



PILCH & BARNET

MARKETING REPORT
2024 | Q1 January - March

GOAL

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing goals in Q1 2024 included:

- Promote travel along the Great River Road
- Highlight the Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers
- Maintain current visitors and encourage repeat visits along the Great River Road
- Drive traffic to the experiencemississippiriver.com website

STRATEGY

Tactics used to accomplish these goals were implemented across the Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing channels, including e-newsletters, the Great River Road website, social media (Facebook and Instagram), a promotion, and more.

TACTICS

1.	At A Glance	pg. 2
2.	Website	pg. 3
3.	E-Newsletters	pg. 8
4.	Social Media	pg. 11
	Facebook	pg. 13
	Instagram	pg. 15
5.	Fulfillment.....	pg. 17
6.	Meetings	pg. 17
7.	Additional	pg. 18

At A Glance

Website

- The homepage was the most visited page (10,557 pageviews)
- Top geographic market was Chicago (6.95% of all traffic), top age demographic was 55-64+ (24.37% of reported site users)
- Organic Search accounted for 55.67% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (22,167 users)

E-Newsletters

- Events-focused newsletters in January performed well, with click rates of more than 4% (almost twice industry averages); all editions beat industry averages in click rates and open rates
- Nearly 1,800 subscribers added to mailing list in Q1

Social Media

- Strong growth and engagement on Facebook and Instagram thanks to appealing content and successful ads
- The Facebook page reached 90,000 total fans in Q1, and the most popular post for the quarter received more than 550,000 impressions, reached more than 381,000 people, and garnered nearly 20,000 engagements.

Fulfillment

- Fulfilled 2,621 map orders

Additional

- 2024 Q2 content calendar created
- Designed and ordered Interpretive Center signage
- Performed quarterly PayPal transfer
- Reviewed and approved event submissions
- Prepared talking points for Norma for a podcast with Discovery Park in TN
- Drafted a press release announcing new addition to the network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers: the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin
- Began preparing for the Annual Meeting in Winona, MN - September 18-20, 2024

TACTIC: Website

Website Analytics Takeaways

Notable Stats

Top Pages

The [/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/](#) page was the most visited specific page of interest (not contest or homepage) with 10,557 views and accounted for 11.68% of all website views

The [/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/](#) page was the second most visited specific page of interest with 9,369 views and accounted for 10.3% of all website views

Acquisition

Organic Search accounted for 55.67% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (22,167 users)

- This means that SEO is being utilized and that the majority of users found the website through search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc, by searching for keywords that related to the content on the website.

Google was the #1 overall source of organic traffic and accounted for 50.44% of all site user acquisitions. (20,053 Users)

Facebook was the #1 overall source of referring traffic and accounted for 13.13% of all site user acquisitions. (5,220 Users)

Metro Areas

Chicago was the #1 city of visitors to the website and accounted for 6.95% of all website users. (2,749 Users)

- The most visited page of interest from this metro area was the [/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/](#) page. (631 views)

User Demographics:

The top reported age group of users was 55-64. (24.37% of reported site users | 30,804 users with no age reported)

- Boomers ages 58 - 67 born between 1955 - 1964 are more likely to travel than any other of today's age groups.
 - Average 27 travel days per year
 - \$44,370 Average income
 - Usually have a budget set aside for travel, book longer stays, prefer active relaxation activities (golf, hiking, massages, wine tours, etc.), Bucket listers, more likely to stay at a repeat accommodation

Device Usage:

51.8% of reported users viewed the site on mobile devices (industry standard for mobile devices is 53.74%)

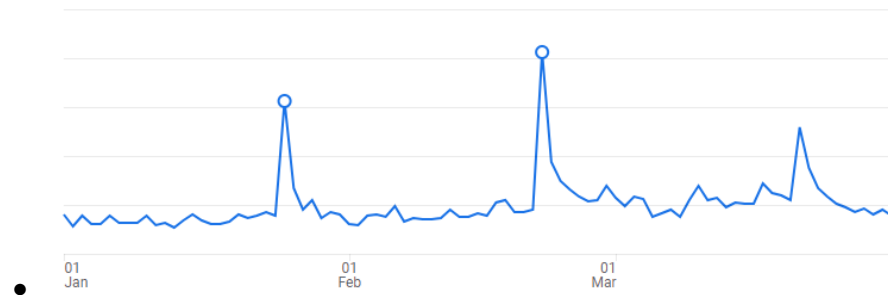
This Year vs Last Year Stats:

