



**MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Ambassadors**

Welcome and thank you for joining us today for an information session about the Minnesota and National Great River Road.

Agenda

- Introductions
- Ambassador Goals
- 10-State Great River Road
- Minnesota Great River Road
- MN-MRPC Member Roles
- Questions & Conversation



Our agenda for the day includes goals for ambassadors; details about the Minnesota and National Great River Road and information tools that are available. Please feel free to ask questions as we go, or we'll also have some time at the end of our session.

Ambassador Goals

Minnesota Great River Road Ambassadors can help:

- Enrich traveler and neighbor exploration of the Mississippi River
- Promote community businesses and attractions
- Promote and confirm the Byway Traveler Resource Inventory of over 700 Minnesota attractions
- Promote the 10-State Interpretive Center Network

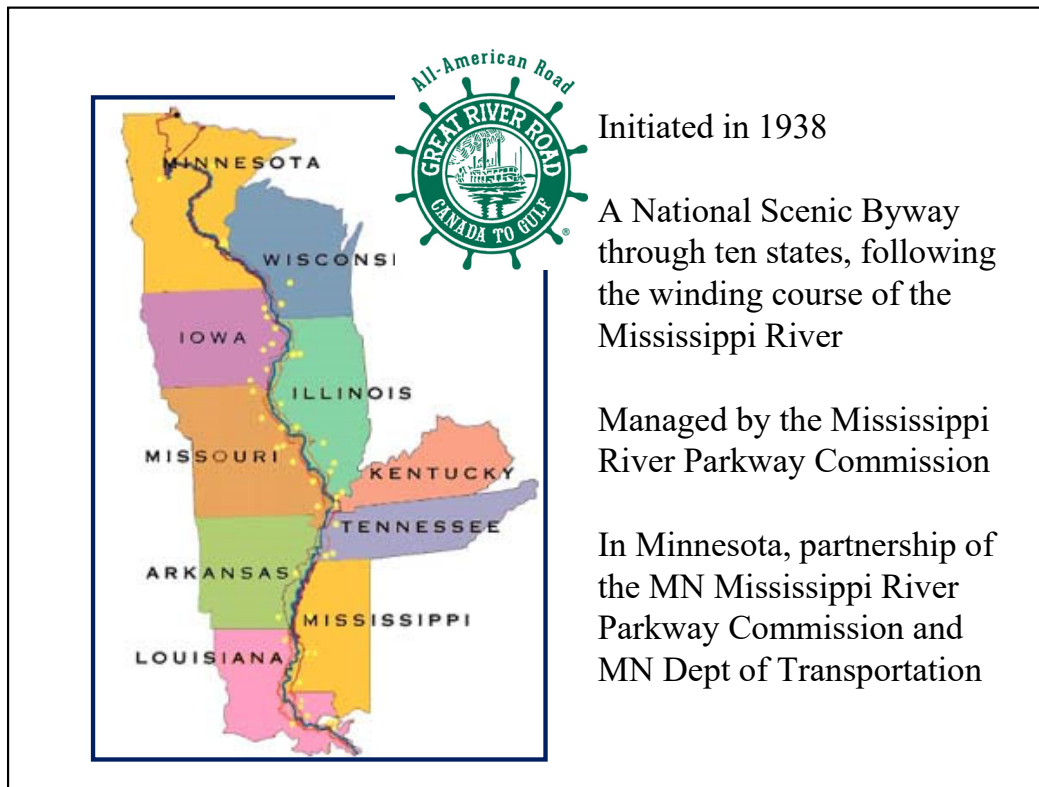
Ambassadors will learn about:

- The Great River Road & Mississippi River
- Byway traveler characteristics and needs
- Website, print map & social media tools
- 700+ places to explore
- 90+ Interpretive Centers
- 10-state and Minnesota promotions

Read the slide.

We need your help so we can promote your site and other communities and attractions along the Minnesota Great River Road. We also need your help telling the stories of the Great River Road to visitors, residents and constituents. And, we thank you for being a Great River Road Ambassador!

Because we're trying to keep an eye on time today and stay within an hour, there are some terms and topics that we won't be able to talk about in detail. We've developed some fact sheets that are posted at www.mississippiriver.com on the Ambassadors page so you can access information as needed.



