



PILCH & BARNET

MARKETING REPORT
2025 | Q1 January-March

GOAL

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission’s marketing goals in Q1 2025 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), and more.

TACTICS

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At A Glance

Website, e-news, and social media ad tactics during Q1 resulted in 588,333 total impressions

Website

- The /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map / page was the most visited specific page of interest with 11,556 views and accounted for 16.64% of all website views.
- Organic Search accounted for 56.16% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (23,155 sessions)
- Illinois was the #1 state of visitors to the website. (3,932 Active Users)
- The top reported age group of users was 55-64.
- 46.96% of reported users viewed the site on mobile devices

E-Newsletters

- All editions topped industry averages for open rate and click rate
- Top edition for click rate was January (25 reasons to drive the Great River Road this year) and February and March editions (historic sites) each topped 50% open rate

Social Media

- Continued growth and engagement on Facebook (+1,400 new fans) and Instagram (+800 new fans) thanks to advertising and popular content

Fulfillment

- Fulfilled 3,468 map orders

Additional

- 2025 Q2 content calendar created
- Performed quarterly PayPal transfer
- Reviewed and approved event submissions
- Began preparing for the Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge, LA - September 10-12, 2025

TACTIC: Website

Website Analytics Takeaways

Top 3 Pages Of Interest

- The /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ page was the most visited specific page of interest with 11,556 views and accounted for 16.64% of all website views.
- The /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ page was the 2nd most visited specific page of interest with 6,696 views and accounted for 9.64% of all website views.
- The /river-attractions/ page was the 3rd most visited specific page of interest with 3,843 views and accounted for 5.53% of all website views.

Traffic Acquisition Summary

- Organic Search accounted for 56.16% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (23,155 sessions)
- Direct accounted for 29.93% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (12,343 sessions)
- Referral accounted for 5.13% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (2,115 sessions)
- Paid Social accounted for 4.63% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (1,909 sessions)
- Organic Social accounted for 3.75% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (1,548 sessions)
- Unassigned accounted for 0.39% of traffic of all site acquisitions. (160 sessions)

Organic Search accounted for 56.16% of all website users and was the highest channel of acquisition traffic (23,155 sessions)

- 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/organic was the #1 overall source of organic traffic and accounted for 50.00% of all site sessions. (20,608 Sessions)

Facebook (combined) was the #1 overall source of referring traffic and accounted for 3.47% of all site user acquisitions. (1,432 Sessions)

Demographic Details: Top 10 Cities to visit the site in the Wisconsin area

City	Active Users	Engaged Sessions
Chicago	2,228	1,678
Minneapolis	987	771
Columbus	207	67
Madison	189	194
Milwaukee	156	131
La Crosse	108	79
Bloomington	89	56
Des Moines	89	55
Springfield	81	59
Jackson	78	51

- Chicago was the #1 city of visitors to the website. (2,228 Active Users)

Demographic Details: Top 10 States to visit the site

State	Active Users	Engaged Sessions
Illinois	3,932	2,973
Minnesota	2,612	2,144
Wisconsin	2,338	2,034
Texas	2,019	1,584
Iowa	1,543	1,072
Missouri	1,439	1,035
Florida	1,335	1,087
California	1,216	931
Virginia	975	677
Georgia	804	588

- Illinois was the #1 state of visitors to the website. (3,932 Active Users)

Demographics Details: User Age

- The top reported age group of users was 55-64. (23.02% of reported site users | 24,656 users with no age reported)
- The "unknown" age value in GA4 appears because users didn't consent to tracking or there isn't enough data from signed-in users for Google to determine their demographics. The numbers shown in this report reflect only the users who've agreed to data collection or are signed in on their browser.

