



Great River Road Development Study

Minnesota Department of Transportation

January 2000



*"How can a roadway, conceived as a tourist route,
contribute to the welfare of the communities it serves
and enhance appreciation of the river
by travelers and neighbors?"*





Great River Road
Development Study
Final Report

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Submitted to the

**Minnesota Department
of Transportation**

January 2000

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Section 1 Executive Summary

The following report discusses the ability of the Great River Road to support tourism in Minnesota. The analysis is premised on the concept that the tourist will be the final arbiter, the person who ultimately decides if the Great River Road program has been successful or not. Of course this is merely an analytical approach. In reality, it will be the individual communities that will decide if they want tourism as an industry. They will determine if tourism enhances their quality of life and if they want to promote it. They will determine whom to attract, when they want them to visit, and how many tourists should be invited into their community.

It is not the purpose of this study to tell communities that they should increase tourism. *The basic assumption of this study was that communities had already determined that the Great River Road was valuable and that one of its primary purposes was to generate tourism and income from tourists.* Indeed, the value and purpose of the Great River Road was established over twenty years ago in a series of public discussions between the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the communities along the Mississippi River. It was not the intent of this study to revisit that discussion but rather to evaluate if the Great River Road program was achieving its goal of promoting tourism.

Report Contents

An overview of the purpose of the Great River Road and its guiding

concepts are outlined in *Section 2: Program History*. The history of the program, particularly, how the administration of the Great River Road has effected the selection and development of the route and the promotion of tourism is discussed in this section. The reasons for the study, how it was structured, and what were its goals are discussed in *Section 3: Project Purpose*.

The study was ambitious. Although it focused on approximately 575 miles of roadway that meandered between Ontario and Iowa, the complete 1200 miles of Great River Road in Minnesota was within its purview. Due to financial considerations, the Minnesota Department of Transportation requested that the primary focus be on three major segments: the National Route from Lake Itasca to Point Douglas near Hastings; the State Route downstream from Hastings to the border with Iowa; and the East Canadian Extension from Bemidji to International Falls.

Those resources that contribute to the experience a tourist has while traveling on the three selected segments of the Great River Road were inventoried and analyzed. Resources found on the parallel State Route from Lake Itasca to Hastings, the West Canadian Extension from Lake Itasca to Manitoba, and all designated spurs were typically not inventoried and analyzed as part of this project unless they were thought to contribute significantly to the experience of the tourist.

Four categories of resources were inventoried: recreational resources, cultural resources, river resources, and transportation resources. The inventory of recreational resources included 1,225 parks, forests, wildlife refuges, campgrounds, picnic areas, interpretive markers, museums, golf courses, and festivals. The inventory of cultural resources included 1,648 sites on the National Register of

Historic Places. The inventory of river resources included 179 beaches, fishing piers, water access sites, and dams. The inventory of transportation resources included 3,224 segments of roadway, rest areas, trails, trail heads, and tourist regions. All in all, over 6,000 separate resources were inventoried as part of the project. Over 200,000 attributes or pieces of information were collected about these resources. This information was stored in a Geographic Information System and transferred to Mn/DOT to be used by future stewards of the Great River Road. A synopsis of the resource inventory is presented in *Section 4: Resource Summary*.

The fifth section of the report discusses the tourist. It reports on an extensive survey of 555 people who visited the Great River Road in the summer and fall of 1998. The survey reveals several interesting facts about typical Great River Road travelers and their preferences. For instance, it was discovered that tourists like to take short three-day vacations, two-hour pleasure drives, and over half don't like to have their view of the river interrupted for more than one-half hour at a time while they travel on the Great River Road. The results of the survey are reported in the first part of *Section 5: The Tourist*.

Understanding the image that tourists have of the Mississippi River and Great River Road and how brand identity is created and promoted is essential for positioning the corridor as a desirable destination. Concepts for ingraining a desirable image into the minds of tourists are offered in *Section 5: The Tourist*.

An analysis of the survey revealed that the market was segmented by tourist motivations and travel styles. Seven different motivations were defined including:



guests, loungers, players, explorers, spectators, pilgrims, and accumulators. Guests were people who were visiting friends and family. Loungers were people seeking relaxation. Players sought adventure. Explorers were attempting to expand their knowledge or skills. Spectators were seeking to be entertained. Pilgrims desired experiences that would change their perception of life and its meaning. Accumulators wanted to purchase goods or services.

Four different travel styles were defined based by how people structured their trip. People either were Group-Structured, Self-Structured, Unstructured, or a combination of Group and Self-Structured called Semi-Structured. The complete discussion of tourist motivations and travel styles also occurs in *Section 5: The Tourist*.

Section 5 concludes with a discussion of *Tourism Implications*. As a result of the analysis of tourists, six implications for tourism are addressed. These six implications are:

- **Shorten the route.** Make the Great River Road more comprehensible to tourists. Focus development and promotional efforts on the National Route from Lake Itasca to Hastings and the State Route downstream from Hastings.
- **Focus on destination areas.** Recognize that most tourists spend only three days at a time on vacation. Create short “natural” destination areas based on geography and history. Use the term “Mississippi” in the name of each destination area.
- **Encourage local control.** Encourage the development of local stewardship organizations for each destination area. These local stewardship organizations

should be composed of stakeholders from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Encourage stakeholders to develop local Great River Road management plans for their destination area. Give control of promoting the road to the stewardship organization. Initially, assist local destination marketing organizations in promoting the Great River Road.

- **Match tourist motivations and travel styles with specific destinations.** Recognize that different destination areas will attract different types of tourists. Recognize who is attracted to a destination area’s natural and cultural attractions. Recognize that travel styles must also be accommodated if tourists are going to visit the places they would like to visit. Concentrate initial capital improvements and promotional strategies on serving the target market.
- **Improve route wayfinding.** Assist the tourist in comprehending the Great River Road. Improve route designation markers. Improve the graphic quality of the route markers. Add distinctive mileage markers starting with Mile Zero at the Headwaters.
- **Increase connections with the Mississippi River.** The focus should be on the river, not the road. The road is a conduit for people to enjoy the natural and cultural attractions associated with the river. The local stewardship organization should develop plans for capital improvement and promotional projects and programs that would draw people to the river.

Section 6: Marketing Strategies presents the concept that there are certain types of trips that are better supported in particular locations. It implies that the all of the Great River Road can’t be all things to all people. Using four criteria, it suggests that it is more useful to segment the Great River Road into seven destination areas. The four criteria are:

- The destination area must be oriented to the Mississippi River
- The destination area must be defined by either natural or cultural history
- The destination area must be locally supported
- The destination area must incorporate a practical marketing strategy

The seven destination areas created are:

- Mississippi Headwaters (Lake Itasca to Bemidji)
- Mississippi Northwoods (Bemidji to Grand Rapids)
- Mississippi Mines (Grand Rapids to Brainerd)
- Mississippi Crossroads (Brainerd to Little Falls)
- Mississippi State Scenic River (Little Falls to Anoka)
- Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (Anoka to Hastings)
- Mississippi Bluffs (Hastings to Iowa Border)

Brief narratives of each destination area are presented in *Section 6:*



Marketing Strategies. The section concludes by suggesting that some *portions* of some destination areas deserve to be more thoroughly studied as examples that could be used by other destination areas to enhance tourism on the Great River Road. These examples became the Demonstration Areas discussed in *Section 7: Demonstration Areas*. Four demonstration areas were selected for further analysis:

- Mississippi Headwaters (Lake Itasca to Bemidji)
- Mississippi Crossroads (Brainerd to Little Falls)
- Mississippi Gorge (Minneapolis to St. Paul)
- Mississippi Bluffs (Red Wing to Winona)

A discussion of the resources that constitute the demonstration area, what type of tourists find it attractive, what capital improvements are necessary to enhance tourism, and what marketing strategies would be effective for promoting the area are discussed for each of the four areas.

The concluding section discusses how the ideas presented in the previous sections could be implemented. Recognizing that many agencies and organizations have a vested interest in the Mississippi River, the Great River Road, community development, and tourism, the study concludes by suggesting that two Stewardship Organizations be formed. The first is one for each destination area. These would be locally controlled and reflect the interests and values of the community. It is suggested that these local Destination Area Stewardship Organizations could be developed from existing Destination Marketing Organizations supple-

mented by other stakeholders. It would be important that the local organization reflect both private and public sectors and their respective interests.

The second Stewardship Organization would be a state-level group. It was suggested that this group also reflect both private and public interests and be given sufficient human and capital resources to be effective in developing and promoting the Great River Road. It was suggested that transforming Minnesota's Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) may be an effective instrument for generating support for the Great River Road program.

In particular it was suggested that the MRPC be reconstituted and renamed the *Mississippi River Heritage Byway Commission of Minnesota*. It is suggested that the when legislation reauthorizing the MRPC is presented at an upcoming legislative session, that the MRPC be reconstituted and given the authority and resources to implement this plan. In particular, it is recommended that the Commissioners (or a high ranking agency staff member) of Economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources, and the Director the Historical Society be made the core of the commission and charged with implementing the recommendations of this report and providing assistance to communities seeking to develop tourism along the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. It is recommended that a local representative involved in tourism development from each of the destination areas be placed on the board by the Governor and confirmed by the State Legislature to better foster local stewardship of the Mississippi Heritage Byway. To ensure legislative involvement, it is recommended that the commission also include

four at-large members from the state legislature with constituency on the river, two from the House and two from the Senate.

It was also suggested that it maybe useful for the MRPC to attain status as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit or public-benefit corporation to enable it to attain grants from foundations and donations from concerned individuals.

Study Conclusions Marketing Recommendations

In conclusion, the report makes seven major recommendations involving the marketing of the Great River Road. The seven marketing recommendations are:

- **Use tourism to generate economic and social benefits.** Coordinate the development and promotion with the for-profit private sector of the economy. The Great River Road program has been the domain of public agencies for over sixty years. It has not been seen as particularly beneficial to private sector interests. The public agencies that currently administer the Great River Road program must involve the private sector if the program is to enhance tourism and provide meaningful economic and quality of life benefits to local communities.
- **Focus on the river and the tourist.** The river is the most important resource. It is the resource that has the best name recognition. Tourists are the reason that the road exists. They are the customer. Their needs must be anticipated and fulfilled. The river and the tourist create a system, the road is merely the tool that brings them together.



- **Divide the route into destination areas.** The Great River Road is too big for today's tourist to appreciate. Give it to them in bite-size chunks based on how contemporary tourists travel. Divide the road up based on natural and cultural history and the ability to provide sufficient attractions and services for tourists.
- **Identify and pursue target markets by destination area.** Realize that tourists have different motivations and travel styles. Matching the motivations and travel styles of tourists to those destinations that naturally support their desires is the most practical way to develop and promote tourism.
- **Develop local and state stewardship organizations.** Reorganize how the Great River Road program is administered. Initiate more local control. It is imperative that local stewardship organizations identify the visitors they want to attract and how they will accommodate them. The need to develop and promote attractions and services should be initiated by local people familiar with the needs and aspirations of their communities. The state stewardship organization should be designed to be responsive. It should have sufficient clout and resources to support local initiatives.
- **Create a coherent and appealing identity.** Recognize that the Mississippi River, not the Great River Road, is the primary attraction. Emphasize the river in order to tie all destination areas together. Use the word "Mississippi" in naming each

destination area. Encourage changing the name of the Great River Road to the Mississippi River Heritage Byway. Create an overarching Mississippi River Destination Area. Emphasize Minnesota as "The Mississippi Headwaters State" by emphasizing that Lake Itasca is a unique world-class destination. Assist the tourist in comprehending the Great River Road by improving route designation markers and adding mile markers.

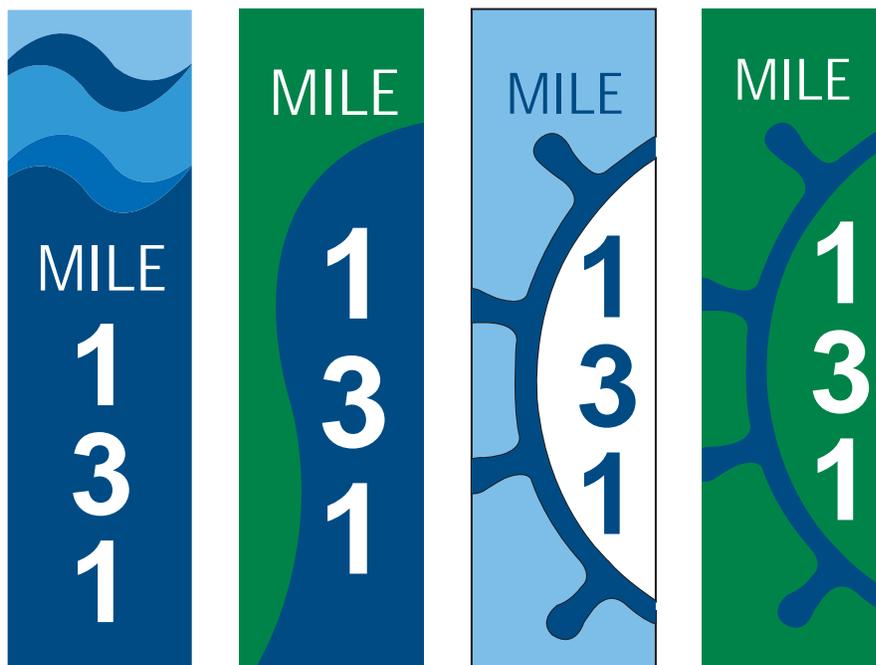
- **Shorten the route.** Make the Great River Road more comprehensible to tourists. Focus development and promotional efforts only the National Route from Lake Itasca to Hastings and the State Route downstream from Hastings.

ment programs. The five programs are:

- **Pave all remaining unpaved segments.** Unpaved segments in the Mississippi Headwaters and Mississippi Mines destination areas degrade the whole system. It is imperative that the expectations of a tourist are met along the whole designated route. Tourists are increasingly sophisticated and familiar with other national byways that are typically well-maintained and paved. Unpaved roads are not viewed favorably by most tourists, except for certain types of explorers. Touring bicyclists especially dislike unpaved roadways. Approximately 25 miles of the 575 mile Great River Road is not paved. Paving the remaining unpaved segments should be a primary goal of the MRPC and the two affected destination areas.

Capital Improvements

The report concludes with suggestions for five capital improve-



Mock-ups for unique Great River Road mileage markers. Such markers would make it easier for tourist to follow the road and find the attractions and services they are seeking.



► **Create a system of unique mileage markers.** A mileage marker system unique to the Great River Road would assist the tourist in staying on the route. This is especially important since the fear of becoming lost is one of the major reasons tourists avoid a particular destination. Currently, it is very difficult to follow the route, even with a map and knowledge of where the road goes. A mileage marker system coupled with improved directional signing at intersections would greatly decrease any foreboding a tourist may have toward traveling on the Great River Road.

A system of unique mileage markers would also make it possible for local attractions and services to advertise their location as being on Mile “x” of the Great River Road. Not only would this be useful to the merchant it simultaneously increases the visibility of the Great River Road to residents and visitors. The value of the markers would make it possible for private interests in each destination area to create guidebooks based on the markers.

► **Create a system of gateway kiosks in the anchors of each destination area.** Design and construct a unique Great River Road Gateway Kiosk in each anchor community. Kiosks should be built, preferably at a travel information center or other major attraction for tourists on the river in Itasca State Park, Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, Little Falls, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Red Wing, and Winona. The exact location should be determined by the local stewardship

organization. Adding kiosks in other communities may be included as determined by the local stewardship organization.

The kiosks would be designed to provide information on public attractions along the Great River Road. It would also incorporate information important to tourists such as advertisements for lodging, restaurants, recreation, entertainment, and travel services provided by the for-profit private sector. Interpretive information about the natural history of the Mississippi River Valley and the cultural heritage of the river communities would also be included.

The kiosk, as part of a general marketing strategy, would be the hub where several radiating trips to various attractions and services scattered throughout the destination area would be promoted. By using a hub and spoke strategy, not all attractions would need to be on the Great River Road, merely accessible from the hub. This will allow the route of the Great River Road to be simplified into a spine that will connect the anchor communities and specifically, the anchor kiosks. The anchor kiosks will act as gateways to visiting the whole community.

► **Complete the bicycle and pedestrian trail parallel to the Mississippi River from Lake Itasca to the Iowa border.** It is unlikely that many tourists would bicycle or hike the whole route in one trip from Lake Itasca to the Iowa border. In this, they are like their motorized brethren. Nonetheless, bicyclists and pedestrians are requesting improved facilities

throughout the Mississippi River corridor. Many improvements have been completed. If these improvements could be linked, a complete system of trails paralleling the river and linking various attractions and services could be created.

Twenty years ago, it was envisioned that the Great River Road would provide such an opportunity. Much of the system was paved with four foot shoulders which was considered adequate for bicycling at the time. Unfortunately, as a modern bicycle facility, a four foot shoulder is not considered sufficient.

Recently, an organization called the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) has promoted the concept of creating a national trail along the river. MRT has received federal support for its effort. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has also supported the development of several trails, particularly with the National Park Service (NPS) in the Twin Cities.

It is recommended that the MRPC, the local stewardship organizations, MRT, DNR, NPS, and other agencies and organizations work together to complete the system. Typically, this could be accomplished by paving the shoulder of the Great River Road or creating an off-road trail where traffic volumes make it unsafe to pedal on the highway. It is recommended that the state-aid standard 8-foot shoulder not be applied if traffic volumes are low and paving an 8-foot shoulder would adversely impact visual quality or some other environmental or social value.



► **Assist local communities in developing their riverfronts.**

The Mississippi River and the communities that grew along its banks are major attractions to a tourist. Redeveloping the riverfront provides a way for a community to conserve and share with tourists its natural and cultural heritage. The authenticity and charm of old buildings, the commercial activity found in the river and the riverbanks, and the inspiring natural landscape provide value to residents and tourists. By improving access to the river, renovating buildings, creating scenic overlooks, and developing riverfront recreational facilities, a community naturally promotes travel to the Mississippi River, the Great River Road, and every other river community throughout Minnesota.

Economic Implications

The Great River Road currently underperforms statewide averages for tourist spending. The median Great River Road party of 2.5 people only spent \$6.00 per day on non-essential shopping or \$2.40 per person per day. The opportunity for Great River Road tourists to contribute to local economies has not been realized. This outcome is not unexpected. Traditionally, only free public resources associated with Great River Road have been promoted. By partnering with the for-profit private sector in local destination areas, the amount of money spent by tourists on consumer articles could also be increased substantially.

In 1998, TravelScope, a national survey of tourist spending behavior, concluded that a tourist would

spend approximately \$32.00 per day in Minnesota. A 1998 Minnesota Office of Tourism Study concluded that residents spend approximately \$43.00 as tourists and non-residents each spend approximately \$50.00. With 2.5 people per traveling party, the Great River Road should be generating at least \$80.00 per party per day for food, lodging, vehicular expenses, and shopping. It is not. According to the survey (Question 68) conducted by Gartner Consulting, the median party was spending \$69.00 per day for these essential travel items. At a minimum, average expenditures for essentials could be increased by over 16% with proper promotion.

If more was done to target out-of-state visitors, especially those in upper income brackets who may be attracted to Minnesota's reputation for pristine wilderness and clean cities, it may be possible to enhance this percentage increase dramatically. Similar efforts by other Minnesota Destination Areas in northern Minnesota, have increased the spending of the average tourist to approximately \$53.00 per day. This would translate into \$132.50 for each party traveling on the Great River Road—a fantastic 92% growth over current levels. Such an increase in economic activity would be substantial.

Summary

By implementing these recommendations and improving the administration of the Great River Road Program, the Minnesota Department of Transportation will be able to complete what it set out to do with this study: Create a Great River Road that enlivens communities and excites tourists.



Section 2 Program History

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) documented the history and purpose of the Great River Road program in its original *Great River Road Route Selection and Development Guides*. These documents, written in the late 1970s and early 1980s, explain how the idea of constructing a parkway along the Mississippi River was conceived by President Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, in 1938. However, other references cloud the picture and it is not clear if Ickes' idea was new or if he was merely promoting an existing concept.

Some authors refer to an earlier time period when explaining the origin of the roadway. The idea of the road, like many roads in the early twentieth century, may have been the idea of private enterprise and civic boosters who thought

linking river towns along the Mississippi would be a sure way to promote visitation and commercial development. Nonetheless, whenever or however the idea first originated, by 1938 it was receiving national attention and had become a federal program.

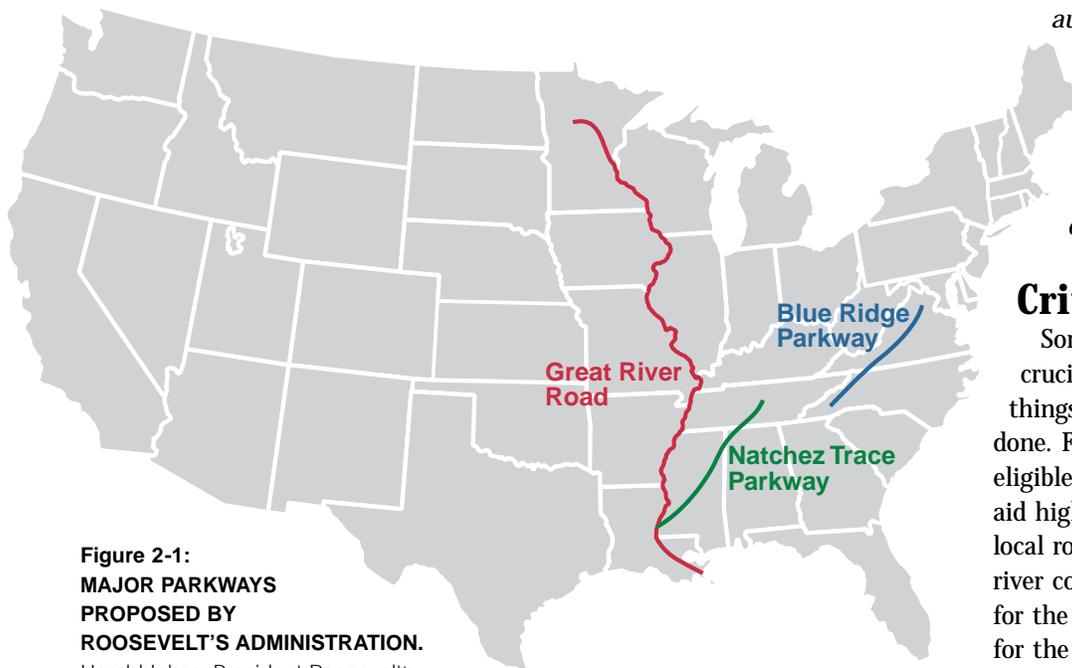
The essential concept was to create a parkway on both sides of the river from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. Some accounts claim this original concept was for a four-lane highway on both sides of the river. Extensions of the parkway would reach into Canada and the Pan-American Highway in Mexico. The Great River Road would be part of a continental road system.

To start, Ickes proposed a parkway to match the *Blue Ridge Parkway* and the *Natchez Trace Parkway* then being developed under his patronage by the National Park Service. Planning, design, and construction of the Great River Road, however, would wait until after the Second World War.

Mn/DOT continues that after the war the:

Study of the Great River Road was first authorized by Congress in 1949. Two years later, the Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service completed the report. Other studies were completed in the 1960s by the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Recommendations for land acquisition, scenic easements, access control, amenity development and road alignment were included in the agencies' examinations.

Although a significant amount of study was directed to the Great River Road in the 1960s and early 1970s, funds for development were not available because of high priorities placed on the Interstate System and other National Defense Highways. The 1973 Federal Highway Act authorized funds but these were not allocated to the 10 river states until 1976. Also in 1976, federal guidelines and regulations, including priorities and new location criteria were released.



**Figure 2-1:
MAJOR PARKWAYS
PROPOSED BY
ROOSEVELT'S ADMINISTRATION.**

Harold Ickes, President Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior proposed, in 1938, a system of three National Parkways. Only the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Natchez Trace Parkway were completed as parkways administered by the National Park Service.

Criteria

Some of these regulations are crucial to understanding why things were done the way they were done. For example, for a project to be eligible it had to be on the federal-aid highway system. This meant that local roads that may be closer to the river could not be used as the route for the Great River Road. Furthermore, for the project to be eligible it had to "be located on roads on the approved Great River Road location." This meant that if an amenity project was to be constructed or an historic site



restored with Great River Road funds, it had to be adjacent to a designated route or spur. This rule created a lot of official spurs and alternative routes.

In addition to these federal regulations, the State of Minnesota created some of its own rules related particularly to the designation of a State Route. State Routes, by act of the Minnesota Legislature, would be limited to Minnesota Trunk Highways. This would limit the burden on county and municipal systems. It also severely limited where the road could be designated and preempted locating the road using access to scenic, recreational, or historic locations as the only criteria.

Mn/DOT defined the purpose of the Great River Road:

The purpose of the Great River Road is to provide a scenic, recreational and historic roadway along the Mississippi River. The proposed Great River Road experience will be multifaceted; it will not only foster a greater appreciation of our natural and historic landscape but offer major recreational opportunities to the traveler. Essential to its success is the conservation of existing natural features such as woodlands and river valleys and preservation of historic sites and landmarks.

The scope was narrowly defined. Improvements were limited to those that would be found on a similar parkway developed by the National Park Service. In practice, improvements would be restricted to the development of the roadway, the enhancement of outdoor recreation, and the restoration and interpretation of historical sites. Travel services (except for rest areas—which were part of developing a safe highway system—and scenic overlooks—which

were part of enhancing recreation) were not part of the Great River Road program. Regulations effectively limited participation to non-commercial attractions. Rules even regulated commercial signage, requiring that off-premise outdoor advertising be prohibited by “local zoning, regulation or ordinance.” Lodging, restaurants, service stations were not discussed or incorporated into the development of the Great River Road. The commercial needs of the tourist were not identified or accommodated. Indeed the federal location criteria all but ruled out new commercial development stating that:

The road shall be located so that unique values of the corridor may be protected. This may be accomplished by appropriate route selection, effective control or elimination of development inconsistent with the nature and performance of the highway through zoning or other land use restrictions, the acquisition of scenic easements and where necessary the direct acquisition of scenic, historic, woodland or other areas of interest in fee or by other appropriate measures.

The federal concept was to develop a single National Route on one side of the river alternating between its east and west sides. In Minnesota, the 426-mile National Route would extend from Lake Itasca to Point Douglas, near Hastings. The National Route would usually be mirrored on the other side of the river with a designated State Route. State Routes would also extend from the Headwaters to Winnipeg and Bemidji to International Falls. These routes would be called the West Canadian Extension and the East Canadian Extension, respec-

tively. South of Hastings, another State Route would follow U.S. Highway 61 and State Trunk Highway 26 to the Iowa border.

Mississippi River Parkway Commission

To promote and coordinate the development of the Great River Road, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission was formed. It included the ten river states and two Canadian provinces, Manitoba and Ontario. The Commission has been in existence since at least 1938 but it may actually predate Ickes' proposal. Each state, in turn, has a State Commission. Minnesota has a very active commission and is a significant leader in the national organization. The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission is composed primarily of representatives from Minnesota's legislative bodies and champions the activities of Mn/DOT and other agencies assisting communities in promoting the Great River Road and the Mississippi River as a tourist destination.

Funding

Funding for the Great River Road Program was categorical until 1986. This meant that money was set aside for the Great River Road and could not be spent on any other type of road project. Millions of dollars were available to be divided by ten states. Each state was allocated a certain amount based on several factors including the length of the road in the particular state. Minnesota had an extremely long segment of the roadway and received proportionally a large share of the money. When states failed to spend their allotment, the other states could request redistribution. Minnesota was very successful at not only spending its original



allotment but in receiving a substantial proportion of the redistributed money. This made the program very popular with Mn/DOT engineering staff and County Engineers who could get improvements to their low volume roadways funded.

High on the list of eligible projects were planning and preliminary engineering studies to determine route selection and amenity development. Mn/DOT authored a series of *Route Selection and Development Guides* for the six segments of the National Route documenting the route selection process and offering suggestions for amenity improvements. As part of the route selection process, alternative routes were evaluated and community meetings were held. As a result of negotiations with local officials, National and State Routes were officially designated. Both the National and State Routes received approval from the Minnesota and National Mississippi River Parkway Commissions, the state legislature, and the Federal Highway Administration.

By 1986, however, the era of categorical funds expired. After 1986, all Great River Road projects had to compete with all other highway pro-

jects for funding. For road improvements to be funded, especially roads with low traffic volumes, considerable interest had to be displayed by the public before road authorities would divert money from more pressing transportation concerns. Since many of the Great River Road routes were on previously improved or little used county roads, additional improvements were typically not a priority and funding of Great River Road projects waned.

The lack of public support and the organized hostility by property rights activists, slowed enthusiasm for the project by local and state public officials. The tourism industry, which had not been consulted in the development of the route, was disinterested and failed to recognize the value of the route enough to become organized boosters. Subsequently, the general public, public officials, and even groups interested in tourism or the river did not rally to support continued government assistance for developing a parkway along the Mississippi.

The advent of ISTEA and TEA-21 transportation funding programs—specifically the funds for transportation enhancements and scenic

byways—has spurred new life into the Great River Road program. The entire route, in all of its permutations, is eligible for enhancement monies. The National Route of the Great River Road from Itasca to Hastings and the State Route downstream from Hastings to the Iowa Border is a designated Minnesota Scenic Byway. This segment is eligible for scenic byway funding. Various projects, like the creation of new interpretive markers, have been designed and installed as part of these new highway funding mechanisms. In addition to the interpretive signs, other proposals for improving the roadway have been advanced by Mn/DOT, the MRPC, and various communities along the route. It was, however, apparent to the MRPC and Mn/DOT that the Great River Road was not reaching its potential as a tourist route in Minnesota. Before additional funds were committed to the highway, Mn/DOT requested proposals from consultants on how to best evaluate the effectiveness of the current program and various development options. This Development Study—premised on tourist needs—is the result of that request.



Section 3 Project Purpose

Program Status

The Great River Road represents a major investment by the State of Minnesota. The investment was the result of over sixty years of efforts by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and its partnering state agencies. The commission is a legislatively mandated body charged with promoting, preserving, and enhancing the Mississippi River Valley while encouraging the development of the Great River Road and its amenities.

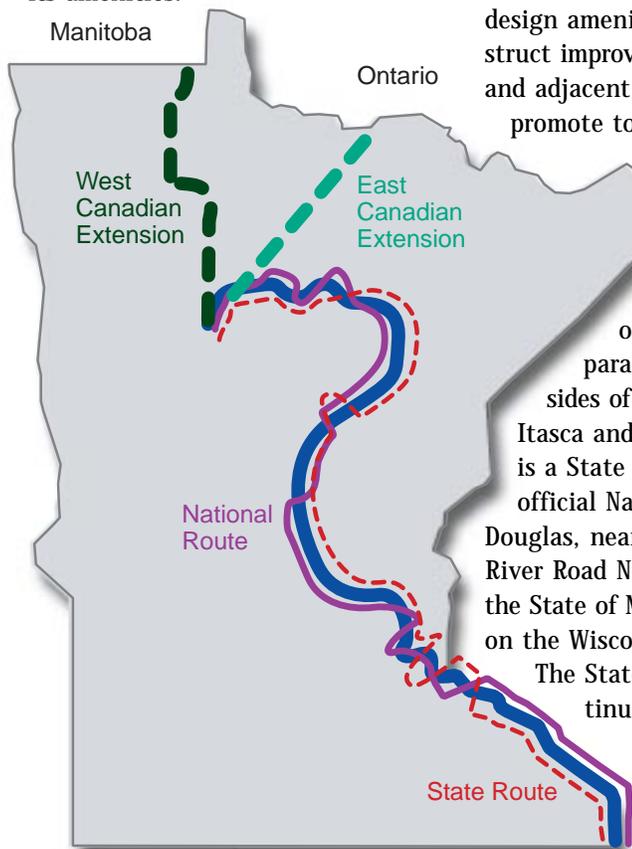


Figure 3-1: Great River Road Routes

The Great River Road in Minnesota is comprised of National and State Routes. The National Route extends from Lake Itasca to Hastings. A State Route parallels the National Route usually on the other side of the river. Near Hastings, the National Route crosses into Wisconsin but the State Route continues to Iowa. There are two Canadian Extensions which connect the tourist to Canada.

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) is composed of ten members: two state senators; two state representatives; five public members, appointed by the heads of five state agencies (Agriculture, Trade and Economic Development, Natural Resources, Transportation, and the Historical Society); and a tenth member appointed by the other nine. The MRPC, working primarily with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, garnered a substantial amount of money to develop and promote a scenic and recreational corridor from Canada to Iowa. The money was used to evaluate and select routes, determine and design amenities for travelers, construct improvements to the roadway and adjacent amenity sites, and promote tourism.

In Minnesota, the Great River Road corridor consists of nearly 1200 miles of roadway, including parallel segments on both sides of the river between Lake Itasca and Hastings. One side is a State Route, the other the official National Route. At Point Douglas, near Hastings, the Great River Road National Route leaves the State of Minnesota and continues on the Wisconsin side of the river.

The State Route, however, continues south to the Iowa border on the Minnesota side. The State Route also extends north on two routes to Canada. One, the Western Canadian Extension, travels to Manitoba and eventually Winnipeg. The other, the Eastern Canadian

Extension, continues north to International Falls and then into Ontario. (See Figure 2-1: Great River Road Routes). Several spurs, some long (including one that circles Lake Mille Lacs) and some short (like one that races to the James J. Hill House on St. Paul's Summit Avenue), add a significant amount of miles to Minnesota's Great River Road network.

Maintaining this huge network, fell on the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the counties whose roads comprised the system. Originally envisioned as a program that fostered tourism and recreational development, interest in the Great River Road program had waned with the withdrawal of categorical funds. It was unknown if tourists were being attracted to the road and what benefit agencies or the communities they served were receiving by having a state or nationally designated road running through their towns and countryside.