Initiated in 1938

A National Scenic Byway through ten states, following the winding course of the Mississippi River

Managed by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission

In Minnesota, partnership of the MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission and MN Dept of Transportation

The Great River Road has a long and rich history – it was initiated in 1938 and is a series of roadways offering the most up-close river experiences possible. This map shows you the ten Great River Road states. These states all work together as part of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission. Each state has its own Commission. In Minnesota, the MN-MRPC works in partnership with MnDOT. MnDOT is responsible for management of the route/roadways.

All-American Road and National Scenic Byway



Most of the Great River Road is designated as a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration and is promoted nationally and internationally as one of America's greatest drives.

In addition, 8 of the 10 states - including Minnesota - have received All-American Road status for the Great River Road.

The Great River Road holds special status – as both a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road. Both of these designations are part of the Federal Highway Administration's "Americas Byways" program. The logo is shown on this sign. All-American Road is the highest level of designation a byway can receive, defining it as a destination unto itself. Minnesota and seven other states were given this honor in 2021. There is a page on our website with more details about what it means to be an All-American Road.

Ten-State Great River Road Tools

www.experiencemississippiriver.com



The Ten-State, National Great River Road provides a variety of information and outreach to travelers - and promotes Interpretive Centers as “must see” stops. Here are a few examples -

The Ten-State Great River Road website, experiencemississippiriver.com, is a one stop shop for information on the route and attractions in all the states.

There’s a print map, showing all ten states and all Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The map is for promotional purposes rather than navigation – it gives a glimpse of what the full route is like. Travelers can order a copy from the National or Minnesota Great River Road website, and Interpretive Centers periodically receive a supply to distribute to visitors.

The Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers is managed and promoted by the National MRPC. Signs like this one (with “Treasures” at the top) are found at the centers to identify them as part of this special network.

The Great River Road’s All-American Road status is shared and promoted – this logo is used to show the designation for the National group, and each of the eight

states that received the designation has a logo showing the state name.

The experiencemississippiriver.com website has a free downloadable app available. The app provides navigation for the route through all ten states, and also information on scenic overlooks, historic sites and more.

The National MRPC/Great River Road has an active social media presence – check them out on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram.

Drive the Great River Road Month is celebrated in all ten states each September. Promotion includes a national sweepstakes, news releases, and social media efforts. In Minnesota, a theme is chosen each year for the promotion. Minnesota Grown sponsored the 2022 campaign, with a theme of Fall Harvest on the Great River Road. The 2023 theme features the arts in Great River Road communities.

MN Great River Road Interpretive Centers

- Itasca State Park/Jacob Brower Visitor Center
- Forest History Center
- Itasca County History Museum
- Charles Lindbergh House & Museum
- Oliver Kelley Farm
- Mill City Museum
- Historic Fort Snelling
- Minnesota History Center
- NPS Mississippi River Visitor Center
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- National Eagle Center
- Minnesota Marine Art Museum
- Winona County History Center



The National MRPC currently has 91 Great River Road Interpretive Centers in its network. Centers are designated for their remarkable telling of Mississippi River stories. The process includes completion of a nomination form including details about the site and background on the site's connections to the Great River Road Interpretive Themes. The National MRPC's Culture and Heritage Committee reviews nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors. Minnesota is pleased to be home to 13 Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The stars on this map show the general locations. The specific sites are listed on the slide as well. Great River Road Interpretive Centers are can't miss sites promoted by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission. They are listed on websites and featured on maps and also receive maps for distribution along with special event promotional items (past examples include key chains and rack cards).

Minnesota's Great River Road



- 565-Mile Route
- 43 Communities
- 20 Counties
- 13 Interpretive Centers
- 6 Destination Areas
- 3 Tribal Nations

This map provides a general overview of the Minnesota Great River Road. As you can see, it spans 565 miles, 43 incorporated communities, 20 counties and 3 tribal nations. As mentioned previously, the Minnesota Great River Road is home to 13 National Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The route is divided into six unique destination areas (regions) to help travelers break down the route into shorter sections. The destination areas are color coded on this map – Headwaters (Lake Itasca to Bemidji); Northwoods (Bemidji to Grand Rapids); Crossings (Grand Rapids to Brainerd); Scenic (Brainerd to Elk River); Metro (Elk River to Hastings) and Bluffs (Hastings to Iowa Border). There truly is something for everyone! Hopefully sites will cross promote within destination areas, and also promote the full route – knit together as a Mississippi River community.

