



PILCH & BARNET

MARKETING REPORT
2024 | Q2 April-June

GOAL

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing goals in Q2 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

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At A Glance

Website

- The /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page was the most visited specific page of interest (9,699 pageviews)
- Top geographic market was Chicago (10.35% of all traffic), top age demographic was 55-64+ (23.75% of reported site users)
- Organic Search accounted for 57.23% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (36,868 users)

E-Newsletters

- More than 1,500 subscribers were added to the e-newsletter list in Q2
- Most popular e-newsletter was June's edition announcing the launch of the Summer Fun on the Great River Road Sweepstakes

Social Media

- Strong growth and engagement on Facebook (+2,500 fans) and Instagram (+500 fans) thanks to appealing content and successful ads

Fulfillment

- Fulfilled 4,713 map orders

Summer Fun on the Great River Road Sweepstakes

- Launched promotion highlighting summer events (Memorial Day to Labor Day) along the Great River Road
- Created events submission page, events calendar page
- Created and launched Summer Fun on the Great River Road Giveaway (\$100 gas card monthly giveaway in June, July, August)
- Collected information on potential ticket giveaways & launched first two social media ticket giveaways (National Eagle Center & Minnesota Marine Art Museum)

Additional

- 2024 Q3 content calendar created
- Performed quarterly PayPal transfer
- Reviewed and approved event submissions
- Planning for the Annual Meeting in Winona, MN - September 18-20, 2024

TACTIC: Website

Website Analytics Takeaways

Top Pages

The /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page was the most visited specific page of interest (not contest or homepage) with 9,699 views and accounted for 9.36% of all website views

The /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ page was the second most visited specific page of interest with 8,710 views and accounted for 7.69% of all website views

Acquisition

Organic Search accounted for 57.23% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (36,868 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 52.1% of all site user acquisitions. (33,558 Users)

Facebook was the #1 overall source of referring traffic and accounted for 2.72% of all site user acquisitions. (1,751 Users)

Metro Areas

Chicago was the #1 metro area/city of visitors to the website and accounted for 10.35% of all website users. (5,132 Users)

- The most visited page of interest from this metro area was the /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page. (891 views)

User Demographics:

The top reported age group of users was 55-64. (23.75% of reported site users | 37,973 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:

57.3% 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

- 49,943 Total Users this year vs 59,782 Total Users last year
- 113,329 Views this year vs 134,182 Views last year
- 64,416 Sessions this year vs 75,254 Sessions last year
- 2m 42s Average Session Duration this year vs 2m 35s last year
- 28,370 Organic search users this year vs 30,724 last year
- 1,652 Organic Social users this year vs 11,603 last year
- 5,1134 Paid Social users this year vs 0 last year
- 11,682 Direct traffic users this year vs 15,889 last year
- 2,789 Referral traffic users this year vs 2,394 last year

The top 5 pages this quarter and year

- Homepage 11,665 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 9,669 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 8,710 views
- /contest/summer-fun-on-the-great-river-road-giveaway/ 7,770 views
- /locks-and-dams-of-the-upper-mississippi/ 4,273 views