What was needed was a thorough evaluation of the system of tourists and attractions found on the Great River Road. In particular, it was necessary to determine who were the tourists and potential tourists and how the development, management, and promotion of attractions and travel services affected tourists and tourism. From that assessment, a series of implementation strategies and priorities could be developed to enhance tourism on the Great River Road in Minnesota.

Proposals Requested

Working together, the MRPC and Mn/DOT solicited proposals to study the Great River Road. The purpose of the study was threefold. It would primarily:

- Conduct an inventory of the roadway and the amenities that had been proposed and built by



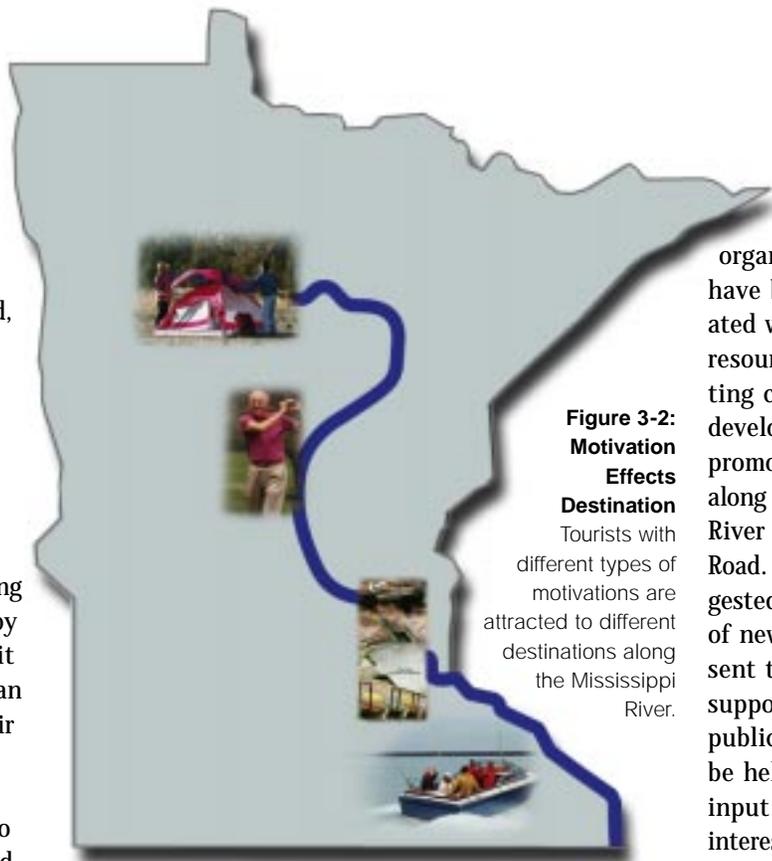
the program. Such an inventory would document what the Great River Road program had accomplished. The inventory would determine if the amenities originally proposed had been constructed or not; and if they had been constructed, were they still in good shape. The inventory would serve as a basis for justifying a request for additional state or federal funding.

- Determine if continuing to maintain and promote the existing 1200-mile route was justified by tourist interest. In particular, it was requested that the Canadian Extensions be evaluated for their effectiveness as tourist routes. The necessity for a parallel State Route from Lake Itasca to Hastings was also to be evaluated.
- Determine if the existing organizational structure was still a reasonable way to develop and promote the Great River Road.

Consultant Response

The Consulting Study Team that was selected to perform these tasks was organized by Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc., a firm with Landscape Architects specializing in recreational highway planning and design. The team included Economics Research Associates with personnel who specialized in community development and heritage tourism. It also included Gartner Consulting, a firm with personnel knowledgeable of tourism trends in Minnesota and The 106 Group, a cultural resource management firm.

The work plan proposed by the Consulting Study Team was based on the concept that the user of the roadway—the tourist—would determine what should be inven-



**Figure 3-2:
Motivation
Effects
Destination**
Tourists with different types of motivations are attracted to different destinations along the Mississippi River.

agencies and organizations who have been associated with managing resources, advocating community development, or promoting tourism along the Mississippi River or Great River Road. It also suggested that a series of newsletters be sent to potential supporters and public open houses be held to assure input from special interests and the general public. This stake-

holder involvement process would provide direction for the study. What, if anything, should be edited from the network of highways that comprised the Great River Road; how the Great River Road can best be developed and promoted; and how should it be managed.

It had a simple premise: How could the Great River Road be more than symbols on a map? More than signs on the side of the road? How could the Great River Road enliven a community and excite a tourist? How could a route managed by numerous authorities achieve a coherence that beckons, engages, and thrills? What would be the electrifying story that communities would tell their children and tourists would take home?

Project Scope and Products

The Consulting Study Team suggested that Mn/DOT form an Advisory Committee to secure information and counsel from

holder involvement process would provide direction for the study.

One of the major tasks was to inventory resources that tourists would find attractive or important on the Great River Road including an understanding of the existing highway infrastructure, recreational resources, and cultural resources. To eliminate duplication of efforts and to reduce costs, electronic inventories were secured from various government sources and transferred to a computerized GIS (Geographic Information Systems) database. Inventories that were not available electronically were gathered by referring to other sources, such as maps, the Internet, or field reviews. The product was a comprehensive ArcView GIS database of the resources and their attributes that constitute the Great River Road experience in Minnesota.

A survey of visitors to the Great River Road was also performed. The survey was used to determine what



were the characteristics of a typical visitor to the Great River Road and how they perceived their experience. The visitor survey would later determine the basis for a tourism marketing strategy. In particular, it identified that tourists with different motiva-

tions were visiting different parts of the Great River Road. This meant that different development and promotional strategies would need to be used on different markets for different segments of the Great River Road. (See Figure 3-2: *Motivation Effects Destination*).

As part of the inventory of the existing system and visitor preferences, the necessity, effectiveness, and benefits of the many Great River Road routes were evaluated. Working with the Advisory Committee and meeting with affected communities convinced the Study Team that by focusing

promotion and development efforts on the National Route between Itasca State Park and Hastings and the State Route downstream from Hastings, Minnesota's Great River Road would be better understood by the tourist, more coherent and manageable for administrative agencies, and more easily promoted by tourism bureaus.

Lastly the proposal by the Consulting Study Team suggested that the ultimate product produced by the study would be a Great River Road Tourism Development Council. The purpose of the council would be to ensure that the ideas generated by the study would be implemented. It had been originally envisioned that the Advisory Committee would morph into this new role. However, as the project concluded it appeared that the Advisory Committee had completed its task and that the Mississippi River Parkway Commission itself should be modified to increase its stature and its ability to command resources to accomplish its goals.



Figure 3-3: Study Area

The Study Team focused its attention on the East Canadian Extension from International Falls to Bemidji, the National Route from Itasca State Park to Hastings, and the State Route downstream of Hastings to the Iowa border.

Section 4 Resource Summary

The Mississippi River Valley is composed of many recreational, cultural, river, and transportation resources that support and contribute to the experience a tourist has while traveling on the Great River Road. Some of these resources were developed or enhanced through funding supplied by the Great River Road program. The State of Minnesota has estimated that it and the federal government have spent tens of millions of dollars to plan, design, and construct the roadway and enhance the recreational, cultural, river resources associated with it. In addition, the State of Minnesota, has spent tens of thousands promoting both the National and State Routes of the Great River Road. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, the agency that contributed most of the funding and led the development and promotion of the route, wanted to know if its efforts to develop and promote the Great River Road have been useful in enhancing tourism or if the program should be adjusted to fit the needs of contemporary tourists and local communities. As one of the first steps in this evaluation, an inventory of existing recreational, cultural, river, and transportation resources was conducted.

Scope of Inventory

Between the summer of 1998 and the summer of 1999, the Consulting Study Team conducted an inventory of resources that facilitate tourism on the Great River Road. Except for private golf courses open to the public, only those resources that were managed by public agencies

were inventoried. Recreational, cultural, river, or transportation resources that could be valued by Great River Road tourists were catalogued for the whole corridor from International Falls to the Iowa border. Typically, resources were catalogued if they were found within one mile of either the river or the Great River Road. In cities with a population over 5,000 people, the geographic scope of the inventory expanded to include those resources that were associated with the Mississippi River or the Great River Road.

When the preliminary inventory was presented to the Great River Road Development Study Advisory Committee, the committee suggested that although the inventory of public resources was useful, it was insufficient. They counseled that public resources alone do not satisfy tourists. They suggested that if tourism was to be enhanced on the Great River Road, it needed to be better understood. In order to be understood, both public and private attractions would need to be inventoried and analyzed. The Advisory Committee urged the Consultant Study Team to include commercial attractions and services provided by the for-profit private sector in the study. In particular, they suggested that the lodging, restaurant, and vehicular services on which tourists are dependent must be considered if the development and promotion of the Great River Road was to be enhanced and tourism increased.

Although including commercial attractions and services in the inventory was not possible given the contractual scope of the project, the Study Team did try other methods to assess private-sector support for tourism. Using a national database of economic resources¹, the Study Team evaluated aggregate data on travel services and noticed several patterns

and clusters of services emerging from the data. Not unsurprisingly, travel services were congregated near the larger cities along the river including, Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, Little Falls, St. Cloud, the Twin Cities, Red Wing and Winona. These patterns later would be used to determine if there was a critical mass of attractions and services to create a “demonstration area” to serve as an example of how a particular segment of the Great River Road could be developed to enhance tourism. Once a demonstration area was selected, private attractions and services were included in the discussion of how to enhance and promote it.

Methodology

The inventory was conducted using several methods of data collection. To avoid duplicating the inventory efforts of other governmental agencies, Mn/DOT requested that the Consulting Study Team obtain as much information from existing databases as possible. Although many agencies, including some counties and municipalities, provided some electronic data, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Minnesota Historical Society provided the bulk of the electronic data.

Information was also gleaned from maps, brochures, and other material printed by dozens of public and private sources. In addition to material from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Minnesota Historical Society, information from material printed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service,



the Minnesota Office of Tourism, the Mississippi Headwaters Board, and the University of Minnesota was used. Information was also collected from printed material promoting specific attractions and services, such as museums and historic sites. Information was also gathered from public and private Websites. In particular, Websites maintained by the Minnesota Office of Tourism, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were extremely useful for gathering information on public resources. The Minnesota Office of Tourism's website was also particularly helpful in gathering information on private services and attractions.

The inventory was supplemented by extensive field reviews. Field reviews were initiated in July 1998 with a tour of the entire route from International Falls to the Iowa border by the Mn/DOT Project Manager and the Consulting Study Team. The initial field review identified several resources including: publicly owned tourist-oriented recreational resources and river resources, cultural resources on the National Register of Historic Places, and the attributes of the roadway. Simultaneously, a series of interviews, organized by the Mn/DOT Project Manager, with many local Convention and Visitor Bureaus or

Chambers of Commerce were conducted as part of the tour. Information on public and private attractions and services that could be added to the inventory was collected during the interviews. Conversations with facility managers, particularly those at state and county parks and historic sites, were also conducted and yielded additional inventory information.

During the course of the project, a series of ten Open Houses arranged by Mn/DOT were also used to gather information directly from the public about resources found on the Great River Road. During the Fall of 1999, after the demonstration areas were selected, members of the Study Team, reviewed the corridors and conducted further research on public resources and private attractions and services to better understand what was needed to enhance tourism in the four selected demonstration areas.

These efforts have been catalogued in a computer database constructed using ArcView®GIS, a geographic information system program that essentially stores information in relationship to a point, line, or area on a map. The database has records for over 1400 sites related to recreational and river resources. It has records of over 1600 sites related to cultural resources. Nearly 94,000 pieces of information were gathered on these 3,000 sites or approximately

31 separate facts were catalogued for each resource. Some facts were standard and gathered for each resource, such as its address, who was the maintaining authority, and if it had received funding from the Great River Road program. Other information was unique to the particular type of resource. For example, for interpretive markers its *Interpretive Theme* was catalogued. For campgrounds, the *Number of Tent Sites* and the *Number of RV Sites* were noted. About one-quarter to one-third of the information was specific to a particular type of resource.

Transportation resources were also added to the database. Transportation resources are based on Mn/DOT's segmentation of the highway system. Typically information is by control section. Each control section is considered a separate resource. In addition to the highway itself, rest areas and trails are included as transportation resources. All in all, over 3,000 transportation resources were catalogued.

Table 4-1: Inventory Statistics lists the number of resources or sites inventoried, the number of attributes or facts collected about each resource, and the total number of attributes collected per resource category. A complete list of what was inventoried for each type of resources follows in the next part of this section.

Category	Number of Resources	Facts Listed per Resource	Total Number of Attributes
Recreational Resources	1,225	28	34,300
River Resources	179	29	5,191
Cultural Resources	1,648	33	54,384
Transportation Resources	3,224	33	106,392
Total	6,276	123	200,267

Table 4-1: Inventory Statistics

The table shows a summary of the information that was gathered as part of the Great River Road inventory of recreational, river, cultural, and transportation resources.

Inventory Results

Inventory Categories

The Study Team inventoried four categories of resources: river resources, recreational resources, cultural resources, and transportation resources. Specifically, it inventoried the following:

- Recreational Resources
 - Parks
 - Forests
 - Wildlife Refuges
 - Campgrounds
 - Picnic Areas
 - Interpretive Markers
 - Museums
 - Golf Courses
 - Festivals
- Cultural Resources
 - National Register Sites
- River Resources
 - Beaches
 - Fishing Piers
 - Water Access
 - Dams
- Transportation Resources
 - Great River Road
 - Rest Areas
 - Trails
 - Trail Heads
 - Tourist Region

General Data Collection

General information was collected for each resource using standard data-entry protocols. It was necessary to standardize information from various sources to make it useful for future analysis. For example, some databases might list the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as “DNR,” others might list the same agency as “MNDNR” or even “Natural Resources.” Although humans are quite capable of understanding that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources can be referred to as its full name or as several different

Attribute	Acceptable Data Entries
GIS Shape File	<i>Computer code for a point, line, or area on a map</i>
Name	<i>Name of the place being inventoried as titled by the Maintaining Authority</i>
Source ID	<i>Number or symbol assigned by the Source</i>
Great River Road ID	<i>Combination of the Source and Source ID</i>
Maintaining Authority	<i>Standard established acronyms of federal, state, or other authorities, usually also the Source</i>
Location by Address	<i>Site address or Maintaining Authority address</i>
Location by City	<i>Use city from “location by address.” If address not known, then locate site to closest city on Official Mn/DOT Map, or if located equally between two cities, locate by the city that is upstream</i>
Location by Zip Code	<i>Use zip code from “location by address”</i>
Location by Road	<i>Use “location by address” road number and highest ranking road designation (use state designated “Minnesota Trunk Highway 51” rather than the municipally designated “Snelling Avenue”)</i>
Location by Trunk Highway	<i>Adjacent trunk highway number</i>
Location by Control Section	<i>As designated by Mn/DOT</i>
Location by Mn/DOT ATP District	<i>As designated by Mn/DOT</i>
Location by County	<i>Actual site or use “location by address” to determine county</i>
Location of Reference Point	<i>Actual reference point as calculated by Mn/DOT</i>
Great River Road Funding	<i>Received categorical funds from FHWA? Yes or No</i>
Telephone Number	<i>Site specific public information number or Maintaining Authority’s public information number</i>
E-mail	<i>Site specific general e-mail number or Maintaining Authority’s e-mail number</i>
Website	<i>Site specific home page or Maintaining Authority’s home page</i>
River Context	<i>IN, if in the water; ON, if on the water; NEAR, if within 1/4 mile of the river; NULL, if further out</i>

Table 4-2: Protocols for General Attributes

This table lists the general attributes that were entered for each individual resource. If the attribute was “Not Applicable” for a certain resource (for example, a segment of roadway does not have an address), “NA” was entered into the database. If the data was pertinent but unknown (such as a telephone number that couldn’t be found), the attribute was left blank.

acronyms or even misspelled, a computer typically cannot recognize these subtle differences. Consequently, it was necessary to develop standard data-entry protocols that defined exactly what could be entered into the Great River Road GIS database. *Figure 4-2: Protocols for General Attributes* is a summary of the protocols used to enter information about each resource. As additional data is collected and attached to the database by

its future users, it is recommended that these standard protocols be followed.

Resource Specific Data Collection

In addition to the general attributes, data was collected specially for each type of resource. For instance, it was noted how many tent sites were available in a campground. The protocols for cataloging this resource specific data for recrea-

tional, cultural, river, and transportation resources is detailed below. This data will be useful to those organizations that will provide stewardship for enhancing and promoting tourism on the Great River Road.

Recreational Resources

Table 4-3: Protocols for Recreational Resources is a summary of the types of resources and their attributes specifically collected for recreational resources. *Figure 4-1: Typical Map of Recreational Resources* is a map that illustrates how this data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Cultural Resources

Table 4-4: Protocols for Cultural Resources is a summary of the types of resources and their attributes specifically collected for cultural resources. Some of this information is not in the GIS database but is available as a separate database. The GIS database has location information. *Figure 4-2: Typical Map of Cultural Resources* is a map that illustrates what data is on the GIS system.

River Resources

Table 4-5: Protocols for River Resources is a summary of the types of resources and their attributes specifically collected for recreational resources. *Figure 4-3: Typical Map of River Resources* is a map that illustrates how this data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Transportation Resources

Table 4-6: Protocols for Transportation Resources is a summary of the resources and their attributes specifically collected for recreational resources. *Figure 4-4: Typical Map of Transportation Resources* is a map that illustrates how this data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Attribute	Acceptable Data Entries
Parks	Yes or No if there are Picnic Areas, Campgrounds, Cabins, Boating, Swimming, Golfing, Historical Sites, Archaeological Sites, Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails. If yes for Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails, enter number of miles.
Forests	Yes or No if there are Picnic Areas, Campgrounds, Cabins, Boating, Swimming, Golfing, Historical Sites, Archaeological Sites, Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails. If yes for Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails, enter number of miles.
Wildlife Refuges	Yes or No if there is Hunting Allowed. Yes or No if there are Songbirds, Migratory Birds, Fur Bearing Mammals, Large Mammals, Hiking Trails, or Bicycling Trails. If yes for songbirds, enter number of species. If yes for Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails, enter number of miles.
Campgrounds	Yes or No if Advanced Registration is allowed. Yes or No if there are Tent Sites, RV Sites, Showers, Potable Water, or Toilets. If yes for Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails, enter number of miles. If yes for showers, enter quantity. If yes for toilets, enter if Pit, Flush, or Portable. RV sites must include electrical hook-ups to be counted as RV sites.
Picnic Areas	Yes or No if there are Parking Stalls, Tables, or Shelters. Enter quantity if data available. Yes or No if there is Potable Water or Toilets. If yes for toilets, enter if Pit, Flush, or Portable.
Interpretive Markers	Enter construction date, erecting authority, Marker Type as defined by MHS. Yes or No if Image or Text is Available from MHS. Enter Interpretive Theme as defined by MHS.
Museums	Define Museum using MHS Interpretive Themes
Golf Courses	Public or Semi-Public. Yes or No if Reservations Accepted. Yes or No if there is a Public Restaurant or Pro-Shop.
Festivals	Identify primary theme and events.

Table 4-3: Protocols for Recreational Resources

This table lists the type of resource and defines acceptable entries for the attributes that are associated with that resource. If the attribute was "Not Applicable" for a certain resource (for example, an interpretive marker may not have an address), "NA" was entered into the database. If the data was pertinent but unknown (such as a museum's telephone number that couldn't be found), the attribute field was left blank.

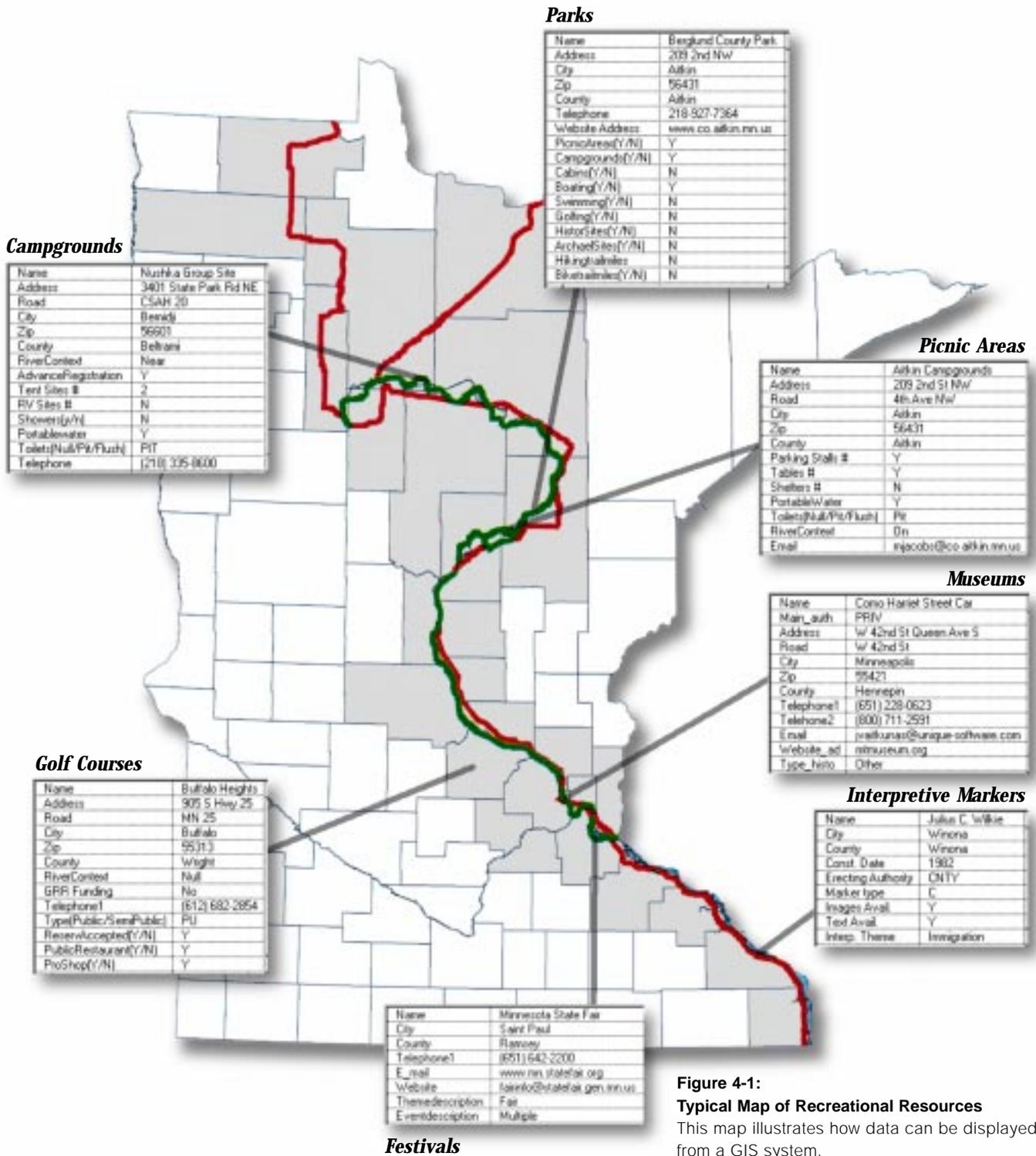


Figure 4-1:
Typical Map of Recreational Resources
 This map illustrates how data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Resource Type	Acceptable Data Entries
Structure (Buildings)	Enter Property Category (Commerce, Domestic, Religion, Education, Government, Transportation, Social, or Recreational and Cultural) Type (commercial building, bank, church, courthouse, theater, bar, post office, office building, restaurant, professional building, etc.) and Yes or No if it is on National Register of Historic Places
Bridge	Enter Property Category, Type, and Yes or No if it is on National Register of Historic Places
Park	Enter Property Category, Type, and Yes or No if it is on National Register of Historic Places
District	Enter Property Category, Type, and Yes or No if it is on National Register of Historic Places

Table 4-4:
Protocols for Cultural Resources

This table lists the type of resource and defines acceptable entries for the attributes that are associated with that resource.

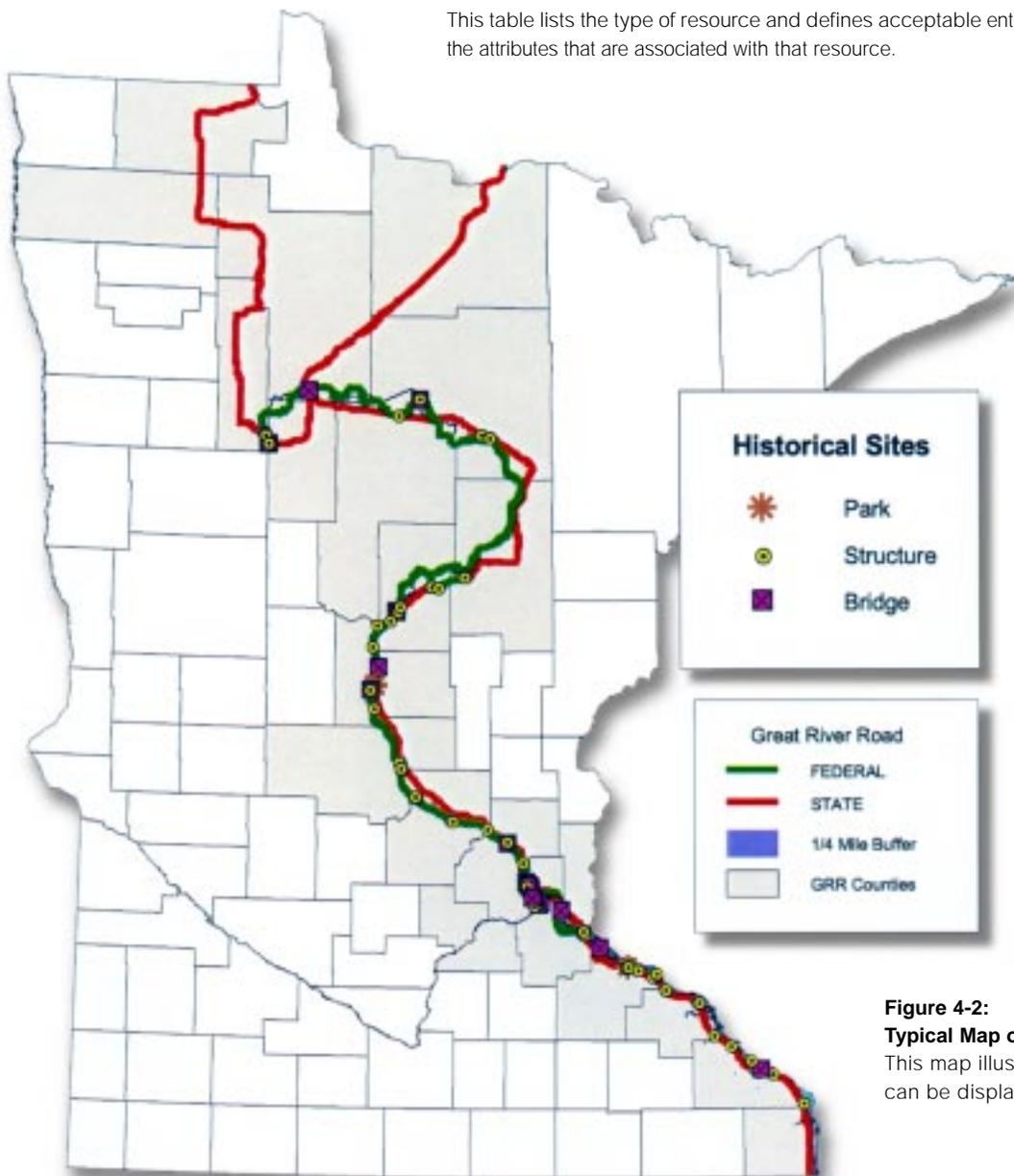
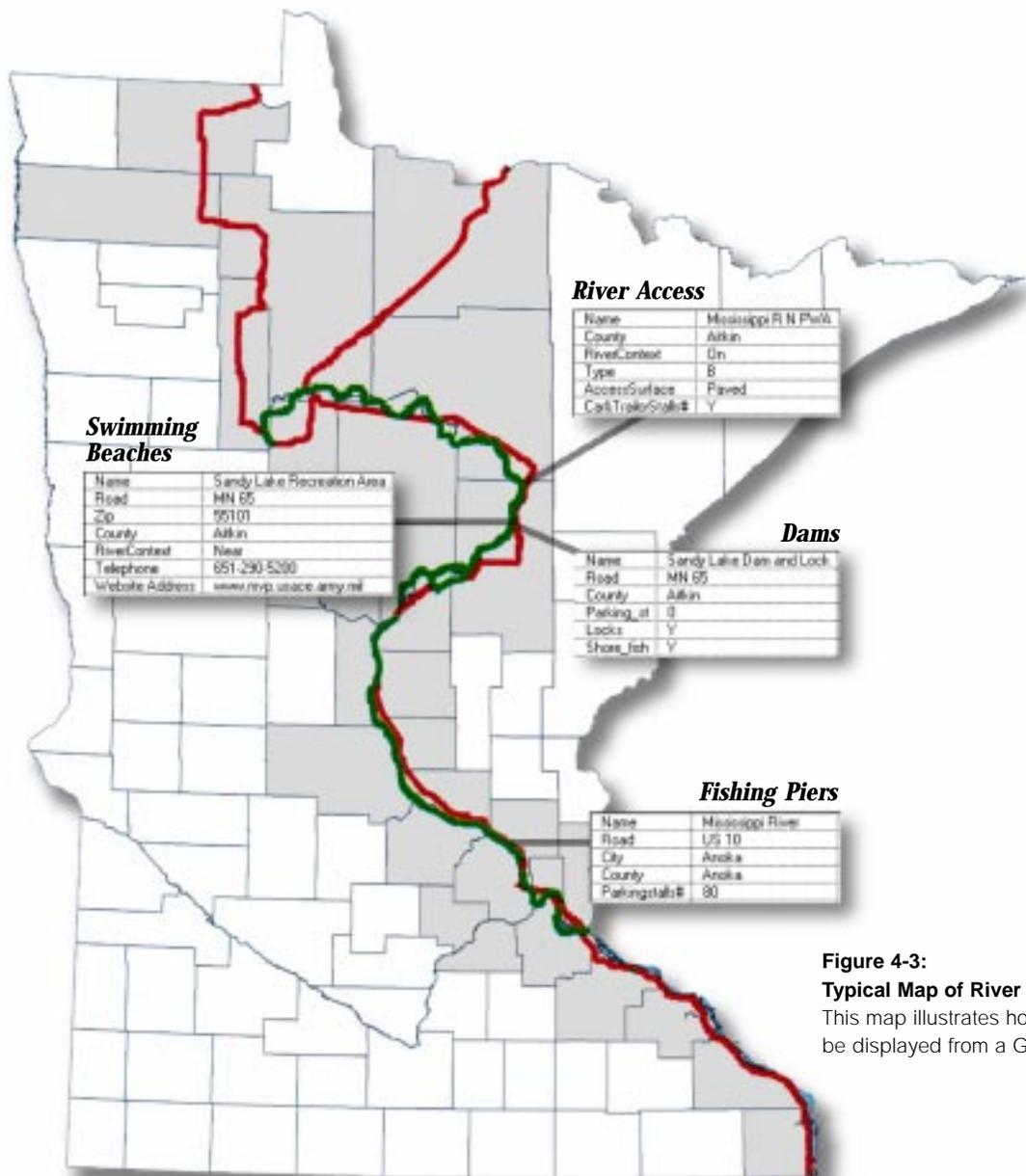


Figure 4-2:
Typical Map of Cultural Resources
This map illustrates the location data that can be displayed from the GIS system.

Resource Type	Acceptable Data Entries
Swimming	<i>General information only Beaches</i>
River Access	<i>Enter if it is a Boat or Canoe Access. Enter if the Access Ramp is Paved or Unpaved. Yes or No if there are Parking Stalls for a Car and Trailer. If yes, provide quantity.</i>
Fishing Piers	<i>Yes or No if there are Parking Stalls. If yes, provide quantity.</i>
Dams	<i>Yes or No if there are Parking Stalls. If yes, provide quantity. Yes or no if there are Locks and Shore Fishing.</i>

Table 4-5: Protocols for River Resources

This table lists the type of resource and defines acceptable entries for the attributes that are associated with that resource. If the attribute was "Not Applicable" for a certain resource (for example, a fishing pier may not have an address) "NA" was entered into the database. If the data was pertinent but unknown, (such as a dam's telephone number that couldn't be found) the attribute field was left blank.



**Figure 4-3:
Typical Map of River Resources**
This map illustrates how data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Resource Type	Acceptable Data Entries
Great River Road Segments	Enter National or State Great River Road Route Designation. Enter Mn/DOT Route Identifier. Enter County Number assigned by FIPS. Transfer Control Section, Control Number, Data Year, ADT from Mn/DOT database. Enter Surface Type, Surface Width, Shoulder Type, Shoulder Width and if it is Divided or Undivided from field review or Mn/DOT database.
Rest Areas & Travel Information Centers	Enter Class (I-IV). Yes or No if there are Parking Stalls, Tables, or Shelters. If yes, provide quantity. Yes or No if there is Potable Water or Toilets. If there are toilets, enter if they Pit, Flush, or Portable.
Trails	Yes or No if there are Hiking Trails or Bicycling Trails. If yes, enter number of miles.
Trail Heads	General information only.
Tourist & Travel Information Centers	General information only for State Travel Information Centers and local Tourist Information Centers. Enter one of four Marketing Areas as defined by the Minnesota Office of Tourism.

Table 4-6: Protocols for Transportation Resources

This table lists the type of resources and defines acceptable entries for the attributes that are associated with that resource. If the attribute was "Not Applicable" for a certain resource (for example, a road segment does not have an address) "NA" was entered into the database. If the data was pertinent but unknown, (such as the address for a rest area) the attribute field was left blank.