This year stats vs last year at the same timeframe

- 39,858 Total Users this year vs 45,884 Total Users last year
- 90,368 Views this year vs 106,099 Views last year
- 48,494 Sessions this year vs 55,456 Sessions last year
- 3:05 Average Session Duration this year vs 1:43 last year

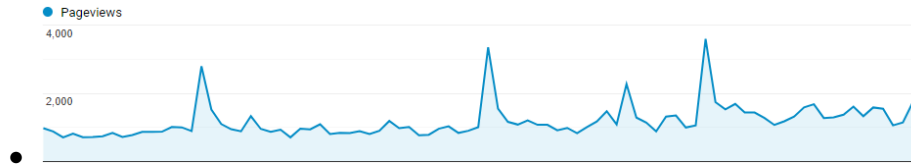
The top 5 pages this quarter and year

- Homepage 10,782 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 10,557 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 9,369 views
- /river-attractions/ 4,276 views
- /annual-events-on-the-northern-great-river-road/ 3,292 views



The top 5 pages last year for this same timeframe were

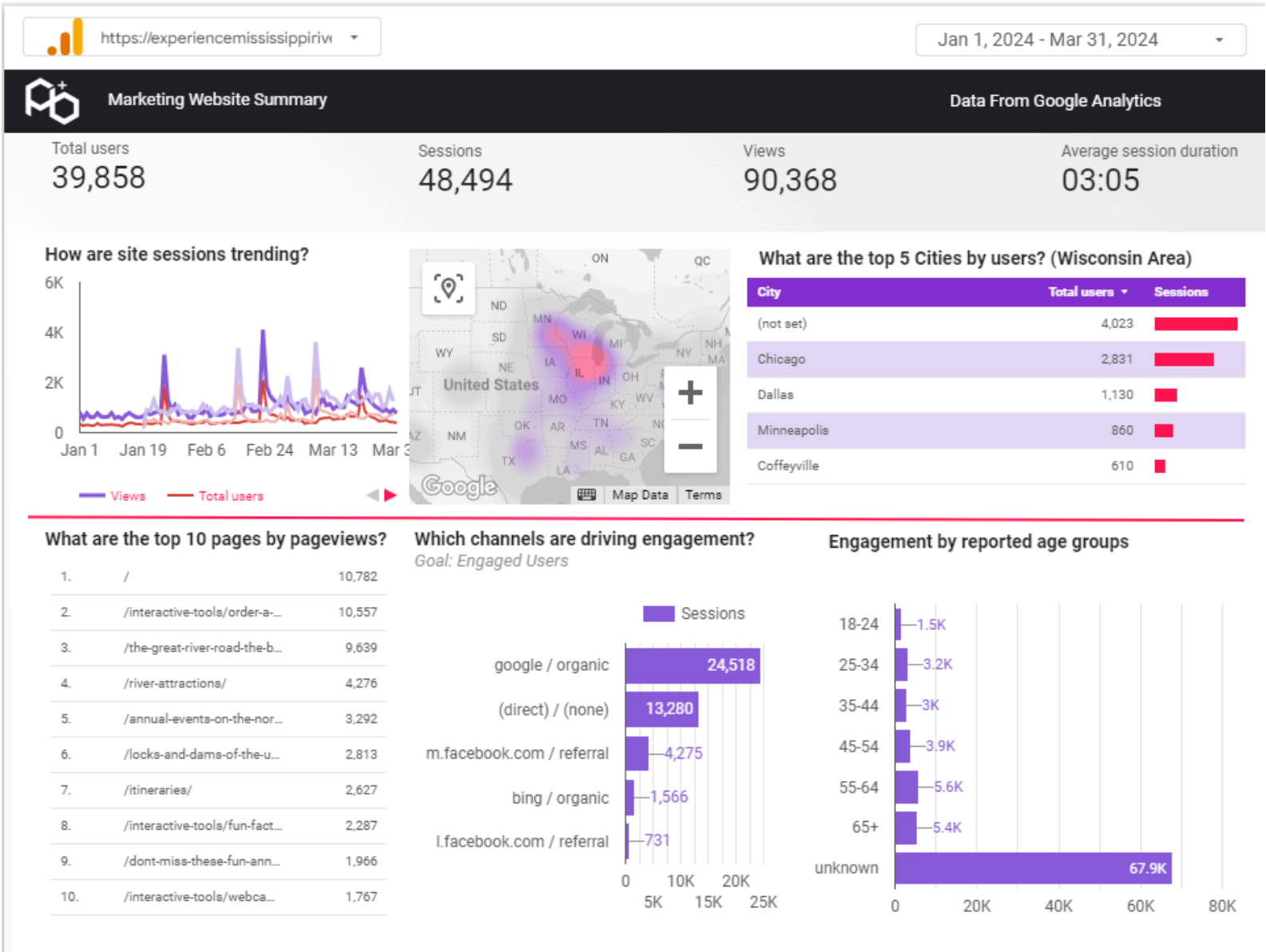
- Homepage 13,997 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 7,264 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 7,146 views
- /river-attractions/ 4,114 views
- /explore-the-northern-great-river-road-states-on-this-5-day-trip/ 3,665 views



