

# Corridor Management Plan Update 2012

## The Great River Road In Illinois National Scenic Byway



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**ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.**

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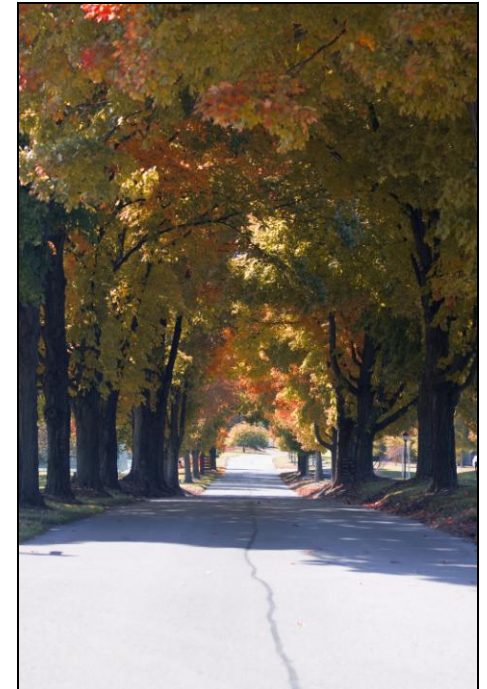


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## Great River Road in Illinois National Scenic Byway

- 557 miles long
- 15 counties
- 59 incorporated communities
- 29 state recreation and/or conservation areas
- More than 40 museums and interpretive centers
- More than 20 state historic sites and memorials



The Great River Road in Illinois follows the Mississippi River along Illinois' western border.

# Executive Summary

The Great River Road in Illinois National Scenic Byway (GRR) exposes travelers to the natural splendor, history, cultures, people, and romance of the Mississippi, the nation's mightiest river. Winding along Illinois' western border for more than 550 miles, the Byway features scenic vistas, parks, and places for outdoor recreation; historic sites, people and cultures of regional, national and international importance; architectural splendors of a bygone era; and intimate glimpses into the heart of American agriculture, industry and commerce. The Mississippi River, long a national icon, has gained international recognition as one of the world's great rivers and is a burgeoning tourist market in Mexico, Japan, China, Germany, and other European countries.

The GRR was officially designated a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration in 2000 and the original Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP) was developed that year. The Byway Marketing and Interpretive Plan (MIP) was produced in 2003. These two plans contain invaluable background information on:

- Federal and Illinois state byway programs
- GRR intrinsic qualities and protections
- GRR designation, early history and administration
- GRR marketing
- GRR interpretation

The original CMP and the MIP form the foundation of this updated CMP. Most of the background information contained in them is still relevant and accurate, and will not be repeated in this document. For more detailed information on the topics above, please see the original CMP and MIP. This updated CMP integrates material from the two original plans with new material and current information on local and regional demographics, economics, resources and amenities. It addresses public participation; highway conditions, uses and safety; signage; commerce; interpretation and marketing. It brings the CMP into full compliance with National Scenic Byway Program standards and contains recommendations on critical, relevant strategies to guide the byway for the next ten years.

Over the last ten years, many of the recommendations contained in the original CMP and MIP have been implemented and have met with success. Most GRR tourism and economic development leaders believe that recognition of the byway has increased regionally, nationally, and internationally, to the benefit of local economies. All along the byway, the GRR is seen as an important tourism development asset, to the extent that some counties/communities that originally opted out of the byway are now considering joining, recognizing that river-related tourism is a critical component in their economies. The last decade has seen more and more communities recognize that their interests overlap with their neighbors' and that cooperation and cross-marketing is the key to success for all.

Moving forward, the challenge for the 15 counties that comprise the byway corridor is to find ways to create and promote activities and experiences that keep visitors staying in the region for a longer period of time and encourages visitors to return multiple times to explore each portion of the byway. Public and private investments will be needed to solidify the image of the byway in the minds of travelers, to make the Mississippi River more accessible to visitors, to more fully tell the story of the byway, to draw more international travelers to the region, to get more people out of their cars and out into the landscape, and to provide more services along some segments of the route. This plan provides a blueprint for accomplishing those goals.



The Great River Road in Illinois showcases western Illinois' history, cultures, scenery, agriculture, natural resources and recreational opportunities.



# Updating the CMP

A CMP is required in order to obtain byway designation and byway-related federal grants and other funding. A CMP is an inventory of current byway conditions and intrinsic qualities. It identifies the vision for the byway corridor, as developed by byway communities and stakeholders. It specifies the actions and strategies needed to maintain a byway's designation, protect its intrinsic qualities, and promote tourism and economic development along the byway corridor. It contains recommendations on enhancing byway safety and alternate modes of transportation. It provides recommendations on enhancing byway interpretation and marketing. A CMP is not a regulatory document and is not enforceable by any government agency or entity. It does not affect or supersede any state, county or municipal zoning or land use regulations or policies, and provides no authority over private property.

The original management philosophy for the byway, and an approach that continues to this day, is that communities should have great freedom to use the byway in the ways they see fit. While there is some need for the formal management and administration of the byway (particularly regarding funding), the specifics of how communities use the byway are unique and varied. Therefore, stakeholder and public participation is essential to allowing communities to identify and express their byway-related needs, desires and priorities. The original GRRR CMP was adopted in 2000 after considerable public and stakeholder involvement. Similarly, an extensive public/stakeholder process was employed in developing the GRRR MIP, which was completed in 2003. This tradition of inclusion and public/stakeholder involvement was continued in developing this CMP update. Information on and recommendations for the Byway were obtained in a variety of ways:

- Great Rivers Country Regional Tourism Development Office informed its various byway partners of the CMP update and encouraged partner participation in the planning process.
- A questionnaire on the byway was disseminated to more than 170 people, including leaders and employees at all levels of government; CVB and Chamber heads and staff; business and community leaders; and other stakeholders.
- Four public/stakeholders meetings were held to obtain information and solicit recommendations. Meetings were conducted at key Byway cities (Fulton, Moline, Quincy, Chester), assuring diverse, regional representation and input. Attendees included government and elected officials, CVBs and Chambers of Commerce, tourism business leaders, environmental groups, parks and outdoor recreation departments, river transportation and river management entities (e.g., the Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), transportation organization representatives, and interested citizens.



Stakeholder/public meeting, Moline, IL

- Extensive interviews were conducted with Great Rivers Country staff and government, community, and business leaders.
- Planning consultants and Great Rivers Country staff toured the entire byway over a six-day period, visiting numerous key sites and facilities.
- The CMPs of other Byways (particularly the Meeting of the Great Rivers) were researched.
- Extensive research was conducted on a variety of topics, including regional demographics; Illinois tourism; regional and multi-state Byway programs, activities, and marketing; and new information technologies (e.g., web, computer downloads, QR codes).

