Administration plan requirements. (Transportation, ERA, C&H, Marketing, BOD)

Promotion/Branding

- Create a plan to be a resource for encouraging businesses to nominate themselves to the MRCC Geotourism website and provide information on future opportunities and directives. (states, Marketing, NO)
- Leverage the National Scenic Byway Foundation: their IPW options, website, webinars, advocacy, etc. (states, Marketing, NO)
- Encourage all ICs to submit nominations to the MRCC Geotourism website. (states, C&H)
- Research navigation systems that include the GRR. (Transportation, Marketing, NO)
- Compile all states videos on a comprehensive YouTube channel on www.experiencemississippi.com showing the different regions of the GRR and promote to new stakeholders/travelers. (Marketing, NO)
- Develop passport, itineraries and regional marketing effort options (boutique trails, wine tours, and get outdoors/get active promotions.) (Marketing, states, NO)
- Encourage local residents to drive the GRR. (Marketing, states, NO)
- Target markets based on GRR intrinsic qualities. (Marketing, states, NO)
- Focus on marketing, including branding, the website, blogs, and social media marketing, nationally and internationally, to promote the GRR and its communities. (NO, Marketing, C&H, committees, BOD, states)
- Continue focusing on the opportunities available through the MRCC Geotourism project. (states, Marketing, NO)
- Work with MRCC to create an annual special event featuring the GRR, changing the theme each year based on an intrinsic quality (Year of the...) and incorporate ICs as hosts for the events. (states, Marketing, C&H, NO)



- Secure additional funding and promotion for the September “Drive the Great River Road” month and measure the ROI. (NO, Marketing, states, BOD)

Strengthen the Organization

- Archive meeting presentations permanently on www.mrpcmembers.com, including past ones. (NO)
- Invite MRC to host their strategic planning session in conjunction with the MRPC Annual meeting and try to meet with them at least every three years while continuing to invite them to meet during our national meetings. (NO)
- Approach MRT about their interest in becoming a member of the MRPC since a bike-able GRR has always been an MRPC goal and design guide. (BOD)
- Add National Scenic Byways Foundations 2013-2015 – Strategic Plan to www.mrpcmembers.com. (NO)
- Post a roster of commission leadership past and present on www.mrpcmembers.com. (NO)
- Survey NO files, members, agencies and the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium for documents, charters/statutes, corridor management plans and links to relevant organizational materials to archive on www.mrpcmembers.com. (NO, BOD, states)
- Create a team to review the archived GRR/MRPC materials. (BOD, NO)
- Create an outline for states to complete for their annual report that NO can turn into one compilation piece. (NO, states)
- Update current PowerPoint presentation for commissioners to use to raise the identity of MRPC and the GRR within state agencies and local communities. Post presentation on www.mrpcmembers.com (NO)
- Develop a state member benefit package, including ROI presentation and a policy for non-dues paying states. (BOD, NO)
 - Create a white paper describing benefits of participating and supporting MRPC, and statements from each state’s high level official supporting MRPC and describing why they fund the organization.
 - Describe the economic impact of hosting a meeting and do not hold meetings in non-dues paying states.
 - Work with members in non-dues paying states to find ways to support their efforts on a state-by-state basis.
 - Assign each committee a task to show the MRPC benefits provided by that committee (Transportation committee’s potential to provide project engineers GRR/MRT alignments, intrinsic resource inventory/contact information and other



context information, marketing assistance through Marketing, IC network through C&H, Stewardship award through ERA, as examples.)

- Make at least one annual visit to review ICs using the visit check list forms from www.mrpcmembers.com. (states, C&H)
- Assign state chairperson to know their ICs and check on their status. (BOD, C&H)
- Start database of GRR signage photos. (Transportation, Marketing, C&H)
- Create a CMP committee to coordinate a 10-state CMP effort. (BOD)
- Develop shape files for GRR if they don't currently exist. (states, Transportation)
- Review each state's CMP for incorporations into the 10-state CMP. (states, Transportation, CMP committee)
- Update Interpretive Plan and Toolkit, including looking at 11 interpretive themes identified and determine how to further develop each theme. (states, Transportation, BOD, CMP committee)
- Update state CMPs to include MRT. (states, Transportation, CMP committee)
- Evaluate staff and explore staffing options to carry out strategic plan (executive committee)



Timeline:

Immediate/Three months

- Meet with governor and legislature between each meeting. (states, Board of Directors [BOD])
 - Coordinate local meetings prior to an organizational meeting in Washington DC.
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- Create an outline for states to complete for their annual report that NO can turn into one compilation piece. (NO, states)



Six months/By Annual Meeting

- Create legislative subcommittee by assigning a commissioner from the party in control from each state. (BOD)
- Train and inform DMOs, local businesses and ICs on the GRR and IC network through a front-line training session/kit available at www.mrpcmembers.com. Host trainings at interpretive center. Provide a certificate of appreciation/completion and photograph the event for a post-training recognition and press release (C&H, states)
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Ongoing/Annual

- Create an annual report that can also be used for legislative meetings, as a press release, and an e-newsletter to stakeholders, legislature, and local media. (states, NO)
 - Get baseline room tax collection data from key GRR destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to show travel trends, economic impact of travel, and the importance of tourism in the region. (states, NO, Marketing, Mississippi River Country [MRC])
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- Encourage local residents to drive the GRR. (Marketing, states, NO)
- Target markets based on GRR intrinsic qualities. (Marketing, states, NO)
- Focus on marketing, including branding, the website, blogs, and social media marketing, nationally and internationally, to promote the GRR and its communities. (NO, Marketing, C&H, committees, BOD, states)
- Continue focusing on the opportunities available through the MRCC Geotourism project. (states, Marketing, NO)
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- Assign state chairperson to know their ICs and check on their status. (BOD, C&H)

2016

- Work with MRCC to create an annual special event featuring the GRR, changing the theme each year based on an intrinsic quality (Year of the...) and incorporate ICs as hosts for the events. (states, Marketing, C&H, NO)



- Secure additional funding and promotion for the September “Drive the Great River Road” month and measure the ROI. (NO, Marketing, states, BOD)
- Start database of GRR signage photos. (Transportation, Marketing, C&H)

2017

- Create a CMP committee to coordinate a 10-state CMP effort. (BOD)
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