This year the website had lower overall views, users and sessions compared to last year during this same timeframe.

- The average daily user count to the site was higher on average last year at this time.
- Social traffic (mostly facebook) accounted for 3449 less visitors to the site this year vs last

Website Analytics Stats



Web Maintenance

- Monthly website checks
 - Tested and updated links as necessary
 - Checked copy and photos, ensured content was current
 - Monthly Mailchimp check to ensure lists are performing/functioning correctly
 - Renewing Instagram Tokens: Refreshing long-lived tokens before expiration, ensuring granted feed app permissions
 - Scanned the site for malware
- Analytics monitored weekly

Website Updates

- Updated the Travel Wisconsin logo
- Created the Interpretive Center Online Nomination form and posted
- Created the Interpretive Centers Visit Checklist and posted
- Reviewed the MailChimp plugin to try and debug an error being logged

TACTIC: E-Newsletters

Takeaways

The Great River Road travel e-newsletter performed well in Q1, easily topping industry averages in open rate and click rate and adding nearly 1,800 fans. The events-focused articles in January (northern Great River Road) and February (southern Great River Road) both saw impressive click rates of more than 4 percent.

E-Newsletter Stats

Subscribers

51,029

Average Open Rate

36.67%

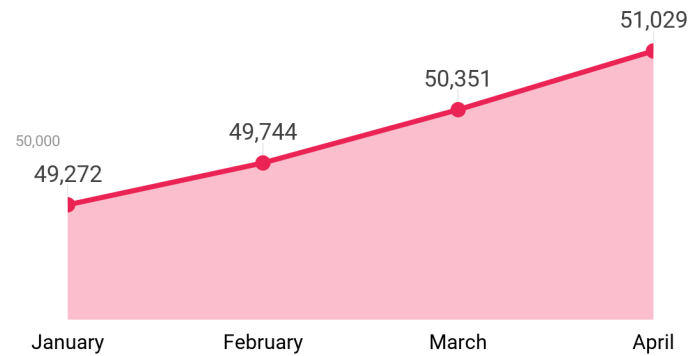
industry average: 20.2%

Average Click Rate

3.87%

industry average: 2.2%

Subscriber Growth



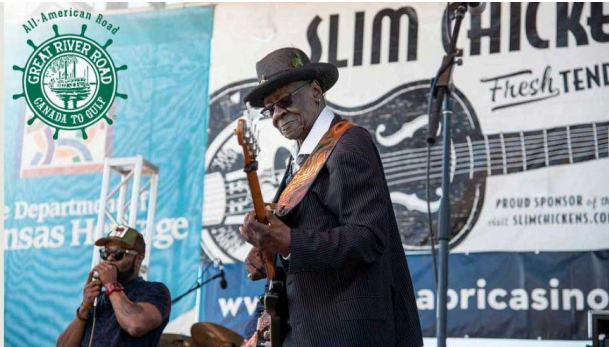


Photo Credit: Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage & Tourism

Don't miss these fun annual events in the South

Mardi Gras, food festivals, and more—the states along the southern Great River Road offer an outstanding calendar of events all year long. Here's a look at just a few of the annual events you'll find in Mississippi River cities and towns in Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

[Learn more](#)

Recipients

50,572

Opened

19,329

Clicked

2,321

E-newsletters Stats

External Tourism E-newsletter			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
Annual events on the northern Great River Road (1/25)	36.6%	4.2%	View newsletter
Don't miss these annual events along the southern Great River Road (2/22)	38.5%	4.6%	View newsletter
Spring recreation along the Great River Road (3/21)	34.9%	2.8%	View newsletter
Internal E-newsletter to Members			
Article/Subject	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
MRPC Q1 Update (1/12)	45.8%	3.1%	View newsletter
Annual Meeting Dates (3/6)	46.9%	5.3%	View newsletter
MRPC Annual Meeting hotel block is open (3/22)	32.0%	3.0%	View newsletter

TACTIC: Social Media

Takeaways

The Great River Road's Facebook and Instagram accounts performed well in Q1, with several posts that performed particularly well thanks to consistently increasing fan numbers and a successful social media advertising campaign.