Numerous agencies and organizations contributed valuable information on the Byway's current conditions and future projects and activities, notably:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| • Alton Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau | • City of Waterloo   | • Randolph County                       |
| • Bi-state Regional Commission                  | • Galena/Jo Daviess County CVB                             | • Rock Island County                    |
| • Blackhawk Waterways CVB                       | • Great Rivers Country Regional Tourism Development Office | • Savanna Chamber of Commerce           |
| • Carbondale CTB                                | • Illinois Office of Tourism                               | • Southern Illinois University          |
| • City of Fulton                                | • Illinois Department of Transportation                    | • Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau  |
| • City of Fulton Chamber of Commerce            | • Klingner and Associates                                  | • The Tourism Bureau IllinoisSouth      |
| • City of Fulton Tourism Committee              | • Meeting of the Great Rivers                              | • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers          |
| • City of Moline                                | • Port Byron   | • U.S. Grant Home                       |
| • City of Quincy                                | • Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau               | • University of Illinois Extension      |
| • City of Rock Island                           | • Quincy Area CVB  | • Village of Cordova                    |
| • City of Savanna                               |  | • Whiteside County Economic Development |
|   |  | • Wineries                              |



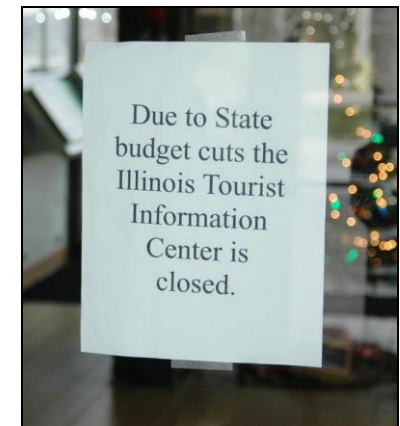
# 2001 -2011: A Ten Year Overview

The GRRI and byway communities have remained fairly stable over the past ten years, despite a significant downturn in the nation's economy. Generally speaking, most of the byway's counties have seen only modest population gains. With the exception of areas near St Louis, MO, most communities have grown only slightly or have seen no growth. As in most rural areas in the United States, local economies have shifted and downtowns have suffered with the expansion of commercial and residential areas on the outskirts of towns. Most large manufacturing companies have scaled back or abandoned outdated facilities and sites. In some cases, these companies have re-invested in the region and created more jobs or new firms have moved to the area, but the new investments have largely occurred away from the byway. However, some communities, such as Galena, the Quad Cities and Quincy, have made significant investments in tourism amenities and services and have realized an economic benefit in return.

This section provides an overview of the past decade, including changes to the byway; trends in growth and byway usage; and significant new attractions, amenities, and infrastructure.

## Trends: Demographics and Economics

- The population of most cities and counties has remained stable with some local fluctuations (e.g., Monroe County's population increasing by approximately 9,000 people).
- Suburbanization and sprawl have increased around some cities, including Galena and Quincy.
- Immigration has increased in some cities, as has the number of former residents returning to live in the city.
- Most local and regional economies continue to be based on agriculture and tourism, with tourism being increasingly important (e.g., tourism has increased approximately 6% in Quincy).
- The agricultural economy is generally up.
- Manufacturing has generally held stable.
- The Quad Cities are changing from an industrial area to a tourism area, with some industries moving to the outskirts of the cities.
- Downtown Quincy's economy is slightly up, in part due to the influx of medical technology businesses.
- All along the GRRI, there is increased recognition of how much a vital riverfront contributes to a city's identity, economic stability and quality of life.



Mississippi Rapids Welcome Center

- Several State Welcome Centers have been closed due to budget shortfalls. There are currently no Welcome Centers north of Interstate 80.
- Motorcycles riders, particularly in groups, have increased on the byway.
- Some areas, particularly Cairo, have been heavily impacted by floods.
- The Kansas City-to-Chicago highway and the Avenue of the Saints (Iowa) may bring additional people to the GRRI.

## **Trends: Visitor Interests/Activities**

- River-based recreation has increased, including kayaking; walking, running and bicycling on riverfront trails; and bird watching (particularly bald eagles in winter).
- There has been an increase in use of GRRI riverfront amenities by residents of Missouri and Iowa (e.g., Chester boat ramp)
- Bicycling has increased in popularity and bike trails have become more important.
- Outdoor recreation in general, including birding, hunting and golf, have increased in popularity.
- The number and quality of art/culture events and activities have increased.
- Increase in tourism based on wineries and locally grown food.
- Interest in genealogy has increased in travelers.
- There is an increasing demand for non-traditional, new-tech interpretation and marketing media, such as web sites, downloads, phone apps, and QR codes.



Bicycling has increased in popularity along the GRRI and many communities have invested in road improvements and trails that benefit bicyclists and pedestrians.

## New Amenities and Infrastructure: Byway Administration

Several administrative and organizational changes designed to increase coordination and communication among byway partners, increase efficiency and maximize byway resources have been enacted in recent years. These include:

- The Illinois Office of Tourism redesigned its regions statewide, resulting in four regions instead of six. The entire GRRI now lies within one region—Great Rivers Country Regional Tourism Development Office (GRCRTDO). This will result in improved coordination and communication among regional tourism development offices, Chambers of Commerce and other partners, and will result in greater continuity of products, services, and activities along the GRRI. It will also increase the power of marketing the GRRI and Great Rivers Country as State dollars will be used on the same projects as FHWA matching funds.
- The redesign of Illinois Office of Tourism regions links 33 counties in the Great Rivers Country region.
- The redesign of Illinois Office of Tourism regions promotes the integration and coordination of all Convention and Visitors Bureaus in the GRCRTDO.
- The GRCRTDO Board and the GRRI Scenic Byway Committee and Marketing Committee were reconstructed as a result of the redesign of Illinois Office of Tourism regions. As of April 1, 2012, these boards and committees consist of:

<b>Great Rivers Country Board</b>	<b>GRRI Scenic Byway Committee</b>	<b>GRRI Scenic Byway Marketing Committee</b>
President: Holly Cain Secretary: Judy Guenseth Treasurer: Tamara Parker At Large: Cindy Benefield-Cain At Large: Katherine Walker Ex-Officio: Martha Downey Ex-Officio: Cindi Fleishli Ex-Officio: Brenda Logan Ex-Officio: Melissa Kribs Ex-Officio: John Mazor	Chair: Brett Stawar Diane Bausman Cindy Benefield-Cain Holly Cain Jo Kathmann Debbie Moore Joe Taylor Katherine Walker	Chair: Joe Taylor Diane Bausman Cathy Foes Brett Stawar

## **New Amenities and Infrastructure: Lodging/Dining**

- There are several new lodging and dining facilities in the Galena area.
- There is a new hotel in Fulton.
- There are several new bed and breakfasts and rental cabins.

## **New Amenities and Infrastructure: Tourism/Marketing**

- New tourism-related promotions include Google ads, Facebook pages, and a 10-county Trail of Terror Halloween event.
- Tourism-related phone apps have been developed.
- Great Rivers Country has established a marketing presence in Japan, Germany and Mexico.
- GRR maps are available in Japanese, German and Spanish.
- A Regional Tourism Development Office has been established that covers the entire byway and its services are considered to be beneficial.

