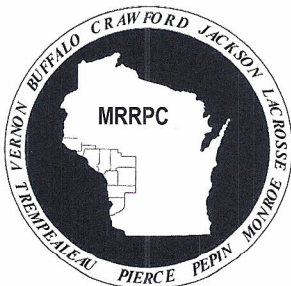


**Wisconsin
Mississippi River
Parkway
Commission**

**Wisconsin
Great River Road
Corridor
Management Plan
2018
DRAFT**



**Prepared by the
Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission**
Plan Survey Data/Public Input Facilitation provided by Corridor Solutions

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Attachment #1 Short-Term Work Plan

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Wisconsin Great River Road Corridor Management Plan

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Wisconsin Great River Road is a stunning 250-mile drive on Wisconsin State Highway 35. The route parallels the Mississippi River and winds through 33 unique river towns. From Prescott in Pierce County to Potosi in Grant County, the Great River Road is home to breathtaking bluff views, countless recreational activities and communities waiting to deliver authentic experiences to travelers.

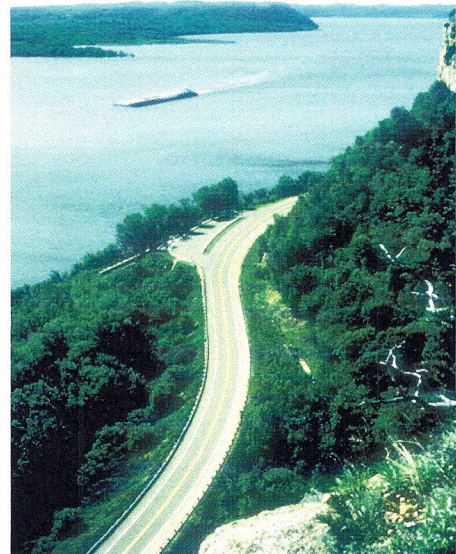
Designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2000, the Wisconsin Great River Road is part of a collection of 150 roads that showcase our nation's most memorable natural, historic and scenic resources. What sets these roads apart as destinations are the people and stories to be discovered.

To aide in preserving and enhancing the Wisconsin Great River Road the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission (WIMRPC) was established by state statute. The WIMRPC provides general oversight of the Wisconsin Great River Road Corridor. The following paragraph from the WIMRPC Commissioner's Handbook illustrates the specific purpose of the Commission:

"The WIMRPC: (1) Assists in coordinating the development and preservation of the Great River Road in Wisconsin and its embellishment, such as scenic easements: roadside parks, and scenic overlooks. (2) Assists other state agencies in all efforts to create a unified development of the Great River Road in Wisconsin and any of its collateral features. (3) Cooperates with similar committees or Commissions in other states in the furtherance of the ultimate development of the Great River Road from its start in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. (4) Consults with the appropriate Regional Planning Commissions regarding the Mississippi River Parkway. (5) Assists in promoting the Great River Road in Wisconsin as a travel destination with the unique historical, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational features along the route of the Great River Road, such as local communities, off-road parks and forests, and water-oriented facilities."

To achieve proper oversight and management of the Great River Road Corridor the WIMRPC maintains a Corridor Management Plan (CMP). In 2017-2018, the WIMRPC contracted with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to assist the WIMRPC in updating the Commission's Corridor Management Plan. The WIMRPC also contracted with Corridor Solutions to assist with gathering stakeholder and public input as part of the CMP planning process.

The existing CMP was created in 1999 and is more a compilation of numerous planning documents than a CMP. The WIMRPC has limited funding but recognized the value of a CMP and the need to update the existing document. A goal in updating the CMP was to create a document that has realistic aspirations with achievable outcomes. The CMP is intended to be a ten-year planning document with a review of the document recommended in year five. The CMP has a short-term work plan (Attachment 1) recommended



The Wisconsin Great River Road – State Hwy. 35

to be annually updated to assist with meeting immediate needs. The planning document also includes longer-term strategies/recommendations to accomplish more encompassing activities/programs.

2. HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

History

The planning and development of the Great River Road began in the 1930's with the idea for a ten-state scenic roadway. In 1938 the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (ten state Commission) was formed to oversee the Great River Road. Each state created a counterpart organization for the purpose of planning and advising state agencies on matters involving the Great River Road. In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission was established by state statutes and is comprised of commissioners from each of the eight counties the GRR travels through.

The GRR in Wisconsin has always been viewed as a unique asset, and in 2000 in response to the state's request the Federal Highway Administration designated the entire 250 mile length of Great River Road (in Wisconsin) as a National Scenic Byway. The designation was a great honor as it was one of only 81 such roads at the time (presently approximately 112 National Scenic Byways) to receive the designation. The designation remains a prestigious and unique honor which recognizes the Great River Road as one of the nation's highways that demonstrate outstanding scenic beauty along with historical, archaeological, cultural and recreational opportunity.