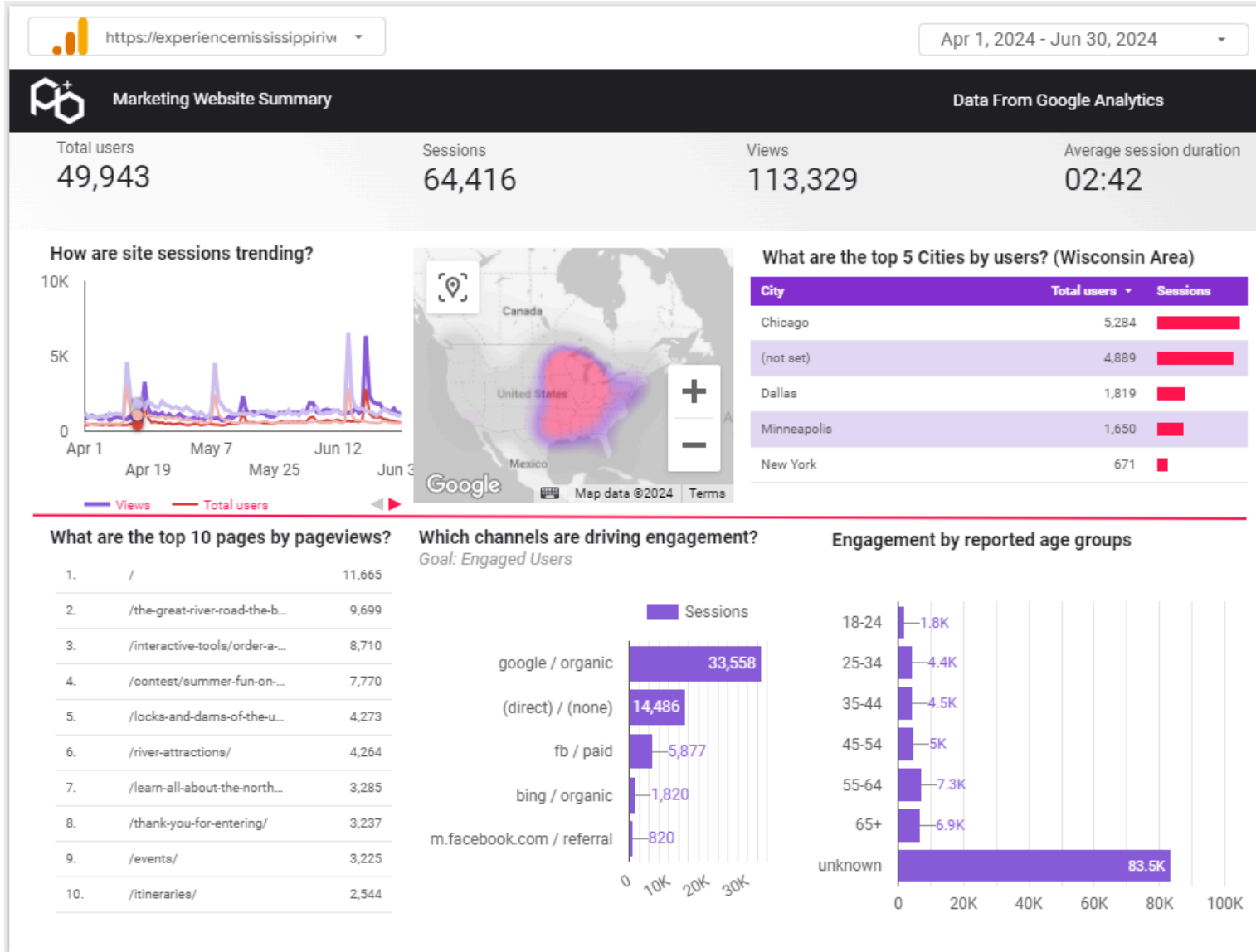
The top 5 pages last year for this same timeframe were

- Homepage 22,309 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 9,114 views
- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 9,041 views
- /4-historic-sites-you-should-visit-on-the-great-river-road/ 7,135 views
- /interactive-tools/webcams/ 5,584 views

This year's overall stats were down from last year. Down in users, views, and sessions. Slightly better in session duration. Almost even in users from organic search.

Non-paid Facebook traffic (Organic Social) was down 9,442 users (-85.94%) from last year at this time.

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 newsletter mailing address
- Updated Prairie du Chien Farmers Market information
- Removed COVID information
- Updated 1930s Preserving Agriculture Museum phone number
- Town of Ripley link
- Looked into app issues, took down app page and links
- Updated outdoor dining article

TACTIC: E-Newsletters

Takeaways

The Great River Road travel e-newsletter performed well in Q2, easily topping industry averages in open rate and click rate and adding nearly 1,500 fans. The most popular e-newsletter in terms of click rate was the June edition, which promoted the Summer Fun on the Great River Road Sweepstakes.