Wayfinding Signage

2018: All Minnesota GRR signs replaced (565 Miles)

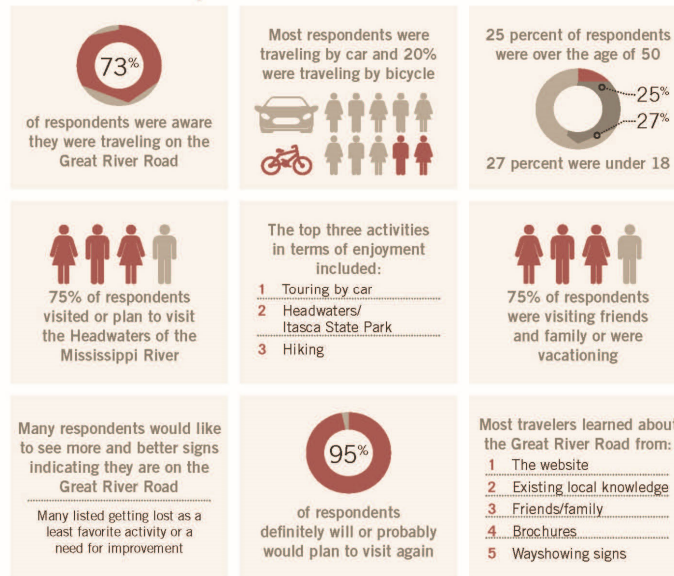
Look for the green and white Pilot's Wheel signs!



Wayfinding signage is one of the most recognizable tools available to promote the Great River Road and your location along it. The route was completely re-signed in 2018, after it was determined that a significant portion of the signs were missing or no longer functional (22 % of the wayfinding signs were missing and 32% needed repair or were incomplete). The route is generally only signed where you need to turn so any missing signs can really impact the travel experience. MnDOT works with local road authorities on route details and signage. Roughly 40% of the route is on MnDOT roadways with the rest being under jurisdiction of cities, counties, etc. Downloadable turn by turn driving directions are available at mnmississippiriver.com on the order maps page.

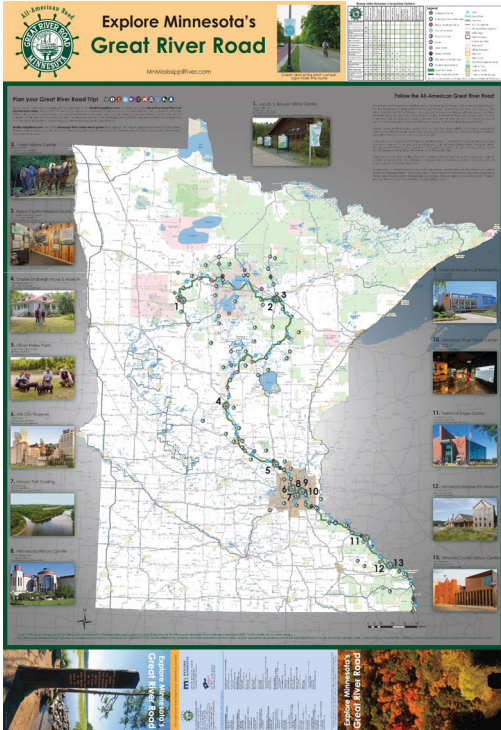
Travelers of Every Age and Many Interests

Great River Road Visitor Survey Results Overview



2016 Corridor Management Plan visitor surveys indicated that Great River Road travelers include every age and they share a common goal of Mississippi River exploration that satisfies a wide range of interests. Discuss selections from the slide and note that this graphic and others are available at mnmississippiriver.com under “About Us.”

Traveler intercept surveys were conducted at Great River Road attractions during the information gathering process for the most recent Corridor Management Plan (2016). This is pre-pandemic data from that point in time.