**Significance of the Great River Road
recognized in the 1930's**

Description

The Wisconsin GRR encompasses a 250-mile corridor traveling through eight counties and over thirty river communities. The north end of the GRR corridor starts in Prescott, Wisconsin and the south end of the corridor begins at the Illinois/Wisconsin border near Kieler, Wisconsin. 230 miles of the GRR are on State Highway 35 and the remaining 20 miles are routed over Grant County roads. Approximately 165 miles of the Wisconsin GRR in rural areas are protected by scenic easements that generally extend 350 feet from the roadway centerline. The scenic easements are administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and protect the views from the GRR by addressing building types, building spacing, deforestation, excavations, signage, and junk/debris.

3. WHY SCENIC BYWAYS ARE IMPORTANT

Scenic byways are not just roads that travel through places, they are places. Places that provide residents and visitors alike the opportunity to discover and rediscover the real places, real stories, and real people that truly define America. The travel experience that scenic byways offer aligns perfectly with the leading trend in tourism today – experiential travel.



National Scenic Byway Logo

Experiential travel involves immersion into local culture and includes learning experiences. The desire of travelers to explore lesser-known destinations, especially those that are relatively untouched or unique, continues to grow with 74% of avid travelers seeking more meaningful travel experiences. This means getting off the beaten path and experiencing the places they visit as if they were a local - eating in local restaurants and learning the stories of the people who call the place home. This is the travel experience that scenic byways provide, and why scenic byways are important in today's tourism economy.

The most direct economic benefit of scenic byways is increased tourism. In 2016, tourism had a \$20 billion impact on Wisconsin's economy. In the eight Wisconsin Great River Road counties, tourism accounted for \$440 million in direct visitor spending, an increase of 1.42% from 2015.

4. MANAGEMENT OF THE WISCONSIN GREAT RIVER ROAD

The National Mississippi River Parkway Commission is the umbrella organization that coordinates the multi-state programs on behalf of the ten-member states of the Great River Road (Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin). As previously discussed, each state has its own commission established by state statute or executive order.

The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission (WIMRPC) was created by Wisconsin State Statute 14.85, and its mission is to *be the leader in preserving, protecting and enhancing the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway along the Mississippi River, benefitting communities and travelers*. WIMRPC membership consists of one representative appointed by the Governor from each of the eight counties bordering the Mississippi River along with two State Senators and two State Representatives. The statute also provides ex-officio membership to the State Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, Tourism, Commerce and State Historical Society.

The WIMRPC meets quarterly and derives its funding primarily from contributions from the eight represented counties, Wisconsin State Departments of Transportation and Tourism, and regional tourism councils. Revenue from advertising sales for the Wisconsin Great River Road Visitor Guide is also a major source of income. The Commission also pursues and has received significant amounts of grant funding.

5. WIMRPC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the 20 years since the Wisconsin Great River Road was designated a National Scenic Byway, the WIMRPC has taken the lead on numerous enhancement projects along the route, and successfully marketed the corridor as a destination. The WIMRPC's ultimate goal is to provide Wisconsin Great River Road visitors a meaningful experience of the history, recreation, natural beauty, and river town charm along the corridor of one of the world's truly great rivers. The quality of the Wisconsin Great River Road visitor experience has been greatly enhanced by projects lead by the WIMRPC. The projects described below impact all three stages of the byway visitor experience: Trip Planning, Driving and Experiencing and Remembering and Sharing.

- *Wisconsin Great River Road Visitor Guide*

This 44-page, full-color publication is an excellent trip-planning tool as well as in-trip guide. The WIMRPC distributes 50,000 copies annually and the advertising is a major source of income.

- *Wisconsin Great River Road Website*

Located at www.WIGRR.com and updated in 2017, the official Wisconsin Great River Road website contains downloadable maps (birding, boating, biking), a photo gallery, video, downloadable audio tour, links to National Wildlife Refuges and state parks along the route, and a calendar of events.

- *Visitor/Interpretive Centers*

A network of 70 museums and historic sites in all 10 river states have been selected to showcase and connect the historic stories of the Mississippi River. Wisconsin offers seven Interpretive Centers welcoming visitors traveling along Wisconsin's corridor of the Great River Road. Here stories of the Mississippi River come alive and guests can learn more about river history as well as find travel information.

- *Wayshowing*

Wayshowing is the communication of information that helps travelers find their way to and along byways. While driving, visitors must be able to navigate the route safely and have consistent reassurance that they are still on the byway. Getting lost creates strong negative emotions that can become the lasting memories of a trip. The 250 miles of the Wisconsin Great River Road are marked by the national Great River Road green and white pilot's wheel logo and the America's Byways logo.



Pilot's Wheel Sign

- *Social Media*

The WIMRPC maintains a Facebook page with nearly seven thousand followers. Research shows that people who are planning trips are more engaged with social media.

In addition, the WIMRPC has recently enhanced efforts to ensure organizational sustainability as the WIMRPC moves forward. In 2016 and 2017 the WIMRPC updated its bylaws, created a handbook for commissioners, and formed a Friend's Group.

6. CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN MISSION AND GOALS

As discussed previously, the WIMRPC contracted with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to assist the WIMRPC in updating the Commission's Corridor Management Plan. The Corridor Management Plan update process included soliciting public input to aid refining the WIMRPC's mission statement and corridor management goals.