Facebook Takeaways

The Great River Road Facebook page continues to grow at a good clip, adding nearly 2,000 fans in Q1 to bring us over 90,000 total (though we mistakenly did not run a likes/follows campaign in February, so we will add those additional dollars to the Q2 budget). We also had several posts that performed very well, reaching more than 100,000 people on Facebook--our top post from the quarter (a promoted post about bald eagle watching in winter) received more than 550,000 impressions, reached more than 381,000 people, and garnered nearly 20,000 engagements. The performance is especially impressive considering we only spent \$50 to boost the post.

Instagram Takeaways

The Great River Road Instagram account continued to perform well in Q1, as we added more than 400 new fans and receiving significant engagement on most posts (though promoted posts obviously fared better) Popular topics included winter and spring scenery and riverboats.

All Combined Social Media Ads Stats

Type of ad run	Amount spent	Result
Boost Facebook posts	Facebook: \$300.00	26,058 page engagements, 4,707 link clicks
Boost Instagram posts	Instagram: \$298.60	815 link clicks
Page likes	Facebook: \$200.13	1,973 page likes or follows

Combined Ads People Reached

904,668

Combined Ads Paid Impressions

1,627,558

Combined Page Engagement

36,606

Combined Ads Link Clicks

9,149

Facebook Overview

Facebook Stats

Facebook followers

90,308

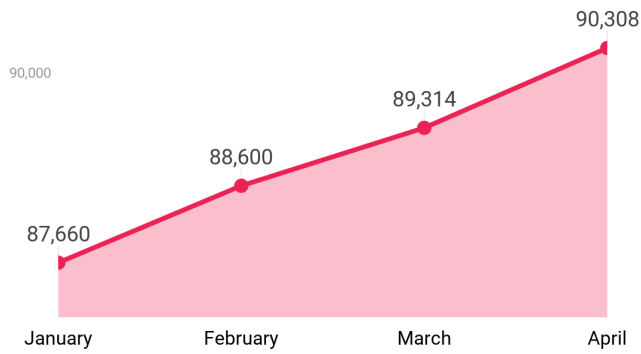
New Facebook followers

+2,648

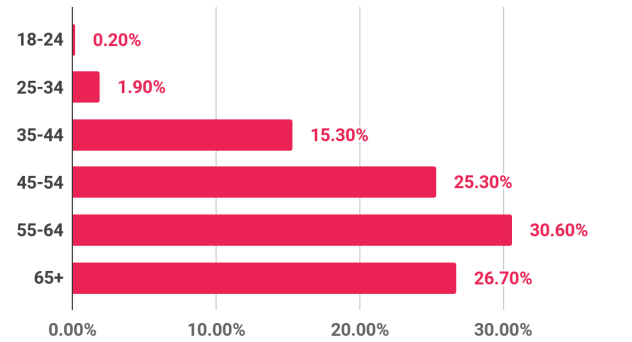
Facebook updates

41

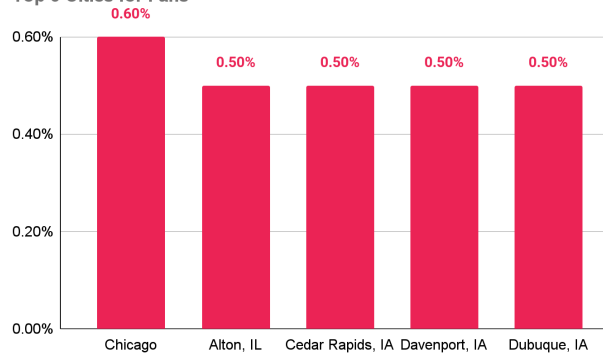
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