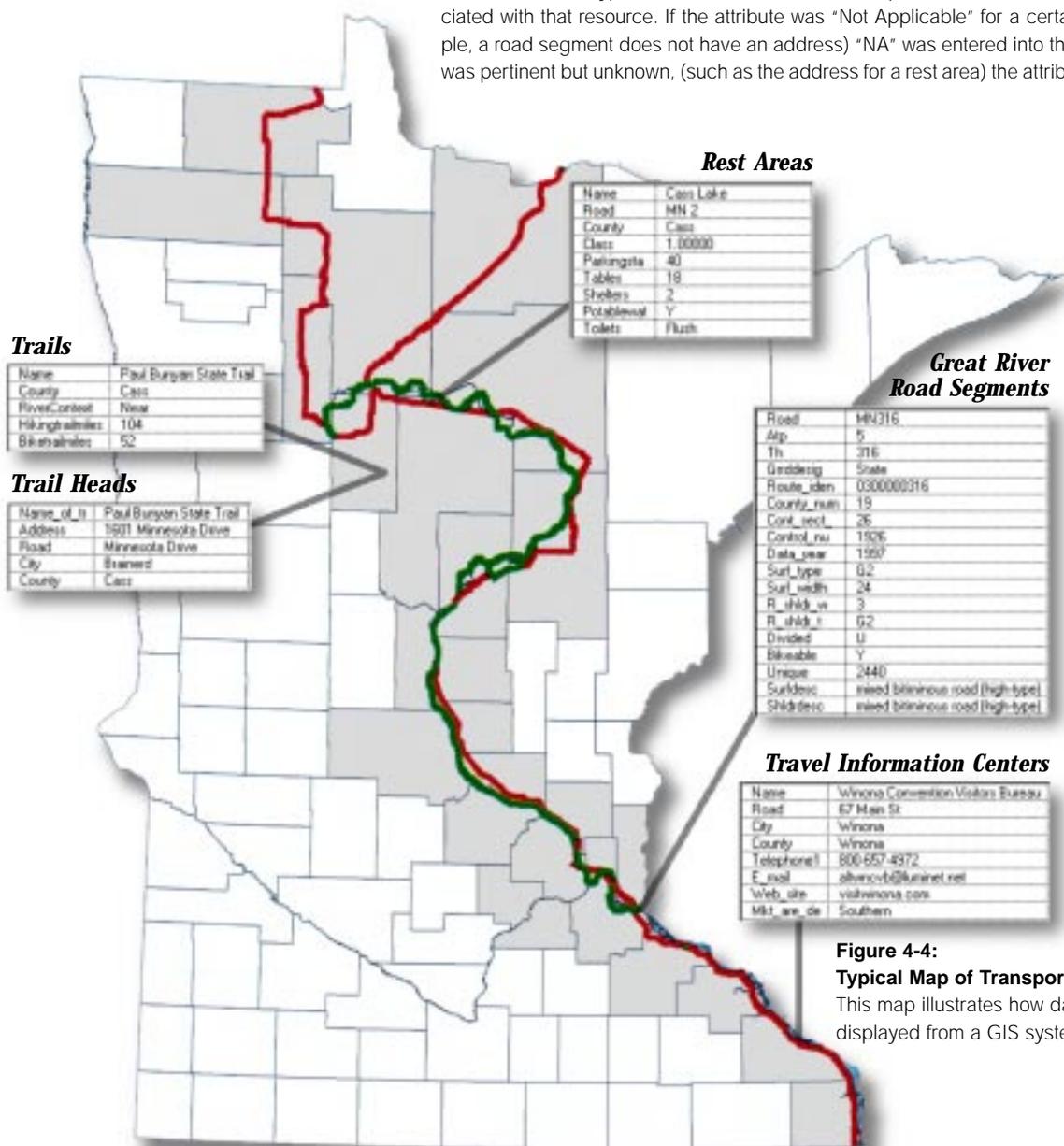


Figure 4-4: Typical Map of Transportation Resources
This map illustrates how data can be displayed from a GIS system.

Conclusion

An extensive amount of information about the recreational, river, cultural, and transportation resources on the Great River Road has been catalogued in a GIS computer database. This database will be useful to those organizations that will be responsible for maintaining, enhancing, and promoting the Great River Road in the future, particularly the proposed local stewardship organizations. By using this database, local stewardship organizations will be able to determine if they have sufficient resources for the type of tourist they are attempting to attract and if additional capital improvements are necessary.

The decision to develop or enhance access to certain resources

for tourists must be a local decision since it involves choices about community development and the quality of life residents will enjoy. Although this study does *suggest* some capital improvements for a few selected destinations, the suggestions are, in fact, reiterations of proposals that were offered by local residents, organizations, or agencies during the course of the study. They have not had the advantage of being reviewed by the whole community or governmental agencies and may not reflect what the community or agencies as a whole would elect to improve. Nonetheless, the suggestions which are presented had the advantage of being useful to developing tourism and have been included as recommendations to begin a dialogue

about how resources and communities along the Mississippi River and the Great River Road could be developed to enhance tourism.

Understanding what resources are available to attract tourists is an important component in developing a development and marketing strategy for the Great River Road. Equally important, however, is understanding what are the desires of the tourist. Desire will determine if a particular resource is valued by the Great River Road traveler. Understanding the tourist and which resources they value is discussed in the next section of this report.

¹ *ESRI Database*



Section 5 The Tourist

Introduction

The behavior of tourists must be understood and their needs and desires accommodated, if a community is to improve its position as a tourist destination. This section inventories and analyzes the perceptions tourists currently have of the Great River Road. It suggests how these perceptions have affected tourism along the Great River Road and in communities on the Mississippi River. A discussion of how these perceptions can be used to generate an effective strategy to promote, enhance, and manage the Great River Road is begun in this section and will be concluded in subsequent sections.

The analysis of the Great River Road tourist is presented in four parts. To understand how existing perceptions affected tourism along the Great River Road, travelers were interviewed and surveyed at key locations along the state and national routes. This survey and its results are reported under the major heading, *Tourist Survey*. The survey and additional research revealed the generic reasons why tourists are motivated to visit a particular destination. These findings are presented under the second major heading, *Tourist Motivations*. Tourists who are part of a structured group travel very differently and have different requirements from those who structure their trip themselves. How tourists structure their trips and the effect trip structure has on tourism is discussed under the third

major heading, *Travel Styles*. What tourists consider the primary attractions on the Great River Road and what factors are currently limiting tourism along the Mississippi River is also discussed under this heading. The section concludes with a discussion of how these findings affect tourism under the heading, *Tourism Implications*.

Tourist Survey Survey Methodology

The Great River Road Visitor Survey included a battery of questions designed to illuminate travelers' behavior, particularly their attitudes and preferences. It also identified their social and demographic characteristics and other key factors contributing to trip planning and enjoyment.

Tourists were surveyed on nineteen days between August and early November, 1998 at locations along the Great River Road where tourists congregate.

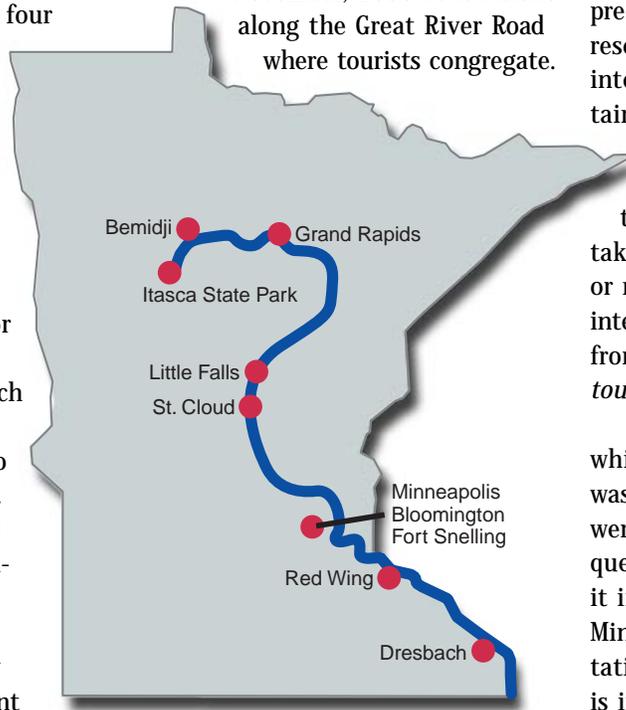


Figure 5-1: Intercept Locations

Travelers were "intercepted" at ten locations along the Great River Road. They were interviewed to see if they were traveling 100 miles from home. If they were, they were asked to fill out a four-page questionnaire about themselves and their trip. Out of 1250 questionnaires distributed, 555 were returned.

Most survey work was conducted in the late summer or early fall at locations outside the Twin Cities. Unfortunately, the late fall work in the Twin Cities resulted in few intercepts. Tourists were surveyed at sites located in Itasca State Park, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, Little Falls, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, Bloomington, Historic Fort Snelling, Red Wing, and Dresbach. The summary results represent a typical Great River Road traveler. The methodology used to collect this data combined two techniques, a personal interview and a mail-back questionnaire.

The personal interview was conducted by study team members who "intercepted" potential respondents at the selected sites. The interview enabled the study team to describe the purpose of the survey while asking a number of questions to pre-qualify the subjects for further research. During this "Front End" interview, the study team ascertained each respondent's home zip code, gender, trip purpose and, most importantly, whether the trip would take the traveling party 100 miles or more from home. If someone was intending to travel at least 100 miles from home they were classified as a *tourist* for this study.

The mail-back questionnaire, which solicited detailed responses, was given only to tourists. Tourists were instructed to complete the questionnaire that day and return it in a postage-paid envelope to the Minnesota Department of Transportation. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

The two-tiered approach was efficient in that it:

- eliminated wasted effort obtaining and analyzing information from day-trippers and other short-haul visitors;



- enabled results from the mail-back survey to be applied to the entire sample population, and;
- provided personal contact, which increased the response rate.

The methodology resulted in 555 useable questionnaires, representing a 44.4 percent participation rate from the 1250 people who took the questionnaire. Responses were then tabulated so that the study team could analyze the relationships between variables and thus shed light on specific tourists with an affinity for the Great River Road experience.

Survey Limitations

The results of the visitor survey should be understood in context of the limitations inherent in interpreting the data. Several potential sampling biases exist, including:

- A small respondent pool of visitors to the Twin Cities segment of the Great River Road. The analysis of the Twin Cities market would be problematic if understanding the metropolitan visitor was dependent solely on the survey. Fortunately, data from other sources were used later in the study to compensate for this methodological problem.
- Influence of the survey sampling sites on the respondent pool. Is there a bias introduced by the sampling site themselves? Do visitors to the information centers and the other sampling sites truly represent the population of potential Great River Road users? If not, sampling bias has been introduced. Fortunately previous research suggests that there is no substantial difference between information center users and randomly selected visitors found elsewhere in a visitor destination.

Reassuringly, the survey’s internal validity checks did suggest that respondent bias was not a problem. Comparing responses to questions designed to measure essentially the same attitude, demonstrated a high positive correlation, indicating that visitors were being accurately measured. Moreover, all but one question had a nearly perfect response rate, indicating that the results were not being skewed by people only answering selected questions. It, therefore, appears that the survey was valid and that it did measure a truly random population of typical travelers.

Survey Results Trip Characteristics

About 84.4 percent of the survey respondents described their Great River Road visit as purely a pleasure trip; while 6.8 percent cited a business purpose, the remaining 8.8 percent combined business and pleasure on their trip.

Length of stay varied greatly, with the mean (statistically, the

average) trip lasting nearly a week, 6.73 days. The mean, however, was unduly influenced by one person responding to the survey who was traveling for 300 days on a single trip! In this case, the median (statistically, the middle value) is a more useful measurement for evaluating tourism. The median trip length was three days.

A three day trip is consistent with how most Americans now vacation—in frequent short bursts. Since the Great River Road cannot be reasonably traveled in three days, these findings suggest that marketing the road in Minnesota would be most effective if it were divided into a series of destinations—destinations that could be explored in three days—rather than marketed as a single 500 mile excursion.

Compared to typical out-of-state travel, Great River Road travelers surveyed took a fairly laissez-faire approach to vacation planning.

Almost 57 percent put together their plans in less than a month. Indeed, one fourth planned their trip during the previous week. On the other hand, 33 percent made advance plans from 2 to 6 months before departing for the Great River Road and 10 percent planned their trip 6 months or more ahead of time.

The current laissez-faire approach to vacation planning has several implications for marketing the Great River Road although it is not clear from the survey which, if any, would be more effective. If people do not plan their trips much in advance, they tend

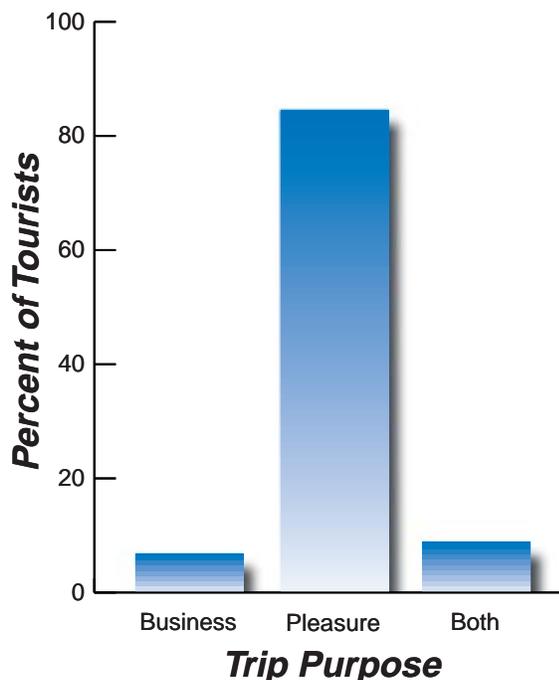


Figure 5-2: Trip Purpose
Most Great River Road tourists, nearly 85%, were traveling for pleasure.



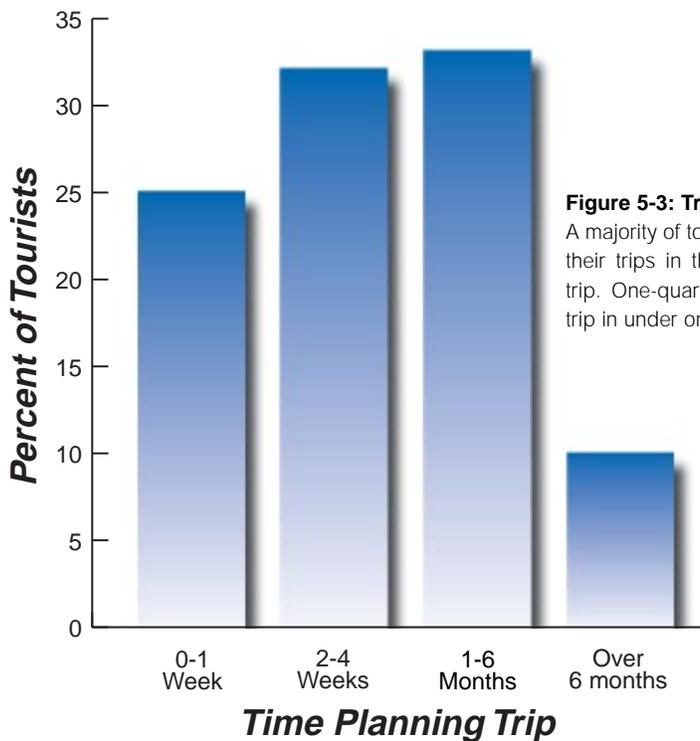


Figure 5-3: Trip Planning
A majority of tourists (57%) planned their trips in the month before the trip. One-quarter planned for their trip in under one week.

toward spontaneous unstructured travel. To reach that market, the Great River Road would need to be developed and promoted as a nearby desirable destination that can accommodate tourists on a short-notice. For many segments of the Great River Road, tourist services, such as restaurants and hotels, are inadequate for spontaneous traveling. Nonetheless, where adequate attractions and services have been developed, such as Bemidji, Brainerd, the Twin Cities, or Red Wing, marketing to spontaneous unstructured travel could prove effective.

Another response to this finding that people who currently travel on the Great River Road do not plan their vacations much in advance, would be to try to increase the proportion of people who would rather plan their vacations long in advance of departure. Presently it appears that people who would prefer to plan their vacations in advance either believe that the Great River Road is not sufficiently

interesting or that there is not enough useful travel information available to them to plan their trips.

Given the attractions and services that are available on the Great River Road and the Mississippi River, it is difficult to imagine that it would not be of sufficient interest to travelers. The lack of useful single-source information on attractions and services related to specific segments of the river and the road may be key to understanding why the Great River Road is not popular among structured visitors. Improving and coordinating promotional efforts may be key to increasing visits by travelers who plan their trips.

Surveyed visitors relied on their own resources to plan their trips. Although 40.8 percent of respondents belong to an auto club, only 11.5 of the sample used their services to help plan their route. Similarly, only 11.8 percent of the survey sample received vacation planning information or assistance from the Minnesota Office of Tourism. Perhaps survey respondents felt confident planning their trips on short notice using their own resources because so many were already familiar with the region where they received the questionnaire. Nearly half (46.2 percent) had previously traveled to the area in which they were currently traveling. The remaining 53.8 percent described themselves as first time visitors. For those familiar with the area, the median number of previous trips, at five, reveals that half had made more than five trips and half had made fewer. The most popular answer, however, was just one previous trip to the Great River Road.

Familiarity with destinations was a more frequent finding upstream of the Twin Cities than it was downstream. This suggests that the trips

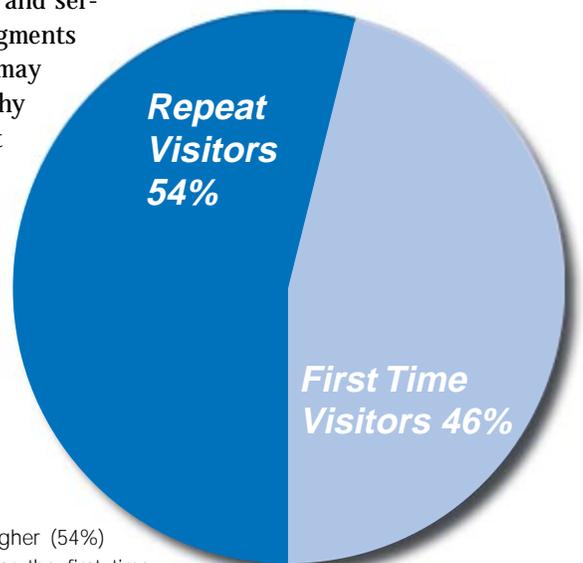


Figure 5-4: Previous Trips
Repeat visitation was slightly higher (54%) than tourists visiting the area for the first time (46%). The graph shows the average for the whole Great River Road. North of the Twin Cities repeat visitation was more common.

north of the Twin Cities tend to be return trips. Perhaps, consistent with what is known about tourism in Minnesota, to a personal cabin or a favorite resort. This suggests that an effective way to promote the Great River Road, north of the Twin Cities would be to involve the hospitality industry. South of the Twin Cities, it is probably more important to frequently remind potential tourists of what attractions are available using popular media outlets.

Visitor Activities

While traveling the Great River Road, survey respondents engaged in numerous recreational, cultural and other activities as shown in the chart below:

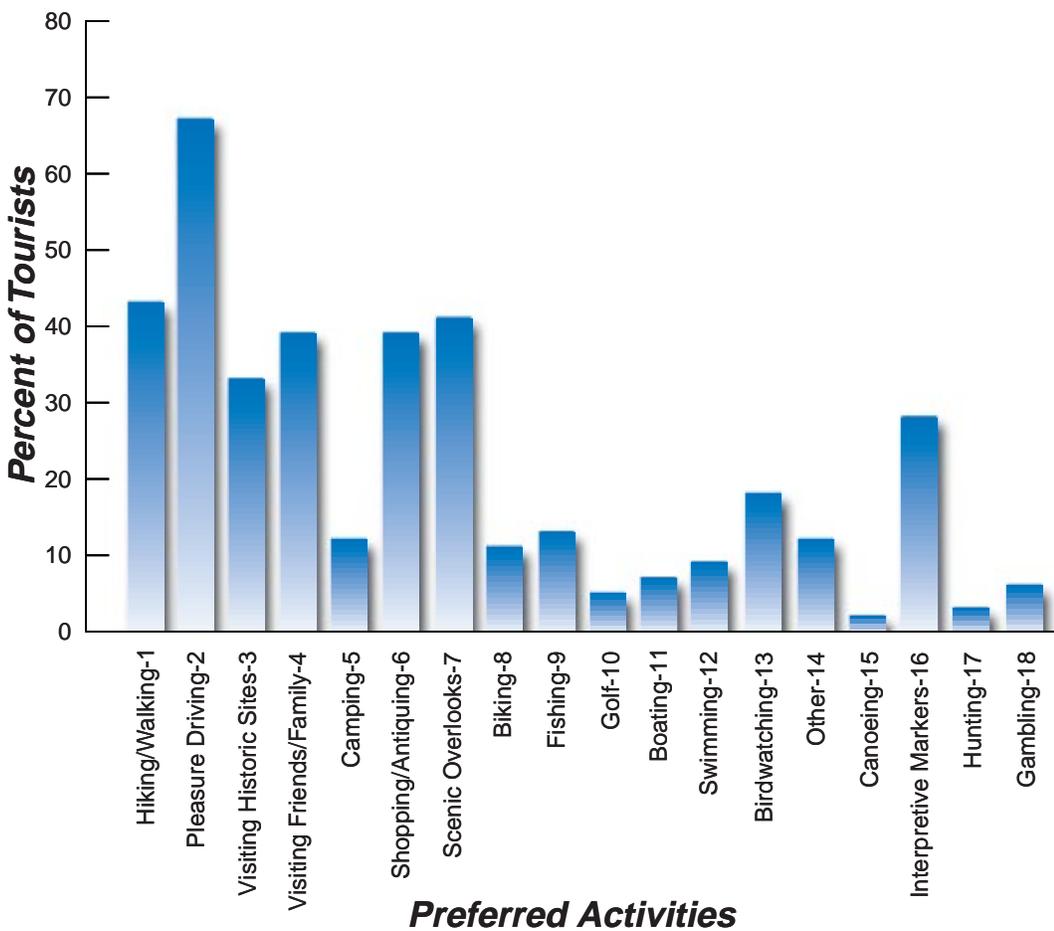


Figure 5-5: Preferred Activities

The graph illustrates the percentage of tourists that actually engage in those activities that they claim to prefer. Notice that although hiking and walking is preferred to pleasure driving, more tourists engage in driving than walking. Curiously, more people read interpretive markers than would be expected given its ranking as a preferred activity.

Figure 5-5 compares what people like to do with what they actually did during their Great River Road trip. For example, while few people checked visiting campgrounds as an activity they engaged in on the trip, it nonetheless ranked fifth among all preferences. These discrepancies between liking and doing may occur for several reasons. Some reflect the respondents' agenda for a particular trip. Frequently, such discrepancies are the result of a "halo" effect that surveys induce—people want to say they usually engage in activities that they believe society considers "correct." Most Americans think vacations are to "improve" yourself, either physically, emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually, the

desire to do certain activities, such as camping, is ranked high but, in practice, is relatively low. The discrepancies could also simply reflect that certain activities were either missing from the Great River Road experience or insufficiently publicized.

With numerous things to see and do, how much time are respondents willing to devote to exploring Minnesota's Mississippi River? As shown in the Figure 5-6, about 43 percent of survey respondents feel that a weekend is about the right length of time. This finding reinforces the previous conclusion that to effectively market the Great River Road, it should be divided into a series of destination areas.

Given the importance of pleasure driving to respondents, which is a top activity in terms of both preference and participation, the visitors surveyed were not especially tolerant of losing sight of the Mississippi River during their drive along the Great River Road. Most accept short intervals without a river view but a third of the respondents have problems if more than 15 minutes elapse.

This finding has tremendous implications for those agencies that manage the Great River Road and manage or regulate adjacent property. This finding questions whether those portions of the State and National routes that



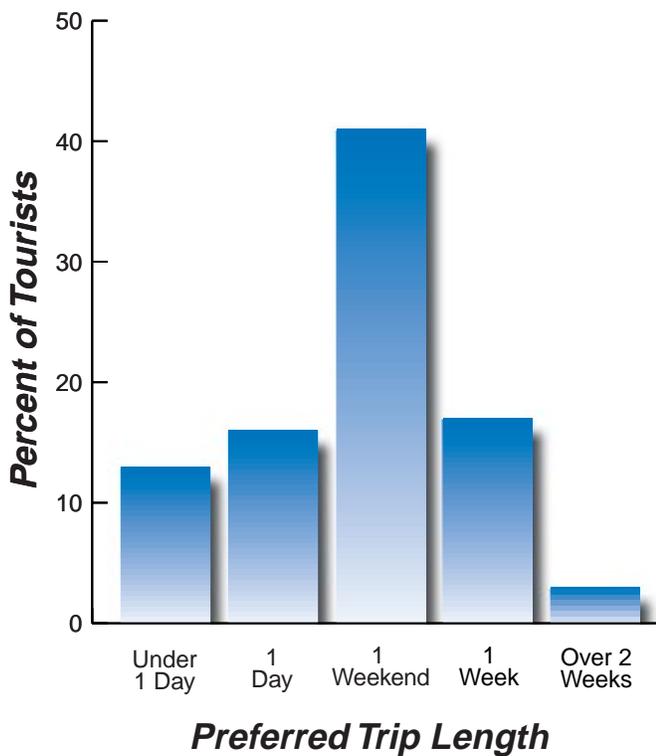


Figure 5-6: Preferred Trip Length
Most tourists prefer to spend one weekend on the Great River Road.

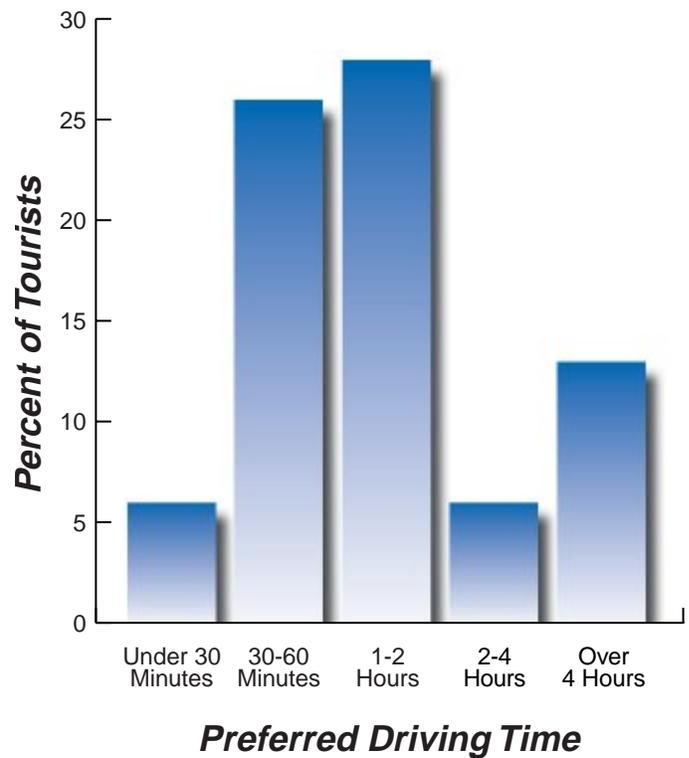


Figure 5-8: Preferred Driving Time
Short drives, under two hours, were preferred by most tourists.

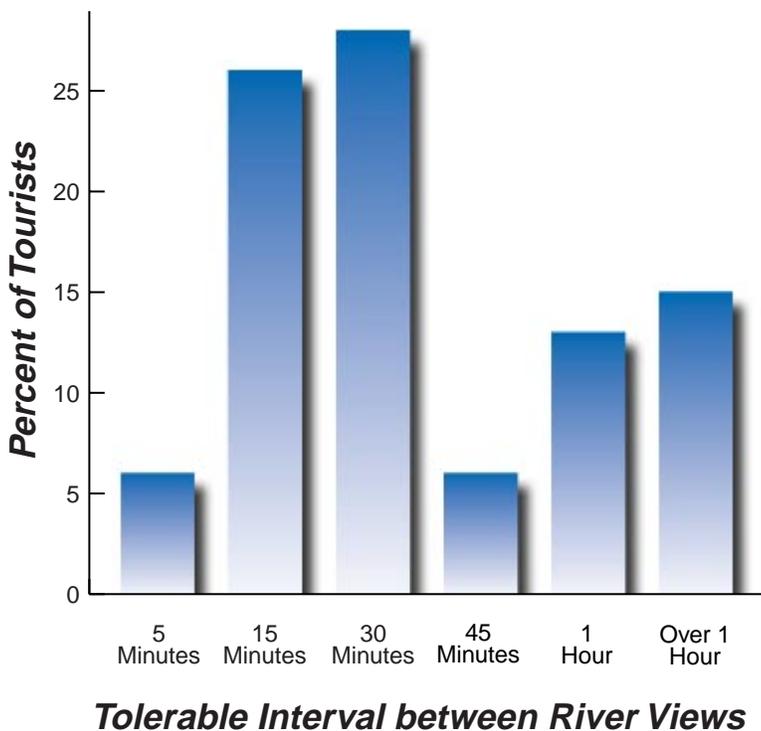


Figure 5-7: Tolerable Interval Between River Views
Over one quarter of the Great River Road tourists wanted to be able to see the river every fifteen minutes. Over half wanted to see the river at least every half hour.

remove the traveler from the river for extended periods of time are a good public investment. Another implication is the need to maintain views of the river. This may mean regulating land-use between the river and the road, managing vegetation, establishing scenic easements, or adjusting the actual route.

These findings make sense when compared to the pleasure driving habits of tourists. An overwhelming 84.7 percent take pleasure drives, but they prefer relatively short trips as shown Figure 5.8. Nonetheless, tourists seem to view the Mississippi River as an attraction worthy of extending their usual short pleasure drive. They are willing to extend their pleasure drive along the Mississippi into a trip lasting at least one weekend.

Visitor Attitudes

To measure opinions and attitudes about driving and activity preferences, visitor services, and tourist information gathering behavior, the questionnaire included fifty statements. Respondents used a five point scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement. Findings of note which

could influence Great River Road development and promotion include:

- Highway travel is perceived as a fun activity;
- Enjoyment of the drive improves if it includes a natural corridor free of unnecessary commercial activity.
- Viewing wildlife in natural settings contributes to the driving experience for 75 percent of tourists. Some respondents would drive out of their way for the chance to see an endangered species;
- Interpretive signs provide a useful tool for learning about an area's historical and natural history;
- Although using the Internet is not a universal practice, nearly 30 percent of respondents conduct a search about their destination before leaving home;
- Flying to a destination is not preferred over driving and respondents like to drive around their destination. There is some support for using tax dollars to create and manage scenic highways. Scenic drives, even those with dramatic scenic vistas, are not viewed as unsafe;
- Respondents perceive themselves as somewhat outdoorsy;
- Small towns along the way are pleasurable resources.
- Minnesotans are nice and helpful.
- Respondents would use an interpretive brochure that tied points of interest to mileage markers.

Visitor Expenditures

How much money do Great River Road travelers spend? While expenditure levels increase with visitor

income, they also reflect the extent to which opportunities to spend money—whether on admissions, retail goods, lodging accommodations or restaurant meals—exist. The survey found that each traveling party (which averaged 2.47 persons of whom 2.13 were adults) spent approximately \$154 per day as shown in Figure 5-9, which equates to an average daily expenditure of \$72.50 per adult. The data behind the numbers, however, reveal that while some travelers spent large amounts of money on shopping and entertainment (especially at casinos), over 50 percent of the respondents spent nothing in these categories. Whether their reticence stems from personal circumstances, trip purpose, or availability of spending opportunities requires further research.

Visitor Demographics

The questionnaire concluded by asking respondents for basic demographic information. The respondents live in households averaging 2.49 people including two adults. This is similar to the average household in Minnesota. The average respondent was 55 years old and enjoyed an average annual family income totaling \$59,000. This is older than the average Minnesotan and richer than a typical Minnesota family. Slightly more males (52.6 percent) than females (45.8 percent) completed the questionnaire.

Figure 5.10 is a map depicting the origin of those visitors that responded to the questionnaire. It is apparent that most travelers to Minnesota come from either Minnesota or other Midwestern states. This fact could be interpreted to mean that promotion should focus on these likely sources of travelers, such as Illinois. It could also be suggested that promotion

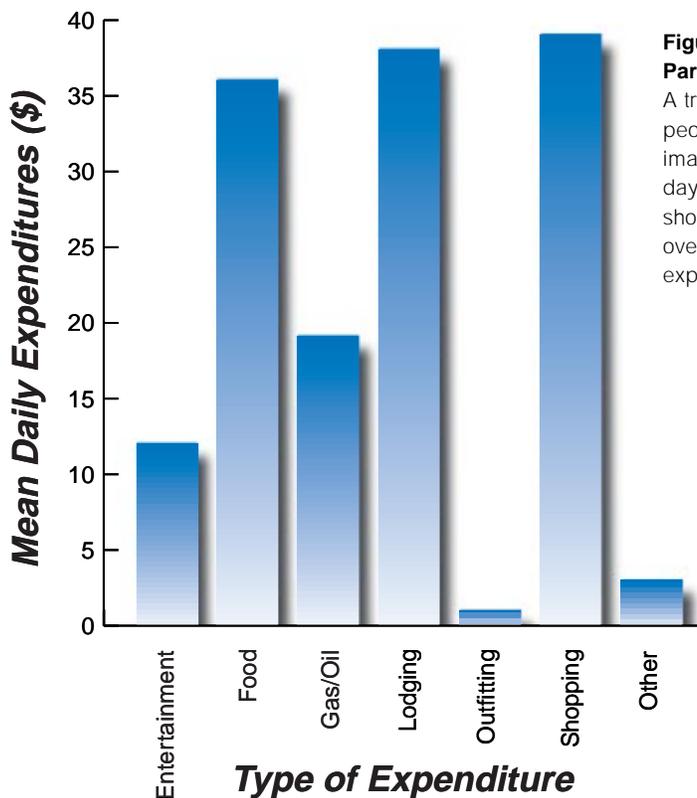


Figure 5-9: Traveling Party Expenditures
A traveling party of 2.5 people spent approximately \$154.00 per day. Food, lodging, and shopping accounted for over two-thirds of the expenditures.