Public Input

A vital component to the Corridor Management Plan is public input. The WIMRPC contracted with Corridor Solutions to assist with soliciting stakeholder and public input on the CMP. With assistance of Corridor Solutions, the WIMRPC began gathering public input for the planning process in the fall of 2017. The process included a survey of major stakeholders, a strategic planning retreat, and follow-up sessions as part of regular Commission meetings.

The stakeholder survey was distributed in September 2017 to approximately 350 Wisconsin Great River Road stakeholders including elected officials, business owners, residents, and nonprofit and government agency representatives and staff. A total of 72 surveys were completed for a response rate of 20 percent. The purpose of the survey was to collect feedback from stakeholders to better understand the priorities of Wisconsin Great River Road byway communities which will help ensure widespread community support for WIMRPC projects. The data also provided insight as to what stakeholders perceive as the benefits of working with the WIMRPC. A summary report of the survey is included as Attachment 2.

In October 2017, WIMRPC Commissioners and key stakeholders held a full-day retreat to begin drafting a new strategic action plan for the Wisconsin Great River Road. During the retreat, a mission statement and draft goals were established along with strategies and recommendations. The first draft of an 18-month work plan was also developed. The following WIMRPC mission statement and goals were developed based on public, stakeholder and Commissioner input.

<i>WIMRPC Mission Statement</i>
"The WIMRPC is to be the leader in preserving, protecting and enhancing the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway along the Mississippi River, benefitting communities and travelers."
<i>WIMRPC Corridor Management Plan Goals</i>
Goal 1: Develop sustainable policies, programs, and practices in areas critical to the long-term success of the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway.
Goal 2: Develop and implement education programs that increase knowledge of the Wisconsin Great River Road among students, residents, business owners, and elected officials.
Goal 3: Cultivate regional collaboration and promotion that maximizes the economic and preservation benefits of the Wisconsin Great River Road for byway communities.
Goal 4: Preserve and expand the resources that define the visitor experience of the Wisconsin Great River Road and for which it was designated a National Scenic Byway.

7. GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To aid in achieving the goals the following section provides strategies and recommendations that address each goal. In some cases, more background information is provided to better define the strategies/recommendations.

It is important to note that plan strategies/recommendations for the GRR are not meant to be all encompassing or a comprehensive list of all that needs to be accomplished to enhance the GRR. The documents recommendations/strategies have been developed with sensitivity to the WIMRPC existing staff (volunteer) capabilities and funding constraints (some level of fund raising will be necessary to achieve all the strategies/recommendations. A goal of the document is to identify key tangible strategies/recommendations that can be initiated or achieved within 5 years.

Goal 1 Strategies/Recommendations

Goal 1: Develop sustainable policies, programs, and practices in areas critical to the long-term success of the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway.

Organizational sustainability is critical component for the WIMRPC to address moving forward. The WIMRPC is continually challenged to gain sufficient funding for annual operations and having time/funding allocated to complete tasks identified by the Commission as necessary to maintain, promote, preserve, protect and enhance the GRR.

As earlier discussed, the WIMRPC is a volunteer organization composed of twelve voting members. The Commission maintains two active committee's (a Technical Committee and a Promotion and Marketing Committee) which are comprised of Commissioner's and non-commission representatives from various agencies, backgrounds and interests.

A challenge for the WIMRPC to date is that the organization has no compensated staff to assist in promoting the WIMRPC or carrying out daily duties of the commission. The organization has survived on volunteer activities of commissioners, committee members, and interested parties. To ensure the effectiveness of the WIMRPC in the future it is recognized that funding and staffing challenges must be addressed. The following are strategies/recommendations that will assist in providing organizational stability moving forward.

Strategies/Recommendations to Address Goal 1

- 1.1 Explore the creation of an Executive Director position for the WIMRPC.
 - a. Research options and funding for either a part time/full time Executive Director.
 - b. Consider and evaluate a shared Executive Director with another organization.
 - c. Draft a position description.
 - d. Draft a budget for the position.
- 1.2 Secure accounting services to assist with and ensuring timely and accurate financial management of the WIMRPC.
 - a. Research options (contract, etc.).
 - b. Draft a budget for position or scope of services.
 - c. Draft a position description or scope of work.

- 1.3 Continue the development and promotion of the "Friends of the Wisconsin Great River Road" created under State of WI "Articles of Incorporation".
- 1.4 Identify opportunities and develop materials for advocacy.
 - a. Develop talking points/fact sheet.
 - b. Work in collaboration with the Department of Tourism in the next 2-4 years to conduct a WIGRR visitor survey and economic impact analysis.

Goal 2 Strategies/Recommendations

Goal 2: Develop and implement education programs that increase knowledge of the Wisconsin Great River Road among students, residents, business owners, and elected officials.

