



## IOWA MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION

### Planning Meeting Report

*Prepared by Terry Poe Buschkamp* CMSM CTP

Tuesday, July 7, 2015  
Le Claire Public Library

Participants included:

- Jane Regan - Allamakee County
- Edith Pfeffer - Clinton County
- Lori Wallace - Clayton County
- Debra Jochims - Des Moines County
- John Goodmann - Dubuque County
- Larry Kruse - Lee County
- Dan Petersen - Muscatine County
- Scott Tunncliff - Scott County
- Mary Stahlhut, Iowa Byways Program Manager, Iowa DOT

Terry Poe Buschkamp, Iowa Economic Development Authority / Main Street Iowa Promotion Specialist facilitated the session.

An overview of the process was provided, and it was explained that we would be spending the next three hours thinking strategically on where the Commission will be focusing their efforts in the next year.

The attendees proposed that the desired outcome for the afternoon was to think strategically about priorities, and the implementation steps required to achieve three - four of those priorities in the next 12 months. The group affirmed that this is where we were going to focus our attention.

### Comments on the 2015 Corridor Management Plan

Session attendees were asked to share their thoughts about the 2015 Corridor Management Plan that was presented to the Commission by the consultants earlier in the day. Comments included:

- It helps us think about the future
- Defines the roles and responsibilities of the Commission members
- Indicates we need to involve partners
- Shows we have a lot of work to do (need administration and money)

### Review of the Mission of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission

It was noted that the Commission does not currently use a mission statement to focus, direct, motivate and unify the work of the group. For the purposes of our discussion, it was agreed that we would use the duties of the commission that are found on the State of Iowa web page:

*“The Mississippi River Planning Commission is responsible for the continued development, preservation, and promotion of the byway and its amenities.”*

## Review of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission Achievements

Session attendees were asked to work independently to list work that they have done in the past year to promote the mission of the Commission. Individuals were asked to share their activities for the last 12 months. These accomplishments were noted on flip chart paper (in no particular order):

- Developed, edited, approved and rolled out the new 2015 Corridor Management Plan
- Contacted local stakeholders to encourage attendance at the Corridor Management Plan meetings
- Helped orchestrate Corridor Management Plan sessions and rollout at venues across the region
- Monitored local projects (new \$.5M Interpretive Center in Allamakee County and potential new facility in Louisa County)
- Contacted and met with staff at the Interpretive Centers in local counties to help them understand the relationship their relationship with the commission
- Provided support and oversight for the Interpretive Centers (conducted evaluation for National Mississippi River Parkway Commission)
- Distributed information (maps, flash drives with information) to Interpretive Centers in Iowa and neighboring states, local tourism offices, and numerous tourist attractions
- Delivered new signs and inspected existing signage at local Interpretive Center for location and prominence
- Participated in the Iowa Scenic Byway collaboration meetings, either in person or via conference call
- Served on National Mississippi River Parkway Commission committees
- Made public presentations to numerous local groups
- Welcomed representatives from the National Park Service
- Served as Mississippi River ambassadors for Convention and Visitors Bureaus in the local communities
- Hosted Transportation Day at the Iowa State Capitol
- Staffed booth at the Iowa State Fair
- Exhibited at the Tourism Night event for State Legislators
- Became familiar with route by driving the Great River Road
- Recruited new Commission members
- Attended/made arrangements for Commission meetings
- Communicated with other Commission members
- Communicated with local leaders, stakeholders and partners
- Prepared annual report of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission for elected officials, partners and stakeholders
- Requested new graphic to create passport templates for the Interpretive Centers
- Redesigned and printed the Iowa Great River Road map tear sheet
- Created new business cards to identify Commission members
- Worked on the development of new Great River Road signage project
- Implemented National Scenic Byway Projects
- Developed GPS mapping of significant sites in the region

## Determination of Mississippi River Parkway Commission Priorities

Buschkamp introduced a series of four questions that were designed to be reflective of the four areas for elevated effectiveness that were identified in the Corridor Management Plan:

- Level 1: Existing Level of Appropriation
- Level 2: Effective Administration and Communications
- Level 3: Effective Promotion and Interpretation
- Level 4: Facilitator for Capital Investment

Taking one question at a time, attendees worked individually, then shared their responses with the group using the “Magic Wall” (a lightweight magnetic receptive panel mounted on the wall) as a tool to help organize the ideas.