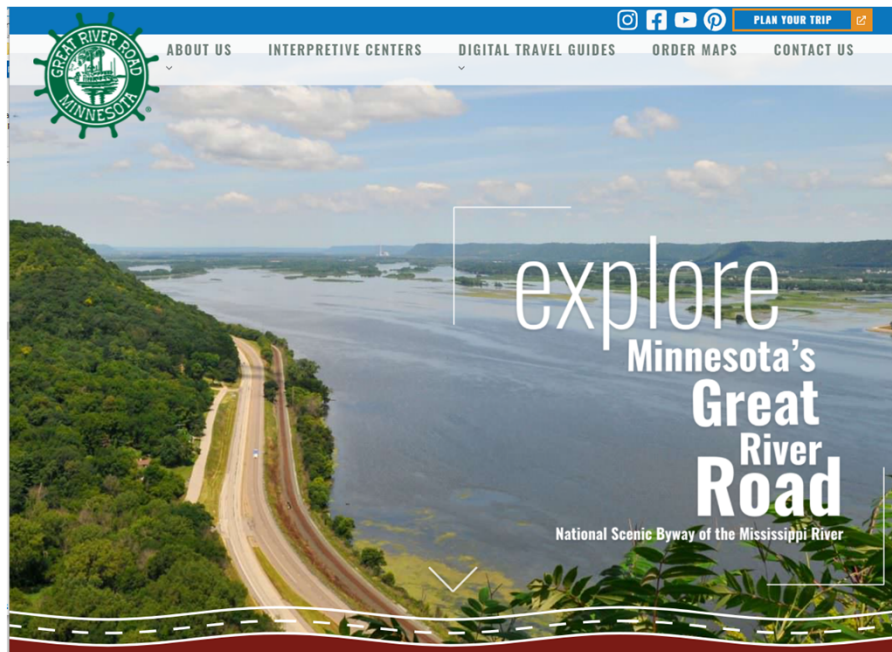


Print Map

- Similar in design to MN State Highway Map
- Features MN GRR Interpretive Centers
- Samples from 700+ byway attractions
- Full state map of Great River Road Route (Side 1)
- Community maps (Side 2)
- Community contact information

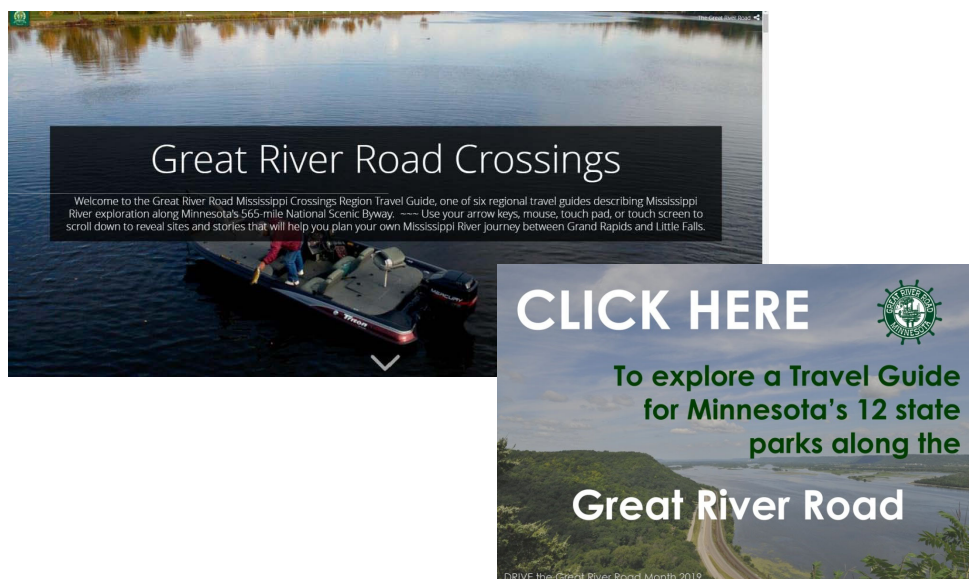
A new Minnesota Great River Road map was printed in 2020 and is currently available upon request. Just contact the MN-MRPC office. The print map is a great “in-hand” guide and souvenir. Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Centers are highlighted to the left and right sides of the state map, as seen on this slide. This map was recently updated and the current version is posted online at mnmississippiriver.com and is shown on this slide.

www.mnmississippiriver.com



The MN Great River Road website, mnmississippiriver.com, is one of the primary information sources available for partners, residents and travelers. It includes a variety of tools and resources we'll talk more about as we move ahead.

