



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



Mississippi River Parkway Commission Marketing Committee Video Conference Call

October 8, 2020 | 11 AM-12 PM

NOTES

Attendees: IA, AR, MN, MS, WI, and National Office (NO)

Meeting started at 11:06am.

I. 2020 marketing plan

- COVID-19 Messaging Update and State Reports: Pilot combined agenda items. IA reported they will meet in November and have new Commissioners appointed. Byways have been promoted as safe travel option through IA DOT. Some Travel Information Centers reopened although some remain closed. Seasonal centers closing soon. AR shared recent travel statistics show only small drop in travel September 2020 to 2019. New AR Tourism Director, Travis Napper is working on EDA grant. COVID-19 numbers remain high and state remains in Phase 2, although Phase 3 hasn't been defined. State has also received strong coverage on GRR and other scenic byways as safe travel option. AR had wet September so uncertain how color will develop which impacts state fall travel. Working on virtual King Biscuit Blues Festival is strange to not plan for in-person event. AR also finds AAR narrative helpful in other uses. MN is continuing to use AAR application as messaging guide. MN received pick-ups regarding Drive the GRR month including a cover story in a MN publication which received good response. Advertising ran in September through *MN Monthly* both in print and online, and in e-newsletter along with exposure in *Home & Away* MN/WI edition. MS received some tourism recovery funding through MS use of CARES Act money that needs to be used by end of year which has been a challenge to pull together a quick 3-4-month campaign. Mask mandate has been lifted statewide but not in all communities. Areas continue to encourage responsible visits. MS MRT grant has been submitted for biking trails. MS is raising funds to do tear-off maps of MS GRR. Delta Blues Museum is open and continues to see traffic from people traveling GRR. WI Governor has announced new phase through early November limiting indoor venue occupancy. Fall colors are good along WI GRR leading to strong travel. Promoting safe activities along GRR such as visiting locks and dams, historical sites, and parks. WI tourism promotional grant is completed with good reviews. Visitor Guide requests coming from

Mission Statement: Preserving, promoting and enhancing the Mississippi River Parkway for communities and travelers

Phone: 866-763-8310 • Fax: 608-242-8896

Web Site: ExperienceMississippiRiver.com • E-mail: info@experiencemississippiriver.com



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



Midwest Living ad and response from past Geiger Tours. WI Chair working to receive funding from communities along WI GRR. WI GRR applied for funding through WI CARES Act TRAVEL grant. Travel is strong along GRR but there is big divide between people wearing and not wearing masks.

- Drive the Great River Road Month update: **NO stated a full report on promotion will be included in third quarter report** but number of entries greatly outperformed goals with 7,366 entries.

II. 2021 marketing plan: NO outlined budgeting process of committees submitting wish list items to Board for inclusion in next year's budget. NO presented list of items for discussion but offered opportunities to include other recommendations:

2021 Marketing Tools To Be Considered:

- All American Road (AAR): based on feedback from September meeting, NO presented "Grand Opening" concept for announcing GRR as AAR and relaunching importance as National Scenic Byway. NO recommended using AAR designation as early year promotion and full-year campaign using state applications as guide for content: website, social media, e-newsletters and public relations. Public relations efforts would promote AAR designation and what makes byway special, but also locally to educate stakeholders on asset importance. Pilot reminded AAR designation is a promotion of byway's national significance and to promote it as a destination. AR noted more education is needed locally and statewide on GRR and byways. AR guessed half of states' population couldn't identify there are three byways in-state. AR stressed importance to get people to know about us. MS agreed and believed educational component is important as well as promoting as a national destination. MN recommended we demonstrate why AAR designation is important for local communities and stakeholders. NO agreed and said it was a good point to share to all committees for consideration. NO asked what could be used by states to get partners excited about AAR distinction. AR offered window clings to designate being along the GRR and/or driving GRR. NO noted requests for pins from travelers. Pilot noted pins are collector's item for many. Pilot also mentioned car magnet popularity. Pilot shared NSBF has talking points and economic data that can be used to prepare a fact sheet for stakeholders. WI offered tying into geocaching popularity to promote AAR. NO said they could price geocoins with GRR logo.

AR asked if Viking Tours are starting. MS confirmed and Vicksburg approved docking station for them and American Queen. Pilot noted Viking is taking reservations and featuring destination in materials. IA had been contacted about docks but not recently. WI thought a destination was included regarding

Mission Statement: Preserving, promoting and enhancing the Mississippi River Parkway for communities and travelers

Phone: 866-763-8310 • Fax: 608-242-8896

Web Site: ExperienceMississippiRiver.com • E-mail: info@experiencemississippiriver.com



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



Norwegian heritage in the area. MS shared tool kit for locals to promote in chat with link showing communities and 2022 planned launches.

- Print map: NO noted printed map is redone every other year and 2021 is time for next addition. New map could use files collected through Transportation Committee but it's balancing promotional vs. technical map. NO reminded committee in past all dues paying states received 10,000 maps and shipping to one location. States can elect to ship to multiple destinations if they pay for it. MN confirmed they have used this option in past satisfactorily. All agreed new map necessary especially sharing AAR branding.
- Mobile app: NO shared interest in updating app with new map files. Costly project but hasn't been updated in many years. Committee agreed.
- Websites (experiencemississippiriver.com, mrpcmembers.com): Based on AAR designation, NO recommends new website to maximize storytelling format for articles and better navigation by theme. Committee agreed. NO shared Board's interest in redoing mrpcmembers.com site.
- Promotions: Interpretive Centers (IC) campaign and Drive GRR month: NO presented idea to include an IC campaign in conjunction with AAR designation along with maintaining Drive campaign. NO clarified IC campaign could take the place of food-travel spring promotion along with an AAR promotional launch. NO noted deliverables such as pins, car magnets, etc. could be facilitated through ICs as key chains were used in past.

Pilot recommended NO create a survey that includes wish list items pricing so committee can prioritize spending. **NO will work on pulling pricing based on feedback for review.**

- III. Annual meeting update: Pilot shared attendance for annual meeting was strong with 85-90 attendees on average per session. Eddy Harris received around 150 attendees which was promoted using traveler e-newsletter list. Pilot was encouraged attendance didn't dip during sessions with numbers holding throughout. Pilot explained evaluation have been sent out to all attendees and overall response has been good. **NO will be providing a full report to the Board in December.** AR was impressed by strong audio for Eddy Harris in France which was better than other international conferences attended.
- IV. Mississippi River Country – Update: NO shared MRC has an approved budget.
- V. Upcoming meeting dates: November 12 and December 10, 11am-Noon
- VI. NO other business

Meeting concluded at 12:06pm.

Mission Statement: Preserving, promoting and enhancing the Mississippi River Parkway for communities and travelers

Phone: 866-763-8310 • Fax: 608-242-8896

Web Site: ExperienceMississippiRiver.com • E-mail: info@experiencemississippiriver.com