Intrinsic qualities help make the Wisconsin Great River Road unique to travelers. To be designated a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess characteristics of regional significance within at least one of the intrinsic qualities. Wisconsin is unique as it can be demonstrated that the Wisconsin Great River Road possesses characteristics in all six intrinsic qualities that make National Scenic Byways unique. It will be important moving forward to continue to highlight, promote, preserve and enhance the intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road.

A Description of Intrinsic Qualities from "America's Byways"

Scenic

Scenic Quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape--landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development--contribute to the quality of the corridor's visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.

Archaeological

Archaeological Quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor's archeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.

Cultural

Cultural Quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features including, but not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc., are currently practiced. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions.

Historic

Historic Quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Natural

Natural Quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations and may include geological formations, fossils, landform, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.

Recreational

Recreational Quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include, but are not limited to, downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.

Wisconsin Great River Road Intrinsic Qualities

Recreational Qualities: Every season offers spectacular recreational opportunities on the Upper Mississippi River along the Wisconsin Great River Road, such as excellent boating and sailing, more than 50 local parks, beaches, recreational areas, and water access sites. Fishing is a favorite activity because of the variety of fish species, ranging from catfish to walleye. The sandbars in the backwaters of the Mississippi River provide places for public camping and picnics. Winter in Wisconsin provides ice fishing, bald eagle viewing, cross-country or downhill skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling through deep valleys and scenic bluffs. Spring, summer, and fall are excellent for dinner cruises on the river, along with hiking and biking trails, picnic areas, and camping opportunities in the numerous parks and campgrounds along the byway.

Cultural Qualities: The past and present cultures of the Great River Road corridor are recorded and revealed in the 33 river towns and villages. Residents in these communities take pride in preserving their heritage, as evidenced by many festivals. Nineteenth-century architecture is scattered throughout the towns and cities of the byway; many of them reflect the varied architectural trends of the early days of settlement. Unique buildings and art forms continue to surface along the Wisconsin Great River Road.

Archaeological Qualities: 12,000 years ago, the first settlers inhabited Wisconsin. Cultures of the Great River left many artifacts and monuments to the past. Thousands of great mounds and effigy mounds, pictographs and petroglyphs, and ancient villages have been found and documented along the entire route. Today these ancient cultures are researched, and their artifacts are preserved and protected.



Woodland Indians
– mound builders

Historical Qualities: In 1673, French missionary Jacques Marquette and explorer Louis Jolliet were the first Europeans to explore the area sighting the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers where Wyalusing State Park welcomes visitors today. Changing hands from the American Indians, to the French, to the British, and finally to the Americans, but not without a struggle. In 1848, Wisconsin became a state. Lumber, steamboats, wheat, lead mining...remnants of this historic Mississippi culture can be seen along the Wisconsin Great River Road. Sites of old forts and building ruins along with thriving communities from the day will take visitors back to the 19th century.

Scenic Qualities: Visual experiences while traveling the Wisconsin Great River Road are why the entire 250-mile route was voted *Prettiest Drive: Ultimate Summer Road Trip in the United States*. The Mississippi River and its backwaters flanked by sandstone bluffs standing over 500 feet tall with the Great River Road winding between both make for scenic opportunities around every curve.

Natural Qualities: Many natural wonders are found along Wisconsin's Great River Road. Foremost is the Mississippi River, the fourth longest river in the world. The Mississippi Flyway hosts over 40% of North America's ducks, geese, swans and other waterfowl during their annual spring and fall migrations.

Wisconsin Great River Road Interpretive Centers

There are seven interpretive centers along the 250 miles of the Great River Road in Wisconsin. Interpretive centers comprise a network of museums and historic sites that showcase stories of the Mississippi River. The interpretive centers provide education and information relating to the intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road. The following is a listing and brief description the seven Great River Road interpretive centers in Wisconsin.

Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center – Prescott

Perched high above the river valley, this center gives visitors a snapshot of an entire region. Through hands-on, multimedia exhibits, visitors learn about the generations of people who have made their living from the river. A life-size eagle nest and bald eagle exhibits gives the visitor a sense of the majesty of this mighty bird. Visitors can also gaze down and see the place where the blue waters of the St. Croix River meet the brown waters of the Mississippi River.



Freedom Park, Prescott

Riverside Museum – La Crosse

The Riverside Museum, located in Riverside Park on the Mississippi River provides the history of the La Crosse area. Through artifacts and exhibits, visitors learn about the impact the Mississippi and Black rivers have had on the development of the area. In addition to local history exhibits, the museum houses artifacts from the wreck of the steamboat War Eagle, which sunk in La Crosse on May 14, 1870.

Villa Louis – Prairie du Chien

The Villa Louis provides a tour of the 1800s estate of one of Wisconsin's wealthiest families. Villa Louis was the home of the Dousman family, who made their first fortune in the fur trade and later became one of the most prominent families in the state. Costumed guides conduct tours of the property, which includes gardens, several historic buildings and a mansion, exquisitely restored to its original Victorian splendor.