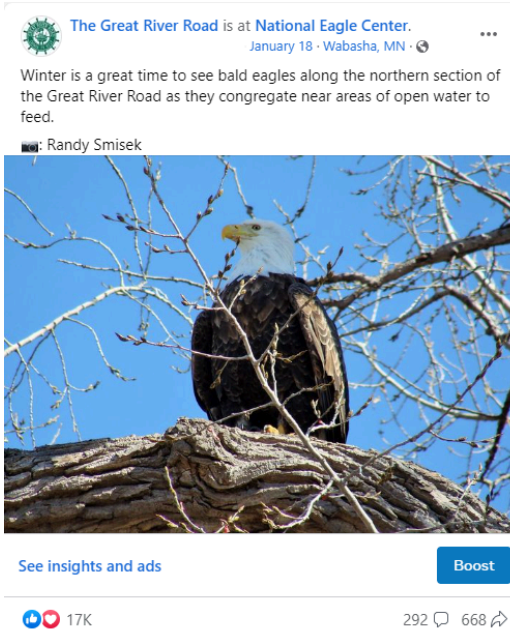


Top 5 Cities for Fans



Facebook Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 1/18



People Reached

381,661

Organic Reach

13,992

Paid Reach

367,219

Post Reactions

18,805

Instagram Overview

Instagram Stats

Instagram followers

6,369

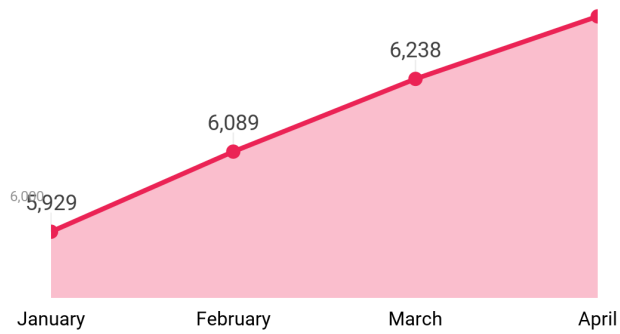
New Instagram followers

+440

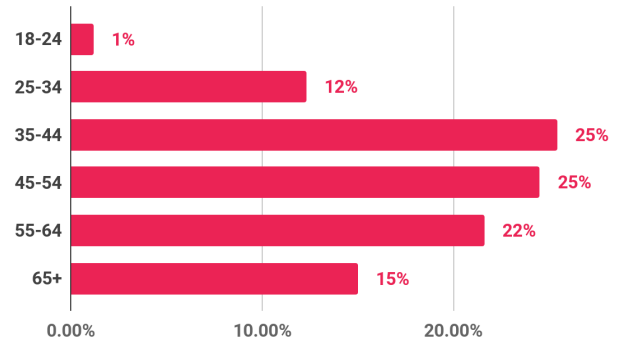
Instagram updates

13

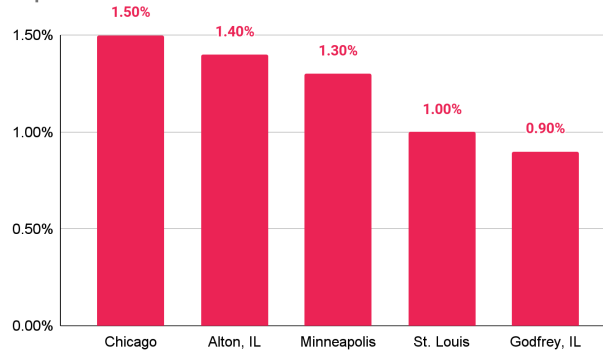
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

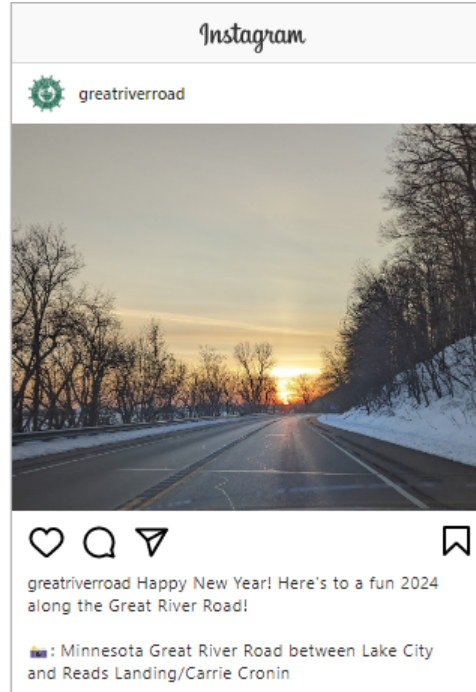


Top 5 Cities for Followers



Instagram Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 1/1



Accounts Reached

6,089

Engagements

235

TACTIC: Fulfillment

- Ordered additional materials - large and small donation envelopes, letters, maps (from printer's storage) and labels.
- Pulled requests and ran labels weekly for fulfillment