When all of the project ideas had been posted, attendees were asked to indicate their first four top choices, and four second choices.

The following raw data includes a priority ranking that was achieved by assigning 2 points to each of the 1<sup>st</sup> choice responses to the questions that were posed, and 1 point for each of the 2<sup>nd</sup> choices.

#### **Question #1**

***“What can we do in the next 12 months to increase the level of appropriation and funding for the MRPC?”***

- Request AGAIN increased allocation from the state via the Iowa DOT **(7)**
- Legislative meeting this fall **(7)**
- Meeting with House and Senate Transportation Committees **(6)**
- Establish advocacy talking points for money for the MRPC **(6)**
- Request support from local subdivisions City or County **(5)**
- Impress on local governments the value of tourism to them **(5)**
- Work with Legislators for more funding to Iowa MRPC that is earmarked for marketing **(3)**
- Try fundraising efforts as a group **(3)**
- Meet with Governor **(3)**
- Start a “Friends Group” [who can host] bake sales **(2)**
- Apply for a grant from IEDA’s Iowa Tourism Office **(2)**
- Appeal to others via a LETTER from the MRPC for donations for an administrator **(2)**
- Determine and identify legislative audience **(2)**
- Find a farmer to [donate the proceeds from] the grain in one bin
- Identify a program to promote the Iowa Great River Road brand with a “buy-in” program with locals [cooperative travel guide supported by the sale of advertisements]
- Fund or find a feasibility/assessment analysis to target sources MPO/RPA or Pro
- Find an Iowa DOT commissioner with good looking legs to convince DOT to increase allocation to commission (sic)
- Develop a plan for spending
- Consider the use of social media to raise awareness and money from millennials [crowd funding]
- Sell Great River Road logo [merchandise] pacifiers and headband bonkers (sic)

#### **Question#2**

***“What can we do in the next 12 months to improve the administration and increase awareness of the MRPC?”***

- Present the Corridor Management Plan to local authorities - City and County – at public meetings **(10)**
- Make sure Commissioners attend all state meetings and a minimum of one national meeting annually **(4)**
- Help new members get going [assign mentors] **(3)**
- Set achievable goals **(2)**
- Commissioners do what Corridor Management Plan suggests at the end of the plan (local tasks, communication, etc.) **(2)**
- Set routine stakeholder events/webinar with [tourism organizations] **(2)**
- Visit EICA’s RPA/MPO [East Central Intergovernmental Association Regional Planning Affiliation or Metropolitan Planning Organization] **(1)**
- Set 2016 priorities and publish them **(1)**
- [Make available/post on the website] a one page roster of Commissioner’s phone numbers, e-mail, addresses. Include DOT contacts **(1)**
- Draft proposed legislation
- Meet with Iowa DOT Commission and present plan
- Lobby Senators and Representatives

- Attend local government meetings on a regular basis
- Meet more often or have working committees do priority tasks
- Meet locally and regularly at the county level
- More local presentations
- Write monthly newspaper articles
- Use the Great River Road brand to communicate with locals this winter
- [Install] signage
- [Install] banners in every Interpretive Center in Iowa
- Challenge local to improve signage. Make a checklist for them.
- [Provide] Great River Road vinyl clings [with the new graphic identity to businesses]
- Use the new business cards
- All members participate
- Hire a staff person for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission

### Question#3

***“What can we do in the next 12 months to achieve increased visitation and travel party expenditures in the Iowa Great River Road communities?”***