## **New Amenities and Infrastructure: Visitor Interests**

- The Fulton Dutch windmill complex has expanded and now hosts cultural and community events. The complex includes a working windmill, visitor center, cultural center, plaza, multi-panel GRR kiosk, and bike path.
- Bike paths have been constructed or extended in numerous locations along the Byway, including the Adams County bike trail.
- A bicycle suitability map has been developed.
- Outdoor recreation-related conferences and events have increased.
- Some cities, notably Quincy, have invested in parks and recreation amenities.
- Some cities have developed weekend and winter event/activity packages.
- In several cities, “Nightlife” and downtown activities have increased and improved.



The windmill at the Fulton Dutch windmill complex, opened in 2010.



- A *Birding the Bottomlands* brochure has been developed.
- There is a new marina at Evansville which features a barge/restaurant.
- The shooting range/complex in Sparta has become very popular and hosts national events.
- A Water Trail map and audio tours have been created.
- The number of indoor events has increased, particularly at the Kroc center in Quincy.

## New Amenities and Infrastructure: Interpretation

- A new GRRRI brochure featuring interest tracks (history, nature, sightseeing, agriculture) has been developed and is available in four languages.
- A GRRRI rack card has been created and is being distributed.
- A new four-panel information kiosk was designed (right) and four kiosks have been fabricated and installed at key locations (Galena, Quad Cities, Quincy, Cairo). More than 65 orientation and interpretation signs were created and installed on these kiosks and along the byway.
- Existing IDOT information kiosks at eleven locations we repaired, painted blue for consistency with the new four-panel kiosk, and provided with orientation/interpretation signs.
- A new wayside base was designed and wayside bases and interpretive signs have been fabricated and installed at four locations (Savanna, Albany, Nauvoo, Warsaw)
- Ties to Lincoln have been increased, and the Native American story is being told more than in the past.
- 14 *Looking for Lincoln* waysides have been placed in downtown Quincy.
- A visitor center has opened at the Chester Bridge with Scenic Byway funding.
- There are new museums in Savanna and Grand Tower.
- The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium has opened in Dubuque (located off the GRRRI).



Four-panel kiosk, Mississippi Rapids Welcome Center, Moline, IL

## **New Amenities and Infrastructure: Other**

- Several cities, notably, the Quad Cities and Quincy, have made significant investments in their riverfronts and riverfront access has been improved in other communities.
- A large FHWA grant was awarded to the Children's Botanical Garden in the Quad Cities. While still in the works, this facility has the potential to be an important byway education and marketing partner.
- Funding has been acquired to light the Bayview Bridge in Quincy.
- Roadway connectivity has increased greatly along the byway.
- Western Illinois University has opened a campus in the Quad Cities.
- Numerous improvements to the Quad Cities' downtown area and the riverfront have been made.
- The Loop Transit, a bus route through the Quad Cities, has been established.



Quincy's riverfront at Clat Adams Park is thriving and funds are available to light the Bayview Bridge.

# Intrinsic Qualities

The GRRRI continues to retain the intrinsic qualities that led to its byway designation in 2000:

- Views of and access to the Mississippi River
- Vital and visible agriculture
- Diverse history and historic sites
- Natural areas, parks and refuges
- Diverse recreational opportunities
- Unique and diverse architecture
- Local and regional amenities unique to the Mississippi River corridor

For marketing and interpretive purposes, the byway's intrinsic qualities, sites and amenities have been classified into four tracks based on topics of interest to travelers. Significant sites/amenities for each track and for the byway in general, are found on the following page.

**Heritage Track**



**Nature Track**



**Sightseeing Track**



**Agriculture Track**



The GRRRI has numerous amenities and activities to meet the needs and interests of diverse visitors and byway community residents.

Heritage Track	Nature Track	Sightseeing Track	Agriculture Track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Albany Mounds State Historic Site</li> <li>Allaman/Eames Covered Bridge</li> <li>Black Hawk State Historic Site</li> <li>Cahokia Courthouse State Historic Site</li> <li>Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site</li> <li>Cairo Custom House</li> <li>Church of the Holy Family</li> <li>Dr. Richard Eell's House</li> <li>Fort de Chartres</li> <li>Fort Defiance Park</li> <li>Fort Kaskaskia</li> <li>Galena</li> <li>John Deere Complex</li> <li>Lewis &amp; Clark State Historic Site</li> <li>Lewis and Clark Visitor Center and Tower</li> <li>National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows</li> <li>Nauvoo</li> <li>Pierre Menard Home</li> <li>Quincy's Historic Districts</li> <li>Thebes Courthouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Albany Mounds State Historic Site</li> <li>Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center</li> <li>Lost Mound National Wildlife Refuge</li> <li>Loud Thunder Forest Preserve</li> <li>Mississippi Palisades State Park</li> <li>Montebello Eagle site</li> <li>Oakwood Bottoms/Greentree Reservoir/Turkey Bayou</li> <li>Pere Marquette State Park</li> <li>Spring Lake, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Butterworth Memorial Parkway</li> <li>Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site</li> <li>Clat Adams Park</li> <li>Fort de Chartres</li> <li>Fulton Dutch Windmill</li> <li>Galena</li> <li>John Deere Pavilion</li> <li>Long Hollow Rest Area</li> <li>Lost Mounds National Wildlife Refuge</li> <li>Loud Thunder Forest Preserve</li> <li>Mississippi Palisades State Park</li> <li>Mississippi Rapids Welcome Center</li> <li>Mississippi River Museum</li> <li>Nauvoo</li> <li>Pere Marquette State Park</li> <li>Popeye statue</li> <li>Quincy's Historic Districts</li> <li>River vistas</li> <li>Rock Island arsenal</li> <li>Spring Lake, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge</li> <li>Sunset Park</li> <li>Tower Rock/Devil's Backbone Park</li> <li>Heritage Canyon</li> <li>Quad Cities Botanical Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mississippi River Visitor Center and Lock and Dam 15</li> <li>Fulton Dutch Windmill</li> <li>John Deere Pavilion/Complex</li> <li>Wineries, farms, etc.</li> </ul>



# Transportation and Signage

The Great River Road in Illinois National Scenic Byway winds its way along 550 miles of State Highways 84, 92, 17, 96, and 3. This section reviews the nature of the road, its ability to accommodate commercial traffic, traffic volumes, bicycle friendliness and planned improvements to the corridor.

Overall, the byway road system is very suitable for travelers and can accommodate a mixture of agricultural, residential, industrial and commercial vehicles and use. The roadway is well suited to handle the incremental growth in vehicle traffic anticipated in the next decade. The vast majority of the byway is rural with two lane roads with 2-foot wide shoulders, although there are stretches of road without shoulders. In areas that approach communities, the shoulders typically widen to AASHTO standards of 3-4 feet. Bicycling is safe in most areas and the network of ancillary roads allows cyclists to choose alternate routes if necessary.