Digital Travel Guides



[Bluffs Travel Guide](#)

Six regional travel guides are available on the website—telling the stories and highlighting special places of the six unique Minnesota Great River Road regions and featuring the Interpretive Centers. A travel guide to state parks along the Minnesota Great River was also developed. Other specialized guides may be created over time and would also be located under the Digital Travel Guides tab at the top of the website homepage. Are there topics you would suggest for new Digital Travel Guides?



Plan Your Trip interactive mapping can be accessed from the website homepage. This is what the landing page looks like after you click on “Plan Your Trip.” The tool includes route navigation and information on over 700 things to see and do in a variety of categories. You can zoom into specific locations on the route to help answer traveler questions or for your own reference. A series of videos show how to use the features available within the interactive map and can be accessed from the landing page or directly from YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0rmHaSsN3scC9f6_qeeh01dXwknd1Vbr. Next we’ll take a brief tour of the website.

Plan Your Trip Updates

- The more than 700 sites plus Minnesota Grown locations in the online resource inventory need to be confirmed and updated as part of the regular maintenance of the interactive map.
- Commission Agencies (DNR, MNHS, MnDOT, MDA) account for about a third and we will work individually with those agencies.
- Ambassadors can help to update site information, improve photos, and suggest new sites.

We need your help to make sure that Plan Your Trip includes accurate information. Feel free to reach out to any of us with requested updates or photographs. We appreciate it!

MN-MRPC Members

“Job Description”

MN-MRPC COMMISSIONER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Enact the mission of the MRPC and Corridor Management Plan at national, state, and local levels, serving as liaison between the Commission and the State Agency or Region they represent.
- Participate in four meetings of the MN-MRPC annually.
- Participate, as schedule and funding allow, in National Mississippi River Parkway Commission meetings and serve on National Standing Committees as appointed by the MN-MRPC Chair.
- Actively support projects, promotions and special events related to the Mississippi River and/or Great River Road.

In addition, Regional Commissioner’s responsibilities:

- Enable regional stakeholders to maximize the benefits of the Great River Road.
- Act as liaison between the MRPC/MN-MRPC and the Great River Road region.
- Foster partnerships and cooperation within the region, harnessing local resources to implement the mission and plan.
- Coordinate meetings and lead implementation of work plans for their Regional Citizen Committee.

Examples - Legislators

- Help sponsor legislation that benefits the work of the Commission
- Inform fellow legislators about the GRR and MN-MRPC
- Share GRR story with the public



Above, Rep. Sheldon Johnson with Randy Thoreson of the National Park Service. On right Sen. Dave Senjem with MN-MRPC At-Large Member Anne Lewis

Examples – Regional Members

- Serve as liaison to local stakeholders
- Leverage local efforts that help implement the Corridor Management Plan
- Connect local communities and projects with technical assistance or other resources available through the MN-MRPC



Brainerd MRT Kiosk Ribbon Cutting – MN-MRPC Regional Member Karl Samp in Great River Road green on left, and Carol Zoff of MnDOT in black holding scissors/ribbon on right side of photo. Also at event but not visible in photo – Regional Member Nancy Salminen.

Examples – Agency Appointees

- Communicate within the agency and to agency leadership about the work of the MN-MRPC
- Prioritize agency involvement and staff support for MN-MRPC projects



Drive the Great River Road Month 2022 Kick-Off Event at MN State Fair. L to R – Kent Whitworth – MNHS; Anne Lewis – MN-MRPC At-Large; Grant Wilson – DNR; Andrea Vaubel – MDA; Nancy Daubenberger – MnDOT; David Kelliher – MNHS; Lauren Bennett McGinty – Explore Minnesota; Sen. Dave Senjem; John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings Region; Paul Hugunin – MDA; Christina Iliev - MDA

Examples – Agency Technical Members

- Support and carry out projects
- Provide connections to partners and the Corridor Management Plan
- Leverage Great River Road initiatives to enhance agency projects and programs



Bicycle Tour with a stop at a Mississippi River Trail kiosk, at the Minnesota GIS/LIS Conference in Bemidji

Questions & Conversation



Please feel free to send your feedback or requests anytime...

Thank You!

MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission

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Thank you for your time! We look forward to our next Annual Visit! Please keep in touch with any questions, suggestions or information we can help share...