MRCTI **DRAFT** Letter of Support

Rev. 5

To Colin Wellenkamp and the Mayors of the Mississippi

River Cities and Towns Initiative,

We, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, acknowledge and support your work on behalf of the Mississippi River Corridor. As the 10-state organization founded in 1938 to promote, preserve and enhance the Great River Road National Scenic Byway along the Mississippi River, benefitting communities and travelers, we share many of the objectives of the Safeguarding Mississippi River Together (SMRT) proposed legislation and your 2021 policy agenda.

In particular, we stand with your goal of a grant program for infrastructure repair, resilience, and adaptation and your 2021 policy objective for increased funding for the National Scenic Byway program. These two MRCTI program aspects represent benefits we, too, promote for both travelers and the Mississippi River Valley economy because they ensure maintenance and resilience for natural and built infrastructure into the future.

In addition, we see that the proposed Economic Development Grant Program has the potential to assist many MRPC partner organizations located in small River communities. The proposed act’s stated objective of helping communities move away from less sustainable economies and toward tourism and recreation aligns with our engagement with local visitor and convention bureaus and state tourism offices to promote the intrinsic resources of the byway.

Finally, a Mississippi River Corridor Economic Profile, as described in the SMRT Act, has the potential to help monitor the whole valley’s economic development, especially the roles of tourism and recreation, and would help MRPC better address its promotions to benefit communities as they change and serve travelers and recreation enthusiasts.

We are encouraged by MRCTI’s efforts, and those of others, to seek comprehensive approaches to address Mississippi River Valley “natural resources, cultural heritage, economic viability, scenic quality, recreational amenities, and other features”. With this letter of support, MRPC encourages more cooperation and coordination at state and federal levels, and through public and private collaboration, on behalf of the Mississippi River Valley.

Sincerely,

Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Board of Directors