E-Newsletter Stats

Subscribers

52,607

Average Open Rate

34.33%

industry average: 20.2%

Average Click Rate

3.67%

industry average: 2.2%

Subscriber Growth

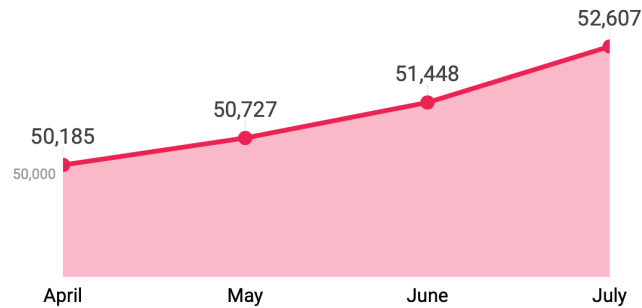




Photo Credit: Shawnee Cave Amphitheater

Enter now & find fun summer events on the Great River Road

We're giving you the chance to get out and explore the Great River Road's outstanding summer events! We're giving away three \$100 prepaid gas cards in June, July, and August, just what you need to explore the heart of America this summer. Enter today for your chance to win!

And [follow us on Facebook](#), where we'll be giving away tickets to exciting Great River Road events throughout the summer.

Enter now

Recipients

52,551

Opened

17,965

Clicked

2,759

E-newsletters Stats

| External Tourism E-newsletter | | | |
|---|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Article/Subject | Open Rate | Click Rate | URL |
| Learn about the northern Great River Road (4/18) | 35.1% | 3.5% | View newsletter |
| All about the southern Great River Road (5/16) | 33.4% | 2.2% | View newsletter |
| Enter our summer giveaway & find fun events along the Mississippi River (6/20) | 34.5% | 5.3% | View newsletter |
| Internal E-newsletter to Members | | | |
| Article/Subject | Open Rate | Click Rate | URL |
| MRPC Q2 Update (5/3) | 47.3% | 5.3% | View newsletter |
| Registration is now open for the 2024 MRPC Annual Meeting (6/5) | 41.8% | 7.9% | View newsletter |
| Keys to Effective Partnering for the Great River Road (6/17) | 39.0% | 5.2% | View newsletter |
| An update on the Drive the Great River Road app (6/28) | 36.5% | 3.6% | View newsletter |

TACTIC: Social Media

Takeaways

The Great River Road's Facebook and Instagram accounts performed well in Q2, seeing significant growth in fans on both platforms and good interaction on posts (especially promoted posts).

Facebook Takeaways

The Great River Road Facebook page increased fan numbers by more than 2,500 in Q2 thanks to a robust page likes campaign. We also had several posts that performed very well, with 4 posts (promoted with ad dollars) reaching more than 100,000 people and the top two posts reaching more than 330,000 people combined.

Instagram Takeaways

The Great River Road Instagram account continued to perform well in Q2, as we added more than 500 new followers. Popular topics included Great River Road scenery and wildlife.

All Combined Social Media Ads Stats

| Type of ad run | Amount spent | Result |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Boost Facebook posts - regular | Facebook: \$431.28 | 16,565 post engagements, 1,918 link clicks, 378 landing page views |
| Boost Facebook posts - Summer Fun on the Great River Road (ticket giveaways) | Facebook: \$75 | 686 post engagements |
| Boost Facebook posts - Summer Fun on the Great River Road Sweepstakes | Facebook: \$149.89 | 2,028 post engagements |
| Boost Instagram posts | Instagram: \$279.64 | 690 link clicks |
| Page likes | Facebook: \$198.86 | 1,732 page likes or follows |
| Traffic to experiencemississippiriver.com | Facebook: \$149.94 | 2,417 link clicks |