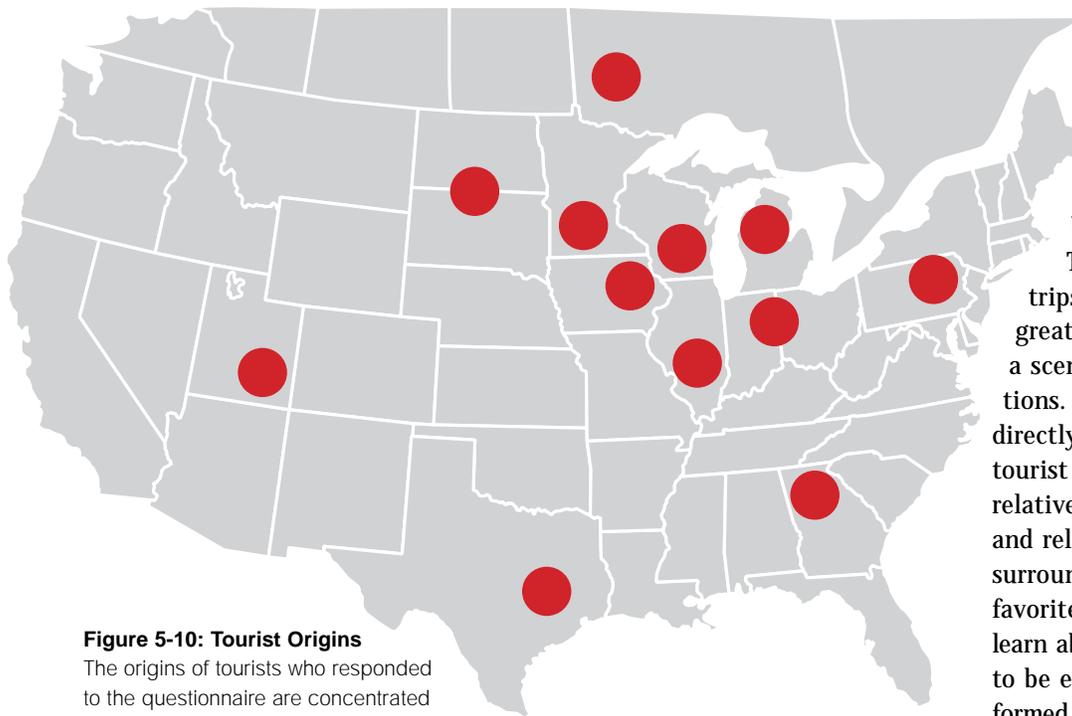


Figure 5-10: Tourist Origins

The origins of tourists who responded to the questionnaire are concentrated in the Midwest.

should target those places that have the greatest potential for increasing their percentage of tourists who travel to Minnesota, from states like Georgia, Texas, or internationally from Europe or Asia. In either case, promotional materials for people who are less familiar with the Minnesota would need to be created. People that are willing to travel great distances want to see great things and experience great events. What could the Great River Road offer such demanding tourists?

The obvious answer is the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River is a major natural and historic feature of United States. It is well-known throughout the world. *However, the fact that Minnesota is the source of the Mississippi River is not as universally appreciated.* It may be possible to position Minnesota, particularly the Lake Itasca Headwaters, as a world-class attraction. The State of Minnesota may want to consider lobbying the United States Congress to request that the United Nations designate Lake

Itasca a World Heritage Site. Lake Itasca could be on every American's Top 50 National Attractions that they must visit in order to understand and appreciate our country's natural bounty and rich heritage. It could rank with Gettysburg, the Golden Gate, Old Faithful, the Liberty Bell, and Yosemite.

There are several other sites worth visiting from St. Anthony Falls and the Minneapolis Milling District to Chippewa National Forest to the Mississippi River Bluffs. Nonetheless, it is the Headwaters that makes the Great River Road in Minnesota unusual in comparison to the other nine states the Mississippi passes through on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. This difference should be exploited.

Survey Analysis Market Segmentation

Markets can be defined in several manners. By looking at markets in multiple ways, a more effective marketing strategy can be produced. The study analyzed marketing in

three manners: by trip purpose; by geographic location; and by tourist demographics.

Market Defined by Trip Purpose

The purpose of a trip, even trips defined pleasure trips, can greatly affect the perception of a scenic route and tourist attractions. The purpose of the trip is directly tied to what motivates a tourist to go on a trip. Is it to visit relatives and friends? Is it to rest and relax in beautiful and tranquil surroundings? Is it to recreate at a favorite resort? Is it to discover and learn about history and nature? Is it to be entertained? Is it to be transformed or transfixed by breathtaking scenes or inspiring sagas? Or is it to buy goods and services not found at home?

The analysis of the survey concluded that to develop an appropriate marketing strategy, it would be necessary to understand the motivations of people for traveling on the Great River Road or visiting the Mississippi River. Using the Visitor Survey and additional research, seven key motivations were defined. These motivations are discussed in a separate section.

Market Defined by Geographic Location

Figure 5-11 depicts Minnesota's Travel Destinations as defined by the Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT). It is found on the Explore Minnesota Website (www.exploreminnesota.com). Visitors to the website are directed to obtain information by clicking on the destination area of choice.

An examination of the website and map reveals several issues related to marketing the Mississippi River and the Great River Road, including:



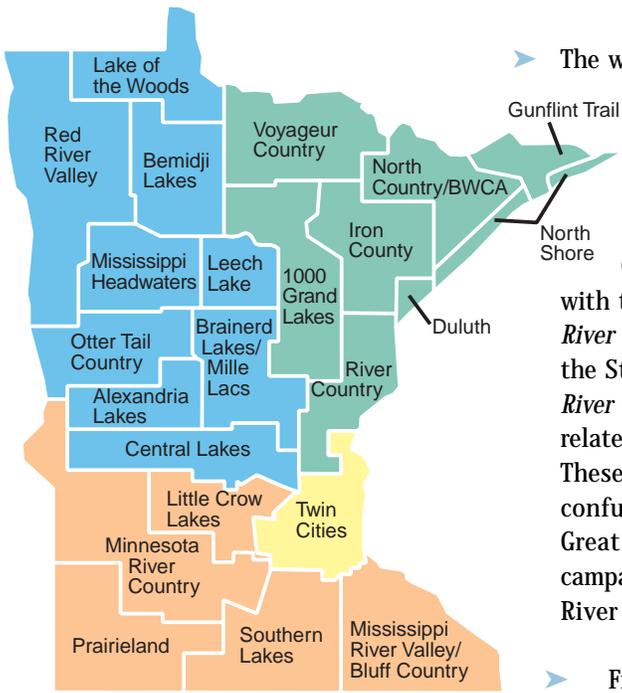


Figure 5-11: Destinations Areas

The Minnesota Office of Tourism has defined standard destination areas for the State of Minnesota.

- Only two of the destination areas use the word, “Mississippi” in their name: *Mississippi Headwaters* for, logically, the Headwaters area; and *Mississippi River Valley/Bluff Country*, for the area downstream from the Twin Cities. For the areas between the Headwaters and the Bluff Country, it appears that the Mississippi River, let alone the Great River Road, are not valuable to tourists as much as are other attractions, particularly lakes.
- Lakes function as a central organizational theme, eclipsing the role of the Mississippi River along much of the Great River Road. The Great River Road passes through such destination areas as Bemidji Lakes, Leech Lake, 1000 Grand Lakes, Brainerd Lakes, Central Lakes, and Little Crow Lakes.

➤ The word “river” is used in the name of several destination areas but it is not consistently used for those areas with the Mississippi River and the Great River Road associated with them. The destination area, *River Country*, is associated with the St. Croix River and *Minnesota River Country* is, understandably, related to the Minnesota River. These names may be easily confused with the multi-state Great River Road marketing campaign called “Mississippi River Country, USA.”

- From the perspective of the Great River Road, not all destination areas are logical. Bemidji and Itasca, for instance, are located in separate destination areas. If, however, Itasca is to be promoted to a world-wide audience, the accommodations and services (especially the airport) found in Bemidji would need to be linked to the headwaters
- A few destination areas (but not all) on the website have links to the “Great River Road.” However, only information about the segment within that destination area is available. Since Great River Road Destination Areas may not correspond to MOT’s Destination Areas, it is critical that links provide access to all of the Great River Road.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism has worked hard to establish identities for the destination areas shown on its web page. The Great River

Road program should not undermine it. The issue is how to display and promote the Great River Road within the official tourist destination areas without altering their identities.

Ideally, the Explore Minnesota map could be redrawn to show the Great River Road as an overlay district with a separate link, as shown in the schematic below. Once in that area of the website visitors could access further information about the Great River Road and its unique destination.

Market Defined by Demographics

Markets are frequently defined by demographics. The social and economic status of tourists can greatly affect what they want to see and how they see it. The survey, however, found a significant homogeneity among visitors: the average Great River Road tourist was relatively affluent and older.

This homogeneity suggests that there is potential for attracting new demographic groups. Nonetheless, attracting youth or



Figure 5-12: Great River Road Overlay

The Study Team suggests that the Great River Road be made an overlay destination area.

families, is not as easily defined as attracting people who have common interests and motivations to travel. That people want to fish, golf, or bird-watch was determined to be more useful in developing a marketing strategy than targeting tourists because they were either young or middle-class. Again, traveler motivation was deemed key to developing a successful marketing strategy.

Market Image

The image that a destination has in the minds of tourists determines the likelihood that a tourist would find the destination attractive enough to visit. Creating that image is a long-term investment in a carefully cultivated process.

The Great River Road is a tourist route that lacks recognition by local authorities, local residents, and the tourist. Although the evidence is primarily anecdotal, it was not unusual to find people involved in tourist services, at restaurants, hotels, and even tourist information centers that were unaware that the Great River Road was designated through their community.

The survey found a surprisingly large number of travelers on the Great River Road failed to identify the Great River Road sign. The survey had six signs that purported to be the Great River Road emblem. Tourists were asked to identify which of the six signs used the correct logo. This was the only question that many people failed to answer (over one-fourth). Only one-half of the respondents correctly answered the question. Therefore,



Figure 5-13: Great River Road Logo

Tourists on the Great River Road were asked to identify the real Great River Road logo. Only one-fourth were able to do so.

approximately 25% of tourists knew the Great River Road logo. This may be construed to mean a general lack of knowledge about the Great River Road among tourists.

Issues of Image

In Minnesota, the approximately 1200 miles of state and federal Great River Road is a victim of its magnitude. If it is relatively well-known, it is frequently a local roadway. Although originally conceived of as a parkway paralleling the river, it is not perceived as such by Minnesotans, let alone visitors to our state. In truth, the Great River Road is not a parkway; it is too long; its route is inconsistently marked; and it often does not even follow the river.

The Great River Road, although amazingly scenic in some locations, follows an unassuming Midwestern river flowing through typical Minnesota landscapes. It also passes through typical Minnesota towns. Conceived as part of an effort to improve the quality of the river experience, it must be recognized that the part of the Mississippi River experience is to witness a working river. Wilderness and bucolic scenes are juxtaposed with residential and commercial

developments that also front the river and the Great River Road. It is important not to oversell the scenic qualities of the Great River Road. It is important to be accurate in describing the type of experience a tourist can expect to have while traveling on the roadway.

Part of the problem of marketing the Great River Road is its name. People all over the

world know of the Mississippi River but the Great River Road is virtually unknown either domestically or internationally. It takes considerable promotional effort to correlate the terms “Great River Road” and the “Mississippi River” in the mind of a tourist. The Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) has been trying to do this for over 60 years. By incorporating the appellation “Mississippi” to each destination area, local destination marketing organizations could employ the free cache that the river holds in the minds of most tourists. The MRPC recognizes the validity of this approach in their own international marketing efforts which are called “Mississippi River Country, USA.”

The Great River Road is so large that to a tourist it is nearly impossible to comprehend. It is composed of National Routes, State Routes, Spurs, and Amenity Sites. As noted by the Great River Road Advisory Committee, the Great River Road, unlike every other Scenic Byway in the state, was not the result of local initiatives. It was designated on roadways as a result of a top-down process instigated by the federal government and supported by the Minnesota Department of Trans-



portation (Mn/DOT). It still lacks significant local support in many segments along its route.

To avoid offending anyone, the Great River Road was designated on both sides of the river. Although the federal government would only pay for improving one side, Mn/DOT and the MRPC frequently allude to the idea that although there are national and state designated routes, administratively, especially in terms of promotion, there are no differences between the two designations.

That both state and national routes are supported with signs and promotional materials testifies to this even handedness. This egalitarian approach allows the Great River Road program to garner political support from as large a constituency as possible. If the Great River Road remains a political rather than tourist based program, this double designation will continue to make sense. However, if the road is to become self-supporting as a tourist driven (literally) route, it would be more practical to make the road more friendly to the tourist. What this means is that the road must become a single, easily understood route, stripped of spurs and designated amenity sites.

To be comprehensible, signage must be improved and better coordinated. To avoid conflicts between



The direction that a Great River Road tourist should follow is not always clear. Does this Great River Road sign indicate that the driver is on the correct route or that he or she needs to turn left? Research indicates that anxiety over getting lost is among tourists' largest fears.

routes, signage should be limited to the National Route between Lake Itasca and Hastings, and the State Route downstream of Hastings. Signs should be placed at each intersection and at standard intervals with other route markers. Where the Great River Road crosses state trunk highways or county roads with average daily traffic counts above 5,000 vehicles, signs on the intersecting road should identify the Great River Road.

Redesigning the signs is highly recommended. The existing sign is not recognized by tourists. Its text and graphic is difficult to read. Its color and layout are not evocative. Although changing the logo and the sign would entail getting agreement with nine other states, it would be worth it. In contrast, the logo for the Mississippi River Trail is evocative, readily seen, and easily understood, even at 55 mph.

Research indicates that anxiety over getting lost is among tourists' largest fears. It is easy to get lost on the Great River Road even for travelers who know where they are going. Signs are infrequent and occasionally inappropriately placed.

One way to reduce anxiety is to provide regular indications to the tourist that they are on the right route. An effective method for doing this would be install distinctive Great River Road mileage

markers. To assist in promoting the route, attractions and services could be tied to actual locations and indicated on tourist maps by mileage marker.

The biggest issue related to image may be that the roadway does not always follow the Mississippi River. It has two extensions to bring the road to Canada, the Western Canadian Extension that links the road to Winnipeg, Manitoba and the Eastern Canadian Extension that runs through International Falls into Ft. Francis, Ontario. The route to Winnipeg has not been promoted recently as the Manitoba government has gradually withdrawn its support of the program. The Eastern Canadian Extension still has the support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, an agency that views the road as an inexpensive avenue for inducing Americans to visit their country. The road is designated the Great River Road on the Canadian side of the border. However, between International Falls and Bemidji there are no signs indicating that one is traveling on the Great River Road. Indeed, the highway is designated "The Voyagers Highway."

Mississippi River starts in Itasca State Park so should the Great River Road. The Canadian Extensions should be re-designated as separate tourist routes.



The Mississippi River Trail emblem is more easily identified at 55 mph than the Great River Road Symbol.



Branding the Great River Road

In the past decade, it has become clear that the same principles that apply to establishing a presence and market identity for consumer products apply to tourism destinations. Tourism destinations that create identities for themselves that evoke positive emotional responses in consumers nurture ongoing relationships with the traveling public, even before trips are actually organized and completed. The National Mississippi River Parkway Commission can benefit from the icon status of the Mississippi River and nurture a brand identity as has been achieved by such destinations as Cape Cod, and the Napa Valley.

What is a Brand?

A brand represents the totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations and expectations a prospective traveler experiences when exposed to a destination's name, trademark, products, or symbol. Factors that strengthen a brand include:

- High emotional involvement by visitors regarding the destination (for example, Yellowstone National Park)
- Real, consistent quality in the experience and associated goods and services, including products associated with the destination (e.g., wine produced in the Napa Valley)
- Early involvement with the destination relative to either its emergence as a tourist experience, or relative to the visitor's travel history. Both evoke a sense of ownership and connection;
- A distinctive brand personality, as opposed to a manufactured assertion of quality;

- A coordinated identity and marketing campaign grounded by effective positioning (Napa Valley for yuppies, South Padre Island for fun-loving college students) which is reinforced in the destination's communication tools.
- Clear understanding by the intended audience and, secondarily, by others. For example, "Scenic Byway" is a brand that connotes quality to people who tour as well as people who don't. The imprimatur conveys an exceptional visual experience, even if people can't articulate how that is accomplished (e.g., no billboards, wonderful vistas).

A brand is a tangible business asset that motivates visitation and thus has value. Consequently it has to be built up in a strategic and logical fashion because it should be more than a simple slogan. The desired branding of a destination should determine its slogan, rather than the other way around.

How to Develop a Brand?

Creating brand identities for destinations is a process that both informs and is informed by parallel product development efforts. It draws on what consumers already think about a destination as well as what the destination's brand managers want them to think. Without understanding the former, the branding will lack credibility and fail; without understanding the latter, the brand cannot become established and move forward.

Branding/Product Development Cycles

Important questions to keep in mind while determining how to brand the Great River Road experience are:

- What are the target markets for this experience?

- How does the Great River Road compare to its competition? Why should visitors choose the Great River Road over this competition? What are its unique benefits? (e.g., that visitors can walk across the Mississippi at Itasca).
- What are the key elements of an experience that encompass a huge array of things to see and do?

The ultimate goal is the positioning the Great River Road brand so that consumers parrot back its identity as conceived by its proponents, creating an experience that reinforces the brand and exceeds visitor expectations.

Promotion

Public Relations

One efficient way to market a tourism destination entails generating consumer awareness via "third party endorsement" of the experience by travel editors and print and electronic media. Techniques include:

- Submitting stories, feature ideas, special notices, and reports to trade journals (travel magazines) and the popular press for broad dissemination to the market;
- Providing a library of film clips and stock photos for broadcast and reprinting, including posting on appropriate web sites;
- Working with Minnesota's Office of Tourism to organize "fam" (familiarization) trips for travel editors and writers along with video crews. This entails pre-qualifying the participants, identifying on-the-road hosts, and handling transportation and other logistics;



- Subscribing to media trade publications and maintaining contact lists to develop sources for publicity;
- Providing information to association publications geared towards individuals with an affinity for part of the Great River Road experience. (e.g., Judy Garland fan clubs, Charles Lindbergh aficionados, etc.)

Collateral Materials

Every communications message about the Great River Road, whether generated by public relations or advertising work, generates demand for more detailed information. There is already a lot of printed material, including maps, describing the Great River Road. The management organization needs to ensure consistency of quality and message and produce:

- A “catalogue” of all the things to see and do along the Great River Road with special sections emphasizing the Demonstration Areas
- A calendar of special events and festivals
- Niche brochures to support the Great River Road’s diverse travel products
- Materials for school children and to supplement existing history of Minnesota educational units
- Segments incorporated into State tourism promotion pieces and collateral materials

Inquiry/Consumer Services

Maintaining the ability to respond promptly and accurately to

travelers seeking information about the Great River Road experience is critical to parlaying inquiries into trips. It probably makes the most sense for the Office of Tourism promotion and database management personnel to incorporate Great River Road materials into:

- The database informing the Explore Minnesota website
- Training for Toll-Free Telephone Information System call center staff
- Collateral Material Fulfillment Center
- Welcome Centers
- Guidebooks for local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

Tourist Motivations

Travelers chose destinations based on how a place satisfies their motivations for traveling and accommodates their traveling style. Therefore, to effectively promote tourism along the Great River Road, it is necessary to determine what motivates people to travel, that is, why would people visit Minnesota’s Mississippi River communities along the Great River Road. As an analytical tool, seven primary motivations—reasons that people have for visiting our state—were identified. These seven motivations are:

Guests

Guests come to visit family and friends. Their motivation for visiting a particular location is to see people, not places. The location is primarily a backdrop—although a location with interesting attractions—such as Washington, D.C.—may generate more visits from family and friends. A prototypical Guest that may be



induced to travel on the Great River Road would be anyone visiting someone in a Great River Town.

The biggest Great River Road attractions for Guests are the most scenic, historic, or recreationally active portion of the river closest to the residence of their host. Since one of Minnesota’s biggest draws is for tourists to visit family and friends, it is important that interesting sites on the river be accessible to everyone who lives relatively close to it. Guests do not need national attractions, they came to see people, not places. But their hosts want to show their guests the pride and joy of their community.

To encourage tourism by guests, access to well-maintained scenic, historic, and recreational sites on or near the river should be preserved and enhanced through-out the corridor. State agencies should support local initiatives to preserve and enhance these important resources in each destination area.

Loungers

Loungers come for rest and relaxation. They are on vacation. They want to avoid being stimulated. They are here to unwind. They want to be pampered or isolated or both. Location is important but individualized. What is relaxing to some may be stressful to others. The



appropriate setting can be found in a variety of formats, urbane four-star hotels to a B & B in a quaint small town to a rustic cabin in an unchartered wilderness. A prototypical Lounger that may be induced to travel on the Great River Road would be a someone looking to getaway from the workaday world.

Loungers are looking for a getaway, a place to relax. Staying at a bed-and-breakfast is a popular form of a relaxing getaway. B&B's are available throughout the corridor from Bemidji to Winona. Fancy hotels with superb service or even standard hotels with popular amenities such as a pool and restaurant are another desirable location for Loungers. These, too, are available throughout the corridor. Some loungers like more Spartan surroundings a would prefer a rustic cabin or camp site. Again, except for

in large cities, this type of location is available from the Headwaters to the Iowa border.

To support tourism by loungers, Destination Marketing Organizations should encourage the development and coordinate the promotion of

public amenities that are associated with relaxing activities, such as trails and scenic drives, with the hospitality industry.

Players

Players come to recreate. Typically, they will be seen on a golf course, on the river canoeing, fishing, skiing, or boating, or on a trail biking or hiking. They physically engage the environment, usually with specialized equipment. They bring their

own equipment or rent it upon arrival. The location contributes immensely to their enjoyment of the trip. To avoid disappointment, the location must match their expectations and the requirements of their recreational activity. A prototypical Player that may be induced to travel on the Great River Road would be an angler fishing for trophy bass near Clearwater.

Players are seeking a location that supports their desired recreational activity. Recreational pursuits that people are willing to travel great distances are usually landscape dependent, such as golf, fishing, canoeing, motorboating, sailing, biking, hiking, and camping. The varied landscapes found along the Great River Road and the Mississippi River provide excellent opportunities for Players. Different segments of the corridor attract different types of Players.

Golf is increasingly popular throughout the corridor, although the traditional attractiveness of the Brainerd Lakes area remains a very desirable location for golfers. Fishing is also a popular activity throughout the corridor. Tourists, particularly out-of-state travelers, may be most attracted to sport fishing between St. Cloud and the Twin Cities. Canoeing the river above the Twin Cities would be attractive to many tourists. Motorboating downstream of Minneapolis is quite common, attracting tourists. Sailing is limited to the large lakes between Bemidji and Grand Rapids, that serve as reservoirs for the river and Lake Pepin, adjacent to Lake City. Bicycling along the river or the Great River Road is not well-developed



except for in the Twin Cities, particularly between the two downtowns. Hiking and camping is well-developed, especially in the state and national forests, parks, and wildlife refuges that border the river.

To support tourism by Players, Destination Marketing Organizations should encourage the

development and coordinate the promotion of public and private amenities that are associated with recreational activities including, golfing, fishing, canoeing, motorboating, sailing, biking, hiking, and camping by working with the public and private providers of recreational services and equipment.

Explorers

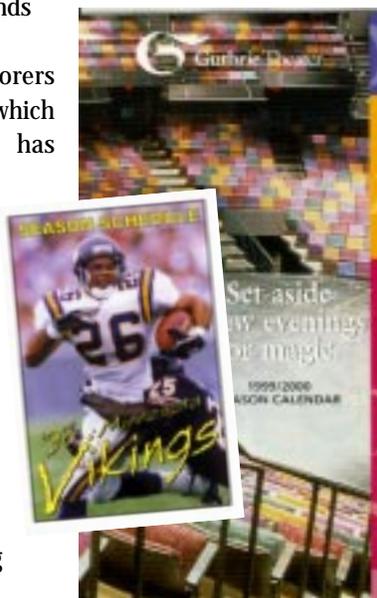
Explorers come to discover and learn. They want to be intellectually enriched by their tourist experience. Location is critical. The destination must offer a sufficient number and quality of attractions to lure a specific type of explorer, such as historic sites for history buffs, avian habitat for bird-watchers, or museums and galleries for art-lovers. A prototypical Explorer that may be induced to travel on the Great River Road would be a bird-watcher observing the annual migration of swans on Lake Pepin or an architecture student visiting Louis Sullivan's Prairie School bank in Winona.

The Explorers desire to understand the natural



and cultural heritage associated with the river could be supported throughout the river corridor. Although no part of the river is void of natural and cultural heritage, the major attraction for tourists interested in our country's natural heritage would be the Headwaters of Lake Itasca. Also attractive, especially to those tourists interested in wildlife, would be Chippewa National Forest and the Bluff Country area between Red Wing and Le Crescent. For cultural tourists, the premier location would be the Twin Cities, particularly the St. Anthony Falls Heritage District and Fort Snelling, although several other sites are intriguing. Some of these sites, the Forest History Center in Grand Rapids, the Northern Pacific Shops in Brainerd, and the Lindbergh Home Historic Site in Little Falls, for example, have tremendous potential to increase their attractiveness to tourists. The Lindbergh site in particular may be subject to national attention as a popular biography is made into a movie about the famous aviator. The new Science Museum and Mill Ruins Park, opening on the riverfront within the next few months and the next few years, respectively, will be important attractions for tens of thousands

Explorers each year. Traditionally, Explorers are the type of tourist to which the Great River Road has been marketed. It is an important market. To support tourism by Explorers, Destination Marketing Organizations should encourage the development and coordinate the promotion of public amenities that are associated with exploring activities, such as enhancing and promoting cultural and heritage



tourism sites. Marketing directly to the “buff market”—individuals or organizations that pursue an interest in a particular item or activity—would be advantageous to increasing Great River Road tourism. These targeted markets include hundreds of specialized interests, such as bird-watchers, industrial archaeologists, military historians, bicyclists, and railroad fans. The potential is almost endless. Destination Marketing Organizations can bundle their attractions and services, into packages for tours specifically designed for particular tourists. DMO's should also work with public agencies to define what improvements to the public infrastructure, such as boat ramps or piers for improving access to the river for anglers, would enhance tourism.

Spectators

Spectators come to be entertained. They want to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch interesting things. Location is critical because spectators want to be assured that their senses will be stimulated by the attractions they visit especially since these activities typically charge an admission fee for the experience. Restaurants, bars, clubs, stadiums, theaters, auditoriums, parks, and even streets are important traditional spectator venues. A prototypical spectator that may be induced to travel on the Great River Road would be a out-of-town Minnesota Twins

fan who has a pre-game meal in downtown or a Guthrie Theater patron eating in a restaurant on Main Street in St. Anthony.

The primary location along the Mississippi River in Minnesota for entertainment is the Twin Cities. Here, a wide range of venues is available to the Spectator from vulgar sports to erudite theater. The recent discussions of placing sports stadiums on the river in Minneapolis and St. Paul indicate how attractive the river is to Spectators. Currently, it is primarily tourist services, such as hotels and restaurants are found on the river. To support tourism by Spectators, Destination Marketing Organizations should encourage the development and coordinate the promotion of public amenities that are associated with watching sporting and cultural activities. The relocating of the University Showboat to Harriet

Island is a good example of how such development could occur.



Pilgrims

Pilgrims come to be transformed or transfixed. They want to have an experience that changes their perception of life or generates awe. Location is important but tends to be idiosyncratic. A pilgrim may desire to go to a specific location associated with particular individual, cause, or event. Sites of battles, sites associated with other cultures, sites associated with a significant historical figure, or sites of breath-taking natural views would all attract pilgrims. A prototypical Pilgrim that may be induced to travel on the Great River

Road would be a military history buff visiting the Baatan Memorial in Brainerd, the Military Museum at Camp Ripley, or Fort Snelling in the Twin Cities.

Where a Pilgrim travels is dependent upon what they consider inspiring. The tranquil early morning mists of the mystic Headwaters, the power of water surging through Blanchard Dam, the enterprising pioneering spirit associated with the Stone Arched Bridge and the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Area, or the free flight of soaring eagles along the Mississippi bluffs could all be inspiring phenomenon to a Pilgrim.

To support tourism by Pilgrims, Destination Marketing Organizations should assume that they are attracting Pilgrims and that by promoting similar sites together, tourism at each site or in different seasons would increase. If people are coming to be awed by Bald Eagles in Chippewa National Forest, for instance, they may be awed by the Eagles that winter on the shores of Lake Pepin. If they are impressed with St. Anthony Falls, they may be struck by Blanchard Dam, the Little Falls Dam, or the dams that form the system of reservoirs near the Headwaters. Destination Marketing Organizations should encourage the development and coordinate the promotion of public amenities that are associated with sites or activities that appeal to Pilgrims, such as scenic overlooks and interpretive trails.

Accumulators

Accumulators come to acquire goods or services. Location is critically important. Obviously, the place where the economic transaction occurs must provide the product or service that the accumulator seeks. Different accumulators seek different types of goods and services. Some are available only in large communities, others

only in small towns. Accumulators prefer locations with a heightened sense of abundance. A location that offers a critical mass of buying opportunities to facilitate comparison shopping and to improve the “hunt” for the objects of their desire. The prototypical Accumulator that may be induced to travel on the Great River Road would be a Mall of America shopper or the “100 Mile Garage Sale” enthusiast in Red Wing.

The primary attraction for accumulators is the Twin Cities. The metropolitan area is the state's primary service center. Almost anything that an accumulator would want is located somewhere in the Twin Cities. Ironically, however, retail stores are not prominent along the Great River Road in the Twin Cities. It would be necessary to direct the Great River Road traveler to metropolitan shopping districts or malls. It is not the shopping districts are far from the Great River Road, but signage or other directional materials would be necessary to induce people to or from shopping districts. In other destinations along the Great River Road, the separation between commercial activities and the Great River Road is less pronounced. Indeed, the 100 mile Garage Sale organized by the communities between Red Wing and Winona is an excellent example of how to market to Accumulators. This segment of the Great River Road is already known for its quaint shops and antique stores.

To support tourism by Accumulators, Destination Marketing



Organizations should coordinate the promotion of shopping opportunities, linking various retail outlets and districts with each other, preferably using the Great River Road as a conduit. Improving signage between the Great River Road and shopping districts would be valuable. Tourist brochures could be created which indicate shopping districts located

near the Great River Road and describe what is available for the Accumulator to purchase.

These classifications are only analytical tools used to inform a development strategy for the Great River Road. While people do hew toward one of these behavioral groups, tourists can be complex and visit a region for a variety of reasons. For example, people attending a professional convention in their hometown may be considered *guests because* they want to visit family and friends; *explorers*, because they want to visit a new museum that has recently opened; *spectators because* they would like to “do-the-town” with their fellow professionals; and *accumulators* when they buy souvenirs for their spouse and children.

Tourists, more frequently than not, travel with a party of family, friends, or acquaintances. Destinations and itineraries are frequently chosen because they satisfy the needs of several members of the traveling party. A Player thus gets to play golf while the Accumulator member of the party gets to shop



This complexity enriches but need not complicate the economic analysis; it will, however render the proposed strategies more useful and compelling.

Travel Styles

To effectively promote tourism on the Great River Road, it is essential to understand the style in which people travel. Travel style is a product of two variables: transportation mode and trip structure. Although transportation mode typically has a major affect on travel style, its importance in determining what people experience on the Great River Road is less critical than how the trip is structured.

Transportation Mode

As a tourist route, the Great River Road is designed primarily for automobiles but accommodates motorcycles, buses, and in some locations bicyclists and pedestrians. The mode of transportation affects the pace and flexibility of travel but theoretically it does not limit what can be experienced. Regardless of mode, the same road is being utilized, the same scenery is being appreciated, the same attractions are being visited, and the same accommodations and restaurants are being patronized.

Although, the distance covered on the road in any given day, the amount of scenic detail perceived, the extent to which a specific attraction is experienced, and the type of accommodations and restaurants patronized may be influenced by the mode of transportation, for a tourist on the Great River Road, the mode of transportation does not need to determine what is experienced. On the Great River Road in Minnesota, similar experiences can be had by tourists regardless of their transportation mode. Therefore,

the differentiating factor is Trip Structure, not Transportation Mode.

Trip Structure

Although transportation mode does not effect travel style significantly, how tourists structure their trip will fundamentally affect their Great River Road travel experience. Trip structure defines how the trip is conceived and organized. Trip structure will shade what is perceived and tint the impression tourists will have of the landscape or communities associated with the Great River Road. Trip structure will determine what is experienced, when it is experienced, and the extent to which the tourist will be immersed in the experience.