## Galena to East Moline

This segment of the byway is 82 miles long and requires about two hours to drive with no stops. The road is almost entirely two-lane highway and is predominantly rural with industrial and commercial traffic more common as one approaches East Moline. The road is in good condition throughout this segment and the safety level of the segment is generally high with suitable sight-distances and acceptable alignments. The road shoulder varies in width. Traffic volumes range between 2,500 trips per day in the northern end of the segment to 14,000 trips in East Moline. These volumes are well within acceptable ranges for a two lane road. The traffic volumes and open alignment make the road well adapted to handling commercial and agricultural traffic.

The only planned roadway improvements for this segment are bridge improvement in Hanover and a realignment and resurfacing project north of Hanover.

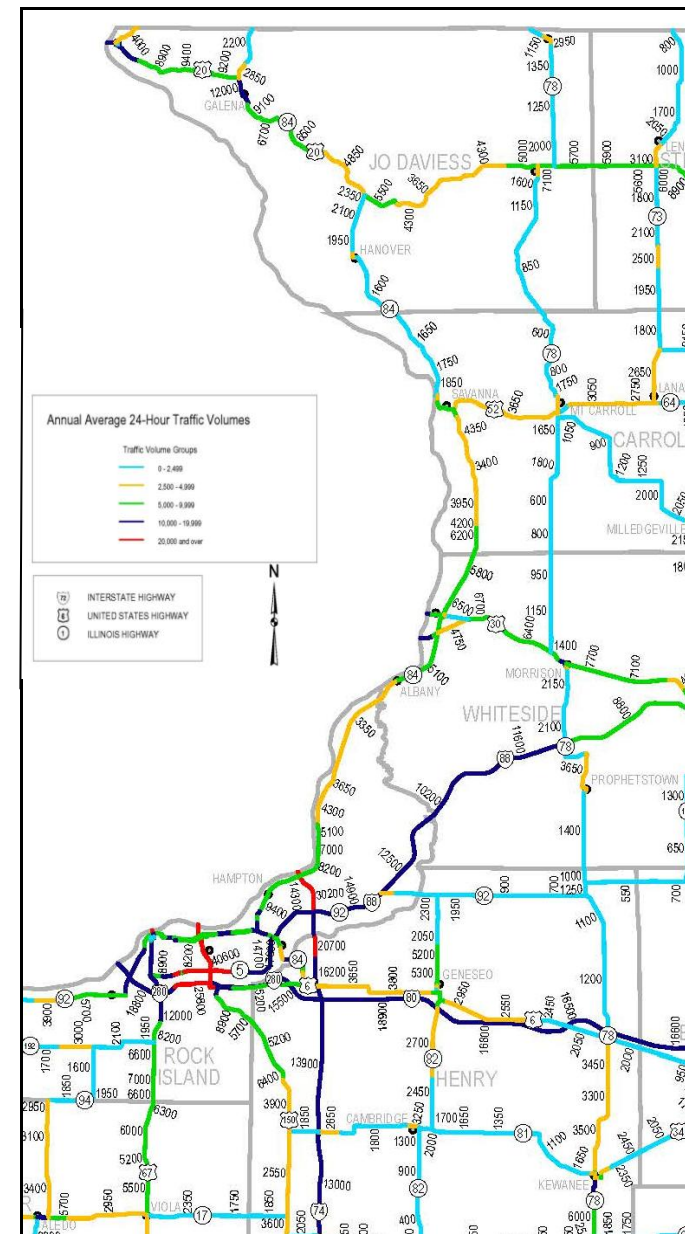


Figure 1. Traffic Volumes - Galena to East Moline

## East Moline to Quincy

This segment of the byway extends a distance of 150 miles. Immediately south of the Quad Cities, the byway is heavily industrial, but this soon gives way to a rural and agricultural landscape of small towns and farmland. Road conditions are excellent and the road is well suited for handling the mixture of scenic drivers and agricultural and light industrial traffic. The road has fairly low traffic volumes (1,000 – 2,500 trips per day) making it suitable for bicycling, but road shoulder widths vary and in some places shoulders are non-existent.

Like most byway segments, this segment is mostly free of off-site outdoor signage. The state and local communities have done a good job managing proposals for new off-site signage and the general level of sign clutter is low.

There is just one project included in the state's transportation improvement plans between 2013 and 2017, a bridge improvement project north of the community of Hamilton.



Quad Cities Botanical Center



Figure 2. Traffic Volumes - East Moline to Quincy



## Quincy to East St Louis

This segment of the byway is approximately 170 miles long and travels through very rural countryside until reaching the suburban and urban outskirts of St Louis/East St. Louis. For much of the segment, traffic volumes range between 1,000 and 5,000 trips per day. In East St. Louis the volume increases to the approximately 10,000 trips per day.

The road needs a variety of improvements and is scheduled for projects between 2012 and 2017, notably at Grafton. This project may delay travel, but there are many alternate routes for travelers and the impact on the byway experience will be minimal.



Interior of Villa Kathrine, Quincy.