- Create an ad campaign (Jane’s) challenging folks to visit each of the Interpretive Centers **(4)**
- [Offer to provide interviews on local] radio and television shows (like Fran Reiley) **(4)**
- Secure sponsorships to fund a bike trip along the Iowa Great River Road **(3)**
- Develop and implement a marketing plan **(2)**
- Lobby county/engineers to complete the Mississippi River Trail **(2)**
- Unite the Great River Road counties with a “Drive the Great River Road” promotion (product / postcard / placemat) **(1)**
- Partner with local tourism organization **(1)**
- Do an online survey of stakeholders to choose a #1 promotion action **(1)**
- [Encourage] corridor towns/cities to promote their festivals on the Iowa Great River Road website **(1)**
- Regularly post Facebook messages, encouraging desired partners to join/like
- Advertise / brand that we are the gateway to the Mississippi River
- Use an ad campaign to steer folks to our website – increase our brand identity
- Advertising
- Promote the Iowa Great River Road to lowans!
- Have local businesses advertise that they are located on the Great River Road
- Encourage local businesses to participate in the national geotourism project
- Group promotions
- A “Geocaching” trip
- Have a Great River Road [scavenger] hunt
- Organize activities like fishing, boat rides
- Bring more groups/tourism (bike and bicycle) to the area
- [Print] new placemats for September
- Coupon sharing from other river “companies” [cooperative marketing]
- [Create/sell] cheap souvenirs
- [Encourage] Mississippi River Parkway Commission website to open up an events tab so festival can be posted

#### Question#4

***“What can we do in the next 12 months to establish funding for programs associated with the Core Management Directions?”***

- Ask local governments for money (2)
- Promote the existing Great River Road Foundation and contributions to it so stakeholders can apply for grant funding for their projects

## Creation of Timeline to Implement Commission Priorities

The top priority in each of the focus areas was selected for our discussion, and attendees were asked to indicate what actions would need to be taken to implement the projects in the next 12 months and identify their willingness to follow through with the action items on the list. Following is a rough timeline for four projects:

### ***Project #1: Request increased allocation from the state via the Iowa DOT (by October 215)***

- July 2015:
  - Executive team determine needs/Identify a Plan (Edith, Jane)
  - Compile a list of actions performed by the Commission in the last 12 months (Terry/done!)
  - Discuss MRPC CMP progress with Craig and Stu / provide last year’s request (Mary)
- August 2015:
  - Present the CMP to the Iowa DOT board at their August meeting
  - Research when/how specific to marketing and administration assistance to create a plan that the DOT can assess and approve/check timetable and last year’s presentation (John)
  - Talk to Craig Paulsen and Todd Bowman re the timeliness of a request for 2016 (Edith)
  - Attend meeting in Burlington (Deb)
- Sept 2015:
  - Write a script for the presentation (include all Commissioners attending) (Edith)
  - Create a power point presentation (Edith, Mary)
  - Prepare hand out materials (Marketing Plan, CMP) for DOT (Edith, Mary)
- October 2015:
  - Request time on the October 13 Iowa DOT board meeting the agenda (Edith)
  - Make presentation to Iowa DOT board at their meeting in Decorah (Scott, Dan)

### ***Project #2: Present the Corridor Management Plan to local authorities - City and County – at public meetings***

- August 2015:
  - Create a template for a proclamation re the Great River Road and provide to the Commissioners for personalization (Edith)
  - Create a summary and Power point for Commissioners to use for presentations to local City/County elected officials (John)
  - Burn info to flash drives and provide to Commissioners/learn how to use a projector (Edith)
  - Request time on the Allamakee Board of Supervisors agenda/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Jane)
  - Request time on Clinton County Board of Supervisors as well as City Councils in Clinton and Camanche agendas/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Edith)
  - Request time on Scott County Board of Supervisors agenda/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Scott)
- Sept 2015:
  - Request time on Dubuque County Board of Supervisors agenda/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (John)
- October 2015:
  - Request time on city councils agendas in Harpers Ferry, Lansing and Waukon/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present the CMP (Jane)
  - Request time on Lee County Board of Supervisors agenda/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Larry)