On the Great River Road, four distinct traveling styles based on trip structure occur:

Group-Structured Travel

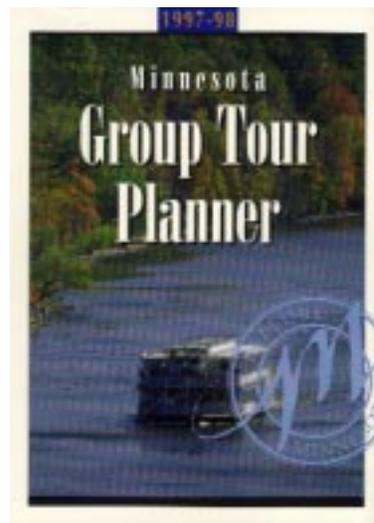
On group tours, a tour organizer determines when, where, and what will be experienced. Tourists merely decide if they are interested in buying a package of activities designed by others. On the Great River Road, Group-Structured Tours would typically be done by motor coach, or in some cities, on rubber-wheeled trolley. There are a wide-range of group-structured tours geared towards distinct market segments. At one end of the spectrum are mass-market tours that offer a completely organized tour of the commonly visited, yet must-be-seen quintessential sites. For example, a mass market tour of

the Mississippi River could conceivably include a visit to the Headwaters at Lake Itasca. At the other end of the spectrum are speciality tours. These tours immerse a tourist in a single area of interest, either geographically or thematically. The Trolley Tours in St. Paul and Minneapolis are an example of this type of speciality tour covering a specific geographic location. Tours conducted for bird watchers are an example of another type of single interest speciality tour, the topical speciality tour. Bird watching tours along the Great River Road have become increasingly popular downstream of Red Wing.

The primary attractions for mass-market Group Tours would be the Twin Cities, Mississippi Bluff Country, and possibly Lake Itasca. In general the mass traveler experience is best done from the Twin Cities downstream. Upstream of Minneapolis the scenic experience along the river is simply not as accessible from a vehicle, particularly from buses.

Furthermore, the area downstream of St. Paul has a number of river towns that appeal to bus tour, whereas not as many exist to upstream. The primary attractions for speciality Group-Tours is dependent upon a particular group's area of interest. By working with convention organizers, interest groups, or associations, the Destination

Marketing Organizations could induce specific groups to visit the Great River Road in Minnesota. Marketing to groups means influencing the people organizing the tour, such as



associations or tour coach operators or even the people, such as those in Minnesota Office of Tourism, who help associations or tour coach operators develop group tours.

Self-Structured Travel

Many people, especially middle-aged adults with families and other pressing obligations, elect to structure their tours themselves. This gives them flexibility and control. They determine what is important for them to see and do on a trip and can tailor the experience to meet their immediate needs and their children's energy levels. They research their options either assisted by a travel agent, travel guides, or increasingly, the World Wide Web. But the tourist picks the itinerary and decides whether to follow it or to adjust it as desired. Some people may emulate mass or speciality tours. Others decide to structure their tours around personal interests allowing them to immerse themselves in a particular topic or locale.

Since the tour would be self-structured, there are no distinct primary attractions for the self-structured tourist except those related to a particular motivation. To support tourism by self-structured

tourists, promotional materials for attractions and services should be organized and distributed together by Destination Marketing Organizations. Information should be readily available either through a simple toll-free telephone call or on the World Wide Web with links to specific key words used by search engines. One key issue with the self-structure traveler is the current high cost of air travel to Minneapolis, which will limit travel from such cost-conscious people.

Unstructured Travel

Some people, particularly younger adults, are interested in experiencing a place unfettered by itineraries and preconceived ideas about what is important to see and do. Some people continue to travel this off-beat way as a matter of principal through out their lives. They want to have an "authentic" experience. They may want to see the Mississippi River or visit a river town but it is a general desire usually without a particular notion about where to go and what to see. Even if they are heading toward a particular destination, they remain open to anything and everything that they happen upon while they travel. This off-beat traveling style is mimicked by the spontaneous traveler. Spontaneous travelers are people who wake up one Fall Saturday morning and rather than putting on the storm windows, they decide to "take a drive" and find themselves touring along the Mississippi River on the Great River Road. The travel experience is unplanned and open-ended but usually short. Typically, spontaneous travel will be confined to a day or possibly an overnight trip.

In order to attract unstructured travelers, it is necessary to establish a reputation as a desirable location that accommodates unplanned travel. This means that it is necessary to

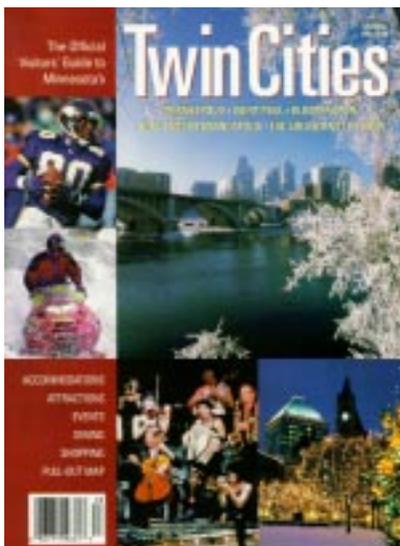
have the idea of visiting an area constantly in front of people so when the opportunity to go on a trip arises, visiting the Mississippi River and the Great River Road is intuitively selected as the destination. To successfully market to unstructured travelers, it will be necessary to saturate the popular media with information on the Great River Road and the Mississippi River, identifying fascinating but not overly-popular attractions found along the river.

Semi-Structured Travel

Two other travel styles which combine elements of the above deserve brief mention in the context of the Great River Road. They can be defined as being semi-structured. One is practiced almost exclusively by travelers from abroad. Overseas visitors often opt for a packaged experience that eliminates the need to deal with the logistics but provides more flexibility than group tour options. These "Fly/Drive" packages include air fare, rental car and hotel reservations but afford the visitors flexibility about how they spend their days. This option has not yet caught on with U.S. travelers.

The final travel style is also an amalgam: the business/pleasure visitor. These people combine a structured element of the trip (the conference or business meeting) with extra unstructured time, often to take advantage of airlines' discounts for Saturday night stays. The business portion of the trip is generally prearranged and may include visits to attractions as part of an accompanying "free time" schedule. Business/pleasure travelers then organize the rest of the trip themselves in keeping with either the "self-structured" or "unstructured" travel modes.

To capture semi-structured travelers, it will be necessary to



coordinate the promotion of the river and the Great River Road with airlines, hotels, and convention promoters. It will be necessary for Destination Marketing Organizations to bundle packages of attractions and services together in a simple to understand package. The semi-structured traveler would be particularly marketable for attractions and services offered in the Twin Cities.

Economic Implications

The Great River Road currently underperforms statewide averages for tourist spending. The median Great River Road party of 2.5 people only spent \$6.00 per day on non-essential shopping or \$2.40 per person per day. The opportunity for Great River Road tourists to contribute to local economies has not been realized. This outcome is not unexpected. Traditionally, only free public resources associated with Great River Road have been promoted. By partnering with the for-profit private sector in local destination areas, the amount of money spent by tourists on consumer articles could also be increased substantially.

In 1998, TravelScope, a national survey of tourist spending behavior, concluded that a tourist would spend approximately \$32.00 per day in Minnesota. A 1998 Minnesota Office of Tourism Study concluded that residents spend approximately \$43.00 as tourists and non-residents each spend approximately \$50.00. With 2.5 people per traveling party, the Great River Road should be generating at least \$80.00 per party per day for food, lodging, vehicular expenses, and shopping. It is not. According to the survey (Question 68) conducted by Gartner Consulting, the median party was spending \$69.00 per day for these essential travel items. At a minimum, average expenditures for essentials could be

increased by over 16% with proper promotion.

If more was done to target out-of-state visitors, especially those in upper income brackets who may be attracted to Minnesota's reputation for pristine wilderness and clean cities, it may be possible to enhance this percentage increase dramatically. Similar efforts by other Minnesota Destination Areas in northern Minnesota, have increased the spending of the average tourist to approximately \$53.00 per day. This would translate into \$132.50 for each party traveling on the Great River Road—a fantastic 92% growth over current levels. Such an increase in economic activity would be substantial.

Tourism Implications

There are five key implications that the analysis of tourism has for the development and promotion of the Great River Road. These implications are:

- **Shorten the route.** Make the Great River Road more comprehensible to tourists. Focus promotions and development on the National Route from Lake Itasca to Hastings and the State Route downstream from Hastings.
- **Focus on destination areas.** Recognize that most tourist spend only three days at a time on vacation. Create short “natural” destination areas on geography and history. Use the term “Mississippi” in the name of each destination area.
- **Encourage local control.** Encourage the development of local stewardship organizations for each destination area. These local stewardship organizations should be composed of stake-

holders from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. Encourage stakeholders to develop local Great River Road management plans for their destination area. Give control of promoting the road to the stewardship organization. Initially, assist local destination marketing organization (DMO) in promoting the Great River Road.

- **Match tourist motivations and travel styles with specific destinations.** Recognize that different destination areas will attract different types of tourists. Recognize who is attracted to a destination area's natural and cultural attractions. Recognize that travel styles must also be accommodated if tourists are going to visit the places they would like to visit. Concentrate initial capital improvements and promotional strategies on serving the target market.
- **Improve route wayfinding.** Assist the tourist in comprehending the Great River Road. Improve route designation markers. Improve the graphic quality of the route markers. Add distinctive mileage markers starting with Mile Zero at the Headwaters.
- **Increase connections with the Mississippi River.** The focus should be on the river, not the road. The road is a conduit for people to enjoy the natural and cultural attractions associated with the river. The local stewardship organization should develop plans for capital improvement and promotional projects and programs that would draw people to the river.



Conclusion

By surveying and analyzing the behavior of tourists and their perceptions of the Great River Road and the Mississippi River, a rational approach for accommodating their needs and desires has been developed. Using this understanding of tourists, destination areas will be defined and specific strategies for promoting, enhancing, and managing the Great River Road will be developed for selected destination areas in subsequent sections of this report.



Section 6 Marketing Strategies

Marketing is a strategic method for determining, producing, and promoting to perspective customers those goods and services which consumers desire. Marketing is a four stage process. It is a process that:

- Identifies the evolving needs of customers
- Evaluates if customers needs are being met by existing products or services
- Initiates the development of new or enhanced products and services to meet dissatisfied customer needs
- Designs and produces media to inform potential customers that their desires can be met

Marketing determines what a customer wants and then determines a way to fulfill those desires. It can, and often does, include promotion but it is promotion *based on informing the customer that what they want is available*. Marketing is simply a process used by the creators of goods and services to determine how to better satisfy the needs of their customer.

Marketing is significantly different from selling. Selling is when a potential customer is told about the value of a product or service in the hope that they will buy it without the seller knowing if the customer has a need for what is being sold. Selling is an attempt to overcome perceived “consumer resistance” to buying a particular item. It frequently results in bombastic advertisements or subtle appeals to vanity.

Marketing and selling both require persuasion but only marketing requires that the needs of the customer be understood before the product or service is sold. Understanding what people want is the key to a successful tourism marketing campaign. What tourists want is a successful trip; they want their destination to match their expectations.

Formulating the Strategy Defining the Trip

The expectations of tourists—their ideal trip—can be defined by their motivations and travel styles. Using the previously identified seven motivations and four styles of travel, twenty-eight different types of trips were defined using a two-dimensional matrix. The matrix, shown as *Table 6-1: Potential Trip Types*, is created by crossing motivations on one axis with travel styles on the other. The matrix lists all of the different types of trips that a tourist could have on the Great River Road.

Defining the Concept

Some types of trips are supported by one destination better than another. Typically, destinations have evolved into supporting a only selected range of activities and, therefore, certain types of trips. Those destinations that support fishing, for instance, have boat landings, docks, resorts, marinas, boat stores, motor repair shops, bait shops, etc. to support the Self-Structured Player who wants to fish. Such a destination may not typically support other types of trips, at least not to the same extent unless it was a major metropolitan area.

It would be highly unusual that a single destination could support all twenty-eight types of trips. It would not only be highly unusual,

it would be undesirable. Trying to meet everyone's needs would undoubtedly lead to leaving everyone dissatisfied. Appropriately matching a particular type of trip to a specific destination is the essence of successful destination marketing.

The Study Team, borrowing from the tourism industry, applied the idea of Destination Areas to the Great River Road. Based on the analysis of resources, it was obvious that attractions were not evenly distributed along the river or the Great River Road. Certain parts of the corridor had more attractions that supported a particular motivation than did other parts. For example, the resources found in the Lake Itasca area supported exploring; Crow Wing County was well-adapted for playing; people visiting the Twin Cities expected to be entertained; and visitors to the southern reach of the river tended to look for ways to simply relax.

It became apparent that local communities, particularly those with organizations to promote tourism, intuitively understood this essential postulate of marketing: *organize a destination to support particular types of trips*. Many communities on the Mississippi River (or more frequently, clusters of communities) already consider themselves tourist destinations with unique attractions that support particular trips.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism has, working with local communities, divided the state into dozens of tourist destination areas. Many of these existing destinations, however, are not necessarily oriented to the Mississippi River or the Great River Road. One possible way of emphasizing the river and river communities, would be to create a new destination area that overlays the existing destination areas. As previously explained in Section 5, an overlay would not



Travel Styles					
Tourist Motivations	Unstructured	Self-Structured	Semi-Structured	Structured	
	Guests	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by local residents and their visitors seeking shared experiences.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by local residents and their visitors seeking shared experiences.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by local residents and their visitors seeking shared experiences.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by local residents and their visitors seeking shared experiences.</i>
	Loungers	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking relaxation.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking relaxation.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking relaxation.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking relaxation.</i>
	Players	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking adventure.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking adventure.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking adventure.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking adventure.</i>
	Explorers	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to expand skills or knowledge.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to expand skills or knowledge.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to expand skills or knowledge.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to expand skills or knowledge.</i>
	Spectators	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to be entertained.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to be entertained.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to be entertained.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to be entertained.</i>
	Pilgrims	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking experiences to change their perception of life and its meaning.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking experiences to change their perception of life and its meaning.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking experiences to change their perception of life and its meaning.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking experiences to change their perception of life and its meaning.</i>
	Accumulators	<i>Flexible, serendipitous trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to purchase goods or services.</i>	<i>Flexible but organized but trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to purchase goods or services.</i>	<i>Flexible or inflexible; serendipitous or organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to purchase goods or services.</i>	<i>Inflexible and organized trips to attractions valued by tourists seeking to purchase goods or services.</i>

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Table 6-1: Potential Trip Types

The matrix defines what types of trips comprise the potential market. By crossing the seven motivations with the four travel styles identified in the report, twenty-eight different types of trips or markets were identified.

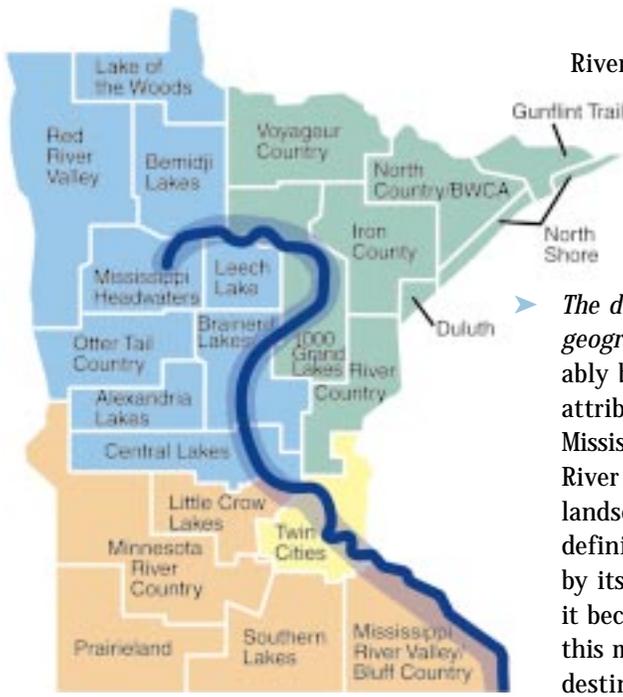


Figure 6-1:
Mississippi River Destination Area.
 The Mississippi River is an internationally known destination. By making it a separate destination area, those tourists interested in the Mississippi River would be readily directed to information about the river, river communities, and the Great River Road.

conflict with the existing structure of destination areas. It would rather augment the promotion of the Mississippi River and the Great River Road by creating a new destination area oriented to the Mississippi River.

Establishing Criteria

The Study Team suggests that four criteria be used to establish Great River Road Destination Areas. The four criteria are:

- *The destination area must be oriented to the Mississippi River.* Many attractions may exist in a community or vicinity but if the Great River Road is to be a vehicle for encouraging tourism, it is essential that attractions be oriented to the river. This is especially important if experiences by tourists in one destination area are to excite the tourist into visiting other Great

River Road Destination Areas. In practice, this means that the name of the destination area must include the word, "Mississippi."

- *The destination area must be geographically defined, preferably by a unique geographical attribute associated with the Mississippi River.* The Mississippi River traverses many different landscapes in Minnesota. By defining the destination area by its geographical character, it becomes authentic. In practice, this means that the name of the destination area should include a delimiting biogeophysical characteristic. In the absence of a defining natural attribute, a dominant cultural attribute should be incorporated into the name.

- *The destination area must be locally supported.* The people that would be affected most from increased tourism need to direct their own destinies. They need to determine if improving tourism is important to their communities, what attractions and services should be enhanced, and how these attractions and services should be managed and promoted. Ideally, this is a locally-controlled, public-private partnership. State and national agencies and organizations should assist but only as directed. In practice, this means that a local stewardship organization should lead the effort to develop and promote the Great River Road.

- *The destination area must incorporate a practical marketing*

strategy. It must be reasonably scaled for a tourist to comprehend and administrative agencies and organizations to develop, manage, and promote. It must market its attractions accurately to the most interested audience. In practice, this means again that a local stewardship organization should lead the effort to develop and promote the Great River Road.

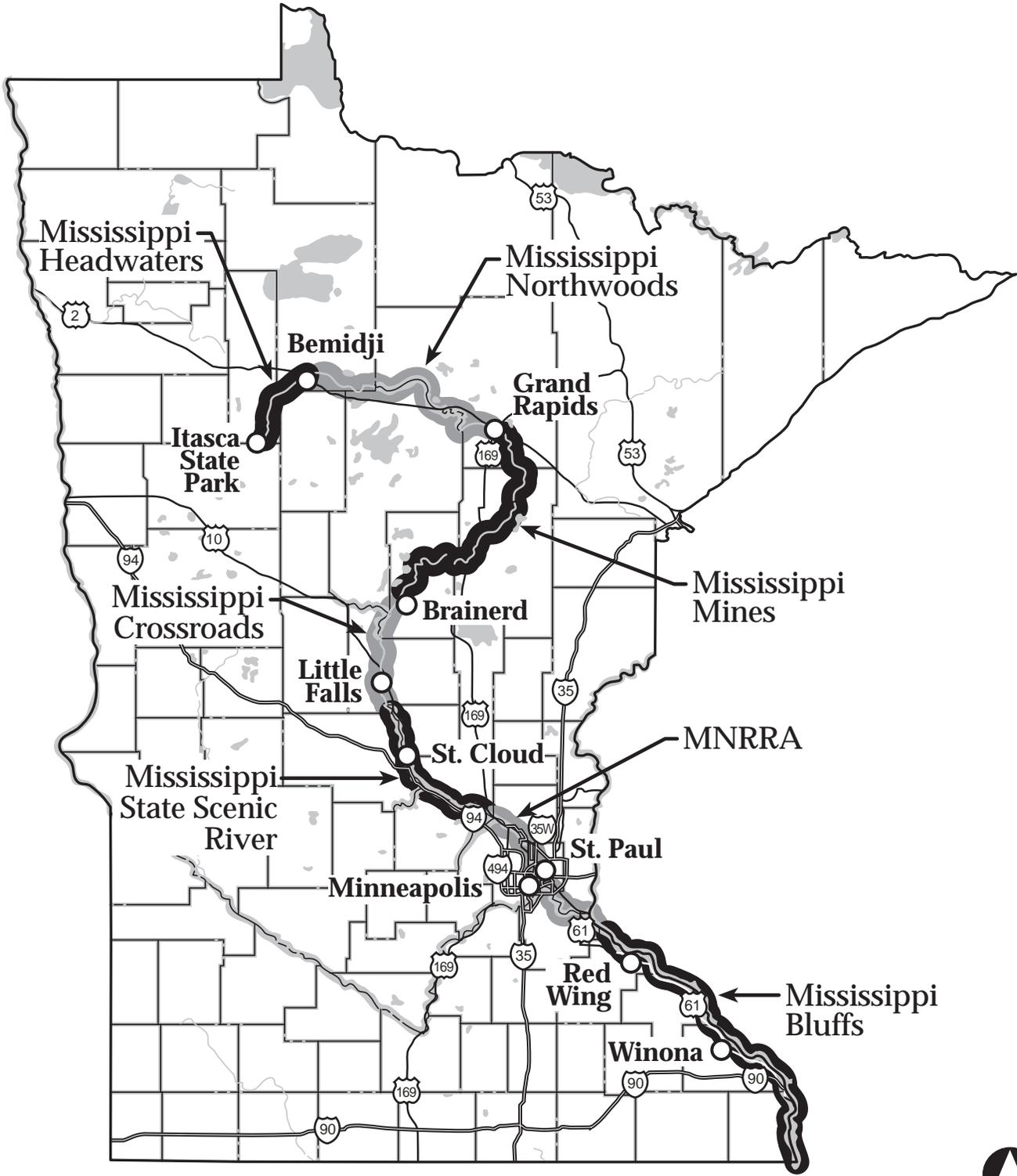
Great River Road Destination Areas

Using the four criteria, the Study Team tentatively identified seven Great River Road Destination Areas. The seven destination areas are suggestions of the Study Team based on the four criteria and its understanding of tourism associated with the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. *If local stewardship organizations believe that defining their boundaries differently would improve recognition of the river, result in a more organically defined destination, garner better support locally, and would enhance the practicality of marketing efforts, then the boundaries of the destination area should be redefined.*

These seven areas are only suggestions. By suggesting these seven as Destination Areas, it is hoped that local tourist promotion organizations, natural and cultural resource management agencies, community development organizations, and other local stakeholders will forge new Destination Area Stewardship Organization as outlined in *Section 8: Implementation Strategies.*

The role of state agencies and the state Mississippi River Parkway Commission should be to advise and support the efforts of the stewardship committee of each destination area.





Location of Great River Road Destination Areas



Mississippi Headwaters Destination Area

The Mississippi Headwaters Destination Area connects the Headwaters at Lake Itasca with the City of Bemidji. This is the source of the Mississippi, the source that numerous European and American explorers tried to find for hundreds of years. The true head of the Mississippi was undiscovered until Henry Schoolcraft was led there by his American Indian relatives. Today, the meandering stream winding its way through mile after mile of marsh is still sought by modern self-structured explorers searching for the solitude found in this wilderness.

Itasca and Bemidji are the primary attractions. Itasca primarily for the



Above: Many tourists visit the Headwaters of the Mississippi to enjoy the experience of walking across the mighty river. **Below:** In the Headwaters Area, the Mississippi is a small river that winds its way through mile after mile of marsh.



Headwaters and its natural resources and Bemidji for its goods and services. The Minnesota Office of Tourism defines this segment of the Great River Road as being in two destination areas:

Mississippi Headwaters and *Bemidji Lakes*. For developing and promoting the Great River Road it will be necessary for these two destination areas to coordinate their stewardship efforts.

A more detailed discussion of this destination area is provided in *Section 7: Demonstration Areas*.

Mississippi Northwoods Destination Area

The Mississippi Northwoods Destination Area extends from Bemidji to Grand Rapids following the Mississippi on a series of county roads. This destination area is dominated by large lakes connected by the Mississippi River. These lakes have been turned into reservoirs by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers which operate a series of dams designed to regulate the flow of water on the Upper Mississippi. Regulating the flow of water is important to the commerce and welfare of the cities downstream. This

was especially important when the river was the primary means of communication, transportation, and energy. Major attractions include the lakes Cass, Winnibigoshish, and



From top to bottom: In Chippewa National Forest, virgin pine groves remain. *Edge of the Wilderness* National Scenic Byway connects to the Great River Road in Grand Rapids. The Forest History Center provides an excellent interpretive story of logging in the Northwoods. The Northwoods Destination Area is punctuated with open areas.

Pokegama. Chippewa National Forest, Schoolcraft State Park, *Edge of the Wilderness* National Scenic Byway, and especially the popular Forest History Center, are attractions valued by tourists.

Much of this segment of the Great River Road traverses the Leech Lake Reservation. Gaming casinos run by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe are



attractive to many tourists. A new museum and cultural center, planned by the Leech Lake Band, is planned for Battle Point Historic Site commemorating the last battle (1898) between American Indians and the United States Army in the contiguous United States.

The Big Story for this segment is how people for thousands of years have lived in the northern forests; how the forest provided a coveted home and valuable products; and how the relationship between people and the forest has changed over the years. The typical tourist would be a self-structured Explorer, Pilgrim, Player, and possibly Lounger traveling from Bemidji or Grand Rapids. Unstructured Guests may also be found along the Great River Road.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism defines this segment of the Great River Road as being in three destination areas: *Bemidji Lakes*, *Leech Lake*, and *1000 Lakes*. For developing and promoting the Great River Road it will be necessary for these destination areas to coordinate their stewardship efforts. It is important to note that Mn/DOT, in its *Route Selection and Development Guide* for this segment believed that most tourists would use only “day use recreational facilities” presumably because the tourist would be staying elsewhere, probably either Bemidji or Grand Rapids.

Mississippi Mines Destination Area

The Great River Road in the Mississippi Mines Destination Area extends from Grand Rapids to Brainerd. It starts in the Mesabi Range and extends to the Cuyuna Range. Here is where the river finally makes up its mind about which direction it will travel for the next thousand miles. Having tried north



The Mississippi Mines Destination Area has many excellent views of the river. Local Great River Road Supporters would like to pave 21 miles that are currently gravel in Aitkin County.

and east it now heads south. Well, mostly south, it is as if it is still considering the possibility, as it twists and turns creating oxbow after oxbow, about the wisdom of going west.

The river sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, cuts through the sandy plain of Glacial Lake Aitkin forming sand bluffs 50 feet high. This was once a busy river. It is the point where the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Watershed met the Mississippi Watershed. Savanna Portage State Park commemorates this ancient passageway used originally by American Indians and later by Fur Traders. From 1750 to 1850 this area was controlled by the Dakota and Ojibwe who competed to supply the European and American traders with furs. Steamboats and logging followed after the fur bearing animals were depleted. Aitkin and Palisade were two of the twenty-five steamboat landings in this segment of the river. Many of these landings are used as boat ramps today. The railroads and mines followed the steamboat era but they, too, left after the resources were exhausted.

Several state forests, Crow Wing, Hill River, Savanna, Golden Anni-

versary, and Pillsbury remain as reminders that this area once supplied and continues to supply raw material to a growing world. Croft Mine Historic Park is a similar reminder from the mining era. There are several campgrounds in the forests and in the state parks. Berglund Park, a campground and park on the Mississippi River in Palisade was developed as one of the first Great River Road amenity site in Minnesota. Big Sandy Lake and nearby Mille Lacs Lake attract tourists, particularly people with cabins and anglers. A casino operated by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, is a significant tourist attraction in the area.

This destination area is the least developed of the Great River Road Destination Areas. In Aitkin County, of the nearly 50 miles Great River Road, approximately 21 miles of it are unpaved. This unpaved segment severely restricts the interest tourist have in the area. Improving this road is the primary priority of local Great River Road supporters. Like the Mississippi Northwoods, the Mississippi Mines Destination Area is primarily attractive to self-structured Explorers, Pilgrims,



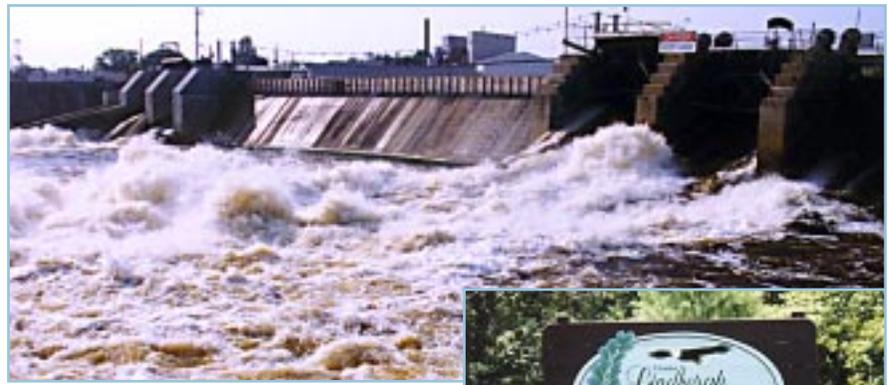
Players, and Loungers traveling from Grand Rapids, Brainerd, or perhaps communities near Mille Lacs Lake. Unstructured Guests, particularly those staying in cabins of friends and family, may also be found along the Great River Road in this destination area.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism defines this segment of the Great River Road as being in three destination areas: *Iron Country, 1000 Lakes,* and *Brainerd Lakes/Mille Lacs.* For developing and promoting the Great River Road it will be necessary for these destination areas to coordinate their stewardship efforts.

Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area

The Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area extends from Brainerd to south of Little Falls. It is located in one of Minnesota's premier destination areas: the Brainerd Lakes Destination Area. Most tourism in this area is oriented to lakes, especially near Brainerd. Near Little Falls, interest in the river increases. Little Falls is oriented to the river, unlike Brainerd. Both cities have wonderful stories to tell about how this area has served as a major crossroads.

The first stories are those related to the American Indians who used the river as conduits for communication and trade. Later stories are



Above: The power of the Mississippi River is evident at the three hydroelectric dams in the Mississippi River Crossroads Destination Area. **Left:** The boyhood farm of Charles Lindbergh, now an historic site and state park, is a national tourist attraction.



connected to when the Red River Ox Cart Trains would ford the river near the town of Crow Wing. When the railroad came, the Ox Carts and Crow Wing vanished. Brainerd became the hub of activity and the agricultural economy grew. Later, as farmers transformed their farms into resorts, the train gave way to the family car. Recently, Baxter has seen growth because of how it accommodates the automobile.

The Big Story in the Crossroads Destination Area is that transportation effects the location and pattern of settlement. Where the transportation corridor crosses the river determines the location and layout of the area's major cities.

The major attractions in this area

are the lakes and the resorts. Crow Wing State Park is a popular attraction. The Northern Pacific Shops in Brainerd have tremendous interpretive potential. In Little Falls, sites associated with Charles Lindbergh have national appeal. The river attracts anglers and the hydroelectric dams, demonstrating the river's raw power, attract many sightseers.

The typical tourists are Players and Loungers. They are typically structured, unstructured, semi-structured, or self-structured. The Minnesota Office of Tourism defines this segment of the Great River Road as being in one destination area: *Brainerd Lakes/Mille Lacs.*

A more detailed discussion of this destination area from Brainerd to south to Little Falls is provided in *Section 7: Demonstration Areas.*

Mississippi State Scenic River Destination Area

The Mississippi State Scenic River Destination Area extends from south of Little Falls to Anoka. Most of the river in this destination area has been designated part of Minnesota's Wild and Scenic River System. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is currently updating its



A variety of tourists visit the Crossroads Destination Area.



management plan for the river from St. Cloud to Anoka. The agency has designated the river as “Scenic” from St. Cloud to Clearwater and “Recreational” from Clearwater to Anoka.

Although there are scattered development, especially residential development, occurs throughout the corridor, the typical landscape is rural with a wooded embankment separating farm fields from the river. Development increases near cities, especially the Twin Cities. There is little public land in this area adjacent to the river. Although Lake Maria State Park, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, Sand Dunes State Forest, and Elm Creek Park Reserve offer tremendous outdoor recreational opportunities within a few miles of the river, none are on the river. There are, however, numerous boat access, fishing piers, and a few smaller picnic sites. The river in this destination area is known for its excellent sport fishing.

Historical sites, are concentrated in communities such as St. Cloud, Clearwater, Monticello, and Elk River. One of the most prominent historic sites is on the State Route, the Oliver H. Kelly Farm. It is a 189-acre living history museum operated by the Minnesota Historical Society. Kelly was founder of the *Patrons of Husbandry*, usually called simply, the Grange. The Grange was a fraternal order of farmers who promoted improvements in rural life. The Grange provided educational and community service programs to farmers and rural districts. It advocated legislative remedies for their predicaments. The railroads and their pricing policies were a particular target. After years



The Kelly Farm is a valuable tourist site for people seeking to learn about history.

of struggle attempting to foster competition for the railroads, organized farmers were instrumental in creating a system of locks and dams on the Mississippi River to provide for the hauling of agricultural products. Using the river

for recreation is probably the major attraction for tourists in this Destination Area. Unstructured and Self-Structured Players and Guests are probably the largest users of the river and the Great River Road in this destination area. Explorers and Pilgrims may be interested in understanding how people use the land and the river. This could be an interesting story to tell to tourists and residents, especially as agricultural uses become more urban in this destination area.

MNRRRA Destination Area

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRRA) has been defined by the National Park Service. As a marketing title, the name may be too cumbersome and the acronym too obscure to be effective. It is recommended that the local stewardship organization modify the name of the destination area to something more evocative.

The MNRRRA extends from the confluence of the Crow Wing River with the Mississippi River near Dayton and Ramsey to the confluence of the St. Croix River with the Mississippi River near Hastings. This 72 river-mile segment runs through the heart of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region. This destination area has been established by an act of Congress and is administered by the National Park Service in coordination with a multitude of local, state, and federal agencies.

The MNRRRA is a large, complex unit of the National Park Service (NPS). The National Park Service has prepared a Comprehensive Management Plan that includes land and water use controls; management of natural, cultural, economic, and recreational resources; management of visitors, including interpretation



Surprisingly to many residents and tourists, there are many places to engage the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities, such as Point Park in Anoka





Above: In St. Paul, recreational and industrial uses share the riverfront. **Left:** In downtown Minneapolis, the Great River Road transverses a well-interpreted riverfront historic district.