Demographic Details: Device Usage

- 46.96% of reported users viewed the site on mobile devices (industry standard for mobile devices is 53.74%)

This Year vs Last Year Stats:

- Total Users: 31,574 this year vs 39,858 last year
- Total Sessions: 40,584 this year vs 48,494 last year
- Total Views: 78,821 this year vs 90,368 last year
- Average Session Duration: 03:11 this year vs 03:05 last year
- Organic Search Sessions: 23,155 this year vs 27,399 last year
- Organic Social Sessions: 1,548 this year vs 5,883 last year
- Paid Social Sessions: 1,909 this year vs 0 last year
- Direct Sessions: 12,343 this year vs 13,280 last year
- Referral Sessions: 2,115 this year vs 2,481 last year

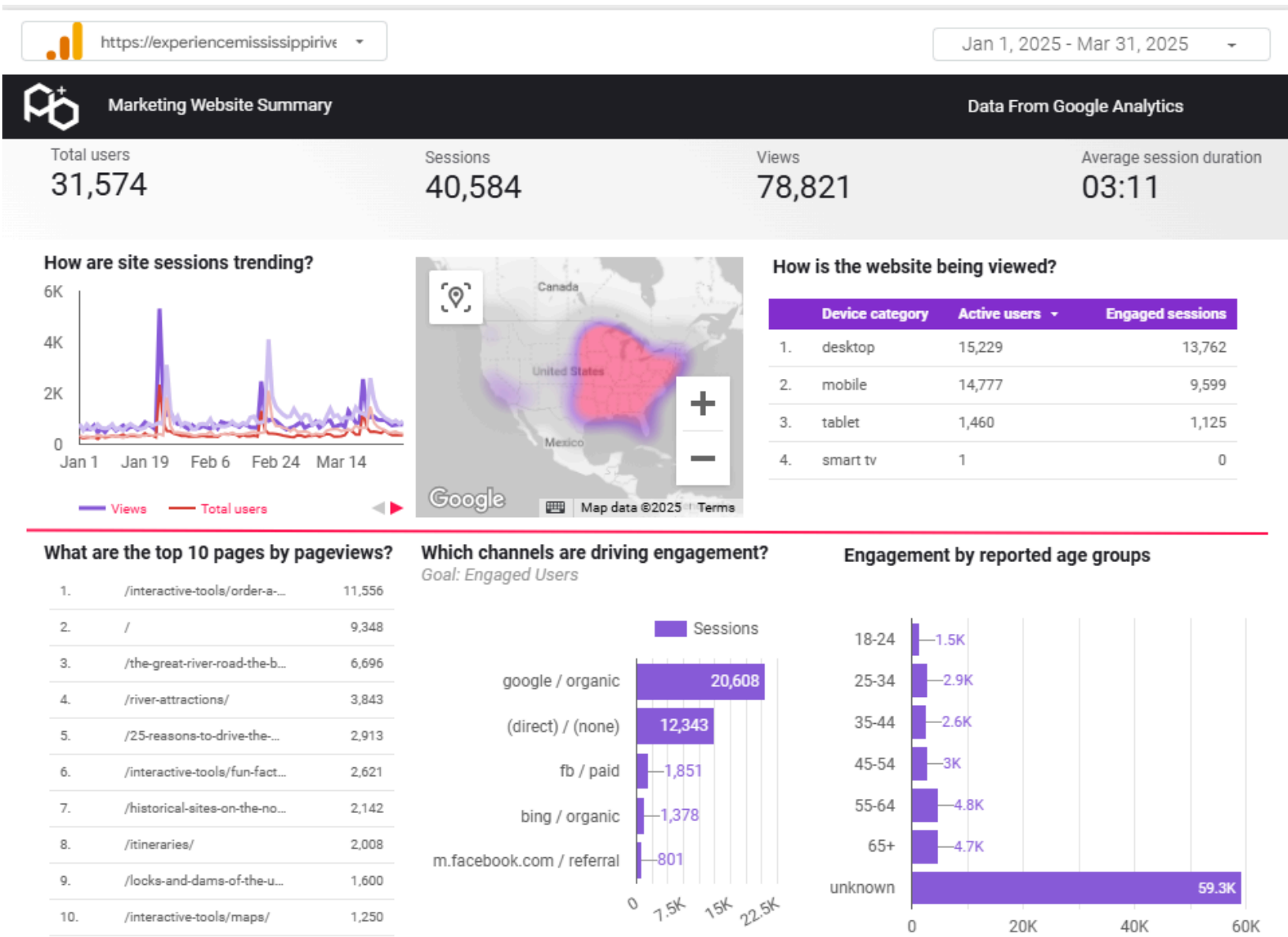
Top 5 Pages This Year

- /interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/ 11,556 views
- Homepage 9,348 views
- /the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/ 6,696 views
- /river-attractions/ 3,843 views
- /25-reasons-to-drive-the-great-river-road/ 2,913 views

Top 5 Pages Last 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/ 9,639 views
- /river-attractions/ 4,276 views
- /annual-events-on-the-northern-great-river-road/ 3,292 views

Website Analytics Stats



How are site sessions trending?



Views Total users



Google Map data ©2025 Terms

How is the website being viewed?

	Device category	Active users	Engaged sessions
1.	desktop	15,229	13,762
2.	mobile	14,777	9,599
3.	tablet	1,460	1,125
4.	smart tv	1	0

What are the top 10 pages by pageviews?

1.	/interactive-tools/order-a-...	11,556
2.	/	9,348
3.	/the-great-river-road-the-b...	6,696
4.	/river-attractions/	3,843
5.	/25-reasons-to-drive-the-...	2,913
6.	/interactive-tools/fun-fact...	2,621
7.	/historical-sites-on-the-no...	2,142
8.	/itineraries/	2,008
9.	/locks-and-dams-of-the-u...	1,600
