



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

P.O. Box 7395
Madison, WI 53707



Mississippi River Parkway Commission Transportation Committee Meeting (part of Annual Meeting, Alton, IL) September 21, 2023 | 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Minutes

Introductions

MRPC – Norma Pruitt
Arkansas – Jeff Ingram
Illinois – no representatives
Iowa – Martin Graber
Kentucky – James LeFevre
Louisiana – no representatives
Minnesota – Peter MacDonagh
Mississippi – no representatives
Missouri – Mark Kross, Dr. David Perkins (MO State),
Tennessee – Michael McClanahan
Wisconsin – Francis Schelfhout, Larry Quamme

Minutes from July 28, 2023 (Teleconference – Committee Meeting)

Minutes have been posted online.

Mississippi River Trail (MRT)

- Presented materials (Appendix A)
- Trademark
 - Established in 1996 – MRT, Inc. – TN Non-Profit
 - Established with previous members/board members that MRT, Inc. – defunct.
 - Trademark not currently secured.
 - TN to pursue options (non-legal)
 - WI to pursue options (legal) if necessary, on behalf of MRPC
 - Trademark Legal Fund = \$1,500
 - Transportation Committee Annual Budget is \$500
 - C & H – dedicated their annual budget at Board Mtg 9/20/23.
 - ERA – dedicated their annual budget at Board Mtg 9/20/23.
- Sign Plate
 - The signs/image covered under the Trademark are in existence in all 10-states (substantially less in WI and IL)
 - M1-9 modified US Bike Route sign plate – interim approval under old version of MUTCD but was not an “in perpetuity” approval.
 - New requests for sign plate approvals would be coordinated with the FHWA representatives from each state/region covering the 10-State

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MRPC

- Options in order of preference:
 - Secure Trademark followed by 10-State request to continue to use/maintain the previous sign plate – request “in perpetuity.”
 - Secure Trademark followed by 10-State request to use existing US Bike Route sign plate with “MRT” vs. a number on the sign plate.
 - No Trademark secured – embrace US Bike Route 45 (currently planned route – along Mississippi River)
- Designation - 3 Step Process – US Bike Route – AASHTO
 - Draft Route
 - Google search for MRT and existing signage establishes the existing route in all 10-states.
 - MRT substantially follows the GRR, but consideration for alternative routes should be given where parallel, less busy routes or alternative facilities (paths, trails, bike lanes, etc.) exist now that previously did not.
 - Frequently in or near Cities/Villages
 - Regional/Local routes/trails should be overlaid where appropriate for mutual benefit (funding/marketing)
 - Both Existing, Alternatives, Proposed Routes can be built (KMZs created) in Google Maps – Francis will build “How to” document for next Committee Meeting
 - Local Agreements/Support
 - This will be the “heavy lift” when it comes to time and resources.
 - WI: 66 Cities/Villages/Towns + 8 Counties
 - KY: 3 Cities + 4 Counties
 - TN: 5 Counties
 - MN: Complete but confirmed this was where the effort is required.
 - State DOT’s Bike/Ped Coordinators would be best contacts/presenters of this effort.
 - Submit Application (followed by signage)
 - 10-State Application – All in this together
 - AASHTO application requires letter/resolution of support from every municipality that the MRT runs through (regardless of roadway jurisdiction – i.e. State highway through a Township, still need Township letter/resolution)
 - Signage efforts should follow approval of US Bike Route
 - Maintenance of signs should be discussed – encourage DOT responsibility as US Bike Route
- ACTION ITEMS:
 - Create “How To” document – begin with mapping your route in GoogleMaps

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Interpretive Centers – Wayfinding Signage