Combined Ads People Reached

704,226

Combined Ads Paid Impressions

1,311,965

Combined Page Engagement

19,279

Combined Ads Link Clicks

5,025

Facebook Overview

Facebook Stats

Facebook followers

92,887

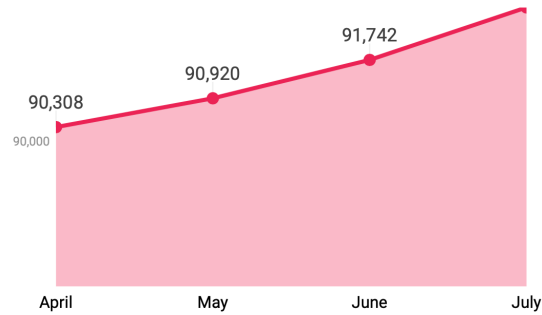
New Facebook followers

+2,579

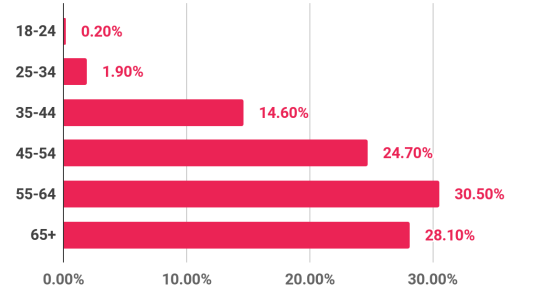
Facebook updates

43

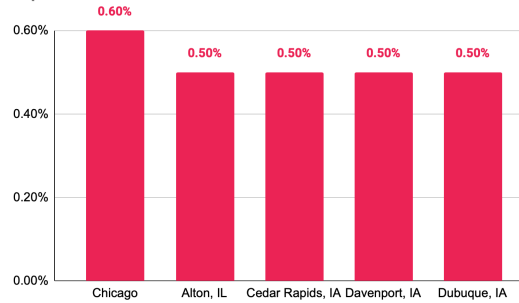
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