10.	/interactive-tools/maps/	1,250

Which channels are driving engagement?

Goal: Engaged Users



Sessions

Engagement by reported age groups



18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+ unknown

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
- Flipped site to Spring on March 21

Website Updates

- Added IA parcel maps documents to the table
- Updated IA IC page
- Looked into Members plugin throwing errors in log
- Removed content on Fort Madison from MRPC and Experience sites
- Worked on plugin extension to pull and send a weekly CSV file of form entries to MS
- Looked at code or plugins to try and send form entries to MS as an excel sheet. test free plugin without success
- Fixed instagram feed
- Build plugin to test sending of csv document for AR
- Finish plugin/testing and add to site

TACTIC: E-Newsletters

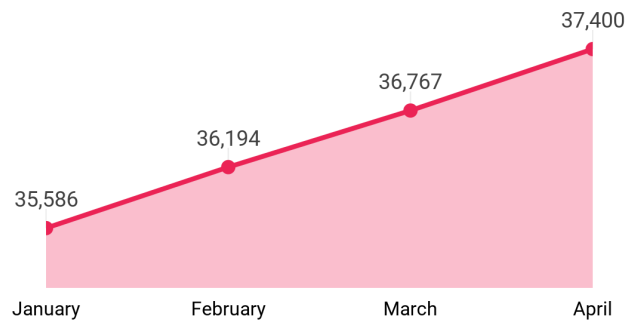
Takeaways

The Great River Road tourism e-newsletter continued to perform well in Q1, easily topping open rate and click rates for all three editions. The January edition (why to travel the Great River Road in 2025) led the way in click rate, and the February and March editions (historic sites on the Great River Road) each had open rates higher than 50%.

E-Newsletter Stats

Subscribers	Total Unique Opens for Q1 E-News	Average Open Rate	Average Click Rate
37,400	58,895	46.83%	4.53%
		industry average: 20.2%	industry average: 2.2%

Subscriber Growth






Photo: Gateway Arch National Park/Brittney Butler on Unsplash

Historical sites on the northern Great River Road

A trip along the Great River Road is a trip through the history of America. Here are some historical sites and museums you shouldn't miss as you follow the Mississippi River through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.