Fort Crawford Museum – Prairie du Chien

The Fort Crawford Museum stands at the site of Fort Crawford, a military fort that guarded the America's western frontier from 1816 to 1856. The museum presents a complete picture of the region's history. Exhibits tell the story of the Zachary Taylor, Jefferson Davis and the tragedy of the Black Hawk War. A special section of the museum is dedicated to the story of frontier doctor William Beaumont, whose pioneering experiments helped advance the science of medicine.



Fort Crawford Museum in Prairie du Chien

Stonefield State Historic Site – Cassville

Stonefield state historic site helps to understand the history of American agriculture and rural life. Visitor's learn about the rise of dairy farming in Wisconsin and see the development of farm implements through the decades. Tractors, reapers and threshers are all on display. The site also includes the home of farmer and Wisconsin's first governor, Nelson Dewey.

The Potosi Brewing Company – Potosi

The Potosi Brewing Company is home to two outstanding museums about beer brewing in America. The National Brewery Museum tells the story of brewing through brewery memorabilia and advertising. The Potosi Brewing Company Transportation Museum reveals how the Potosi Brewery used the highway, railway and the river to bring its product to market. There is an active micro-brewery and restaurant on the premises.



Educational displays at the Potosi Brewing company

Great River Road Interpretive Center Genoa Fish Hatchery - Genoa

The \$3.75 million project features exhibits about the history of the Mississippi River Valley, including the famous Battle of Bad Axe that ended the Black Hawk War in 1832. The interpretive center also offers aquariums with real fish and wildlife from the Mississippi River Valley.

The following are strategies/recommendations that will assist in informing and educating residents and travelers about the intrinsic qualities of the Wisconsin Great River Road.

Strategies/ Recommendations to Address Goal 2

- 2.1 Continue to promote and distribute "Our Mississippi" educational materials to area schools.
 - a. Compile a list of schools that have received the "Our Mississippi" educational materials.
 - b. Collect feedback from users.
 - c. Consider developing a case study to advocate for use.
- 2.2 Inventory existing interpretive resources and determine needs for additional storytelling.
 - a. Consider collecting visitor feedback on quality and accessibility of interpretive materials.
- 2.3 Develop educational materials for residents, business owners and elected officials.
 - a. Explore feasibility of byway learning day.
 - b. Maximize use of the blog on the WIGRR website.
- 2.4 Find a local group or organization (Grant County) to be a champion for locating and developing an interpretive center for the southern entrance of the Great River Road corridor.
 - a. Initiate meeting(s) with Grant County officials to facilitate planning discussions.
 - b. Assist in determining an educational/informational theme.

Goal 3 Strategies/Recommendations

Goal 3: Cultivate regional collaboration and promotion that maximizes the economic and preservation benefits of the Wisconsin Great River Road for byway communities.

The Promotion and Marketing Committee also referred to as the Great River Road Promotion and Marketing Committee develops and implements marketing initiatives and activities to increase awareness and provides promotion/marketing materials for distribution to businesses and the public. WGRRPC is responsible for creating and maintaining a website and to be ambassadors whenever and wherever possible to promote WIMRPC. The committee prepares an annual budget and prepares an annual report that is made available for the state, counties, villages, towns, cities and organizations. A member of the WIMRPC serves on the WGRRPC to provide a liaison and communication link between the groups. The WIMRPC and the WGRRPC also collaborate and work together to fundraise.

The following are strategies/recommendations that will assist in promoting the Wisconsin Great River Road.

Strategies/Recommendations to Address Goal 3

Strategies/Recommendations 3.1 - 3.6 are the responsibility of the WGRRPC.

- 3.1 Continue to maintain and update the www.wigrr.com website and stay apprised of new or expanded social media.
- 3.2 Maintain existing marketing and promotion partnerships and foster new partnerships.
- 3.3 Maintain communications, update and continue attending meetings of the Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission.
- 3.4 Continue to attend events to promote the WIGRR.
 - a. Maintain a list of possible events to promote the Wisconsin GRR.
 - b. Provide a yearly report to the WI Dept. of Tourism on promotion and marketing activities.
- 3.5 Continue to complete a yearly Visitor Guide for the Wisconsin GRR.
- 3.6 Identify opportunities for new partnerships and explore expanding the roles of existing partners.
 - a. Document existing partners and current roles.
 - b. Use Fall 2017 survey data to help identify new partners and existing partners willing to expand their roles.
 - c. Identify critical needs to be filled by new or expanded partners.

Goal 4 Strategies/Recommendations

Goal 4: Preserve and expand the resources that define the visitor experience of the Wisconsin Great River Road and for which it was designated a National Scenic Byway.

A key component of the CMP is an inventory of existing public facilities in the Great River Road Corridor. To adequately plan for the future, it is important to know what exists today. The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission with the assistance of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission conducted an inventory/assessment of Wisconsin public facilities along the Great River Road (GRR) in the

Summer/ Fall of 2017. The inventory/assessment was conducted as part of the update to the WIMRPC Corridor Management Plan.