- Wayfinding signage inventory (including pictures) to ICs.
 - Emily and Francis creating a working document (Appendix B)
 - Baseline Signage Standards Categories:
 - On/Visually available from GRR or visually available after you turn off the GRR
 - WI has 4 sign minimum (2 each direction) 1 ahead, 1 at/turn
 - IA has 2 sign minimum (1 each direction) 1 at/turn (no ahead)
 - Could there be a minimum and desirable signing standard for each category?
 - Off 1 – along same road that you turn off the GRR.
 - Off 2 – a distance great enough to possibly warrant reassurance but along same road.
 - Off 3 – multiple turns or off so great a distance
 - No signage – To far from GRR or “for profit” organization/site
 - Establish Existing Conditions/Inventory – anyone can do this using Google Maps/Earth
 - Inventory completed in WI – reports available for examples, includes:
 - Parcel maps – overall site picture (access points, parking, etc.)
 - Google Maps directions – shows main highways, provides directions/turns, also provides likely path of travel from north/south.
 - GIS Map and/or inventory – provides latitude/longitude, location, age, condition, etc. (this will likely vary from state to state)
 - Picture inventory – this can be gathered from Google Maps/Earth
 - Spreadsheet inventory completed in IA (Emily Whaley)
 - Establish Baseline Signage Category per IC – this should be a discussion with the state MRPC, state DOT and the IC
 - Maintenance Plan/Agreement
 - There must be a benefit to the IC – “What’s in it for them?”
 - Maintenance – who is responsible for replacement (this may be multiple jurisdictions), but who is responsible for reporting damage, wear, stolen, etc.?
 - Would like ICs to report on signs on some regularity – annually or biennially with checklists?
 - This would hold the MRPC accountable to “supporting” our ICs that are required to have MRPC/GRR signage within their sites.
- ACTION ITEMS:
 - Create “How To” document – begin with parcel maps.

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Items for future discussion

- Mark Kross mentioned that the NCHRP (National Cooperative Highway Research Program) is soliciting for the next cycle of research projects. There may be a possibility that there could be projects that would directly or indirectly impact efforts along the GRR – Mark will bring the list of projects up for consideration by the TRB (Transportation Research Board) so that if MRPC either as a 10-State Organization or by recommendation of one of the committees would support or encourage a project be selected.

Next Meetings

- MRPC Board Meeting – December 8, 2023
- Transportation Committee Meetings (3rd Friday – Quarterly @ 9:00am EST)
 - November 17, 2023

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APPENDIX A

Mississippi River Trail (MRT) – A U.S. Bike Route

How do we get there...

Trademark:

- US Patent & Trademark Office ([Trademark Electronic Search System \(TESS\)](http://www.uspto.gov) (uspto.gov))
 - Mississippi River Trail (Serial #:78315052) – TN Non-Profit
 - Disclaimer: No claim is made to the exclusive right to use “Mississippi River Trail” apart from the mark as shown
-
- **This is MRT, Inc. logo – not applicable to our discussions.**
 - MRT (Serial #:78315041) – TN Non-Profit (seems to be the same group)
 - Trademark includes: Design plus words, letters and/or numbers
 - Color is not claimed as a feature of the mark
-
- **FROM MN WEBPAGE CAPTURE:**
 - Confirms M1-9 alternate version approved in 1996 – and stated “is used by state highway departments for all signed portions of the MRT route.”
 - Ruth Hawkins – RHAWKINS@astate.edu (confirmed email)
 - Terry Eastin – terry@mississippirivertrail.org???
 - Todd Antoine – tantoine@grgstl.org (confirmed email)
- Action – Next Steps
 - This is obviously the sign plate that is currently being used
 - How is this possible?
 - Were the initial installs done under this non-profit?

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- How was MN-MRT installed?
- Can we pursue the same permission?
- Does MRPC need to own the trademark?
- If MRPC needs to own the trademark – what are the steps
- All of this is a National Office – National Letterhead – action?
 - Who (committee) leads this effort?
 - Is there a need for investigation?
 - Step by step breakdown?
 - Who (committee) supports this effort?
 - How might a committee support this effort?

