



March 30, 2020

Federal Highway Administration:

I am pleased to write this letter in support of your application to designate the Great River Road as an All American Road.

Connect Worldwide-Japan is the leading tourism marketing organization representing U.S. destinations in Japan. The Japanese market is vital to the U.S. inbound tourism sector. Each year more than 3.5 million Japanese visit the U.S. and contribute over \$16 billion in travel and tourism spending. In comparison to other inbound markets (excluding Canada and Mexico), Japan is the 2nd largest producer of visitors behind the United Kingdom and the 2nd largest in spending behind China. Japanese visitors have been coming to the U.S. since the 1960's and they represent one of the most stable sources of inbound tourism for the U.S. as a whole and for regions, states and cities across the country.

Japanese visitors have a strong affection for the U.S. Key market motivators are the desire to see our natural beauty and scenery, to experience our famous and noteworthy sites, and to immerse themselves in our local culture and culinary offerings—the things that make us “typically American” to Japanese. The Mississippi River and the states bordering it are seen as typifying the nostalgia of the America they learned about in school, saw in movies and listened to in music. Japanese over 50 in particular grew up on the stories of Mark Twain and Tennessee Williams and other American novels set in the region. They became devotees of New Orleans jazz, Elvis Presley, B.B. King, Bob Dylan and Prince, to name just a few of the musicians who help draw Japanese visitors to the Mississippi River states.

Today that nostalgia for what the Mississippi River represents attracts Japanese tourists who want to explore the region through Mississippi River cruises or by car or motorcoach on the Great River Road. A dream of many Japanese is to travel the length of the Great River Road and discover the charm of the communities lining the river from Minnesota to Louisiana. Japanese are highly attuned to official designations so designating the Great River Road as an All American Road will resonate with them and be a way for tour operators and tourism marketing organizations to draw more visitors to the states.

I wish you much success in your worthy endeavor.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marjorie L. Dewey', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Marjorie L. Dewey

President