Public facilities in eight counties along the GRR were inventoried and then rated by WIMRPC Commissioners or committee members. Each facility was viewed and rated by at least two Commissioner's and/or committee members. A standardized rating sheet was developed that consisted of six questions that were utilized to rate the facilities. The rating sheet also provided the opportunity for the person(s) rating the facilities to provide recommendations. The facility rating questions are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Facility Rating Questions

1.	Is the facility easily recognized by a traveler on the Great River Road?				
	Easily Recognized				Difficult to Recognize
	1	2	3	4	5
2.	How would you rate the appearance of the facility from the Great River Road?				
	Excellent				Poor
	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Is the facility adequately maintained?				
	Maintained Well				Poorly Maintained
	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Does the facility adequately meet its purpose? <i>(In other words, if the purpose of the facility is to provide a view of the Mississippi River does it achieve this purpose?)</i>				
	Excellent				Poor
	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Overall how would you rate the facility on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being excellent 5 being poor)?				
	Excellent				Poor
	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Rate the importance of the facility for a traveler to see/visit while traveling the Great River Road?				
	Very Important				Less Important
	1	2	3	4	5

Inventory/Assessment Results (A map of the public facilities is included in Attachment 3)

A review of the assessment data included in Table 1 (Attachment 4) indicates that seventy-seven of the public facilities received a rating of 1 or 2 with regard to the importance of the facility for a traveler to see. Another forty-two public facilities received a rating of greater than 2 but less than 4 to the same question, while eleven public facilities received a rating of 4 or greater. Comparing the results of Question 6 regarding the importance of the facility for a traveler to see to whether a public facility is easily recognized from the GRR provides important insight. Obviously, if a public facility is important to see for a traveler it is critical that it is easily recognized from the GRR. Of the seventy-seven facilities scoring a 1 or 2 with regard to the

importance of the facility for a traveler to see only seven public facilities received a rating of greater than 3 signifying they are not easily recognized from the GRR. This indicates that 90% of public facilities deemed important to see are easily recognized from the GRR.

An additional question that it is important to compare the results of Question 6 regarding the importance of the facility for a traveler to see is whether the public facility is well maintained. Once again, if a public facility is recommended to be seen by a GRR traveler it is important that the public facilities are well maintained. Of the seventy-seven public facilities scoring a 1 or 2 with regard to the importance of the facility for a traveler to see, only three public facilities received a rating of greater than 3 indicating they were not well maintained. In general, the data indicates that regardless of importance of the public facility to be seen by a traveler the vast majority of all public facilities are well maintained as only thirteen public facilities (10%) received responses of greater than 3.

The results of two other rating questions provide valuable information pertaining to the overall condition of the GRR from an “existing” public facilities perspective. With regard to the rating question of whether a public facility meets its purpose, 95% of facilities scored a rating of 3 or less meaning the public facilities meet their purpose. The same can be said for the results of Question 5 referencing the public facilities overall rating, as 90% of the public facilities received a rating of 3 or less meaning overall the public facilities along the GRR are rated very high.

The only public facility rating question that received slightly lower scores pertained to the appearance of the public facilities from the GRR. Of the one hundred thirty-three public facilities, thirty-three of the facilities scored lower than 3 (25%) when rated, indicating they are difficult to see or not appealing when viewed from the GRR.

Overall based on the data collected, the majority of existing public facilities along the GRR in Wisconsin are in adequate condition. It is apparent based on recommendations received from commissioners and committee members that even though some public facilities rated high there are still improvements that can be made. It is also apparent that some specific public facilities need greater attention in order to improve their appearance and functionality for the travelers of the GRR.



Potosi Point viewing platform

This summary of the public facilities data is meant to be a starting point and the public facilities inventory should be update on a regular basis. It is important that each commissioner/committee member review the data included in Table 1 (Attachment 3) and utilize the information in making determinations and recommendations in the future.

Public Facility Spacing, Analysis, Recommendations from Previous Studies

A key component of a corridor management plan is the location and spacing of visitor facilities. In order to enhance visitors traveling experience on the GRR adequate public facilities are necessary to provide information, scenic views, restrooms, etc. to the traveler. It is recognized that private businesses and facilities will assist in meeting the demands of travelers, but it is critical to maintain an adequate level of public facilities throughout the GRR corridor.

In 1997 a planning framework guide was developed for the GRR in Wisconsin that provided recommendations for visitor facilities along the Great River Road Corridor. The information and recommendations have helped to shape the GRR corridor to what it is today. In addition, many of the standards and numerous recommendations remain pertinent today. A summary of the “visitor service spacing analysis” from the study has been prepared and applicable recommendations have been included and are recommended for future implementation.

Spacing Models

The study evaluated visitor facility spacing needs and recommended automobile facilities be spaced based on a one hour driving time or approximately 45 driving miles (national average). Facilities were categorized into three levels detailed in the following chart.

Facility Levels		
Level I	Level II	Level III
Facilities provide overall GRR Corridor information and interpretive opportunities in addition to traveler amenities such as restrooms, parking and provide regional resources offering information on history, culture, and environment.	Facilities that are less encompassing than Level I but still serve visitor needs. These facilities are recommended to be dispersed between Level I facilities.	Facilities provide visitors with periodic stopping points along the GRR and allow the traveler to rest and enjoy the scenic views.