- The Mississippi River is a national treasure
- We must be responsible stewards of the Mississippi River

There are literally hundreds of attractions in this area that are of interest to nearly all types of tourists taking all kinds of trips. The Study Team focused on examining a smaller area with a critical mass of tourist attractions and services—the Mississippi River Gorge as a Demonstration Area.

The Mississippi River Gorge Demonstration Area, which extends from downtown Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul, was created as a representative subset of the larger and more inclusive MNRRA Destination Area. The area is characterized by a gorge, a landform found uniquely on the Mississippi River in the Twin

Cities. St. Paul is the site of the original head of navigation and Minneapolis is home of North America's second most powerful waterfall. (Niagara Falls is the first.) St. Paul became a major transshipment point and Minneapolis became a major milling and manufacturing town.

The Great River Road passes mostly on parkways along the bluff top, occasionally diverted to the flats below the bluffs. Between St. Anthony Falls and the landings in St. Paul, the river is bounded mostly by a natural landscape with only pedestrian and bicycle paths impinging on the native image. Upstream of the Falls and downstream of the landing, the river is more accessible and industry vies for a riverside location.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism defines both the destination area and the demonstration area as being in one destination area: Twin Cities. People on all kinds of trips visit the river and the Great River Road in the Twin Cities. Many of these visitors, however, come to be entertained as Spectators. Spectators are probably the largest group of tourists that visit the riverfront. How their needs are being met and what can be done to enhance their experience is discussed in greater detail in *Section 7: Demonstration Areas*.

and education; and a plan for park facility development.

The National Park Service has identified the need to improve access to the river, both for pedestrians using riverfront trails and facilities, and boaters using the river, as a development priority. It has also identified several interpretive themes that would explain the value of the river to tourists and residential visitors. These themes are:

- The Mississippi is one of the world's great rivers
- The Mississippi River is a diverse, yet interdependent ecosystem
- Both geological and social forces have shaped the river
- The Mississippi has been the home to human beings for 12,000 years
- The Mississippi River is a working river



Bike paths and historic railroad bridges complement each other in Hastings. A bike path adjacent to the river from Anoka to Hastings is one of the goals of the National Park Service.

Mississippi River Bluffs Destination Area

This destination area extends from Hastings to the Iowa Border dominated by bluffs and an unusually wide river. The Great River Road, traveling through quaint historic towns and impressive wildlife habitat, beckons the tourist. Loungers stroll through rivertown antique shops. Players boat, hunt, and fish the waterway. Explorers watch eagles or discover the rich history of the area. Most tourists are on self-structured trips although a few, mostly those on their way to casinos, travel in structured groups. Local destination marketing organizations have created strong marketing campaigns and have coordinated improvements, like the proposed National Eagle Center, in Wabasha that would promote tourism.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism recognizes this area as its own destination area, Mississippi Valley/ Bluff Country. The area is described in greater detail in *Section 7: Demonstration Areas*.

Canadian Extensions

The two Canadian Extensions were not selected as destination areas. They did not fit the four criteria for selecting destination areas, namely:



Above: Scenic Views of the Mississippi River, like this one from Frontenac State Park, are significant tourist attractions. **Right:** Boating is a popular activity in the Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area.



- Neither extension was oriented to the Mississippi River or even its watershed.
- Neither extension could be defined using a unique geographical or cultural feature associated with the Mississippi River.
- Neither extension, as part of the Great River Road, had local support. There was support for tourism but, again, it was not oriented to the Mississippi River or the Great River Road.
- Neither extension could be practically marketed as part of the Great River Road without confusing the tourist or diluting the marketing efforts of other communities that are actually on the Mississippi River.

Using the criteria established for selecting destination areas, the two Canadian Extensions should not be promoted as part of the Great River Road. Nonetheless, since they currently are designated as part of the Great River Road, they were examined for their inherent attractiveness to tourists as part of this study.

East Canadian Extension

The East Canadian Extension connects International Falls to Bemidji by following U.S. Route 71. Although various promotional material, including the Minnesota's Official State Highway Map, indicate that it is part of the Great River Road, there are no Great River Road signs along the route. The route does not follow the Mississippi River. Most of the segment is not



The Steamboat, Mississippi Queen, approaches Red Wing.





Voyageur National Park and the Rainey Lake Visitor Center are major attractions along the East Canadian Extension.



Grand Mounds Historic Site is evidence that humans have occupied the region and used the area's rivers for thousands of years.

even in the Mississippi Watershed.

Major attractions include state and national forests, Big Fork River, Grand Mounds Historic Site, the northern border lakes, and Voyageurs National Park. No mention was found in promotional material for this destination area about the Mississippi River or the Great River Road except for material produced by Ontario for the Canadian tourist.

The East Canadian Extension is located in the *Voyageur Country Destination Area*, as defined by the Minnesota Office of Tourism. Signs identify the route as only the Voyageurs Highway. To a tourist in Minnesota, this label is more appropriate than the calling it the Great River Road.

Although this segment of the Great River Road has tourism potential, it is not oriented to the Mississippi River or the Great River Road. A more productive marketing strategy would be to promote the *Voyageurs Highway* as a route connected to—but separate from—the Great River Road. It is, therefore, the recommendation of Study Team, that the East Canadian Extension be dropped from further Great River Road promotional efforts and that consideration be given to de-designating the segment.

West Canadian Extension

The West Canadian Extension connects the Headwaters to Winnipeg by following state and county roads to Warroad and north into Manitoba. This segment is in the *Bemidji Lakes* and *Lake of the Woods* destination areas as defined by the Minnesota Office of Tourism. Like the East Canadian Extension, the route does not follow the Mississippi River nor is most of it even in the Mississippi Watershed. This segment of the Great River Road was not examined as part of the Great River Road Development Study because it appeared that the Manitoba provincial government was not especially interested in promoting the Great River Road. The impression that the provincial government

lacked interest was based on the fact that Manitoba has not supported or participated in the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission for years. Nonetheless in the province's tourist promotional material, the Great River Road is listed as one of the province's scenic roads. This promotional material notes that the Great River Road connects Manitoba with the “continent's greatest river, the Mississippi.”

Like the East Canadian Extension, this destination has tourism potential but it is not oriented naturally to the Mississippi River or the Great River Road. Therefore, a more natural and authentic connection between Minnesota and Manitoba—such as promoting our common heritage by interpreting stories of the Red River Ox-Cart Trail—may enhance tourism more than trying to artificially extend the Great River Road to Canada. Although, the route does connect Itasca State Park with three of Manitoba's most popular provincial parks—Whiteshell, Birds Hill and Grand Beach—it is still the recommendation of Study Team, that the West Canadian Extension be dropped from further Great River Road promotional efforts and that consideration be given to de-designating the segment.



Above: A typical landscape found on TH 11 is the West Canadian Extension Destination Area. **Inset:** Similar structures such as the one on US 89 north of Pinecreek make the West Canadian Extension attractive to tourists interested in history.



Establishing Demonstration Areas

The earlier discussion of tourist motivations and traveler styles identified the types of experiences that visitors seek when planning trips. Clearly, certain locations along the Great River Road are better at providing the experience desired by a particular tourist than other locations. Different destination areas, therefore, appeal to tourists of different stripes. It is also clear that some destination areas appeal to a wider range of visitors and possess greater concentrations of the attractions and services needed to support significant levels of tourism. These destination areas (or portions thereof) were selected as “demonstration areas.” The four selected were:

- Mississippi Headwaters
- Mississippi Crossroads
- MNRRA
- Mississippi Bluffs

The Demonstration Areas are examples—precedents—for other destination areas along the river to emulate. Each has a satisfactory level of viable attractions and hospitality services to generate significant levels of tourism and each has a distinctive river-oriented identity for creating successful marketing campaigns. The four Demonstration Areas are examined in detail in the next section of this report.



Section 7 Demonstration Areas

Introduction

Four Destination Areas were selected to demonstrate how the general strategy for developing and marketing the Great River Road could be applied to specific geographical markets. The four Destination Areas that were chosen to become Demonstration Areas had characteristics that made them good prototypical examples. These distinctive characteristics were:

- Each Demonstration Area has a geographical identity in relation to the Mississippi River that is distinct from the other three areas.
- Each also has a propensity to attract tourists with motivations and travel styles distinct from each other.
- Each has a good range of attractions and services oriented to tourists and actively promotes tourism.

Together, the four Demonstration Areas represent a wide range of resource and tourist attributes. By focusing on these four representative destinations, it will be possible to transfer both general and specific development and marketing strategies to other Destination Areas.

As located on *Figure 7-1: Great River Road Demonstration Areas*, the four demonstration areas are:

- Mississippi Headwaters between Lake Itasca and Bemidji
- Mississippi Crossroads between Brainerd and Little Falls
- Mississippi Gorge between Minneapolis and St. Paul

- Mississippi Bluffs between Red Wing and Winona

To create the marketing strategy for a particular demonstration area, it was necessary to answer seven questions:

1. Where is the demonstration area located?
2. What existing resources could potentially attract tourists?
3. What story excites the tourist and unifies the community?
4. Who would be likely to visit these attractions?
5. Why would they visit?
6. How can their visit be enhanced?
7. How can tourism be effectively promoted?

The first question, “Where is the demonstration area located?” was answered by defining the extent of the demonstration area, the location of its anchors, and its general geographical character. The second question, “What existing resources could potentially attract tourists?” was answered with a description of the river, the road, and the associated attractions. The third question, “What story excites the tourist and unifies a community?” was answered by identifying one definitive aspect of the demonstration area. The fourth question, “Who would be likely to visit these attractions?”, was answered by correlating motivation and travel style with visitation to particular attractions. The fifth question, “Why would they visit?” was answered by determining the benefit a tourist would receive by visiting the demonstration area. The sixth question, “How can their visit be enhanced?” was answered by identifying potential capital improvements that would enhance the tourism experience. The final question, “How can tourism be effectively promoted?” was answered

by outlining optional promotional tactics and defining how to measure their effectiveness.

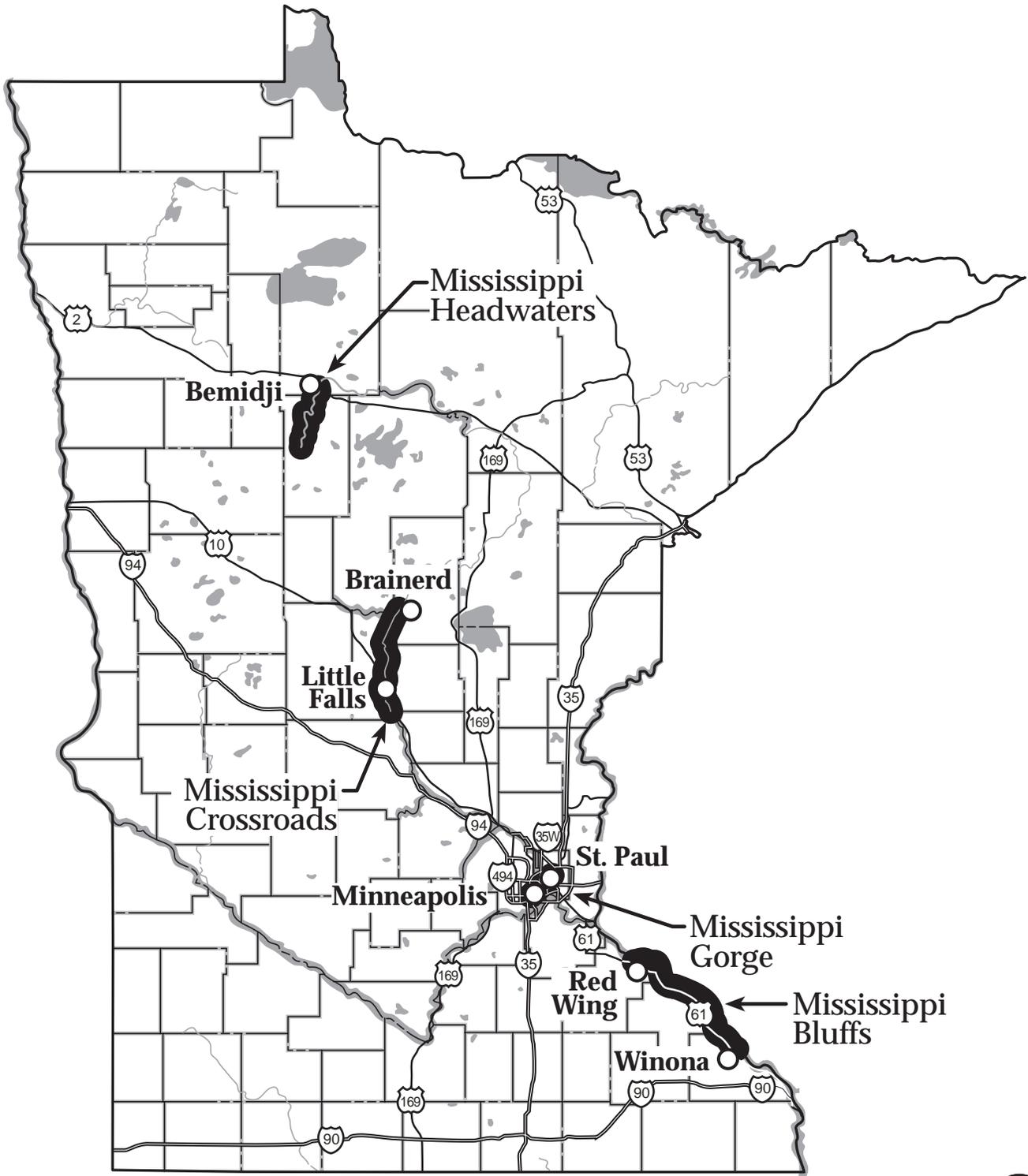
Mississippi Headwaters Geographic Description

The Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area extends between two distinctive anchors, Itasca State Park and the City of Bemidji; one natural, the other urban. Itasca State Park is the primary anchor for the Headwaters Demonstration Area and the Great River Road in the State of Minnesota. It is the start, the “Mile Zero,” of the Great River Road. The park features a natural landscape dominated by Lake Itasca and the presence of the Headwaters. To the Great River Road tourist, the other anchor, the City of Bemidji, is, geographically, the “First City on the Mississippi.” Bemidji is an urban outpost in the middle of unmitigated wilderness. The two anchors provide an interesting contrast between wilderness and urban environments.

Between the two anchors the Great River Road traverses a glacially-formed landscape with slightly rolling topography and vegetated wilderness. It has little reference to humanity or the river. This wilderness is dominated by extensive wetlands and boreal forest. Furtive glimpses of the Mississippi River can be enjoyed by the tourist from the three bridges between Itasca and Bemidji. Typically, however, the river is concealed by endless marsh or woodland.

Except for the roadway, pastures, an occasional farmstead, a solitary restaurant, a forsaken church, and a few picturesquely abandoned and dissolute buildings, no evidence of human occupation of the landscape exists between the state park and the exurban outskirts of Bemidji. The area appears to be an unfettered northern wilderness.



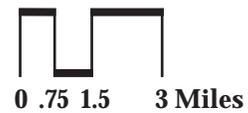
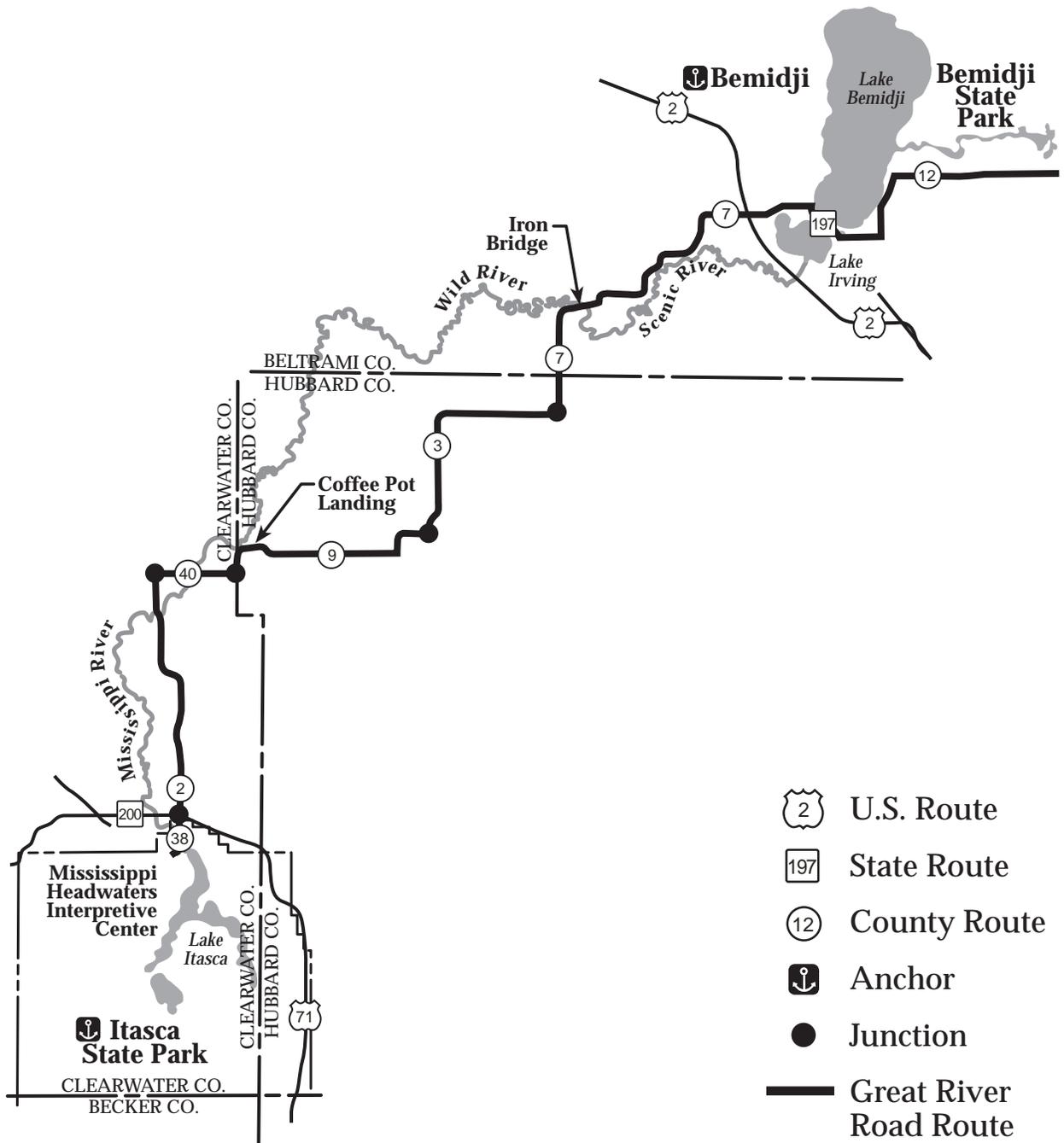


North



Location of Great River Road Demonstration Areas





Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area



Resources

The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River, meandering through the boreal forest and marshes of northern Minnesota between Lake Itasca and Lake Bemidji, begins its 2,348-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico as a narrow stream—a mere 20 feet wide—at Lake Itasca. Approximately 62 river miles from Lake Itasca, the Mississippi River enters Lake Bemidji still as a modest river, only 120 feet wide. This is the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area, the first Destination Area and the first Demonstration Area on the Great River Road.

The river in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area is different from the other Demonstration Areas. Here, the river is narrow, wild, and hard to follow but it rewards the persistent tourist with a wilderness experience, an experience comparable to Minnesota's premier wilderness experience, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

Although the river is typically a gentle flowing stream, there are several locations where Class 1 Rapids exist along this stretch as it rifles through narrow valleys flanked by steep spruce-covered riverbanks. The river drops 260 feet in elevation between Lake Itasca and Lake Bemidji, an average drop of four feet per mile. Water quality is ranked outstanding by regulatory authorities. The Mississippi Headwaters Board has designated the first 50 miles of the river, from Lake Itasca to Iron Bridge Landing on Beltrami County Road 7, as a "Wild River." The fifteen miles from the Iron Bridge Landing to Bemidji have been classified as a "Scenic River."

This is a challenging section to travel by canoe or kayak. It cannot be traversed by motorized boat. There are no navigational markers on the river to guide river recreationists. In marshes, the river can quietly slow and disappear in the vegetation, especially in low water conditions. Although it is approximately a thirty-mile, one-half hour drive on the Great River Road between Lake Itasca and Bemidji, a canoeist requires at least two days, frequently three, to travel the 62 mile river route.

Left: A much photographed marker designates the origin of the Mississippi River as it flows from Lake Itasca. **Below:** Even experienced canoeists find the Mississippi River between Lake Itasca and Bemidji challenging to navigate because the channel is difficult to follow as it flows through obscuring marshes.



The Great River Road

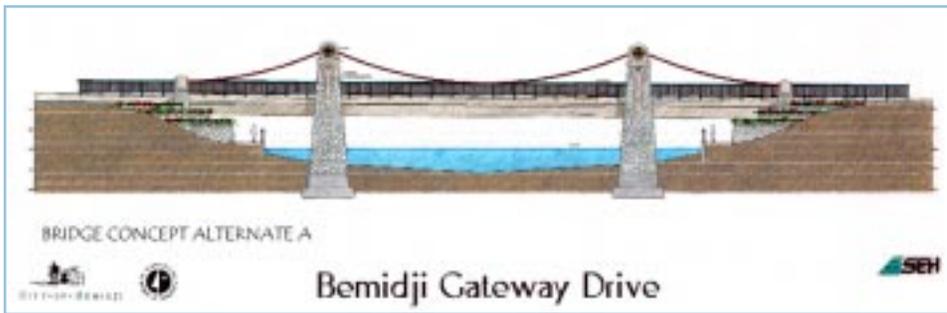
Vehicular Transportation

The Great River Road follows the general northeast path of the river but ironically, in this Demonstration area where the river is the most wild, free-flowing, and curvilinear, the Great River Road is rigidly constrained, straight, and angular. The road only crudely mimics the direction of the river, jogging in a staircase pattern until it reaches Bemidji. In this region with limited roads, it is restricted to tracing the lines and corners established by the original government land survey. Nonetheless, even with its jogs, the road is only thirty miles long, half the distance the river travels between Itasca and Bemidji.

In the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area, the Great River Road and the Mississippi River parallel each other from a distance. The river meanders through the countryside mostly invisible to a tourist on the Great River Road. Only at the five locations where the Great River Road crosses the river is the Mississippi truly visible. Nevertheless, in Bemidji, from the bridge with the most traffic in the demonstration area, the river appears to be constructed over a short channel between two lakes not the Mighty Mississippi and the Great River Road appears to parallel a lake, not a river.

The federally designated route between Itasca and Bemidji is almost entirely on county roads. From the Headwaters Interpretive Center, the Great River Road travels north out of Itasca State Park on Clearwater CSAH 38. It crosses the junction with TH 200 and becomes Clearwater CSAH 2 continuing north for six miles to Clearwater CSAH 40. The road follows Clearwater CSAH 40 for two miles east to the Hubbard County Line. East of the County Line, the road continues on Hubbard





The City of Bemidji and the Minnesota Department of Transportation are developing plans for a new bridge across the Mississippi River. A trail and streetscape improvements are also part of the reconstruction project being designed by Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.

CSAH 9 east for 5.5 miles to the junction with Hubbard CSAH 3 at Becida. The road continues on Hubbard CSAH 3. Hubbard CSAH 3 jogs for six miles through northern Hubbard County, first north, then east, then north again, ending at the Beltrami County Line. From the Beltrami County Line to downtown Bemidji, the Great River Road is designated on Beltrami CSAH 7 to its junction with TH 197. (TH 197 is the only State Trunk Highway designated part of the Great River Road in the Headwaters Demonstration Area.) TH 197 skirts the southern shore of Lake Bemidji to the junction with First Street and Beltrami CSAH 12. Beltrami CSAH 12 brings the Great River Road around the southeast shore of the lake, north to the junction with Beltrami County Road 19. Although the Great River Road continues downstream on Beltrami CSAH 12, the Demonstration Area ends at the junction with County Road 19.

The road crosses the river five times in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area. The most potentially notable of these crossings are in the locations that anchor the Demonstration Area, Itasca State Park and Bemidji. The first time the Great River Road crosses the Mississippi on Clearwater CSAH 38 in Itasca State Park, the Mississippi passes unceremoniously under the

road in a culvert. In Bemidji, the Great River Road crosses where the river is but a mere short channel between Lake Irvine and Lake Bemidji. The channel is lost in commercial development and is currently not emphasized as an attraction.

Bicycle Transportation

Roads are not strictly for motorized vehicular transportation. The Great River Road especially was conceived to provide a route for recreational bicycling. The original Great River Road Design Guidelines, established in 1981, called for a four-foot paved shoulder or an eight-foot off-road trail where practical to accommodate bicycling. Design standards have changed significantly since those original guidelines were established. Currently, a ten-foot shoulder or eight-foot off-road trail are considered minimal for State-Aid Funded County Road projects. In practice, a ten-foot surface is preferred for off-road multi-modal trails also.

Except for a trail around Lake Itasca and the sidewalks (which are meant only for pedestrians) in Bemidji, there are no off-road trails that parallel the Great River Road or the Mississippi River in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area.

Transportation System Summary

According to Mn/DOT data all roads are adequately wide and paved, except for one two mile stretch of

county gravel road. Shoulders are of various widths, generally wider in Beltrami County near Bemidji and quite narrow between Itasca State Park and the Beltrami County Line. Sidewalks and off-road trails are limited to the two anchors.

Attractions and Services

Fully developed attractions exist primarily at the anchors of the Demonstration Area, Itasca State Park and the City of Bemidji. A few attractions, such as river access points and rest areas, have been developed between the two anchors as part of the original federal funding of the Great River Road. Nonetheless, the Mississippi River Headwaters Board considers recreational opportunities in this segment of the river as being limited. The same board, suggests that cultural resources, particularly those related to American Indians, are plentiful, but underdeveloped for tourism. The following discussion details attractions first in the anchors and then the connecting corridor between the anchors.

Upstream Anchor

The Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area begins at the source or headwaters of the Mississippi River, Lake Itasca about 30 miles south and west of Bemidji, Minnesota. Access to the "Source of the Mississippi River" has been enhanced by the creation of paths, bridges, and a stepping-stone walkway. In the 1930s, the Depression-Era work program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created the stepping-stone walkway and rustic marker to demarcate the origin of our continent's largest river. Prior to this, the river had merely meandered out of Lake Itasca unannounced.

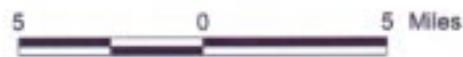
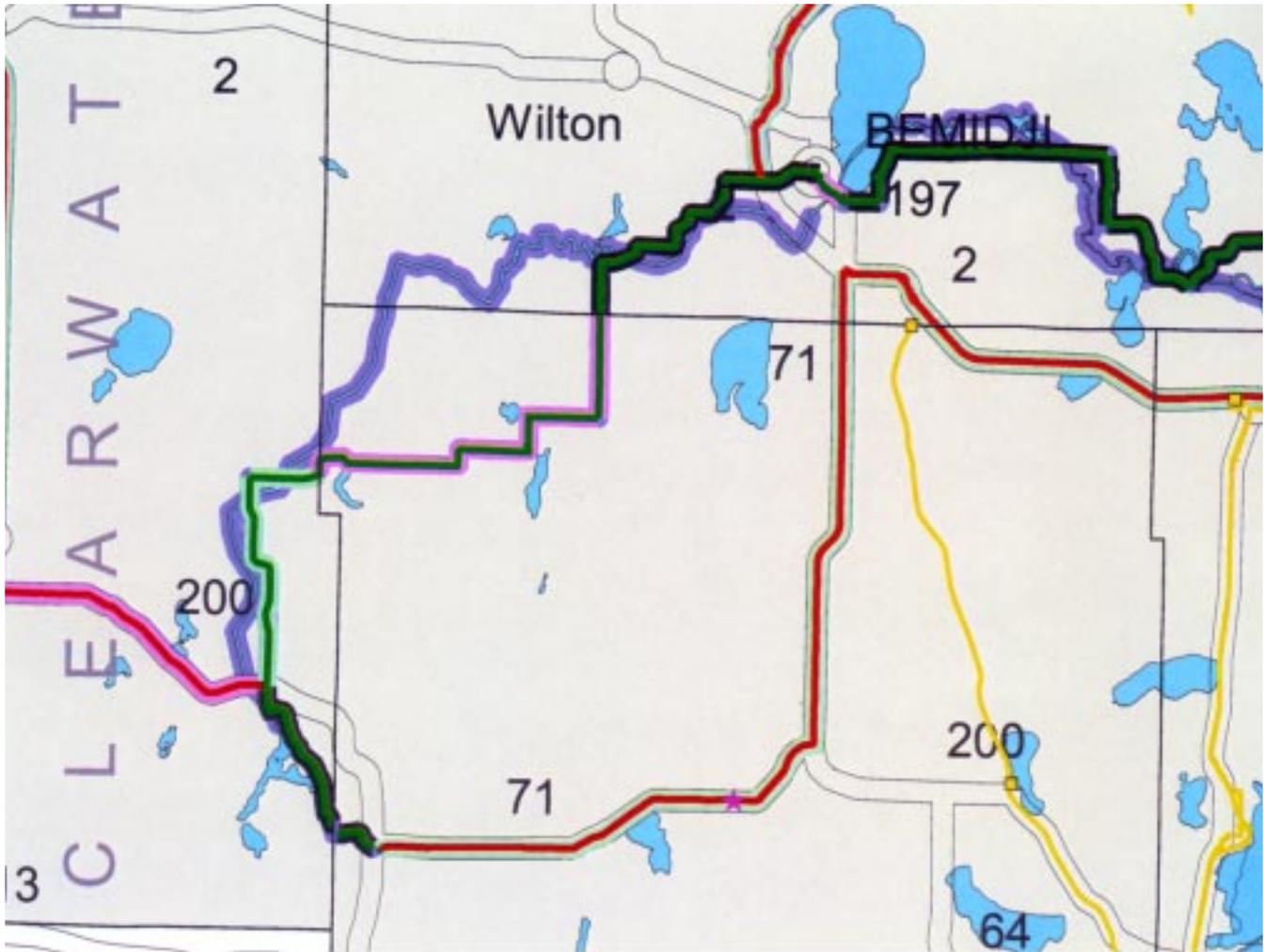
The Work Progress Administration (WPA) planners, recognizing that people would be willing to travel to

The Great River Road Development Study

Transportation Resources

“Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area”

Itasca to Bemidji



1 inch = 5 miles



Map created: 10/26/99
bd

Legend

★ Rest Area	Bike Compatible*
□ Trailhead	Yes
— Trail	No
	Unknown

* Criteria for Bike Compatibility:
Shoulder width greater than 3 feet
Flared shoulder
Flat or intermittent humps
No utility needs to be met to have a bike riding.

Great River Road

— FEDERAL
— STATE
— 1/4 Mile Buffer
□ GRR Corridor





Top: Walking across the Mississippi River in Itasca State Park has been a right-of passage for generations of Minnesotans and a proud boast of visitors since the stepping stones were installed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. **Above:** A variety of accommodations are available in Itasca State Park, including camping, hotels, and these housekeeping cabins.

Lake Itasca if it provided a memorable experience, decided to create a place and an event that would be capable of etching itself into every visitor's soul.

The stepping-stones, strategically placed at the point where the river flows out of the lake, allows nearly anyone who is ambulatory, the ability to "walk across the Mississippi River." This claim—that one has humbled the Mighty Mississippi by simply stepping across it—is a traditional right-of-passage for most Minnesotans and an enjoyable boast for out-of-state visitors.

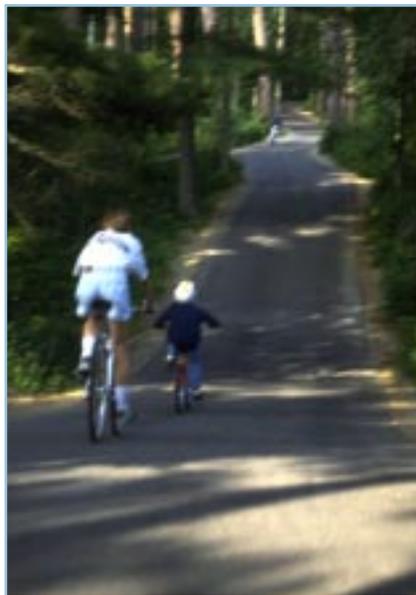
The legacy of the Depression Era has been maintained and enhanced by the management of Itasca State Park by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Several other Depression Era structures, like Douglas Lodge and the Forest Inn, and the Bear Paw cabins which offer an authentic "northwoods lodge" experience to the tourist are thoughtfully preserved.

Accommodations provided by the DNR include the hotel in Douglas Lodge, rustic housekeeping cabins, group cabins, and family cabins. Additionally, there are hundreds of

camping sites for RVs and tents. A grand dining room in Douglas Lodge overlooking Lake Itasca provides fashionable dining for the visitor. Snacks are also available.

Bicycles, canoes, and motorized fishing boats are readily available for rent. Hiking trails are common. Hiking, bicycling, canoeing, and fishing are among the park's most popular activities.

Wilderness Drive connects the park's major attractions. It connects premier interpretive attractions for both motorized and non-motorized travel. In addition to the headwaters, the drive offers several virgin groves of red and white pine. One particu-



Bicycle trails and other recreational facilities are popular in Itasca State Park.

larly beautiful stand, Preachers Grove, evangelistic crusades were held overlooking Lake Itasca during the 19th Century. State record Red and White pine trees are accessible from the drive. Wildflowers, especially spring ephemerals, are delightful standard fare. Wildlife sightings, including bear and eagles are not uncommon. Bird watching, star-gazing, and photographing nature are simple activities easily enjoyed in Itasca State Park.