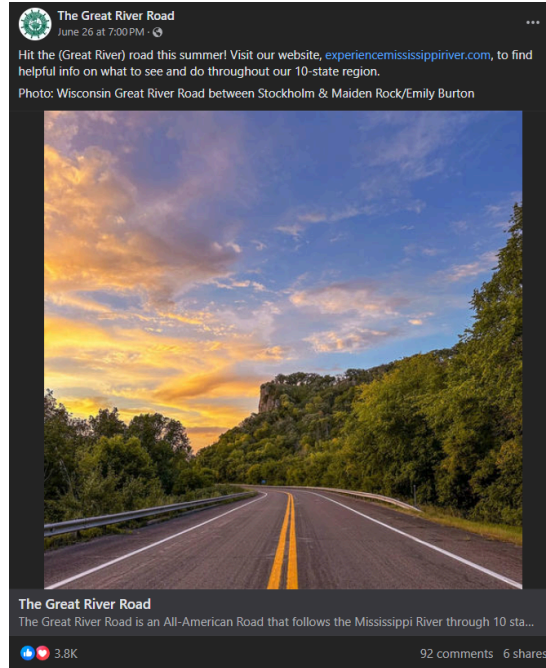


Top 5 Cities for Fans



Facebook Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 6/26



People Reached

118,268

Organic Reach

3,732

Paid Reach

115,055

Post Reactions

3,914

Instagram Overview

Instagram Stats

Instagram followers

6,907

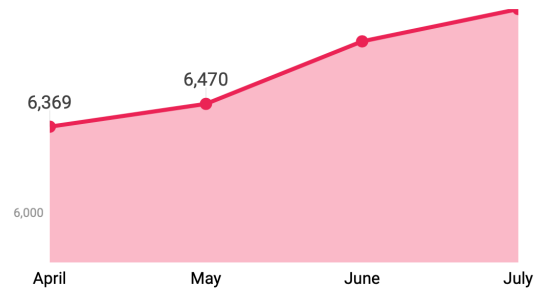
New Instagram followers

+538

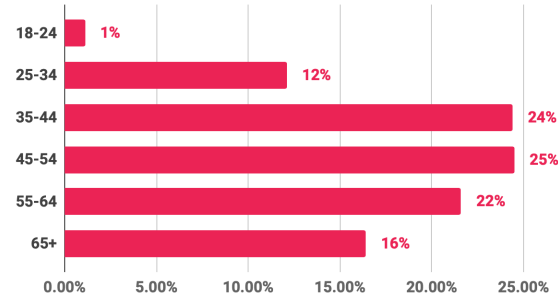
Instagram updates

14

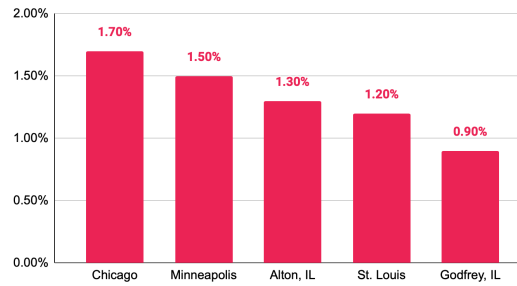
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics



Top 5 Cities for Followers



Instagram Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 6/26



Accounts Reached

5,418

Engagements

229

TACTIC: Online Store

- Created graphics for apparel and added to store

TACTIC: Promotion

Summer Fun on the Great River Road Giveaway

We launched a new campaign that put a focus on Great River Road summer events (Memorial Day to Labor Day) with a push to a new webpage where viewers can select from state and month to view events. Additionally, we launched a monthly giveaway for a \$100 gas card (drawings will take place in July, August, and September) and social media giveaways for featured events. We also created a form to collect event info (event name, date, location, description, event website, etc.) and event images for promotion.

Proposed Campaign Period: Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend

Goals:

- ❖ Bring attention to the Great River Road through variety of shared events
 - ❖ Collect event listings
 - ❖ Collect event photos for future promotional use
 - ❖ Create reporting with large numbers, such as entries, collection of events, web and social traffic, co-op ad participants
-
- Created events submission page, events calendar page, reviewed and published events
 - Created look/graphics for Summer Fun on the Great River Road Giveaway (\$100 gas card giveaway), created contest pages, launched promotion on 5/27 (runs through 9/2)
 - Collected information on events who wanted to provide free tickets for social media giveaways
 - Conducted two social media giveaways (National Eagle Center & Minnesota Marine Art Museum)

A full recap will appear in the Q3 report.

TACTIC: Fulfillment

- As needed, 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

4,713

Financials

- Performed quarterly PayPal and Stripe transfers
- Collected donations mailed in and deposited funds
- Follow up on 2024 state dues, updated invoices, collected payments and deposited funds
- Followed up on outstanding bills, processed 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

- 4/9 Annual Meeting Planning
- 4/29 Annual Meeting Meetings
- 4/30 Annual Meeting Planning
- 5/17 Nominating Committee
- 5/21 Culture and Heritage committee meeting
- 5/22 Annual Meeting Planning
- 5/29 Legal re: MRT
- 5/29 Met with Pilot
- 6/4 Marketing committee meeting
- 6/12 ERA committee meeting
- 6/14 Board meeting
- 6/27 App meeting

ADDITIONAL

Content

- Created 2024 Q3 content calendar detailing social media posts, e-news topics, ad budgets and goals.
- Collected story ideas, drafted and distributed member Q2 e-newsletter

Committees

- Attended meetings. Drafted minutes. Assisted in agendas. Posted meeting materials online and distributed via email. Follow up on matters as needed.
- Finalized Interpretive Center materials for nomination form, model applications and IC visit forms.
- Discussed nominations committee steps and outreach
- Communicated Stewardship Award and requested approval to extend deadline to 7/1
- Provided updated online system to help collect information from interpretive centers moving forward
- Created and maintained online forms to promote summer events on the website
- Created an online location to update tourism organization database
- Started to collect accessible viewing areas with online form submissions
- Updated and distributed information for this year's National Pollinator Week along the Great River Road

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
- Continued drafting themes and possible speakers as well as agenda flow with planning group
- Confirmed bus rental
- Communicated updates to membership through bi-weekly emails and updated the website as needed