Location and Spacing Analysis

Level I Facilities

The study recommended three locations for Level I facilities offering information/interpretive services to visitors. The locations are at places where there are converging highways, trails and river crossings. These locations are meant to be “gateways” to the Great River Road. The northern-most gateway is in the City of Prescott which serves as a major entrance to the GRR from Minnesota. The Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center which through hands-on, multi-media exhibits provides a overview of the entire region and information about how people have made their living from the Mississippi River.

At the mid-point of the GRR in Wisconsin is La Crosse where the Interstate-90 Corridor intersects with the GRR and it offers another major entrance point to Wisconsin from Minnesota. The area features the newly upgraded Interstate-90 Rest Area that serves as the La Crosse Area Travel and Wisconsin Welcome Center. The facility has parking, bathrooms, picnic tables/shelters, trails and travel information. Also located in La Crosse is the Interpretive Center (Riverside Museum) located in Riverside Park on the Mississippi River. The museum houses artifacts and exhibits pertaining to the Mississippi River and Black River impacts of the development of the area.

The southern most gateway is located where the GRR begins in Wisconsin in the area of the Wisconsin/Illinois border. At this location, US Highway 151 crosses the Mississippi River from Iowa and converges with several highways including the GRR. Since this area is less developed than the two other gateways no significant welcome center currently exists. The closest interpretive centers are located

several miles north in Potosi (The Potosi Brewing Company) and Cassville (Stonefield State Historic Site). This southern gateway has the potential for a GRR visitor center with significant visitor facilities.

Level II Facilities

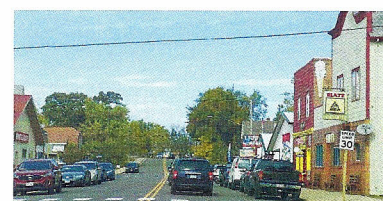
Level II facilities are meant to provide a secondary level of visitor services (restrooms, parking, etc.) and are intended to be dispersed between Level I facilities creating a 45-mile spacing standard (one hour drive time) throughout the GRR Corridor. Areas for Level II facilities also correspond to four Mississippi River crossings along the GRR Corridor.

The southern-most Level II facility/area is located in the City of Prairie du Chien. The U.S. Highway 18 Mississippi River crossing between Wisconsin and Iowa is located in Prairie du Chien. Two GRR interpretive centers are located in Prairie du Chien at the Villa Louis and the Fort Crawford Museum. As travelers enter the City of Prairie du Chien via U.S. Highway 18 a wayside facility (a former welcome center) is located on the Wisconsin side of the river crossing. Additional signage welcoming visitors to the GRR at the intersection of U.S. Highway 18 and the GRR would help to introduce travelers to the GRR.

A second Level II facility is recommended for the area by Desoto and Ferryville in proximity to where the State Highway 82 Mississippi River crossing is located. State Highway 82 intersects with the GRR approximately 2 miles south of Desoto on a rural segment of the GRR. In recent years, Ferryville upgraded the Governor Lucy memorial and created an excellent viewshed of the Mississippi River and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service upgraded the Genoa Fish Hatchery creating a visitor/interpretive center which is located approximately 10 miles north of the river crossing. These facilities assist in meeting the needs of visitors along this segment of the GRR. Additional signage welcoming visitors to the GRR at the intersection of State Highway 82 and the GRR would help to introduce travelers to the GRR.

A third Level II facility is recommended to be located in southern Buffalo County at the State Highway 54 Mississippi River crossing (Winona, Minnesota). Currently, State Highway 54 intersects with the GRR on a rural segment of the GRR. Additional signage welcoming visitors to the GRR at the intersection of State Highway 54 and the GRR would help to introduce travelers to the GRR.

A fourth Level II facility is recommended to be located in Nelson, Wisconsin at the State Highway 25 Mississippi River crossing (Wabasha, Minnesota). Currently, State Highway 25 intersects with the GRR on in Nelson. Additional signage welcoming visitors to the GRR at the intersection of State Highway 25 and the GRR would help to introduce travelers to the GRR.



**Nelson WI, on the Great River Road
recommended for a Level II public facility**

Overall Level II facilities need to be identified and or developed. In some cases, existing public facilities such as waysides could serve as such facilities but most likely would need to be upgraded. With transportation funding issues at the State level, it is unlikely such improvements would be a priority along the corridor. It may be more beneficial to work with local communities and determine if local parks and/or community facilities could assist in meeting Level II facilities with some minor improvements, signage, etc. An additional option would to work with local businesses to determine if a private facility could serve the needs of travelers along the GRR.

The following are strategies/recommendations that will assist in preserving and enhancing the resources of the Wisconsin Great River Road.