Fulfillment

2621

Financials

- Performed quarterly PayPal and Stripe transfers
- Collected donations mailed in and deposited funds
- Created 2024 state dues invoices, collected payments and deposited funds
- Followed up on outstanding map postage and 2023 annual meeting registration fees and deposited collected funds
- Created estimated invoices, as requested, for interpretive center signage
- Collected Community Foundation and Ameriprise earning statements and updated financials accordingly
- Prepared financial reports for Board meeting

TACTIC: Meetings

- 1/16 Culture and Heritage committee meeting
- 1/26 Transportation committee meeting
- 2/6 Marketing committee meeting
- 2/27 Met with Pilot
- 3/7 Annual Meeting planning
- 3/8 Board meeting
- 3/19 Culture and Heritage committee meeting
- 3/20 ERA committee meeting
- 3/20 Annual Meeting planning

ADDITIONAL

Content

- Created 2024 Q2 content calendar detailing social media posts, e-news topics, ad budgets and goals.
- Collected story ideas, drafted and distributed member Q1 newsletter

Miscellaneous

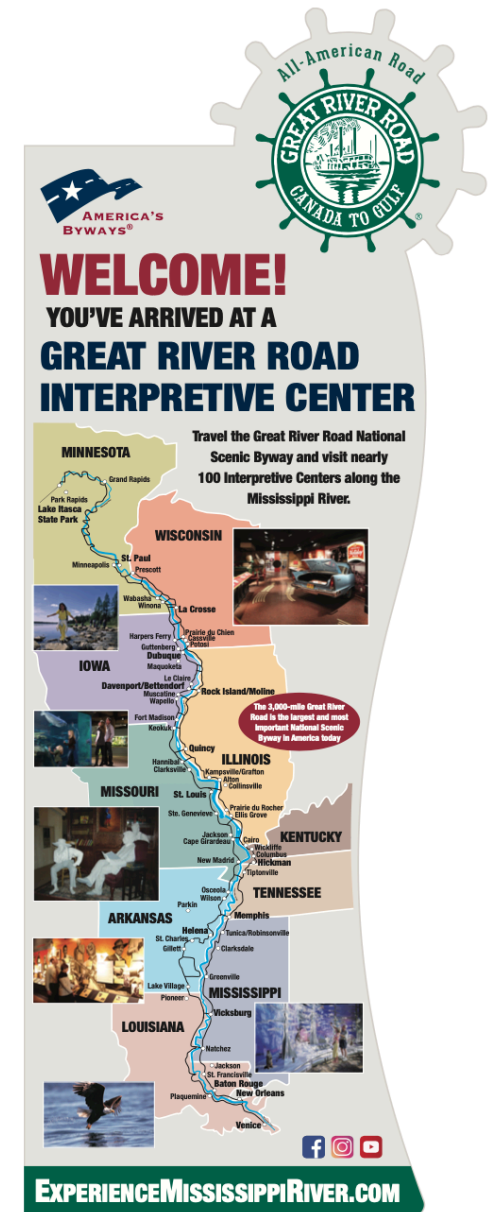
- Designed and ordered Interpretive Center signage communicated with ICs/ states to determine pick up and delivery options
- Reviewed and approved event submissions
- Prepared talking points for Norma for a podcast with Discovery Park in TN
- Drafted a press release announcing new addition to the network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers: the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin

Committees

- Touched base with committee chairs to confirm 2024 schedule and updated online and distributed to all
- Attended meetings. Drafted minutes. Assisted in agendas. Posted meeting materials online and distributed via email.
- Updated language in interpretive center materials for nomination form, model applications and IC visit forms

2024 Annual Meeting

- Continued conversations with several states about hosting this year's Annual Meeting and provided example budgets and to do lists
- Worked with Minnesota to survey destinations and possible lodging and meeting options to



identify available fall dates

- Began preparing for the Annual Meeting in Winona, MN - September 18-20, 2024
- Met with several Minnesota commissioners, as well as Chris Miller, to outline the meeting process moving forward
- Met with hotel contact at River Port Inn to secure lodging contract
- Shared lodging block with members
- Met with River Port Inn banquet contact to outline meeting room and meal needs
- Followed up with Minnesota Marine Art Museum and Winona County History Center to secure use of their facilities for the welcome reception and banquet
- Contacted caterers for the welcome reception and banquet to identify menu options and budgets
- Began drafting themes and possible speakers with planning group