Learn more

Recipients

37,013

Opened

18,827

Clicked

1,467

E-newsletters Stats

External Tourism E-newsletter				
Article/Subject	Unique Opens	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
25 reasons to drive the Great River Road this year (1/23)	21,015	39.1%	5.6%	View newsletter
Historical sites & museums to visit on the northern Great River Road (2/20)	18,827	50.9%	4.0%	View newsletter
Historical sites & museums to visit on the southern Great River Road (3/20)	19,053	50.5%	4.0%	View newsletter
Internal E-newsletter to Members				
Article/Subject	Unique Opens	Open Rate	Click Rate	URL
MRPC Q1 Update (3/13)	230	40.7%	5.0%	View newsletter
Hotel group room block is now open for the 2025 MRPC Annual Meeting (3/20)	236	41.9%	5.3%	View newsletter

TACTIC: Social Media

Takeaways

The Great River Road's Facebook and Instagram received good organic and paid interaction in Q1, thanks to engaging content and a successful advertising campaign. Advertising helped us reach more than 275,000 people and helped boost several posts throughout the quarter.

Facebook Takeaways

The Great River Road Facebook page added more than 1,400 followers in Q1 and may hit 100,000 total followers in Q2. Promoted posts yielded nearly 3,500 engagements with Facebook content. Popular content included Great River Road scenery and links to articles about the Great River Road.

Instagram Takeaways

The Great River Road Instagram account added more than 800 fans in Q1 and continues to see solid engagement. The top post was a winter photo of the Great River Road in Wisconsin, which received more than 12,500 views.

All Combined Social Media Ads Stats

Type of ad run	Amount spent	Result
Boost Facebook posts - regular	Facebook: \$299.82	3,964 post engagements, 2,064 link clicks
Boost Instagram posts - regular	Instagram: \$298.69	1,254 Instagram profile visits, 1,287 link clicks
Page likes	Facebook: \$296.07	1,915 page likes or follows

Combined Ads People Reached

275,739

Combined Ads Paid Impressions

450,617

Combined Page Engagement

11,979

Combined Ads Link Clicks

4,765

Facebook Overview

Facebook Stats

Facebook followers

98,720

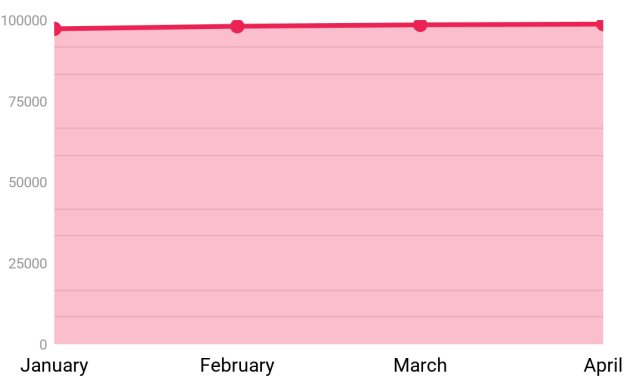
New Facebook followers

+1,445

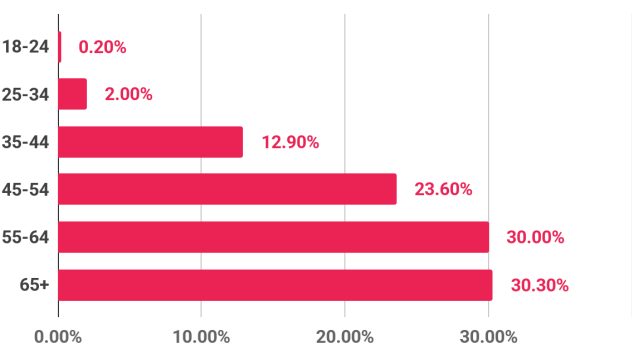
Facebook updates

41

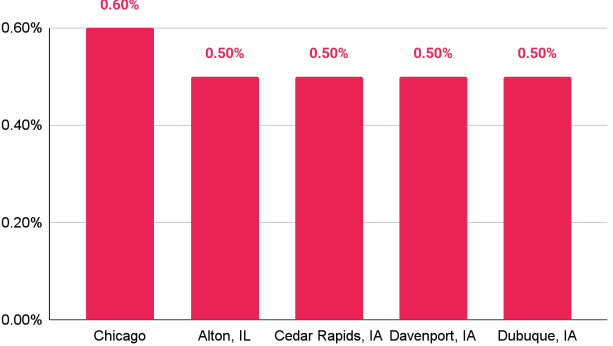
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