A variety of guided nature oriented activities are scheduled for inquisitive children and adults. There are several interpretive markers discussing these explorations. Other interpretive stories are told throughout the Park. Several natural and historic sites are explained by interpretive signs or by guides. Archaeological sites involving American Indians are less likely to be interpreted, although an Indian Cemetery exists in the park.

Itasca State Park, as the Upstream Anchor of the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area, engages the tourist in a remarkably unique natural environment.

Downstream Anchor

The downstream anchor for the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area is the City of Bemidji. Bemidji is an urban setting, a contrast to Itasca's wilderness. Bemidji is the regional service center and the regional center for governmental agencies. There are 11,000 people living in Bemidji with thousands of tourists who annually visit this "First City on the Mississippi."

The quintessential symbol of Bemidji, the painted giant concrete statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox located on the waterfront at the Tourist Information Center, are ideal icons for this northern town and tourist destination.

According to the text on a popular postwar postcard, Paul and Babe were one of the six most photographed objects in the Post-War United States.

Although the icon itself has become a roadside attraction, the statue represents the importance of the lumber industry in defining the identity of the region and its people. It is logical and practical that these two mythic characters greet the tourist at the entrance to Bemidji's Tourist Information Center.



Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox have been greeting visitors to Bemidji since 1937.

The history of the lumber industry and Bemidji, is relatively new, approximately 100 years old. It could be interesting to tourists, especially Explorers, if interpretation was properly presented. Several sites associated with the lumber industry are still extant in Bemidji.

The lumber industry dominated Bemidji from the 1890s through the 1920s, when most of the accessible large timber was being harvested. Lumbering had been part of the Minnesota landscape for over 50 years before it reached Bemidji. The logging of Bemidji's hinterland had to wait for railroads. Although it was on the Mississippi River, the

shallowness and narrowness of the river from Itasca to Grand Rapids required loggers to ship by railroad rather than the river. The Great Northern arrived in 1898 to haul logs from the headwaters to the downstream markets. The Soo Line followed in 1910. Although the river wasn't used directly, the river, or actually its water, was important in the development of the Bemidji's logging industry.

Lake Bemidji was used as a large mill pond. The shore from downtown to the outlet of the Mississippi was covered with mills. The narrow peninsula between Lake Irvine and Lake Bemidji was particularly filled with railroad yards and mills. A devastating fire in the 1920s destroyed much of this infrastructure. The mills and rail-

road docks were not reconstructed since they had been at the end of their commercial life.

Evidence of past commercial logging activities can be found in several surviving buildings including the Great Northern Railway Depot and the Soo Line's Union Depot. The Union Depot, built in 1910, has been redeveloped as a popular restaurant and bar. Plans for renovating the 1913 Great Northern Depot are being developed. The primary evidence of the influence of the railroads, however, are not historic buildings. It is the continuing presence of the railroads themselves.

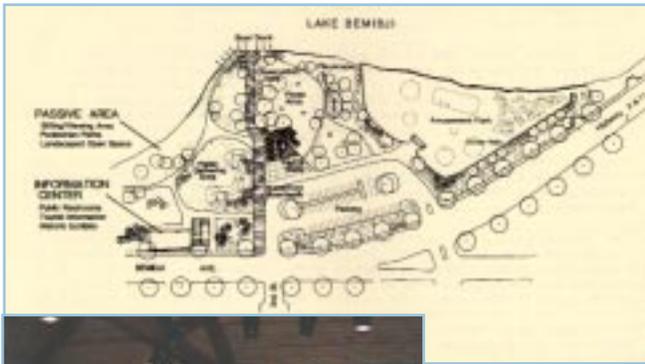
The successors to the Soo Line

(Canadian Pacific) and the Great Northern (Burlington Northern Santa Fe) still use the rail corridor as a major east-west route and switching point. Trains lay over; trains roll past; and monstrous stacks of pulp are loaded and unloaded into waiting gondolas and flat cars. Except for through-trains on the mainline, the long-standing commercial activity of railroads near Bemidji's waterfront is disappearing as the City transfers industrial activities to a new Industrial Park on the edge of town.

Evidence of the old milling operations is more rare. The best example of the mills that dominated the shoreline is at Nymore Beach. Here the foundational ruins of one of the mills still exist as a sentinel on a sandy public beach. The ruins are not interpreted and must appear as massive discordant litter to many recreationists using the beach. Younger visitors may be more forgiving, viewing them as an interesting climbing structure and in keeping with their recreational desires.

It is Lake Irvine and Lake Bemidji that make the City of Bemidji attractive to residents and visitors. Lake Irvine and Lake Bemidji are the first large lakes that the Mississippi flows through. Indeed, the name Bemidji is derived from the original Objibwe appellation, Pemidjigumaug, meaning "the river that crosses the lake." After the demise of the logging industry, recreational activities came to dominate the shoreline of Lake Bemidji. Rides on seaplanes, speedboats, and paddlewheelers were the rage from the 1930s through the 1960s. A small amusement park with a Paul Bunyan theme still occupies the shoreline next to the Tourist Information Center. The Tourist Information Center, although new construction, was inspired by an old boat house used in the earlier era. The boat house was part of a





Top: Plans for Bemidji's Travel Information Center were incorporated into Mn/DOT's original Great River Road Development Guide in the early 1980s. When the the City of Bemidji developed the site in the early 1990s, the Travel Information Center was placed closer to the existing statues and the lake. **Above:** The new Travel Information Center in Bemidji is a staffed facility guiding tourists to local attractions and services.

waterfront complex that included an extravagant dock that housed a gazebo that was used for public concerts. The dock, gazebo, and boat house had all been removed by the time the Great River Road was designated to go by the lake. Nonetheless, the idea of reconstituting a public recreational area has persisted to the present day.

Plans for Nymore Beach, the river channel, and the waterfront were originally developed in 1980 by the consulting firm of Wehrman-Chapman. The Minnesota Department of Transportation included these plans in its Great River Road Development Guide. Many of the ideas illustrated in the original Development Guide, such as a new Tourist Information Center, have been constructed.

Recently, the City of Bemidji and the Minnesota Department of Transportation have been developing plans for reconstructing the Great River Road along the waterfront.

These plans, developed by the consulting firm of Short Elliott Hendrickson, include transforming the waterfront and riverfront into an area for recreation for residents and tourists. The idea is being nurtured by the City of Bemidji and partially funded by Mn/DOT. Lighted, waterfront trails and a new bridge over the Mississippi are important tourist-related facilities being developed as part of a larger transportation project. The trails are considered part of a larger community effort to create a continuous trail around the lake, connecting Bemidji with Bemidji State Park. Docks, community entry signs, and boulevard plantings complete the transportation phase of the development.

Today tourists find a variety of sleeping accommodations including many national and regional chains with standard recreational features such as swimming pools and exercise rooms, most moderately priced. Convention halls and meeting rooms are at a premium, however. Tent and RV camping is accommodated in Bemidji State Park. Close to the state park is a well-respected traditional lodge and cabin resort, Rutger's Birchmont Resort, occupying the north shore of the lake. On the eastern shore, a few Bed and Breakfast establishments have opened on Bemidji's fashionable Lake Boulevard.

A variety of restaurants are available from the standard national

fast-food outlets to buffets to locally-owned establishments with moderately priced full-course menus. Grocery stores are plentiful.

Bemidji is alive with activities for the resident and tourist. The streetscape of downtown has been enhanced with pavers, lights, banners, seating, planters, and other urban accouterments. Music is broadcast from integral speakers on streetlights. In winter, every tree downtown and along the lakeshore is adorned with twinkle lights creating a spectacular winter wonderland. The arts community is thriving. An Arts Center is located in the old Carnegie Library, situated as the terminal vista as one approaches Lake Bemidji on the 5th Street segment of the Great River Road. The Paul Bunyan Playhouse, a local equity theater company, occupies the old



Top: Several urban design streetscape elements have been proposed for improving the aesthetics of the Great River Road in Bemidji, including the construction of graphic crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety along the lakeshore. **Below:** On Lake Bemidji, accommodations range from camping, to resorts, and even Bed and Breakfasts.



downtown movie theater, the Chief. Inspired by the statues of Paul and Babe, a dozen new sculptures were recently unveiled throughout downtown. A map for a walking tour of the sculptures is distributed at the Tourist Information Center.

Northwoods artifacts and souvenirs are available at several shopping establishments that cater to the tourist. Bemidji Woolen Mills actively seeks the tourist for purchasing their "Made in Bemidji" clothing and blankets.

Fishing and hunting remain one of the most common reasons for visiting Bemidji. There are many bait and hunting shops that provide equipment and provisions for local and visiting sportsmen. Access to Lake Bemidji is good and available at several locations for fishing

Adaptive reuse of older structures, like the conversion of an old movie theater into a playhouse and the former library into the Bemidji Community Arts Center, have kept downtown active and interesting to residents and tourists.



and ice-fishing. Access to Lake Irvine is less well maintained but is available near the outlet of the Mississippi River. The reconstruction of TH 197 may include improving the access to Lake Irvine.

Other outdoor activities are becoming draws for tourists. Golfing, in particular, is increasing in popularity. Bemidji boasts three good golf-courses. Observing nature is another increasingly favored recreational pastime. Bemidji State Park promotes its Bog Walk, a boardwalk through a bog, as a major attraction to tourists. Trails, which are beginning to form a system around Lake Bemidji, are used extensively by bicyclists and walkers. Snowmobile trails are popular and are being planned to facilitate stopping at favored downtown restaurants. Picnic grounds in several city parks and Bemidji State Park provide leisurely activities for families and groups.

Bemidji has few traditional museums for tourists to visit. The Headwaters Science Center provides programs for local school children interested in exploring the area's natural history. It is in the process of searching for a new site possibly closer to the Mississippi. A new site might allow it to expand its program to include activities of interest to tourists. Although



Fishing remains a popular recreational activity in the Headwaters Demonstration Area.

information is limited, a similar situation apparently exists with an extensive collection of American Indian artifacts housed at Bemidji State University.

The Connecting Corridor

The river, recreational, and cultural attractions in the corridor between the anchors are limited to a few turn-outs along the road. The most notable is at Coffee Pot Landing where the river is a definitive stream, perhaps forty feet wide. Coffee Pot Landing is the only developed rest area between Lake Itasca and Bemidji. It provides the only opportunity between the two anchor destinations for the tourist to get out of their vehicle, launch a canoe into the river, picnic at the river's edge, or take a hike. It has an unpaved parking lot, a hand water pump, a picnic table, and a pedestrian bridge over the river. It lacks a toilet.

Other less developed turn-outs exist or have been created through use. These typically occur at where the road crosses over the river. The Iron Bridge Landing is a typical example and is the best candidate for turning an existing turnout into another minor rest area. A potential turnout was previously identified by Mn/DOT that would overlook LaSalle Lake. LaSalle Lake is nestled in a





In the connecting corridor between Lake Itasca and Bemidji, there are several places—frequently adjacent to bridges—to access the Mississippi River.

picturesque landscape and although it is not on the river, it does provide an understanding of the headwater’s geographic context. Unfortunately, it is very close to Coffee Pot Landing and may be redundant. Additional scenic turn-outs could be developed at more appropriate spacing where the Great River Road crosses the Mississippi River.

The Big Story

The Headwaters of the Mississippi River engages a person’s imagination. This is the source, the true head, of the Mississippi River. The longest most powerful river in North America and one of the largest rivers in the world. The story of finding the source is heuristic, it provides insight into what motivated early visitors and what might motivate the modern tourist. Indeed, exploration stories are still told in popular histories and in international guidebooks on the Mississippi River.

The Original Explorers

The quest for the source of the Mississippi River was one carried on over centuries and one written by curious European and American

explorers with sometimes curious personalities. Unsurprisingly, the source seems to have been well known by Indians, who actually served as guides on most of the European and American expeditions.

One of the most colorful, literally, of these early explorers was the namesake of Beltrami County, Italian Giacomo Constanino Beltrami who arrived on the first steamboat to Fort Snelling. He was determined to become an explorer. He was guided by the Ojibwe to a lake that he called Lake Julia, after a Medici countess. This lake is thought to be Lake Bemidji approximately 60 miles from the river’s true source. A painting of the first steamboat arriving at Fort Snelling displayed on the *Jonathan Paddleford* in St. Paul, shows Beltrami on deck with his signature large red parasol.

The Mississippi Headwaters Board’s *Mississippi Headwaters Guide Book* credits another Italian, Tonti as being the first Caucasian to have actually seen the headwaters. Tonti, escorted with Father Hennepin to Mille Lacs in 1680, is thought to have left Hennepin and traveled with Dakota guides to the source of the Mississippi.

The *Guide Book* also suggests that a century later, a trader, William Morrison, visited a lake in 1804 named by the French as Lac La Biche. It is thought that Lac La Biche is actually Lake Itasca.

American Army Lt. Zebulon Pike who was clearing the British out of newly acquired American Territory, reached Leach Lake in 1805 and declared it the source of the Mississippi. He was about 80 miles from Itasca.

Michigan’s Territorial Governor Cass organized an expedition in 1820 which concluded that the source had been discovered about 100 miles downstream from Itasca in a lake the expedition named Cass Lake, after their patron.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft is popularly credited as the first non-native to discover the actual source of the Mississippi. Schoolcraft, who had been on the expedition with Governor Cass, returned in 1832 with Ojibwe Chief Ozawindeb, who took him to the Lake Itasca. Cass was related to Ozawindeb through his marriage to a British-Indian wife. The expedition only took one week. Most scholars believe the speed and accuracy of the exploration indicates that Ozawindeb knew exactly where the headwaters were located. Indeed, as the *Mississippi Headwaters Guide Book* suggests, the site was well-known to American Indians.

Creating Itasca

The name, *Itasca* comes from the Latin words, “veritas,” meaning “true;” and “caput,” meaning “head.” Schoolcraft combined these words, dropping the first and last syllables, to form *Itasca*. Schoolcraft also transformed a classical Greek myth into a folktale about an Indian maiden stuck in the underworld, crying for her lover left on the surface. Her tears become the



Mississippi River. The legend hasn't stuck in the popular mind but the equally manufactured name, *Itasca*, has been accepted. Ironically, most tourists probably believe the name is of authentic Indian origin rather than fabricated from Latin.

Applying the Story

Being the location of the source of the Mississippi River makes Minnesota extremely unique. It allows Minnesota to position itself separately from the other nine Great River Road states. Lake Itasca is one of North America's natural wonders—the True Head of this continent's most amazing river.

Intuitively, tourists recognize that to understand America and Americans, they must understand our nation's landscape. The Mississippi River is a dominant geographical feature. It divides the country between east and west and it is one of a handful of American geographical features that is recognized internationally. If we weren't the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," we'd probably be the "The Mississippi Headwaters State" Capitalizing on this natural gift, it may be possible to re-position Lake Itasca as one of America's Top 50 Natural Landmarks that tourists "must see" if they are to have a complete understanding of our country. At a minimum, it should be possible to re-position the Mississippi River Headwaters as a preferred destination for trips to the Midwest and a required stop on trips to Minnesota.

The Tourist Motivation

The type of tourist that has been traditionally attracted to the Headwaters Demonstration Area is the Explorer, Player, Lounger, and Pilgrim. The area does not particularly attract Accumulators and

Spectators. Surprisingly, a 1998 survey of visitors to Clearwater, Hubbard, and Beltrami counties, conducted for the Mississippi Headwaters Board, indicated that many tourists are Guests of residents. It is assumed that Guests significantly contribute to tourism but the relatively low indigenous population base limits the ability to increase the number of Guests visiting the demonstration area substantially.

As a demonstration area, the Mississippi Headwaters has many similarities with and attracts some of the same tourists as the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area. Those resources that support Players, such as fishing, golfing, bicycling, and hunting are present in both destinations. Nonetheless, the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area can differentiate itself by its appeal to the Explorer and even the Pilgrim.



Explorers, such as this group of canoeists who are landing in Bemidji after canoeing from Lake Itasca, would be a good target market for the Headwaters Demonstration Area.

Travel Styles

Most tourists visiting the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area are self-structured. They have elected to see Itasca or Bemidji on

their own volition. A few are part of structured or semi-structured tours. Unstructured visits by tourists is the least common tourist style seen in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area.

A limited amount of tour buses do visit Itasca State Park. A few years ago structured tours from Canada to Bemidji were frequent when the Canadian dollar was stronger than the U.S. dollar. These Canadian Accumulators came to shop for bargains in Bemidji's stores. Unfortunately, that has been less frequent of an occurrence in recent years. Tour buses on the Great River Road between Itasca and Bemidji are rarely, if ever, observed.

Semi-structured tourists are rare in the Headwaters Demonstration Area primarily because semi-structured events are relatively rare. However, semi-structured conferences are a major attraction in the Crossroad Demonstration Area. It may be possible to lure semi-structured tourists—who happen to be Explorers or Pilgrims rather than Players—to Itasca and the Headwaters. It may also be possible to arrange structured tours from the same destinations. Spousal tours may be particularly well-suited. European Fly-Drive packages would also work well.

Unstructured Tourists are not a significant factor in tourism in the Headwaters Demonstration Area. It is too remote to attract significant numbers of spontaneous travelers. Its population is too small to generate significant spontaneous travel from residents. Guests, staying in Bemidji, may be induced to travel on the Great River Road to Itasca as an enjoyable side trip. The only critical mass of unstructured tourists that could be reasonably tapped are the students of Bemidji State University and their visiting friends and family.



Geographic and Modal Characteristics

Tourists arrive mostly from the Twin Cities but also from the Dakotas and Canada. The tourist typically arrives by automobile and is greeted by Paul, Babe, and the Tourist Information Center. Some, an increasing number, arrive by airplane.

Several flights with reasonable fares fly in and out of Bemidji's International Airport daily to the Twin Cities. For approximately an additional \$60.00 round-trip a person can connect through MSP to Bemidji from any of Northwest Airlines hundreds of flights daily into the Twin Cities from all over the world. Rental cars and limited taxi service is available at the airport.

Target Markets

The primary tourist that would be naturally attracted to the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area would be a self-structured Explorer arriving by automobile and touring by automobile, bicycle, or canoe.

Secondary markets, include the unstructured Guests or the Bemidji State University student who wants to explore the world in which they find themselves located. If they lack a car, this market may be induced to explore the Great River Road by bicycle. This secondary market also includes the semi-structured and structured Explorers and Pilgrims attending a convention in the Brainerd Lakes Region who would want to see the source of the Mississippi River.

The third market, which is more speculative, but potentially has high economic rewards for the State of Minnesota, is to promote the fly/drive semi-structured model of bringing Explorers to the Headwaters Demonstration Area, rent them a car, accommodate them in Itasca,

Bemidji, or both, and finally providing them with appropriate tourist information so they can do the exploring themselves.

Market Summary

The primary target market tourist, the Self-Structured Explorer visiting the Mississippi River Headwaters at Itasca State Park by automobile or bicycle, would find the demonstration area satisfying. The opportunity for exploring a unique natural resource and following in the footsteps of historical explorers satisfying. The major attractions in the Upstream Anchor include: Itasca State Park, particularly the Headwaters and Headwaters History Center; Douglas Lodge and the Forest Inn; Wilderness Drive, especially Preachers Grove and other unique natural attractions; and the park's hiking and bicycling trails. The major attractions in the Downstream Anchor include: Paul and Babe statues and the tourist information center; Lake Bemidji and the trails and parks associated with it near downtown; downtown restaurants and bars; range of sleeping accommodations; sporting goods stores, Bemidji State Park, and the airport and rental cars.

The Self-Structured Explorer could readily explore from Lake Itasca to Bemidji by automobile, bicycle, or canoe. The landscape between the two anchors would provide an appropriate wilderness setting for an Explorer. "Outfitting" requirements would be easily satisfied in a wide range of stores in Bemidji. Bemidji serves as an accessible gateway for those Explorers arriving by car or airplane. Rental vehicles are readily available at the airport, including Minivans and Sport Utility Vehicles to accommodate a wide range of Explorers. Renting bicycles is less available, primarily restricted to a few bicycle shops in Bemidji

and Itasca State Park where staying in park boundaries is required. No bicycle shuttle service is available. Canoe rental and canoe shuttle services are available.

Capital Improvements

Capital improvements should first be oriented to establishing the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area as a destination for Explorers. First by supporting travel by Explorers that structure their own itinerary; followed by promoting travel by Explorers that travel in structured groups. By following a strategy of accommodating Explorers, the Mississippi River and the Great River would become more noticeable to the local residents. Since a significant amount of tourism in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area is derived from Guests, making residents more aware of the river and road should increase unstructured tours of the Great River Road and its associated attractions by Guests.

Suggested capital improvements to enhance the tourist experience include several that are associated with the highway and could be implemented by state and county transportation agencies with assistance from other governmental agencies as necessary:

- Add distinctive mileage markers to enhance route identity and improve wayfinding, starting with Mile Zero in Itasca State Park. Mileage markers would clearly identify the route, reducing traveler anxiety. It would visually integrate the road, attractions, and services into a tourist-oriented system. Mileage markers would facilitate the development of private-sector authored tourist guides, including interpretative maps, guidebooks, and audio tours. Public



and private attractions and services could describe their location using a mileage marker. By benefitting attractions and services, the use of the system would be assured and awareness of the Great River Road as a destination would be enhanced.

- Install Great River Road route and directional markers at every junction with a state trunk highway and county roads with over 5,000 ADT. In particular, add directional signs on TH 200, TH 2, TH 197 and any county road with over 5,000 ADT, informing drivers of the junction with the Great River Road.
- Pave 2 mile stretch of gravel road creating 12-foot lanes and 4-foot paved shoulders.
- Add 4-foot shoulder to accommodate bicycling between Itasca and Iron Bridge Landing. Add 6- or 8-foot shoulders from Iron Bridge Landing to TH 2 (future school site) for bicyclists and pedestrians. From TH 2 to downtown create an off-road trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. In downtown, create sidewalks for pedestrians and on-road bicycle routes.
- Signify the importance of Itasca State Park and the City of Bemidji to the Great River Road traveler by creating appropriate gateway monuments. Working with DNR, create a “Great River Road Starts Here” monument or street graphics in Itasca State Park. Working with the City of Bemidji, establish a Gateway Monument near the junction of 1st Street and TH 197.
- Work with the City of Bemidji to

add an informational sign that can be read from a moving vehicle on TH 197 or an interpretive marker near the lake, that explains “Lake Bemidji” is derived from the Objibwe word “Pemdjigumaug” which means “The River that crosses the Lake.”

- Work with the DNR and the City of Bemidji to add Great River Road Anchor Kiosks at Headwaters History Center in Itasca State Park and at the Tourist Information Center in Bemidji. Use these kiosks to orient travelers to all of the other features that can be seen off of the Great River Road spine, highlighting especially those attractions and services in the individual anchor.
- Standardize and improve signs to existing rest areas and future attractions between Itasca and Bemidji, especially existing signs to Coffee Pot Landing and Iron Bridge Landing. Add sign to Gulsvig Landing.
- Improve existing rest area facilities at Coffee Pot Landing and Iron Bridge Landing for Explorers, especially bicyclists. At Coffee Pot Landing pave parking lot, improve landing and picnic area by repairing steps, paths, and picnic table; maintaining well and hand-pump, bridge, and hiking trail; standardizing signs; and by adding bike racks, an interpretive marker, and a small picnic shelter as a haven from rain. At Iron Bridge Landing improve the turn-out by separating it from the road and adding a paved parking lot, a well and hand pump, bike racks, a picnic table and small shelter, inter-

pretative markers, and signs identifying the rest area.

Create a rest area by adding a turn-out for scenic vista at LaSalle Lake separating it from the road and adding a well and hand pump, bike racks, a picnic table and small shelter, interpretative markers, and signs identifying the rest area.

- Improve trail system around Lake Bemidji connecting GRR to Lake Bemidji State Park, particularly improve the pedestrian and bicycle trail adjacent to the Lake Bemidji and TH 197. Add interpretive markers to trail system.

Capital improvement projects for public recreational facilities are generally outside the jurisdiction of Mn/DOT to fund but deserve consideration as projects that would enhance the experience of the Great River Road tourist. As recreational projects near highways, joint-development agreements between Mn/DOT and the provider may be a practical way to reduce construction costs. It is not uncommon for parking lots, for instance, to be paved at a significant savings when an adjacent roadway is being paved. Typically these projects are funded by those federal, state, and local agencies charged with providing recreational facilities. Such projects include:

- Improvements to the recreational facilities at Nymore Beach, Diamond Point Park, and the Mississippi Riverfront in Bemidji.
- Improvements to the boat access to Lake Irvine near its outlet to the Mississippi River. Improvements to the boat access at Lake Bemidji at Nymore Beach and Diamond Point Park; and improvements to the canoe



access to the Mississippi River between lakes Irvine and Bemidji.

- Improvements to the docking facilities at Nymore Beach, Diamond Point Park, the Mississippi River, and the Tourist Information Center.
- Construction of additional docks on the southern beach of Lake Bemidji as proposed by the TH 197 Public Advisory Committee.

Capital improvement projects related to interpreting or preserving cultural resources are typically not funded by Mn/DOT unless a transportation function can be identified. Several projects that would enhance the tourist's understanding of cultural resources have been proposed by the community. Projects that may include an association with transportation include:

- The renovation, adaptive re-use, and interpretation of the Northern Pacific Depot.
- Restoration and interpretation of the WPA scenic overlooks constructed of cut fieldstone on Paul Bunyan Drive (TH 197) and Lake Boulevard overlooking Lake Bemidji.
- Adaptive re-use and interpretation of Midway Bridge as a pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi after TH 197 is re-constructed.

Cultural resources projects that have been discussed by the community and would be of benefit to tourists but probably would not be eligible for funding from Mn/DOT include:

- The development of an American Indian Museum or Heritage Center in Bemidji.

- Renovation and interpretation of WPA structures in Itasca State Park.
- Interpretation of Nymore Beach ruins.

Several projects that would be utilized primarily by residents but would improve the experience of tourists have been proposed by the community. Typically none of these projects would receive financial support from Mn/DOT but could receive verbal support as important additions to Great River Road tourist facilities. These projects include:

- The development of the Science Museum in Bemidji
- The development of an outdoor amphitheater near the waterfront.

Promotional Strategies

Strategies for enhancing the experience of the Great River Road tourist could involve altering management or promotion of attractions and services in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area. These strategies could be implemented by Federal, State, Local governmental authorities or private associations.

Several strategies could be implemented by state agencies. Those that could be implemented by Mn/DOT include:

- Verifying the existence and adequate condition of Great River Road route, directional, and mileage markers each spring prior to Memorial Day and the beginning of the tourist season.

Those strategies that could be implemented by DNR include:

- Working with tour bus operators to provide adequate parking, restaurant and lodging services increase visitation by structured tourists.

- Increasing overnight lodging in Itasca State Park or promoting shuttle services between it and lodging in Bemidji.

- Promoting to Tourists in Bemidji that they visit Itasca State Park for the Headwaters and for the intriguing meals served at Douglas Lodge that feature foods and beverages unique to Minnesota meals.

- Increasing the range and number of food services in Itasca State Park, especially near the bicycle and boat rental center and the Headwaters History Center.

- Utilizing local manufactured goods, such as using blankets from Bemidji Woolen Mills in Douglas Lodge and the Bear Paw Housekeeping Cabins.

- Promoting bicycling on the Great River Road between Itasca and Bemidji or between the two state parks.

- Developing (or encouraging the private development of) canoe and bicycle rental and retrieval services between Lake Itasca and Bemidji or between the two state parks.

- Distributing Great River Road Mississippi Headwaters map illustrating the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area to tourists at the two state parks.

Those strategies that could be developed by the Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) include:

- Positioning the Headwaters of the Mississippi as one of America's most important natural attractions and an easily attained destination.



- Re-establishing the preeminence of Paul and Babe as quintessential tourist attractions.
- Developing with Northwest Airlines ways to increase passenger traffic between the Twin Cities Airport (MSP) and Bemidji International.
- Study the feasibility of developing fly/drive options between the Headwaters and MSP.

Those strategies that could be implemented jointly by Mn/DOT, DNR, and the MOT include:

- Creating a Great River Road Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area map for public distribution through agencies and private venues throughout the region. This would include Tourist Information Centers, state parks, regional bicycle shops, lodging accommodations, and car rental agencies at Bemidji International Airport.

Several strategies that could be implemented by the City of Bemidji or its tourism promotion or business organizations:

- Promote winter visitation to see Bemidji as the “City of Lights.”
- Discuss creating a tradition of acting historic plays with Paul Bunyan Players. Suggest the development of an outdoor amphitheater to stage stories about Schoolcraft’s discovery of the source of the Mississippi, the tales of Paul and Babe, or other plays interesting to tourists that help codify the region’s rustic headwater’s identity. These could be a rotating annual performances that become widely known

and attract many people.

- Use this outdoor amphitheater, adjacent to the lake or river for a “Headwaters Music Festival.”
- Expand and continue to showcase the public art. Rotate pieces. Promote and advertise in art regional magazines.
- Use local accommodations and restaurants to promote these artistic events. Such as a standard restaurant placemat that is a map of all the public art in Bemidji.
- Work with local manufactures to create items with a distinct “Mississippi Headwaters” feel useful to tourists or tourist providers such as commissioning Bemidji Woolen Mills to create unique blankets for local hotels or the “housekeeping” cabins in Itasca.

Mississippi Crossroads Geographic Description

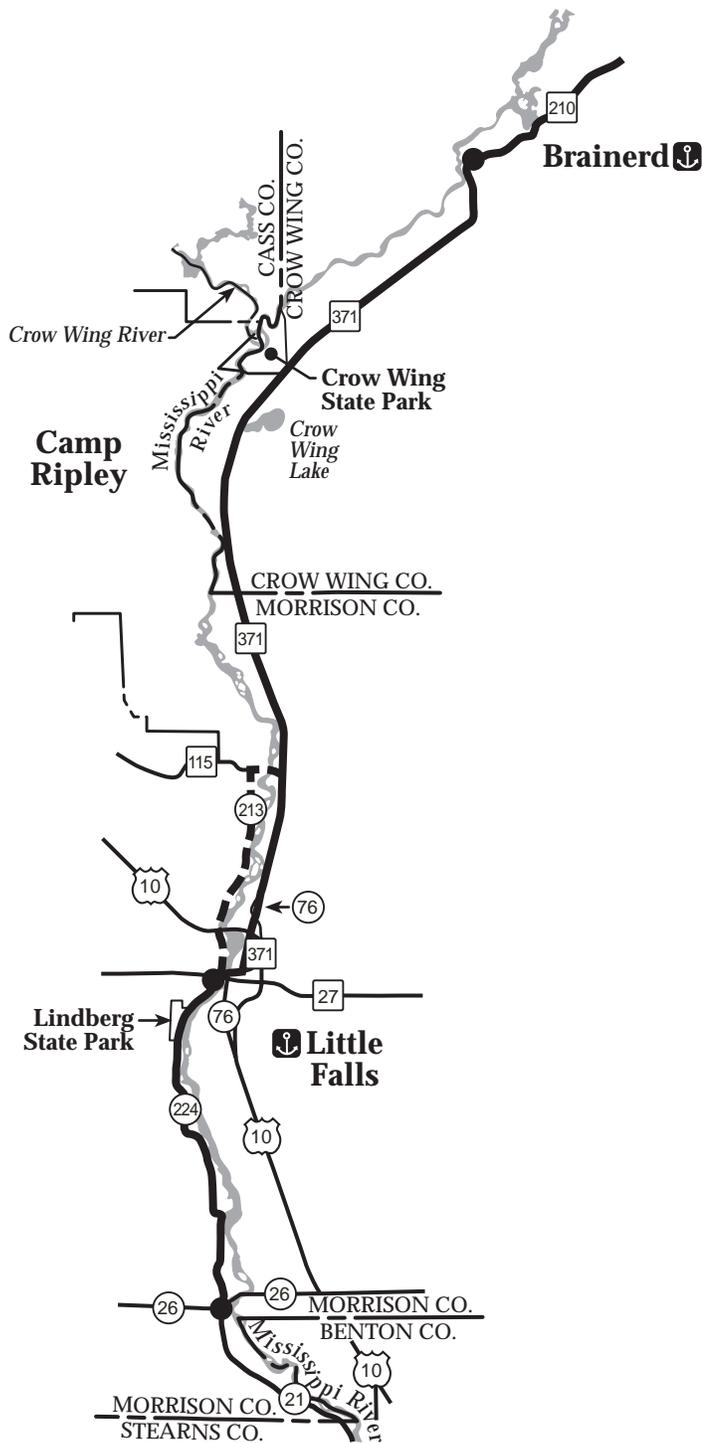
The Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area is in Crow Wing and Morrison Counties in central Minnesota. Anchored by Brainerd and Little Falls, the destination area extends along the Great River Road from TH 25 in Brainerd to Morrison CSAH 26 near Royalton. This area is dominated by lakes, lake cabins, and resorts. Historically, the river in this destination area has been used as a commercial commodity. Although recreational use of the river has increased in the last half-century with the creation of several river-oriented state, county, and municipal parks, in practice, tourists are blithely unaware of the river or the Great River Road.

Ironically it is in the older

urban core that substantial portions of riverfront have been converted into parkland or open space. Tourists would find these recreational facilities more attractive if recreational opportunities were complemented by more and better travel services in the adjoining commercial districts. Unfortunately, to a tourist comparing facilities found on nearby lakes, attractions and services related to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road, underperform. Indeed, attractions (such as water access, parks, trails, historic sites) and travel services (such as hotels and restaurants) specifically oriented to promoting tourism on the river or the Great River Road, are rare and minimally developed.