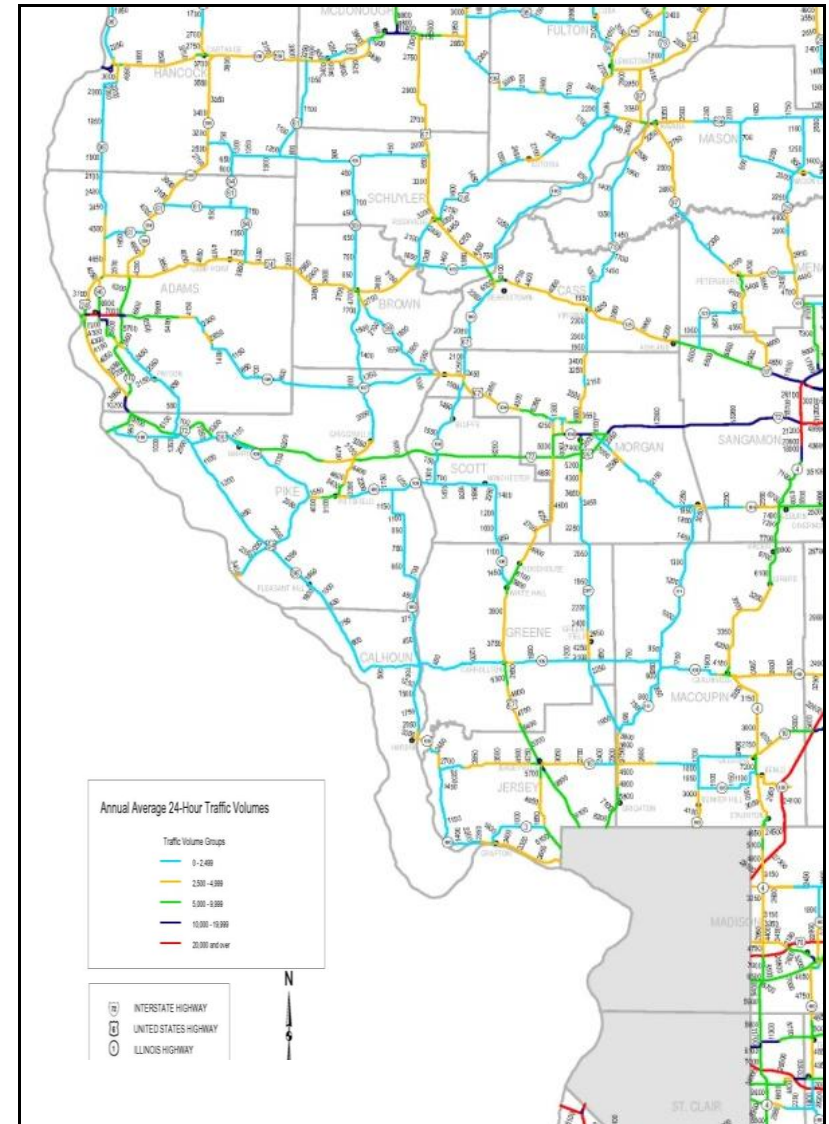


Figure 3. Traffic Volumes Quincy to East St. Louis

## East St. Louis to Cairo

The southernmost segment of the byway stretches for 158 miles and takes nearly three hours to drive non-stop. Traffic volumes range from 1,000 to 4,000 trips per day for most of the route. This portion of the byway is very rural with a more wooded landscape than the northern portions of the byway. Farming machines and vehicles are prevalent but the rural nature of the area makes accommodating commercial traffic fairly easy. As with most of the byway, outdoor off-site signage is minimal.

There is one roadway improvement project scheduled for this segment (north of Chester).



Figure 4. Traffic Volumes – East St. Louis to Cairo



## Transportation and Signage Challenges and Actions

As with virtually all byways, adequate wayfinding signage is essential to travelers feeling oriented and safe and is a critical component of a byway's branding. The brand or identity of the GRI is strong and most major intersections along the corridor are well-signed, especially on the southern half of the byway. Most directional and wayfinding signs are in good to very good condition. The byway, though, is undersigned in some of the urban and industrial sections. In places like the Quad Cities, Quincy and East St. Louis, it is at times difficult to follow the byway route. Add GRI signs in the undersigned urban/industrialized areas. Wayfinding is especially important in the byway's urban or "less attractive" areas where people may fear they've wandered off the byway.

1. Wayfinding signs have been purchased for some areas but have not been installed. The byway should work with each urban area to evaluate the adequacy of wayfinding and information signage in their community and to install these signs before the upcoming tourism season.
2. Plan for roadway improvements and modifications so that visitors are alerted to possible detours and other construction-related problems. Information on construction projects and if necessary, alternate routes, should be made available on websites and along the byway itself at construction areas.
3. Complete all uncompleted sections of the Great River Road bicycle path. Gaps in the path must be filled in and other sections must be maintained and given minor upgrades and resurfacing. When completed, this cycling and walking path will be a great amenity for byway visitors and the residents of byway communities.
4. Add America's Byway signs to under-signed stretches of byway, including in the Hamilton-Nauvoo area.
5. Add detailed pull-outs or insets (right) of the major metro-areas to the GRRR map, detailing the byway's route through the city. This will improve wayfinding and also draw attention to the city's other river-related amenities, such as a riverfront, historic district, etc.



Map pull-out, Quincy

# Tourism

The GRRI reveals fascinating chapters in the story of the Mississippi River as it winds through cities, quaint towns and villages, manufacturing towns, river towns and rich farmlands. It passes through economically healthy communities and communities that have suffered greatly from economic change and flooding. For the visitor, the experience of this road is one of learning about the ways in which people have been impacted by and, in turn, have impacted the river and its surrounding ecosystems (including agricultural land).

## Tourism Resources

The main reasons people visit the GRRI are:

- Experiencing the Mississippi River – seeing its width and its character, learning about its history and natural systems, learning about the engineering feats that allow people to live and work with the river.
- Scenic driving – enjoying the quiet, peaceful rural landscapes along the river.
- Experiencing the unique attributes and amenities of byway communities – browsing antique shops, eating in small cafes, staying in B&Bs and inns, attending village festivals and events.
- Visiting primary attractions such as museums, locks and dams, the John Deere Pavilion or the National Great Rivers Museum.
- Attending local/regional festivals and events.
- Engaging in bicycling, birding, hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation activities.

The major, anchor tourism attractions along the byway are described below. While there are numerous sites on the byway that contribute to the GRRI's character and enhance the visitor experience, these are the sites and resources that best define the byway experience.

- **Galena**

Galena is a quaint village at the north end of the byway that offers fine dining, boutiques, antiques and lodging all in a well-preserved turn-of-the-century setting. Various historic resources are present in this village including the U.S. Grant Home State Historic Site and the Old Stockade from the 1832 Black Hawk War. Galena hosts a large volume of tourists and is a significant destination for Chicago-area residents.



Galena is an important and thriving byway community

- **Mississippi Palisades State Park**

This beautiful park extends from the river's edge upwards to majestic bluffs that overlook many miles of surrounding landscape. In addition to an outstanding river view, the park affords numerous, diverse recreational opportunities.

- **Fulton**

This community has done an excellent job focusing its tourism development on international culture, including developing a Dutch windmill and Windmill Cultural Center located on the banks of the Mississippi River.

- **Great River Road Bicycling Path**

Several communities have completed or are moving forward with construction of a bike path/route that will traverse the entire byway corridor. The path is often the best way to move close to the river and experience the natural areas that abut the Mississippi.

- **John Deere Pavilion/Complex**

The famous farm implement and equipment manufacturer was founded in Moline and continues its operations there. The John Deere Pavilion/Complex is a major agricultural amenity on the GRR and features educational exhibits and activities. The John Deere Company offers factory tours.

- **Quad Cities**

This Illinois/Iowa metro area is one of the most popular small cities to move to and live in the United States according to a variety of such assessments. It offers a wide variety of dining, cultural and outdoor recreation amenities.

- **Mississippi River Visitor Center at Lock and Dam 15**

The Rock Island Arsenal and Visitors Center offer fascinating perspectives on the military importance of the river and on the topic of river navigation.

- **Wineries, Vineyards and other Agricultural Amenities**

There are currently 24 wineries along the GRR and the byway's wineries and vineyards that draw thousands of visitors each year. In addition, the region's selection of small market farms and specialty produce farms is expanding and thus providing more agriculture-based activities for visitors.



The John Deere Pavilion, a major destination on the GRR and in the Quad Cities

- **Fort de Chartres State Historic Site in Prairie du Rocher**

This well-preserved 18<sup>th</sup> century stone fort was one of the primary French settlements along the Mississippi River. It is in excellent condition and educational exhibits are found in the visitor center.

- **Nauvoo**

This well-preserved historic village offer fascinating views into 19<sup>th</sup> century life. It also contains an excellent visitor center and the temple of the Church of Latter Day Saints, and is a destination for Mormons and non-Mormons alike.

- **Quincy**

This river-front city was a major river-trade community and as such it contains an impressive array of fine architecture from the late-Victorian period and forward. It has a healthy downtown, a vital riverfront, and several local treasures, such as Villa Kathrine.

- **Alton**

Alton is strategically located and contains many excellent tourist amenities and services.