Strategies/Recommendations to Address Goal 4

- 4.1 As the CMP was prepared, it became apparent that one thing that is missing for travelers when visiting the GRR corridor is a defined “sense of place”. The Great River Road and WIMRPC have a digital/website presence with numerous digital and paper maps/brochures describing the GRR corridor location. What is missing is validation “on the ground” that informs travelers that they have entered or are approaching a National Scenic Byway – The Great River Road Corridor. To address this, it is recommended that entrance signage be developed for the GRR corridor. The signage would help define the GRR as a location providing a “sense of place” for visitors. The signage recommendations would also help brand the GRR corridor not only for visitors but local residents and businesses, some of which do not realize they live and work near or within a National Scenic Byway.

To aid in achieving this, it is recommended the WIMRPC discuss with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Wisconsin Department of Tourism locating signs along the GRR corridor informing/directing travelers to the Great River Road. Such signs could possibly read “Wisconsin’s Great River Road – National Scenic Byway”. Approximately 160,000 vehicles a day traveling on State or Federal roadways intersect the Great River Road Corridor. Signs would greatly improve highway safety, as signs would provide clear direction for travelers that are looking for the National Scenic Byway (eliminating vehicles slowing down, pulling over, exiting and re-exiting, turning around, or travelers looking at maps or phones, etc.). The signs would also be beneficial to tourism and economic development as the signs would bring awareness to the Great River Road as the State of Wisconsin’s only National Scenic Byway.

- a. First priority - GRR corridor entrance signs (Figure 1) to be located at the north and south entrances to the GRR corridor and Interstate-90 signs (Figure 2) directing travelers to State Highway 35 exits.

Figure 1. Example of Scenic Byway Entrance Sign in Utah.

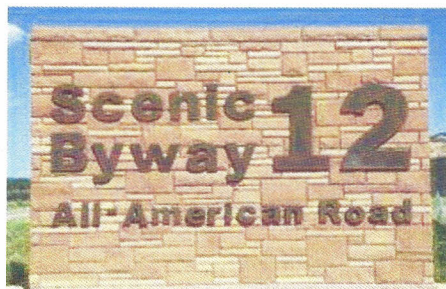


Figure 2. Example of GRR Interstate Exit Sign.



- b. Second priority - locate directional/entrance signs (Figure 3) at or near Mississippi River crossings as travelers enter the State of Wisconsin and the state or federal highways intersect State Highway 35 (Great River Road).
- c. Third priority - locate directional signs/entrance signs at locations where all remaining state and federal highways intersect State Highway 35 (Great River Road).

Figure 3. Example of GRR Directional/Entrance Sign.



- 4.2 Work to implement recommendations for Level I and Level II facilities identified in the "Location and Spacing Analysis" section of this plan.
 - a. Work with local communities and determine if local parks and/or community facilities could assist in meeting Level II facilities with some minor improvements, signage, etc.
 - b. Work with local businesses to determine if private facilities could serve the needs of travelers along the GRR.
- 4.3 Conduct a bike facility spacing analysis to determine the adequacy and spacing of existing public facilities for biking.
 - a. This could be accomplished "in house" utilizing the WIMRPC public facilities inventory.
 - b. Utilize the WIMRPC's "Wisconsin's Great River Road Bicycle Suitability Report", May 2001 for additional information.
- 4.4 Support local/regional efforts to increase/improve bike facilities along the GRR corridor.
 - a. Review and consider resolutions regarding public bike facilities when requested.
 - b. Assist and support communities/counties when conducting biking suitability plans.
- 4.5 Work closely with WIDOT and County Highway Commissioner's/Departments on facility maintenance needs (brush trimming, etc.) identified in the WIMRPC public facilities inventory.
 - a. Schedule meetings with all County Highway Commissioner's to provide them with information on the WIMRPC, the GRR, and discuss maintenance needs.
 - b. Meet with WIDOT staff responsible for supervision/maintenance of roads and facilities along the GRR corridor.

- 4.6 Reach out to the Burlington Northern- Santa Fe railroad to establish a railroad contact and provide them with information on the WIMRPC, the GRR, and discuss public facility maintenance needs along the corridor.
 - a. Brush/tree clearing at selected GRR viewsheds of the Mississippi River.
- 4.7 Update the WIMRPC public facilities inventory in odd number years.
 - a. As in 2017, enlist commissioners and committee members in reviewing GRR public facilities.
- 4.8 Encourage better directional signage for public facilities as identified in the WIMRPC public facilities inventory.
- 4.9 Develop interpretive kiosks/signs for Level I and Level II facilities providing information about the current location ("You are here"), Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway, and other destinations throughout the corridor.
 - a. Continue efforts underway in Grant County to establish Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway Interpretive Signage and replicate interpretive signage throughout the GRR corridor.

8. CONCLUSION

The WIMRPC Corridor Management plan will assist Commissioners in preserving, protecting, enhancing and promoting the Wisconsin Great River Road for years to come. The WIMRPC's purpose was to create a planning document that established realistic goals and practical strategies/recommendations within the financial and staffing constraints of the WIMRPC. To that end, it is believed this document serves that purpose, with the understanding that in time as the WIMRPC continues to mature as an organization more will be accomplished. As with any plan, implementation will be the key to its success. The WIMRPC is comprised of dedicated individuals that are committed to preserving, enhancing and promoting the Wisconsin Great River Road which will ensure successful implementation of this plan.