

MRPC Marketing Committee Conference Call Notes December 18, 2015

Attendees: MN, WI, IA, MO, KY, MS, LA, Pilot Pro Tem, National Office (NO)

Meeting began at 10:03am.

- **National Geographic Geotourism update:** NO reported that nominations can still be submitted on the website, but cannot be guaranteed for inclusion since the deadline has passed. 300 nominations have been approved and 250 nominations are pending. There are duplications on the website, yet some interpretive centers are missing. Marketing Committee requested a list of the interpretive centers that have been approved and the ones that are pending. NO will pass along this request and will update the committee.

During the Board call, a request was made to add a “Great River Road Interpretive Center” category to the website. NO will update the committee on the decision.

- **2016 marketing/advertising plan options:** NO confirmed the Board approved the marketing budget for 2016 that includes the production of a new 10-state map and three seasonal promotions. NO requested that any state that needs to provide, or amend, their requested map quantity should do so by December 23rd. Once the cost of the map is determined, the remaining budget will be used for the seasonal promotions. The map budget is determined by the print quantity.

KY shared an advertising package that *Southern Travel and Lifestyle* extended to them through their “Power of Partnership” program. KY recommended committee members send NO their favorite advertising vehicles and any sales contacts for consideration. Additionally, MN recommended adding any recommended niche marketing vehicles, including birding and biking vehicles. NO will then contact them for potential advertising packages and cooperative advertising opportunities. NO will provide a deadline for submitting this information.

- **Discuss map sponsorship ideas for 2016:** NO shared that they are working with Meredith Publications to draft a proposal to create a 10-state advertising supported travel guide. NO will provide the proposal when it is submitted.

NO discussed the possibility of finding a corporate sponsor (or sponsors) to cover production costs without needing to sell advertising. KY recommended that a partnership package be drafted that can be used to present to potential sponsors. NO said they could create a sponsorship package and presentation that could be used when meeting with possible sponsors based on the list of potential sponsors to tailor the package to their interests. MS recommended that each state create a list of potential sponsors that is then

shared with the committee prior to contact so there is a cohesive presentation and not multiple requests from states. All states agreed. MN requested a deadline to present a list of potential sponsors. NO will provide a deadline for submitting this information.

- **Create priorities and steps for work plan items:** NO reviewed the Work Plan items. Most items are in progress. NO discussed a partnership with National Scenic Byway Foundation (NSBF). LA provided information on membership dues which are \$150 for a state to join. KY confirmed they are members and find value in their programs including brochure distribution at IPW. LA announced Rob Draper from NSBF is currently looking to fill open positions on their National Board of Directors. LA will send an email with more information and NO will share the email with the committee. KY recommended MRPC join the NSBF. NO confirmed with Pilot Pro Tem that Marketing Committee can approve the use of their 2016 line item. NO will contact NSBF.

Motion to approve using allocated Marketing Committee budget to pay National Scenic Byway Foundation dues for 2016 by MN. Second by LA. Motion carried.

- **Committee collaboration ideas:** NO introduced an idea for a 10-state biking event that was presented on the Board call. KY confirmed concept for the bike event incorporate Interpretive Centers with activities for families who are supporting the bike riders. NO discussed bringing the event to the Environmental, Recreation, Agriculture (ERA) committee since it has a recreational component and the Marketing Committee can market the event once it is planned. KY requested giving ERA a deadline to decide whether they will take the lead on the project so momentum continues on planning the event. MN also offered that the Transportation Committee may also have interest in organizing the event. Committee agreed the concept of the event touches each committee.

KY proposed including event related sponsorship options in the sponsorship packages being developed for the travel guide. Potential sponsors may also want to be involved in the event's planning process. MN agreed and said bike companies may be interested in a partnerships related to the bike trails along the Great River Road and this event. NO said they will include event sponsorship opportunities in the sponsorship package options.

KY believes that the committee that best feels they can get the event started should take on the project. KY referenced a local bike event that has grown to over 300 riders and has many options for involvement as inspiration. More information on that ride can be found at ridethefaultline.com. MO confirmed the popularity of bike rides and races and recommended that bicycling-related consumer shows may be a good option to find potential sponsors and advertising options. MN asked what Mississippi River Trail's involvement will be in the event. NO said they will find out. KY requested the original email outlining the idea for the event be sent to the full committee. NO will distribute the email. MN requested that the MRPC keep the momentum going on the event as someone will do an event like this and the MRPC should do it first.

- **Merchandise update:** NO confirmed that Land's End is producing the MRPC apparel now which is higher quality than the merchandise produced by Café Press. Land's End doesn't produce non-apparel merchandise and a vendor is still needed for those materials. A link to purchase the merchandise is on experiencemississippiriver.com. Pilot Pro Tem asked if Land's End will present their materials at the Semi-Annual meeting in La Crosse. NO said they will discuss the idea with Wisconsin.
- **Other business:** Committee members wished each other a joyful holiday season.

Meeting adjourned at 11:06am.

Updates on agenda items not discussed during the meeting:

- **Promotional toolkit updates:** The PowerPoint is online at mrpcmembers.com and was distributed on USB drives provided by Dr. Ruth Hawkins. The certificate of completion is also available online. NO has more clings available if states need them. NO will add this item to the next Marketing Committee agenda to get an update on how the meetings are going with businesses and stakeholders.
- **MRC updates:** MRC held their strategic planning session on December 8 in St Louis, MO. The meeting was attended by five states. The committee voted to host a breakfast for Japanese attendees at IPW in New Orleans, taking advantage of the event's location on the Mississippi River. Notes for the session will be available soon.
- **State reports:** NO encouraged states to provide reports via email to share what they are working on in their states.
- **Set meeting dates for 2016:** NO will email potential dates for consideration.