- **Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site**

This World Heritage Site contains the remains of a major, early Native American city. It features trails and an excellent visitor center.

- **Chester**

This small riverfront town has done a great job building on its theme of being home to Popeye (created by Chester resident Elzie C. Segar).

- **Wildlife Areas and Eagle Watching**

There are many wildlife areas, nature preserves, conservation areas and wildlife viewing sites along the byway. As a major flyway in North America, birding enthusiasts flock to the byway. Bald eagle watching is a major activity, particularly in winter.



Nauvoo provides both active and passive opportunities to experience GRRR history and culture.



Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site



## Tourism Markets

The markets from which the byway's visitors come vary greatly, due to the length of the byway and the locations of population centers and highways. Chicago is a significant source of visitors to the northern segment of the byway (Galena to the Quad Cities) and smaller Illinois cities like Springfield and Peoria also provide visitors. St. Louis, MO is a major origin market for the Quincy/Alton/Chester area. Iowa provides an increasing number of visitors all along the byway, particularly East Dubuque, the Quad Cities, Quincy and Chester. Colleges along the byway bring the families and friends of students to the region in growing numbers and more and more international travelers are finding the byway as the region markets more heavily abroad.

## Tourism Challenges and Actions

The GRRI has taken significant steps forward in its marketing and tourism development. The byway's marketing has become more coordinated, targeted and sophisticated. Tourism amenities and services have expanded and new hotels, motels, inns, cafes, restaurants and traveler services have emerged in many of the communities. The byway has a solid administrative structure through Great Rivers Country. But challenges still exist. The major tourism development objectives for this byway in the coming years will be the following:

### 1. **Differentiation, Uniqueness, Connectivity**

The Great River Road in Illinois National Scenic Byway runs through many states, therefore, the Illinois section of the byway must distinguish itself as having something unique to offer travelers. Defining how the byway in Illinois is different from the byway in other states is important. Equally important, though, is determining how the Illinois segment can connect with and capitalize on other byway segments, even across state lines.

### 2. **Encourage Exploration and Increase Length of Stay**

The consensus among byway CVBs and Chambers is that relatively few visitors travel the entire length of the byway. Instead, they are visiting a town for what it has to offer or simply enjoying a 1-2 day road trip. These visitors are attraction or event focused, rather than byway focused. The byway should work to encourage more exploration to benefit the communities that lie near major destinations and also increase overall length of stay on the byway.

- To capitalize on existing visitation patterns, GRRI should create regional travel itineraries/day trips/loops based out of the byway's natural hubs: Galena, Quad Cities, Quincy and Chester. Driving loops and day trips should promote travel between hubs. For example:

Galena ↔ Quad Cities      Quad Cities ↔ Quincy      Quincy ↔ Alton      Alton ↔ Chester

This approach takes advantage of the byway's strategically located towns/cities and their services and amenities, while exposing visitors to the GRRI. At such time that Cairo is once again visitor ready, it should be designated a byway hub.

- Develop and promote loops that have north and south entrance and exit points. For example, a visitor from Chicago might enter the byway at Galena, explore the byway to the Quad Cities, then head home via I-88.
- GRRRI should consider creating an alternative to Cairo by promoting an Alton—Prairie du Roche—Kaskaskia—Chester loop.
- Develop themed itineraries based on the interpretive tracks adopted for the byway: heritage, nature, agriculture, sightseeing. This is similar to the type of winery tours that have been developed. Sample itineraries could include birding hotspots, antiquing opportunities, significant historic sites, museums and visitor centers that meet basic visitor readiness criteria (e.g., adequate hours of operation), etc. Brochures, maps, downloads and other materials should be created to promote and facilitate following the itineraries.
- Work with state and local farm bureaus to address liability and insurance issues related to public visitation to working farms and ranches.
- Work with bicycle clubs and groups on road-sharing awareness programs, adopt-a-road programs, and special events.
- Determine if additional visitation by motorcyclists is desired. The recent increase in motorcyclists has occurred without marketing directly to motorcycle clubs and groups, which should be done if additional use is desired.
- With *stay-cations* increasing in popularity and the general population aging, there is an increasing demand for maps and information on camping, campgrounds and RV parks.
- Consider redeveloping the Long Hollow Rest Area to include a visitor center and a new viewing tower.
- Consider building a visitor center in East Dubuque to take advantage of people traveling to/from Iowa.
- Identify significant out-of-state facilities and resources that the GRRRI can work with to cross-promote and market the GRRRI. The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque is an excellent example of such a facility and may serve as a pilot program for this strategy.



National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium  
Dubuque, IA

### 3. Increase/Improve River Connections

“River connections” means all the ways in which one can experience the river: going to a museum, walking or bicycling along the river, standing at an overlook, riding on a boat or kayak, eating a meal with a view of the river. While the number of connections has increased in the last decade, and several communities have made significant investment in their riverfront, more work is needed on this challenge.

- Communities should continue to invest in their riverfronts, improving their aesthetics, amenities and vitality.
- Communities should conduct and coordinate riverside festivals and events.
- Add boat docks to key riverfront restaurants.
- Increase the number of marinas and boat docks at strategic locations along the byway (e.g., East Dubuque, Fulton, Quad Cities, Quincy, Alton, Chester). While calculating the number of marinas operating on the Mississippi River at any point in time is difficult due to differing definitions of marinas and inconsistent sampling years, it seems clear that Illinois has relatively few such facilities compared to neighboring GRRRI states. For example, by some estimates, Illinois has five river-based marinas, while Iowa has 26, Missouri 16 and Wisconsin 15.
- Increase opportunities for people to rent boats ranging from kayaks to houseboats. For example, house boats are available to rent in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, but not along the GRRRI.
- Identify significant river views and access points (table below). These could be overlooks, riverside locations or exceptional stretches of road where the byway is close to the river. These locations should be added to the GRRRI map and promoted as “must see” destinations. Ideally, each byway riverside location would have a similar amenity, such as the viewing tower at Sunset Park, but this is not essential and generally not practical.



Kayaking, bicycling and other outdoor recreation activities are gaining in popularity along the GRRRI

Overlooks	Riverside Locations	Stretches of Road
MS Palisades State Park Mississippi Rapids Welcome Center Fort Edwards Memorial, Warsaw Visitor Center, Chester Phelps House, Oquawka	Sunset Park, Rock Island Clat Adams Park, Quincy Grand Tower Fort Defiance Park, Cairo	Albany to Quad Cities South of Nauvoo to Hamilton Between Grafton and Alton The Chester Area

# Information Dissemination and Interpretation

There is a desire among virtually all CVBs and Chambers to move away from paper products and hardcopies of brochures and other informational materials. While this move is both economical and environmentally sound, printed materials will always be of value to drop-in visitors who do not want to deal with a computer and/or interact with staff/volunteers and people wanting a keepsake—a tangible reminder of and connection to their trip. Hard copies also serve a minor marketing function, as people pass them along to family and friends.