- Request time on City Councils and Board of Supervisors Clayton County agendas/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Lori)
- Request time on Burlington City Council and Dubuque County Board of Supervisors agendas/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Deb)
- Request time on City Council agendas in Davenport, Bettendorf, LeClaire and Riverdale, ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present CMP (Scott)
- Nov 2015:
  - Request time on City Councils agendas in Danville, Middleton, West Burlington and Mediapolis/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present the CMP with the new Commissioner from Des Moines County (Deb)
  - Request time on Muscatine County Conservation Board and City Council agenda in Muscatine/ascertain that they have the equipment needed/secure handouts and present the CMP with the new Commissioner from Muscatine County (Dan)

***Project #3: Create an ad campaign challenging folks to visit each of the Interpretive Centers***

- July 2015:
  - Secure proclamation for National office and provide to each County Commissioner to include in their presentations on the CMP to local officials (Jane)
- August 2015
  - Make personal contact with local tourism bureau to provide information on driving the Great River Road in September (ALL COMMISSIONERS)
  - Post a “Call to Action” to drive the Great River Road in September on Facebook page, Travel Iowa and via Constant Contact to all stakeholders (Mary)
  - Contact local television station (i.e. Fran Reiley) to offer to provide an interview about driving the Great River Road in September (Edith, Dan, Scott)
  - Contact local television station (KWWL and KCRG) to offer to provide an interview about driving the Great River Road in September (Jane)
- September
  - Contact local television station (Channel 6) to offer to provide an interview about driving the Great River Road in September (Lori)
  - Deliver handouts about driving the Great River Road to local restaurants (Lori)

***Project #4: Ask local governments for money***

- July
  - Have discussions with the UERPC RPOs (i.e. Rachelle Howe) and ask for ideas on how to fund an administrative position (Jane)
- September
  - Provide new Great River Road signage/branding material for Commissioner’s use with marketing plan and financial requests determined at August meeting (Mary)
- November
  - Develop a list of potential individual donors in my county (Edith)
  - Use marketing plan to demonstrate need for cash from local authorities and Interpretive Centers (John)
- December
  - Use marketing plan to appeal to County Supervisors and possibly City Council to demonstrate need for cash from their budgeting process (Dan)
  - Use marketing plan to appeal to County Supervisors to demonstrate need for cash from their budgeting process (Scott)
- January
  - Will go to local governments to provide documentation ask for money (Jane)

## Session Wrap Up

At the close of the session, Terry thanked the attendees for their active participation, and stated that within two weeks she will provide a session report for Mary to distribute to the Mississippi River Parkway Commission members.

## Summary

It is evident that with the new Corridor Management Plan, excitement is building and many ideas have emerged. During the planning meeting, it was apparent that there is surplus of proposals, and scarcity of time and manpower to accomplish the long list of projects and activities.

With a fresh perspective on its mission and an appreciation of what has been accomplished, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission should use the information in this report to move forward in a direction based on the desires of the Commission members.

## Recommendations for Next Steps

- Add the duties of the Commission (your mission), a list of accomplishments and roster of names/contact information for Commissioners to your website.
- Move forward with the implementation steps for the four priority projects that are outlined in this report.
- At your August Commission meeting, review all of the proposed initiatives listed in this report to determine additional projects that could be added to the program of work for the coming year, and what should be moved to a later date (long range/next year's plan) or dropped. Thoughtfully take into account your budget/time restraints before adding any of the projects that were not identified as priorities.
- Add implementation steps to the additional priorities that the Commission has selected for inclusion on your program of work. Appoint a Champion for each project who will create detailed action plans and assign responsibilities. Be sure to include every step necessary to complete the activity, a timetable, and the name of the person responsible. If you can't find an individual who will accept responsibility for an activity, it shouldn't be on the action plan.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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