Sign Plate (see trademark for MRT above):

- Interim approval under previous MUTCD by FHWA
- Was not requested or “grand-fathered in” when the new MUTCD was published
- Actions – Next Steps
 - Without Trademark ownership or permission to use, we should not move forward with this
 - Petition to FHWA for either another interim approval or a perpetual approval
 - MRPC National Office – National Letterhead – 10-State Support – 10-States in a different status (Designated, Signed or Both)
 - Who (committee) leads this effort?
 - Who (committee) supports this effort?
 - How might a committee support this effort?
 - **Vehicle and Trail size signage interim approval should be sought as part of this request**

Route Status (per State should be established):

- Designated:
 - Drafting the Route
 - **Draft Routes between neighboring Mississippi River States**
 - Securing Local Agreements along the Route
 - Preparing and Submitting the AASHTO Application (see Actions – Next Steps)
- Signed:
 - Level of Signage
 - At Turns (“ahead” and “here”)
 - Reassurance (within long sections without turns)
 - Signage Condition
 - Range of installation age

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- Locations of consistent signage has been maintained?
- Status of all 10-States would inform the steps regarding Trademark and Sign Plate and would likely bolster any attempts/applications for either
- Actions – Next Steps
 - Prepare and Submit AASHTO Application for US Bike Route Designation of the MRT
 - MRPC National Office – National Letterhead – 10-State Support – 10-States in a different status (Designated, Signed or Both)
 - Who (committee) leads this effort?
 - Who (committee) supports this effort?
 - How might a committee support this effort?
 - MN – looking for documentation on USBR agreement (MRT converted to USBR 46)
 - Once Designated USBR – How to Sign
 - Funding Options (*MN-DOT, WisDOT*)
 - NPS
 - FHWA Scenic Byway Grant
 - DNR

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APPENDIX B

Interpretive Center Signs – Establishing Baseline Signage Standards

Categories:

- On/Visually available from GRR or visually available after you turn off the GRR
- Off 1 – along same road that you turn off the GRR
- Off 2 - a distance great enough to possibly warrant reassurance but along same road
- Off 3 – multiple turns or off so great a distance
- Others?
- Is there ever a “No signing” category?

Category Baseline Signage:

- On: “Ahead” and “At”/”Turn” signs from both directions
- Off 1 – Additional “At” sign
- Off 2 – Additional “Reassurance” signs as appropriate
- Off 3 – Additional “Ahead” and “At”/”Turn” sign per additional turn (single direction) with additional “Reassurance” signs as appropriate

Workflow:

- Existing Conditions: provide inventory (Departments)
- Establish Baseline Signage based on Categories (MRPC/States/ICs)
- Maintenance Plan/Agreement (Workflow probably at the IC level, within the state)

Considerations:

- Multiple signing jurisdictions (standards/sizes/name/install/maintenance)
- Simplicity of all levels of documentation (Department to Public to IC)
- ICs with large acreage or multiple entrances or both
- MUTCD Restrictions on Recreational/Cultural Signs
 - Section 2M.09 Destination Guide Signs
 - May be posted at intersection/crossroads to access or road to access
 - May be posted as supplemental guidance signs to direct road users to the destination
 - Where access/crossroad leads exclusively to the destination, guide sign and exit direction sign may be posted
 - Did not find any distance restrictions – but logic should probably be applied
- Business vs. Non-Profit (Brewery vs. Brewery Museum)
- IC could be in two categories depending on GRR direction of travel (if off GRR)

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Categories (examples):

- On/Visually available from GRR or visually available after you turn off the GRR
 - IA
 - George M. Verity Riverboat Museum
 - WI
 - GRR Visitor & Learning Center (Freedom Park)
 - Genoa National Fish Hatchery & GRR IC
 - Stonefield Historic Site
 - Stonefield Village
 - Stonefield Historic Site
 - Stonefield
 - Stonefield Village Parking
 - Potosi Brewing Company
- Off 1 – along same road that you turn off the GRR
 - WI
 - Villa Louis
- Off 2 - a distance great enough to possibly warrant reassurance but along same road...
- Off 3 – multiple turns or off so great a distance
 - IA
 - Toolesboro Indian Mounds National Historic Landmark
 - WI
 - Fort Crawford
 - Villa Louis
 - WisDOT has signs, but city has none once traveler leaves the State Highway System
- Others?
- Is there ever a “No signing” category?
 - WI
 - Potosi Brewing Company
 - Potosi Brewing Company (for-profit)
 - Potosi National Brewery Museum (non-profit)

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