1. Rather than discontinue all printed materials, providers should assess the demand for certain printed materials, re-estimate the number of copies needed, and reduce the number and quantities of printed materials.
2. The consensus among CVBs, Chambers, and Welcome Centers is that very few new materials need to be created, but rather, materials should be inventoried, coordinated, and made available to visitors. Visitors need access to existing materials, not more, new materials.
3. To facilitate the transition to paperless operations, CVBs, Chambers, Welcome Centers and other facilities will have to provide stations where visitors can access on-line materials and selectively download them to a variety of media (various phones, ipod, MP3, etc.). There is a variety of “new-tech” media and tools to consider for use including websites, downloads, pod casts, phone apps, QR codes, phone-in tours and social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. The tools/media are detailed below.

## Websites

Websites are an efficient, economical and essential tool for providing information to byway travelers through downloads and links to other websites. Web sites allow travelers to plan and personalize their byway trip and experience and can enhance partnerships through website linkages. Websites can be created in-house or by an outside party. Website designers are ubiquitous and fairly inexpensive and website development services are often available through students and fledgling web developers. There are also grants available for matching non-profits with web professionals.

- Identify all partners, stakeholders and other entities that have a website related to GRRRI or any of the byway’s interpretive topics. This list can then be used to prioritize websites to link to the GRRRI site.
- Update the GRRRI website quarterly (including rewriting, editing and updating the existing text/content). Topic-specific informations, downloads, and travel itineraries should be added to this site.



## **Downloads**

Downloads, available through a variety of media (website, phone, etc.), can reach a broad and diverse audience. Being able to download materials helps the visitor save time, personalize their experience, and make optimum use of their time on the byway. Downloads can be developed for virtually any topic, interest or need (visitor or GRRI). Downloads can be made available through the GRRI website as well as the websites of partners and stakeholders.

- Update or create essential downloads (maps, Byway and site descriptions, itineraries, etc.)
- Develop content that can be used on or adapted to a variety of formats and media.
- Create a “flyover” of the Byway (real or animated) to showcase its attributes and to show road conditions and vistas.

## **Podcasts**

A podcast is a pre-recorded audio or video program that can be downloaded from a website and played on a computer or digital music player. Podcasts have been used for audio tours of museums, cultural or historic sites, cities and more. They can be created to address virtually any topic. Public libraries can podcast certain publications free of Copyright, offering spoken word alternatives to the visually impaired and expanding the byway’s presence into communities in general.

- Develop several podcasts on a variety of interpretive topics with the priorities being an overall byway tour, track-based itineraries (heritage, nature, agriculture, sightseeing) and key interpretive sites.
- Assess the need for podcasts to be developed in languages other than English.

## **Phone Apps**

A phone app (application) is a downloadable computer program that can be run on a website, small computing device (e.g., iPad) or cell phone. Apps can be created in-house or created by an outside party. Templates for creating apps in a variety of platforms are available on-line, as are app development services. Phone apps are the current new-tech trend, exploding in popularity in just a few years. Apps can be created on virtually any topic including itineraries, maps, audio-visual tours, wineries and farm stands, historic sites, etc.

- Because phone apps are expensive to create, GRRI should work with agencies/organizations that already have apps and direct people to them.
- The *Enjoy Illinois* phone app is excellent. In general, though, CVBs and Chambers did not know that the information in the app came from the ITIMS database and that app updates are made by CVBs and Regional offices updating their information on ITIMS. GRRI should conduct a training session or provide an instructional sheet on how to access, update and utilize this and other phone apps.

### QR Codes

A QRC (Quick Response Code) is a type of barcode that, among other uses, can link users to a pre-programmed URL (Uniform Resource Locator) such as the Enjoy Illinois phone app. Users must have a camera phone or similar reader that can scan the QRC and provide internet access to the programmed website or other destination. QRC's are increasing in use and popularity and are the least expensive new-tech medium to implement. GRRR QR Codes have been produced (right) and will be added to byway kiosks in 2012.



GRRR and Enjoy Illinois QR Codes

### Phone-in Audio Tours

These tours were gaining in popularity until the advent of phone apps, podcasts and QR Codes. Visitors call a phone number that is provided to them (e.g., printed on an interpretive sign) and listen to an audio recording. GRRR should not invest in developing phone-in tours due because of the cost to develop and host the recordings.

### Social Media

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) enable people to communicate easily via the internet. Social media can contain text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other digital files. Of all the new-tech tools described in this document, social media are the most controversial and volatile, with protocols varying among agencies and organizations. For example, U.S. Forest Service offices can have a Facebook presence but are not permitted to use Twitter and the Colorado Attorney General recently opined that the state should not use social media. Social media are the most personal and interactive of the new-tech tools addressed in this plan. Users have an expectation of currency of information, immediacy of response, and personal contact, all of which can be difficult for a byway organization to provide. Many social media sites must also be monitored regularly for objectionable or suspect content. GRRR should determine whether it has the resources to monitor and manage a social media site of its own. In the interim, the byway should look for opportunities to “piggy back” on the social media sites and activities of partnering agencies/organizations.

### DVDs and Audio-Visual Media

DVDs have value both in domestic and international marketing, as souvenirs/merchandise for travelers, and for a variety of internal agency/organization uses. The GRRR should continue to assess the use of and demand for DVDs, particularly as social media, apps, downloads and other new-tech media increase in use.

## New Tech Media Summary

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages	Infrastructure	Cost
<b>Phone App</b>	<p>Limitless number of topics</p> <p>Available to a variety of phone types and service providers</p> <p>Excellent way to acquire a specialized computer program (e.g., a star guide)</p>	<p>The number of apps available means people must be selective in what they download and store on their phone. (There are currently more than 500,000 apps for the iPhone)</p> <p>People are not inclined to download and store an app for temporary use (e.g., a trip itinerary).</p> <p>App must be tested for use with a variety of phones (e.g., iPhone, Android, Blackberry)</p> <p>Apps can be difficult to install and sometimes are glitchy across platforms</p> <p>Apps usually require a developer's license and content approval by the licensor (e.g., Apple)</p>	Requires phone service for downloading and subsequent use	<p>\$3,000-\$50,000 per app</p> <p>Depends on the complexity of the app, how much time it takes to develop it, and the developer profile (U.S. vs. off shore, level of experience)</p>
<b>Phone-in Audio Tour</b>	<p>Provides access to an audio tour that can be developed to meet the client's budget</p> <p>Is an excellent ADA feature</p> <p>Content can be changed relatively easily</p>	Requires developing the audio narrative	Requires phone service and a host company	<p>Several hundred to several thousands of dollars</p> <p>Initial fee and monthly hosting fee</p> <p>May require outside "talent" such as a narrator</p>

## New Tech Media Summary

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages	Infrastructure	Cost
<b>PodcCast</b>	<p>Provides specific information on any topic</p> <p>Can be developed relatively easily using a variety of software</p>	Usually requires creating new materials	<p>Requires a computer and microphone for recording audio</p> <p>Requires internet access for downloading. Does not require access for subsequent use</p>	<p>Several hundred to several thousands of dollars</p> <p>May require outside “talent” such as a narrator</p>
<b>QR Code</b>	<p>Provides access to exiting websites and materials.</p> <p>Does not require new materials or formatting</p> <p>Can be changed/updated easily</p> <p>Can log the date/time of scanning</p>	Needs a UV-resistant coating	Requires Internet access and a host server (e.g., the existing GRRRI website)	Virtually free other than time developing QRCs (less than five minutes per QRC)