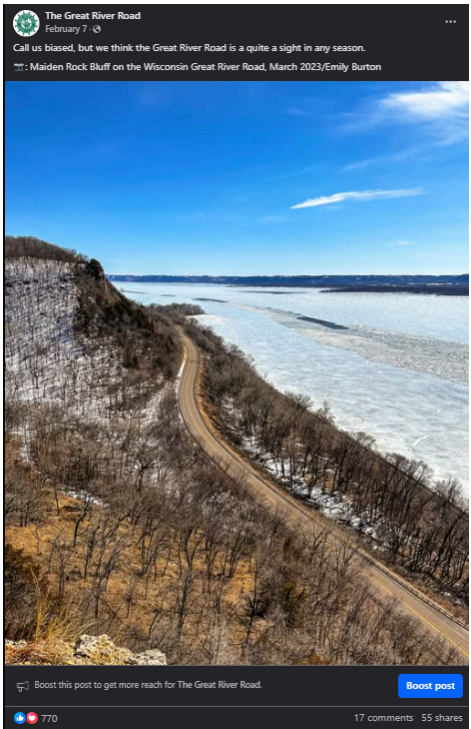


Top 5 Cities for Fans



Facebook Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 2/7



Views

62,317

People Reached

51,727

Post Interactions

845

Instagram Overview

Instagram Stats

Instagram followers

8,953

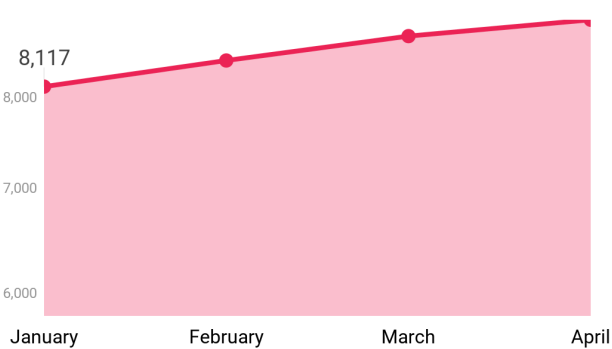
New Instagram followers

+836

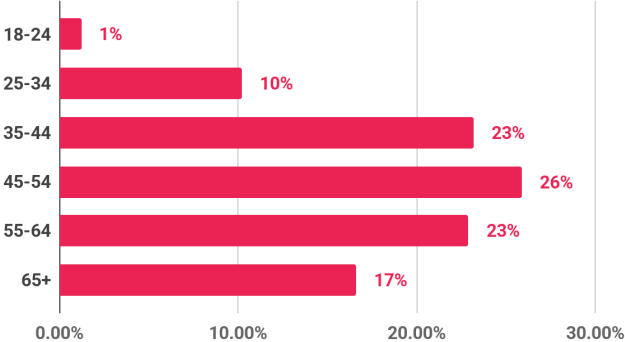
Instagram updates

13

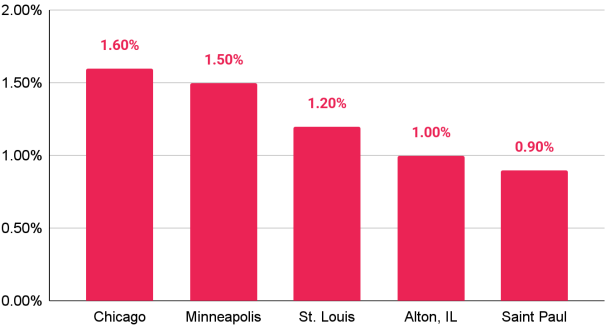
Follower Growth



Follower Demographics

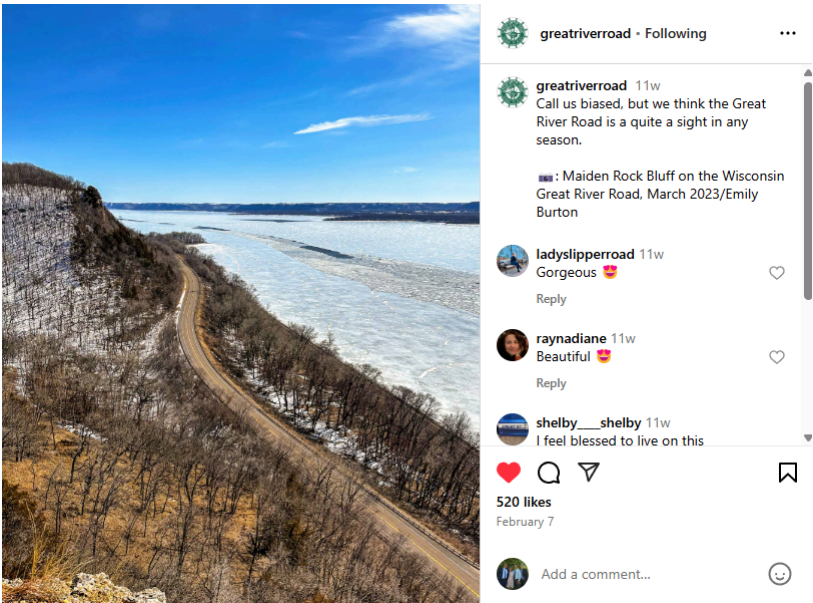


Top 5 Cities for Followers



Instagram Posts

Top Performing Post | Date: 2/7



Views

12,674

Accounts Reached

8,688

Interactions

549

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
- Replied to email and phone inquiries

Fulfillment

3,468

TACTIC: Financials

- Performed quarterly PayPal and Stripe transfers
- Collected donations mailed in and deposited funds
- Sent 2025 invoices for state dues, updated invoices, collected payments and deposited funds
- Followed up on outstanding bills, processed and deposited collected funds
- Collected Community Foundation and Ameriprise earning statements and updated financials accordingly
- Prepared financial reports for Board meeting

TACTIC: Meetings

- 1/21 Culture and Heritage committee meeting
- 2/5 Marketing committee meeting
- 2/28 Transportation committee meeting
- 3/14 Board meeting
- 3/18 Culture and Heritage committee meeting
- 3/19 ERA committee meeting
- 3/28 Transportation committee meeting

ADDITIONAL

Content

- Created 2025 Q2 content calendar detailing social media posts, e-news topics, ad budgets and goals
- Collected story ideas, drafted and distributed member Q1 enewsletter

Committees

- Attended meetings. Drafted minutes. Assisted in agendas. Posted meeting materials online and distributed via email. Follow up on matters as needed.
- Continued to promote new Interpretive Center materials for nomination form, model applications and IC visit forms.
- Continued to collect and promote online systems to help collect information from interpretive centers moving forward.
- Continued to collect and maintain online forms to promote summer events on the website.
- Continued promotion and collection of an online location to update the tourism organization database.
- Continued promotion and collection of accessible viewing areas with online form submissions.

2025 Annual Meeting

- Discussions and planning began with Louisiana looking at a meeting location. Time was initially spent planning a meeting in St Francisville. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure enough sleeping rooms. We then began discussions and planning in Baton Rouge and eventually secured the Hilton Downtown Baton Rouge and opened up the meeting room reservations in March. Work continues on the agenda including speakers.

USA Today Best Scenic Drives

- Created marketing campaign and initial content for Great River Road nomination as Best Scenic Drive in USA Today 10Best Readers' Choice Awards

National Pollinator Week

- Created campaign look for National Pollinator Week 2025