4. The byway has greatly increased and improved its interpretation over the past ten years, as previously outlined in this plan. Some interpretive signs have faded or been damaged and are in the process of being replaced. If possible, the GRRRI should designate individuals in each region of the byway who can monitor the interpretive signs and kiosks and report damaged signs and amenities so they can be repaired/replaced as quickly as possible.
5. As outlined elsewhere in this plan, track-based itineraries, loops and day trips should be developed and accompanying interpretive materials developed.
6. If the MS Rapids Welcome Center is to remain closed, the interior byway exhibits there should be relocated to another facility.
7. There is an opportunity to take advantage of some of the byway's "less attractive" or blighted areas by interpreting them in the context of the boom and bust cycles of river life, the realities of flooding, and the perseverance of river communities and people.



With a firm connection to the past and an eye on the future,  
The Great River Road in Illinois is well-positioned to be one of the nation's best byways.

# Summary of High Priority Recommendations/Actions

1. Marketing the GRRI, including internationally, should be a high priority in the next five years.
2. Develop a few large projects involving multiple partners. Since FWHA is more likely to fund large projects than small, a single \$100,000 project is preferable to ten \$10,000 projects.
3. Develop the infrastructure and programs needed to provide technology-based information and interpretation, such as websites, QR Codes, computer downloads, Twitter and Facebook. These media are essential tools for the byway to modernize and stay current with technology and society in general.
4. Create regional travel itineraries/day trips/loops based out of the byway's natural hubs: Galena, Quad Cities, Quincy and Chester.
5. Develop and promote loops that have north and south entrance and exit points.
6. Develop track-based itineraries (heritage, nature, agriculture, sightseeing) for loops and day trips. Track-based itineraries or pre-programmed travel routes can be delivered to visitors via virtually all media (downloads, podcast, phone app, etc.). Visitors can also create their own itineraries based on information available to them via web pages, further personalizing their byway experience.
7. Consider redeveloping the Long Hollow Rest Area to include a visitor center and a new viewing tower.
8. Consider building a visitor center in East Dubuque to take advantage of people traveling to/from Iowa.
9. Consider providing additional lodging in the northern part of the byway by building a lodge at Mississippi Palisades State Park.
10. Identify significant out-of-state facilities and resources that the GRRI can work with to cross-promote and market the byway.
11. Communities should continue to invest in their riverfronts, improving their aesthetics, amenities and vitality.
12. Add GRRI signs and America's Byway signs in undersigned areas, particularly urban/industrialized areas.

# Summary of Additional Recommendations/Actions

## Transportation and Signage

1. Work with each urban area to evaluate the adequacy of wayfinding and information signage in their community.
2. Plan for and inform travelers of roadway improvements, detours and construction-related problems.
3. Complete all uncompleted sections of the Great River Road bicycle path.
4. Add America's Byway signs to under-signed stretches of byway.
5. Add detailed pull-outs or insets of the major metro-areas to the GRR map, detailing the byway's route through the city.

## Tourism

1. Define how the Great River Road in Illinois is different from the byway in other states.
2. Determining how the GRR can connect with and link with and capitalize on the GRR in adjacent states.
3. Encourage exploration of the byway to increase traveler length of stay.
4. Create and promote an Alton--Prairie du Roche--Kaskaskia—Chester loop.
5. Work with state and local farm bureaus to address liability and insurance issues related to public visitation to working farms and ranches.
6. Develop coordinated, multi-community events, such as a Great River Road Garage Sale, riverside festivals and events.
7. Work with bicycle clubs and groups on road-sharing awareness programs, adopt-a-road programs, and special events.
8. Determine if additional visitation by motorcyclists is desired.
9. Provide maps and information on camping, campgrounds and RV parks.
10. Monitor interpretive signs and kiosks and report damaged signs and amenities so they can be repaired/replaced as quickly as possible.
11. Relocate the byway exhibits in the MS Rapids Welcome Center to another facility.

12. Interpret the byway's "less attractive" areas in the context of the boom and bust cycles of river life, the realities of flooding, and the perseverance of river communities and people.
13. Add boat docks to key riverfront restaurants.
14. Increase the number of marinas and boat docks at strategic locations along the byway.
15. Increase opportunities for travelers to rent boats ranging from kayaks to houseboats.
16. Identify significant river views and access points.

## **Information Dissemination and Interpretation**

1. Assess the demand for brochures and printed materials and adjust number and quantities of printed materials accordingly.
2. CVBs, Chambers, Welcome Centers and other facilities should provide stations where visitors can access and download a variety of on-line materials.
3. Identify and coordinate with all partners, stakeholders and other entities that have a website related to the GRR or any of the byway's interpretive topics.
4. Update the GRR website quarterly.
5. Update or create essential downloads (maps, Byway and site descriptions, itineraries, etc.)
6. Develop content that can be used on or adapted to a variety of formats and media.
7. Create a "flyover" of the Byway (real or animated) to showcase its attributes and to show road conditions and vistas.
8. Develop several podcasts on a variety of interpretive topics.
9. Assess the need for podcasts to be developed in languages other than English.
10. Coordinate with agencies/organizations that already have apps and direct people to them.
11. Conduct a training session or provide an instructional sheet on how to access, update and utilize phone apps.
12. Consider expanding the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook.



# Definitions

- **Anchor Destination** – A major community or attraction that is a multi-service tourism destination.
- **CMP** – Corridor Management Plan
- **Critical services** – Services and amenities that are essential to the comfort and security of byway travelers (e.g., gas, restrooms, food)
- **Destination travelers** – Visitors who are focused on going to a specific destination on the byway.
- **Hub** – A population center that provides access to the byway and serves as a “base camp” for travelers to explore the byway.
- **Interpretive Site** – A location that showcases an important topic, event or resource. Interpretive sites may contain a kiosk or a wayside.
- **Itinerary** – A planned, sequenced and promoted route that provides information and experiences related to a particular topic, such as a tour of wineries.
- **Loop** – A drive, bike route or walking tour that takes the visitor away from and then back to the point of origin.
- **MIP** – Marketing and Interpretation Plan
- **River Connection Point** – A location that gives the visitor a premier experience with the Mississippi River.
- **Secondary Destination** – A somewhat less well-developed attraction.
- **Segment** – A section of byway that stretches between hubs and offers a broad range of experiences.
- **Track** – A series of interpretive sites/amenities that are linked by a common theme (e.g., heritage, nature, sightseeing, agriculture).
- **Through-travelers** – Visitors that travel in a linear fashion, potentially along the entire byway.
- **Wayfinding** – The ability to identify and navigate the byway.

The Great River Road In Illinois National Scenic Byway  
Corridor Management Plan Update

02/12 200