In Brainerd and Little Falls, the river flows past houses, then downtown businesses, then more houses. The houses become more infrequent, located on larger lots, the further one is from the commercial core of these two cities. In the rural corridor between the anchors and downstream from Little Falls, land adjacent to the river is primarily agricultural fields or woodlots. Except for Camp Ripley Military Reservation, most land is owned privately, providing sites for housing, business, or agriculture. Camp Ripley occupies approximately one-fifth of the river’s shoreline in the demonstration area. However, as a military reservation, it typically is not open to the general public. Less than five percent of the shoreline is publically-accessible. Here, only ninety minutes from the wilderness of the Headwaters, evidence of human occupation dominates the landscape. The quintessential emblem of human dominance—the taming of a wild river with a hydroelectric dam—is almost pedestrian in this demonstration area. There are five power dams between Brainerd and St. Cloud,





Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area



three in the demonstration area: one in Brainerd; one in Little Falls; and one near Royalton. The Mississippi has become not only a working river, but a human artifact.

Resources

The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River is a noticeable force in the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area. It is no longer subtle. It does not hide in marshes or in lakes. It travels in a channel and is reasonably large, hundreds of feet across, as it passes approximately 50 islands, an unusually high number for a river in Minnesota.

As the river passes through three hydro-electric dam sluice-gates, it demonstrates its raw power. Typically, these demonstrations of power occur in cities because cities first harnessed and continue to utilize the energy. Both Brainerd and Little Falls have dams. Ironically, the largest hydroelectric dam on the Upper Mississippi is the Blanchard Dam which straddles the river in a completely rural setting about five miles from Royalton.

These three dams are undiscovered attractions and would compare favorably to other more commonly visited dams in the Twin Cities. The Blanchard dam is huge; the falls at Little Falls immense. Both beg comparison with St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis. Blanchard actually

generates more power; Little Falls has nearly as much generating capacity. Although St. Anthony Falls has the natural capacity to generate more power than either, it is the only falls on the Upper Mississippi that can make this claim.

This capacity to generate energy is caused by an unusually significant fall in elevation. Between Little Elk Creek near Little Falls and Two River near Royalton, the river falls on average 6.5 feet per mile for twenty-two miles.

Between Brainerd and Little Falls are several large tracts of public land, including Belle Prairie Morrison County Park, Crow Wing State Park and Camp Ripley Military Reservation. In these areas, the river is tranquil, unmolested by human enterprise. The river appears wild and scenic rolling quietly through the forested or agricultural countryside. Water quality is considered satisfactory for fishing and recreation. Efforts to improve water quality are underway by reducing agricultural runoff and industrial discharges. This part of the river is known for its good fishing. Motorboats can readily navigate its waters, although shallow riffles may have many boaters preferring to frequent the pools created by the three dams.

The Great River Road Vehicular Transportation

The designated National Route of the Great River Road follows the general path of the river, running south in one long shallow bow from Brainerd to Belle Prairie, arching in reverse to

Little Falls. Except for the roads in the vicinity of the two anchors, the designated Great River Road is on state trunk highways: TH 25, TH 210 and TH 371.

The Demonstration Area begins in Brainerd at the junction of TH 25 and TH 210. The National Route follows the TH 210 or Washington Street, to East River Road. It continues on East River Road downstream to eastbound College Drive and eastbound Quince Street before it turns south onto TH 371. TH 371, also known as the Paul Bunyan Highway, remains the Great River Road downstream to Little Falls.

This National Route, which by following municipal roads that wind through Brainerd closer to the river, is less direct than the State Route. The State Route, also arriving from upstream on TH 210, simply turns south on TH 371 from westbound TH 210. The State Route runs totally on the east side of the river on TH 371 between Brainerd and Little Falls and on Highway 10 (US Route 10) downstream to Royalton. The Federal and State Routes are concurrent between Little Falls and Brainerd because Camp Ripley prohibits access to the river from the Westbank between Crow Wing State Park and Belle Prairie.

In Little Falls, the downstream National Route exits from TH 371 on CSAH 76. It enters downtown Little Falls as 4th Street on the city's more retail-oriented east side. At the junction with TH 27, or Broadway Avenue, the Great River Road continues west over the river. Turning south, it continues downstream on CSAH 52 which is also known as Lindbergh Drive. Crossing Pike Creek, CSAH 52 becomes Morrison County Road 224. The Great River Road continues on CR 224 until the junction with CSAH 26, where the demonstration



The power of the Mississippi River is evident at the hydroelectric dam in Little Falls.



area ends, two miles west of Royalton.

The Great River Road crosses the river only once in this destination area, on Broadway Avenue in Little Falls.

Bicycle Transportation

Roads are not strictly for motorized vehicular transportation. The Great River Road especially was conceived to provide a route for recreational bicycling. The original Great River Road Design Guidelines, established in 1981, called for a four-foot paved shoulder or an eight-foot off-road trail where practical to accommodate bicycling. Design standards have changed significantly since those original guidelines were established. Currently, a ten-foot shoulder or eight-foot off-road trail is considered minimal for State-Aid Funded County Road projects. In practice, a ten-foot surface is preferred for off-road multi-modal trails also.

Except for sidewalks in Brainerd and Little Falls (which are meant only for pedestrians), there are no off-road trails in the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area. The only designated bicycle route is on Lindbergh Drive from downtown Little Falls past Lindbergh State Park and Historic House site to Pike Creek. This bicycle route, however, is exclusively on the roadway, except for a separate bridge over Pike Creek.

On TH 371, the large volume cars and trucks moving at or over the posted 65 mph, inhibits use by bicyclists even though there is four-lanes and a ten foot paved shoulder between Belle Prairie and Little Falls. North of Belle Prairie where the road narrows to two lanes, similar untenable conditions also exist. Although the speed limit is slightly lower, 55 mph, traffic volumes are still high and dangerously close.

Downstream from Little Falls on

Morrison County Road 224 traffic is minimal and bicycling is more enjoyable. However, the shoulders are gravel and this also tends to prohibit bicycling to only experienced cyclists.



Resorts, such as Grand View Lodge, have been attractive to tourists for generations.

Transportation System Summary

According to Mn/DOT data all roads are adequately wide and paved. Shoulders are of various widths and typically not paved on county and municipal routes. Sidewalks and off-road trails are limited to the two anchors.

Attractions and Services

Various cultural, recreational, and river attractions and travel services appealing to tourists occur throughout the demonstration area. The discussion of these attractions and services is divided into three parts: those attractions and services found in the two anchors of the demonstration area, Brainerd and Little Falls, and those found in the rural corridor outside the anchors.

Upstream Anchor

The City of Brainerd is the upstream anchor. The quality and quantity of its cultural, river, and recreational attractions and the availability of travel services is critical to the success of this demonstration area. Generally, recreational attractions and travel services are superb but not oriented to the river or the Great River Road. River and cultural attractions are typically underdeveloped.

Brainerd has been one of Minnesota's premier tourist des-

tinuation areas for generations. A resort industry dominates the lakes found in the region. Lately, the development of tourist services has moved west and north along Highway 371 into Baxter. This movement is expected to accelerate when a new route for TH 371 will bypass downtown Brainerd.

Brainerd and Baxter are in many ways similar. Both have promoted strip development adjacent to the highways carrying tourists to their destinations. Both have a history of being oriented to the region's lakes and the lake-bound tourist. Although much attention is paid to providing travel services to tourists, little attention is paid to attractions associated with the Mississippi River.

Nonetheless, Brainerd does have a downtown and the river. Baxter has neither. Brainerd has an older more varied history than Baxter. This history is primarily associated with railroads. Indeed it was the railroad that created Brainerd and the Brainerd Lakes Resort phenomenon. By utilizing the river and its railroad history, Brainerd could distinguish itself from its flashier neighbor.

Cultural Resources

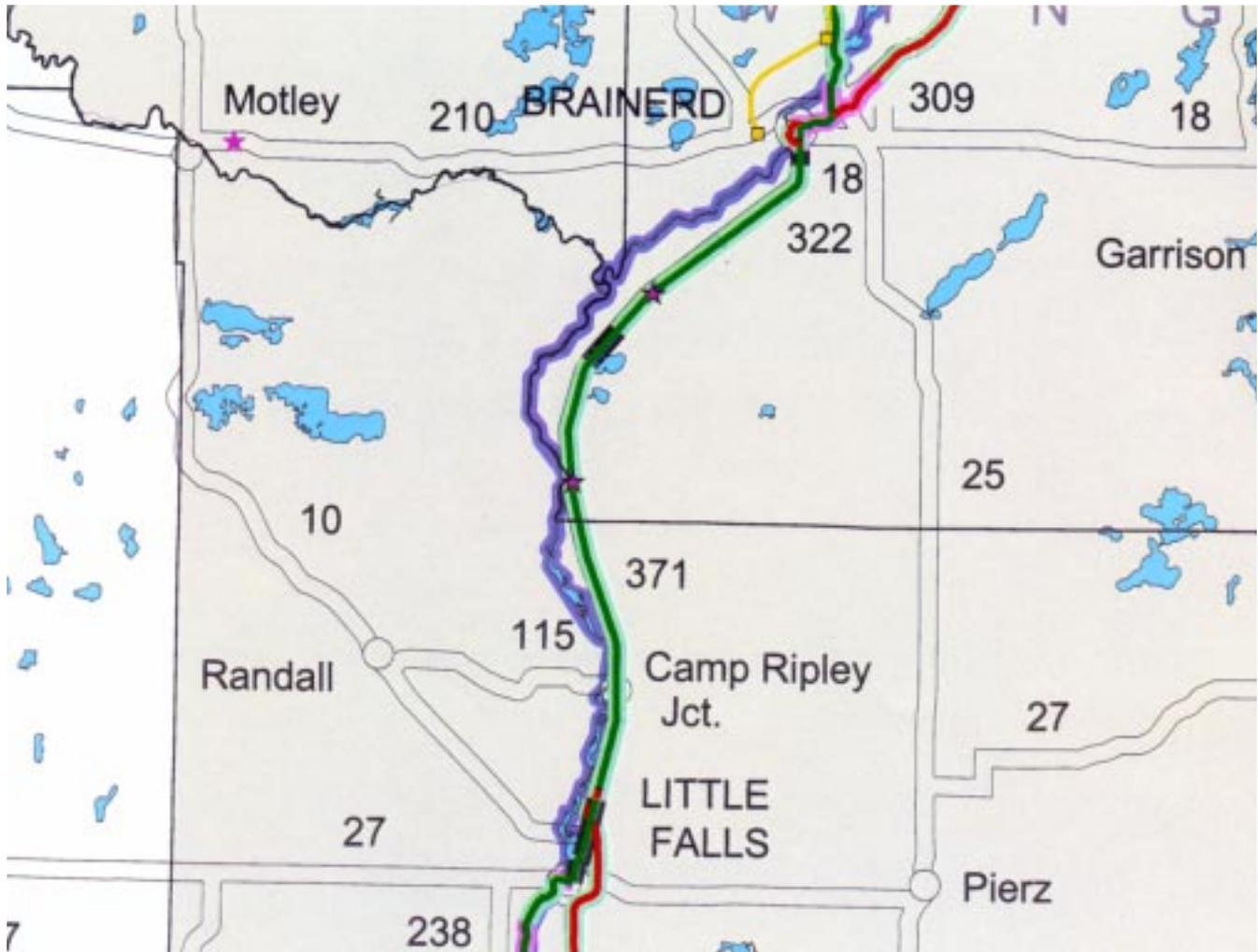
Brainerd has several important historic sites that it has linked as a heritage trail illustrating the history of the city. Significant sites include



The Great River Road Development Study

Transportation Resources

“Mississippi Crossroads” Brainerd to Little Falls



1 inch = 6 miles



Map created: 10/26/99
bd

Legend

★ Rest Area	Bike Compatible*
□ Trailhead	Yes
— Trail	No
	Unknown

* Criteria for Bike Compatibility:
- Shoulder width greater than 11 feet
- Paved shoulder
- Not an Interstate Route
All markers need to be met to have a pin rating.

Great River Road

— FEDERAL
— STATE
— 1/4 Mile Buffer
□ GRR Counties

historic downtown buildings, the Northern Pacific Shops east of downtown, and an historic residential area surrounding Gregory Park north of downtown.

Brainerd has always been an important crossroads, and to this day it is a gateway to the central lakes region. When coming into town on either Highway 371 or 210, a prominent landmark is the historic water tower. Located at the intersection of the two main highways, the tower is roughly in the center of town and currently houses a tourist information center. Built during 1918-1921, the water tower is significant because it is an early, and perhaps the first, tower to utilize reinforced concrete for water storage. It is well-lit at night, clearly dominating the sky.

Brainerd was platted in 1871 as the point where the Northern Pacific Railroad Company would cross the Mississippi River. For many years, the city served as the switching point between Minnesota's two terminal ports, St. Paul and Duluth, and the mainline running west to the Pacific Coast. The Northern Pacific built a large complex of shops, offices, and storehouses, and by 1880 the company employed over 1,000 people in Brainerd. As late as the 1920's, approximately 90 percent of the families in Brainerd were dependent



Gregory Park is a lavish display of the wealth that the railroads created in Brainerd.

on the railroads. The shops complex still stands today, retains its original historic feel, testifying to the significance of railroad transportation to the city.

To the west of the Northern Pacific Railroad shops, there is the historic commercial area around Laurel Avenue in downtown Brainerd. In particular, there is a fine commercial block on the north side of Laurel between Sixth and Seventh streets. As with other communities, the presence of the railroads ensured the inflow of supplies and materials necessary to develop the city's economy as a local trade center. The railroad also provided a means of shipping out wood products, which was another mainstay of the Brainerd economy.

Although the logging industry was beginning to decline in the area by the 1910's, wood products remained important. One of the leaders in the industry was the Northwest Paper Company, which built a mill in

1917 to take advantage of the waterpower from the Brainerd dam. The current dam was built in 1950, following the wash out of the original 1888 timber version, and it historically provided power for the city and for the Northwest Paper Company. Chemical pulp, processed at the company's Cloquet plant, was shipped to Brainerd where it was combined with ground-wood pulp to make newsprint. In addition to its importance to Brainerd, the plant is significant for the introduction of new, more efficient technology that became the industry standard.

With revenue generated by the railroads, commerce, and milling, Brainerd residents developed a community. Gregory Park, which dates to the first city plat, was an attractive area for community events and celebrations. Cut-stone entry gates and the reaching shade of the pine and hardwood trees on the property welcome visitors. It is not surprising that the area around the park was a desirable location for residential development. The Gregory Park residential area includes roughly a two-block radius around the park and contains a variety of residential styles that reflect the city's social and ethnic heritage. There are also a number of public buildings in



The Northern Pacific Railroad Shops are a significant cultural resource in the Crossroads Destination Area.



Brainerd that illustrate community development. As the county seat for Crow Wing County, Brainerd houses a prominent courthouse (1919-1920) that was designed by the Alden and Harris architectural firm as a classically inspired, City Beautiful monument. A block east on Laurel, the City Hall (1914) employs classical elements, though much more sparingly than the courthouse. Situated between the Gregory Park residential area and downtown, the Carnegie Library (1904) was also inspired by classical architecture – a columned portico leads into a central domed space.

Recreational Resources

The primary recreational attractions found in Brainerd include the NASCAR Brainerd International Raceway. NASCAR racing is the country's second largest spectator sport. Thousands of people are attracted to Brainerd annually to these races. Other recreational attractions include: Paul Bunyan Land Amusement Park, Crow Wing County Historical Society Museum, Paul Bunyan Nature Learning Center, and the Lakes Area Children's Museum.

Although, the riverfront in Brainerd is bounded by open space, little of it is developed for recreational use. Kiwanis Park, on the Great River Road at the junction of East River Road and College Drive is a popular park with a carry-in access, picnic tables and a shelter, playground, and two fishing piers. Historic Gregory Park also provides space for

passive recreational pursuits such as picnicking or strolling through ornamental gardens.

Several annual events and celebrations occur in Brainerd including an Old Farm Show Days in August, the Crow Wing County Fair, and the Brainerd Taste of the Lakes Festival.

River Resources

In downtown Brainerd there is little that has been developed to attract a tourists to the river. Upstream from downtown and the Potlach Dam, a boat access, fishing pier, swimming beach in Lum Park provide good access to the impoundment called Rice Lake. Below the dam, in addition to the facilities in Kiwanis Park, there is a boat landing at Evergreen Landing.

Transportation Resources

Tourist Information, housed inside the city's signature water tower is available at the junction of TH 210 and TH 371.

Commercial lodging is plentiful and varied from large historic

lodges to quaint bed and breakfast inns. Dozens of hotels, inns, and resorts are listed in brochures produced by the Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT). MOT also lists over ten commercial campgrounds and RV parks available to the tourist in the Brainerd vicinity. Most of the commercial lodging is oriented to lakes, not the river, nor the Great River Road. Reservations during peak tourist seasons are usually necessary.

The nearest public campground

is the Lum Park Municipal Campground and downstream in Crow Wing State Park. Lum Park Campground only allows RV camping. Crow Wing allows both tent and RV camping. Both public campgrounds are oriented to the river.

Restaurants are also plentiful with varied offerings from standard inexpensive fast-food fare to unique regional cuisine served in expensive elegant settings.

Gas stations and roadside services are readily available.

There are no public rest areas or waysides oriented to the traveler operated in Brainerd along the Great River Road.

Downstream Anchor

Little Falls is the Downstream Anchor. The quality and quantity of its cultural, river, and recreational attractions and the availability of travel services is critical to the success of this demonstration area. Generally, the area has many superb cultural and an inviting variety of river and recreational attractions. Travel services, however, are limited.

Cultural Resources

The main historical attraction in Little Falls is the Lindbergh House, the boyhood home of Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. world-renown aviator and conservationist. The residence was owned by his strong-willed, pacifistic, and progressively-minded father, Representative Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr. who represented this area in the United States House of Representatives during Wilson's Administration. Run by the Minnesota Historical Society, the Lindbergh House is an outstanding public interpretation site of the Lindbergh family and their contributions to the national and international events that shaped the 20th Century.



Most tourists that currently visit Brainerd are coming to relax or be entertained, such as race car enthusiasts at Brainerd International Raceway. How can they be induced to see the Mississippi River or travel on the Great River Road?





The boyhood homestead of Charles Lindbergh, the world-renown aviator and conservationist, is a major tourist attraction.

Charles Lindbergh, Jr., according to many of his contemporaries, embodied the ideal American character: brilliantly innovative, doggedly persistent, and scrupulously honest. Perhaps best known for his feats of aviation, he also supported technological innovation and conservation of natural resources.

A recent best-selling biography about Lindbergh is being developed into a major motion picture by world-famous director, Steven Spielberg, according to the manager of the historic site. If Spielberg, known for his fidelity to historical characters, portrays the influence of the Mississippi River and Little Falls had on shaping young Lindbergh's personality and conservation ideas, this segment of the Great River Road may witness a phenomenal increase in visitation following the release of the movie.

Across the road from the historic site is Lindbergh State Park, also part of the father's original estate. The park has many excellent examples of rustic style log and stone structures constructed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression.

Adjacent to the two Lindbergh sites is the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, home of the Morrison County Historical Society.

contributions of the Weyerhaeuser family to the development of the region despite its name.

In town, the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot, located on the west bank of the river, is visible from the Great River Road. The Northern Pacific routed its mainline through Little Falls in 1889 connecting factories in Little Falls with larger markets, increasing the city's prosperity. The depot's interpretive potential comes not only from its association with economic expansion but also from its architect, Cass Gilbert, the architect who designed the Minnesota State Capitol. Although a prolific depot designer, most of Gilbert's other railroad buildings have been demolished or dramatically altered. The Shingle Style depot exhibits influences from Richard Norman Shaw and H. H. Richardson, leading architects of the time.

Like Brainerd, the river and the rails built Little Falls; unlike Brainerd, the

The museum primarily provides information on the general history of Little Falls and Morrison County with an emphasis on the forest industry and the genealogy of early settlers. The museum references—but does not accentuate—the

river supplied the primary industry and the railroads played a supporting role. Little Falls was platted in 1855, and while small lumber and flour mills had previously utilized the fall of water at the rapids, it was the construction of a dam and hydroelectric plant in 1888 that led to rapid growth. Companies using the great generating potential—second in Minnesota only to St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis—flourished.

The Little Falls Hydroelectric Development dam was partially constructed in 1888 and finalized during the 1910's. The dam complex includes channel dams designed by Ralph D. Thomas, a prominent hydroelectric development designer. Although heavily altered through the years, the dam and power plant are visible from the riverfront.

Lumber magnate Frederick Weyerhaeuser and his associates chose Little Falls in 1891 as the site for their Minnesota operations, including the Pine Tree Lumber Company and the Hennepin Paper Company. They selected Little Falls because of the hydroelectric power provided by the dam, the storage capabilities for logs floated on the Mississippi River, the city's rail



The Northern Pacific Railroad Depot is nicely located on the Mississippi River and would be an excellent location for a kiosk orienting travelers to the Great River Road.



Above: Tourists are already attracted to Little Falls as a Fall 1999 "Ride for the Cure" fundraising event illustrates. **Left:** The Minnesota Fishing Museum in Little Falls is geared toward teaching children and adults about one of Minnesota's favorite recreational sports.

access, and its location relatively near the northern pine forests. In addition, numerous smaller.

On the east side of the Mississippi, Weyerhaeuser's Pine Tree Lumber Company Office illustrates the importance of the lumber industry to Little Falls. While the office building still stands, the 127-foot brick smokestack and the almost 100 acres of mill buildings that once flanked the river and dominated the view of Little Falls are now gone. The office building evokes a simplicity and efficiency in design, qualities that Weyerhaeuser strove for in the mill's operation. In addition to the office, the Weyerhaeuser and Musser estates, built in 1898, illustrate the vast fortunes created by the logging industry and are exuberant examples of the Colonial Revival Style. Located at 608 Highland Avenue, the combined estate is currently owned by the City and serves as the Linden Hill Conference and Retreat Center.

The Little Falls Commercial Historic District is an excellent example of how the establishment and expansion of rail service, combined with the river, benefitted local companies. The Little Falls

Commercial Historic District includes 32 buildings that contribute to its historic value, 24 of which date to the economic boom that followed the railroads and dam building. There are eight other buildings in the District related to its expansion following the construction of regional highways. Together the structures in the Little Falls Commercial Historic District present "a uniform collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings which comprises the core of Little Falls' historic commercial center." With careful restoration of these buildings, Little Falls has the potential to combine commercial opportunities with public interpretation that would be attractive to heritage tourists.

The Minnesota Fishing Museum has a large and impressive collection of items related to the historical development of inland fishing including boats, motors, rods, reels, and tackle. Located in a temporary facility on TH 27 two blocks west of Lindbergh Drive, it is currently in developing plans for a new museum building and searching for a new site on the Mississippi River.

Recreational Resources

Little Falls has several parks that border both sides of the river with parking lots, walking paths, and picnic facilities to accommodate tourists. Except for these passive parks and trails associated with the river, there are few permanent recreational attractions. Several recreational events, however, may be of interest to the tourist including:

- The Arts and Crafts Fair and Antique Auto Show held downtown on the weekend after Labor Day.
- The Morrison County Fair held annually in late summer in Little Falls. The fairgrounds feature a racetrack and field for horses.
- The Great River Arts Association sponsors exhibits and performances throughout the year, including Sunday afternoon concerts in Maple Island Park during the summer.
- The Heartland Symphony Orchestra performs throughout the year in both Little Falls and Brainerd.
- The Stroia Ballet Company also offers performances throughout the year including the Nutcracker Fantasy annually at Christmas.
- Little Falls House Concerts, folk musicians performing at a variety of venues, is another artistic event that may be of interest to specific tourists.

River Resources

Observable from LeBourget Park (named after the French town where Lindbergh landed after his record-breaking 1927 Trans-Atlantic Flight), the Little Falls Dam operated by



LeBourget Park in Little Falls was named after the town in France where Lindbergh landed after his transatlantic flight. It is a favorite spot for residents and visitors to stroll.

Minnesota Power is an amazing example of the river's power when its sluice gates are open. Tours of the dam are available by arrangement.

Situated on the west bank of the river near the Northern Pacific depot, Larson Boat Works is a Little Falls landmark. With 10,000 lakes creating a market, Minnesota is home of several boat manufacturers, many of which, like Larson Boat Works, are owned by the same parent company, Genmar. Genmar is one of the most successful boat manufacturers in the nation. Forms for constructing boats of all sizes are intriguingly stored outside the massive plant. Tours of the manufacturing plant are available by arrangement.

Both carry-in and boat access ramps are available in this park below the dam. Above the dam, two boat access ramps are situated on both riverbanks in North End Park. River overlooks and trails are available at the Lindbergh Historic Site and Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum.

Transportation Resources

The Little Falls Chamber of Commerce operates a Travel Information Center in the renovated Northern Pacific train depot designed by Cass Gilbert. The center is open week-days only. The nearest MOT operated

Travel Information Center and Mn/DOT rest area is a jointly operated facility on TH 10 is in St. Cloud. There are several municipal parks that serve as waysides in Little Falls near the Great River Road.

Commercial lodging is limited to less than a half-dozen establishments according to the MOT listing. This includes recent construction which has increased the number of rooms available to travelers. The increased capacity has been on the TH 10/TH 371 Bypass rather than downtown Little Falls or the river. As such, these rooms probably serve the long distance traveler rather than someone seeking Little Falls as a destination. The only existing downtown river-front lodging, an inviting period architectural piece that had been known for good meals, has been closed for several years and is falling into disrepair. Camping is accommodated by the DNR at Pike Creek Campsite and Lindbergh State Park.

The community supports a few modest restaurants downtown. None are currently oriented to the river or offer unusual specialized cuisine. Standard, inexpensive fast-food fare is also infrequent on the Great River Road in Little Falls.



The Little Falls Chamber of Commerce operates a Travel Information Center out of this historic train depot designed by Cass Gilbert, the same architect who designed the Minnesota State Capitol.

Gas stations and roadside services are readily available on the east side of the river in Little Falls. No travel services are available on the Great River Road after it crosses over to the west side of the river.

The Connecting Corridor

Attractions and services available to tourists outside the anchors of the destination area are essential to promoting travel along the Great River Road. Without attractions or services adequately sprinkled along the route, tourism would remain focused only on the anchors. Fortunately, there are adequate attractions outside the anchors in the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area. Travel services, however, are limited to a few undeveloped turn-outs. Nonetheless, this lack of travel services outside the anchors does not inhibit tourism. Travel services, if available more readily in Brainerd and Little Falls, would cover most needs for accommodations and food adequately.

Cultures have met and exchanged produce and ideas for centuries, even millennia, here, in the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area. For thousands of years people have been attracted to the rich and varied

resources found here, where three biogeographical regions converge: prairies from the west; boreal forests from the north; and deciduous forests from the east. In the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area, transportation has always determined the location



of human settlements.

Rivers have been the initial transportation corridors for every culture that entered the area. The evidence is ancient. Paleo-Indians occupied a site near the confluence of the Little Elk River with the Mississippi thousands of years ago. Other Indians, including the modern Dakota and Ojibwe, followed. The French occupied the Little Elk River site in the mid-1700's as part of a network of fur- trading posts. For the French, this site may have been the furthest west they came with a permanent trading post. This site, known as the Little Elk Heritage Preserve is two miles north of Little Falls. Managed by the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, a private organization, the site is available for inspection by invitation only. The Institute also conducts classes and has performed actual archaeological digs at this location and other sites (notably Red Wing.)

Later the American settlement of Crow Wing took advantage of the confluence of the Crow Wing and the Mississippi rivers. For decades in the

19th Century, one branch of the Red River Ox Cart trail crossed the Mississippi River at Crow Wing. The advancement of the railroad destroyed transportation by river and ox cart. The decision of the Northern Pacific Railroad to cross the Mississippi River at Brainerd, rather than at Crow Wing determined the fate of both communities. This story of how nature and cultures intertwined to create settlement patterns is interpreted at Crow Wing State Park south of Brainerd.

This state park, just downstream from Brainerd, has great potential to illustrate the importance of the Mississippi River to early residents, and there are a number of interpretive markers in the park. The markers include discussions of the trading posts and missions, as well as the ghost town, Crow Wing. Located at the confluence of the Crow Wing and Mississippi rivers, the area was a meeting point for American Indians and fur traders from the late eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth. Even as the fur trade declined in the 1840's,

Crow Wing developed as an outfitting point for travelers on the Red River ox cart trails and by the 1850's for the growing number of loggers. With the removal of local tribes to the White Earth Reservation after 1868 and the decision of the Northern Pacific to cross the Mississippi at Brainerd, old Crow Wing quickly declined and disappeared. Though no buildings remain to tell the story of Crow Wing, there are many archaeological sites in the area.

Downstream from Old Crow Wing is Fort Ripley Landing. Near the confluence with the Nokasippi River, this is one of two areas between Brainerd and Little Falls where the Mississippi River can be seen from TH 371. However, the river can only be seen from late fall to early spring when leaves are off the trees that screen the river from the highway. The landing provides an access for motorboats and an unpaved parking lot for vehicles.

Just east of TH 371 is an intriguing Scientific and Natural Area, the Ripley Esker. The three-mile long esker is a remnant of a stream trapped underneath the ice of a monstrous glacier. Depositing sediment as it flowed, the stream created a long serpentine hill. The Minnesota Geographical Survey, in association with Mn/DOT's Office of Environmental Services recently placed an interpretive plague overlooking the eskar.

Camp Ripley Military Reservation is adjacent to the Great River Road but not its entrance which is on TH 115. The camp houses the Minnesota Military Museum, an extensive collection of artifacts associated with the original Fort Ripley and Minnesota's involvement in our nation's military. Displays depict the evolution of the combat gear from settlement through the Civil War, the World Wars, Korea and



Left: The Little Elk Heritage Preserve is an excellent location for interpreting how people have lived along the banks of the Mississippi River for thousands of years. **Below:** Crow Wing State Park, the site of an abandoned town used by ox-cart drivers, provides recreational and educational opportunities for tourists.





Above: The Ripley Esker is an example of not only an interesting geological formation but a little-noticed program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources—the Scientific and Natural Areas program which preserves unique wildernesses throughout the state. This esker was interpreted with funding from Mn/DOT. **Left:** Camp Ripley is used by National Guard troops from throughout the nation. Orienting service personnel to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road may induce them to return with their families on vacation.



Three photos from top to bottom: Belle Prairie County Park provides many day-use facilities. The Blanchard Dam is the second largest dam on the Mississippi River after the dam at St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis. Converting this abandoned railroad trestle into a non-vehicular bridge would provide an interesting path for tourists wanting to bicycle or walk along the river in the Crossroads Demonstration Area.

Viet Nam Conflicts, to Desert Storm. Camp Ripley Military Reservation is the second oldest military reservation in the state after Fort Snelling Military Reservation. It is the largest training facility in National Guard Units in the country. Unique and interesting stonework marks the entrance to the reservation. Although, typically not open to the public, the 53,000 acre camp preserves the pre-settlement ecology of the region quite well and may be of interest to visiting soldiers. A deer-hunt for disabled veterans is held annually at the camp.

Belle Prairie County Park is a large park for day uses. It has a extensive picnic facilities, a playground, motorboat access, swinging benches with wonderful views of the river, and drinking water. No camping is allowed. Near the park, it is possible to get glimpses of river when trees have lost their leaves.

The Blanchard Dam, the largest hydroelectric dam on the Upper Mississippi, is operated by Minnesota Power. Located south of Little Falls, the dam creates a massive pool upstream. Minnesota Power maintains a boat landing on the east bank of the pool. Sport fishing is superb.

An abandoned high railroad trestle, a few hundred feet downstream from the dam, provides an

intriguing pedestrian crossing and fantastic views of the river and dam. An undeveloped turnout has been created primarily through use by people fishing, picnicking, and generally exploring.

The Big Story

There are several stories in the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area that vie for the attention of tourists:

- The fascinating history of the glacially-formed landscape.
- The unusual dominance of islands in the river.
- The unique confluence of three major North American biomes: the eastern deciduous woodlands, the northern boreal forests, and the western prairies.
- The evolution of transportation corridors.
- The history of human settlement.

Can these stories be woven into a single overarching story that tourists would find interesting? By focusing on human use of the river and how technology has changed this use, it seems possible to create a single theme for organizing tourism. The Big Story is that this demonstration area is a crossroads: a geological crossroads where glaciers stopped and created moraines, outwash plains, eskers, and hundreds of lakes as they retreated; a topographic crossroads where after 300 miles of meandering through lakes and marshes, the river is finally defined by a continuous channel and dotted with nearly 50 islands; a biological crossroads where three distinct biomes converge; an historic crossroads for water transportation, a place where many streams and rivers converged and people, for thousands of years, did too; a crossroads for changing patterns of land transportation, a place where ox carts forded the Mississippi and railroads and highways constructed bridges; and a place where societies decided to change their relationship with transportation and therefore, the river, and thus modify their settlement patterns.

Although this concept of crossroads is multi-faceted, the pivotal idea is that this is a place where items, properties, attributes, and ideas converge.

The Tourist Motivation

The type of tourist that has been traditionally attracted to the Crossroads Demonstration Area is the Player, Lounger, and Spectator. The area does attract some Accumulators, Explorers and Pilgrims. Guests to cabins and homes of family and friends are a significant addition to the tourism base.

As a demonstration area, the Mississippi Crossroads has many similarities with and attracts some of the same tourists, particularly Explorers and Pilgrims found in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area and the Spectators which dominate the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area. However, the primary attribute that differentiates the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area from the other demonstration areas, is its catering to Players.

Those resources that support Players, such as fishing, golfing, bicycling, and hunting dominate the area. Spectators are enthralled with the Brainerd International Speedway. While Loungers appreciate being pampered in countless resorts. Nonetheless, the Mississippi Crossroads Demonstration Area can diversify its image even more by aggressively incorporating those resources that would appeal to the Explorer and even the Pilgrim. Many of these resources, such as the Minnesota Military Museum and the Lindbergh home are associated with the river, not the lakes which currently bring most of the tourists who come to play.

Tourists Styles

Most tourists visiting the Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area are either on a semi-structured or self-structured vacation. Some visit the area on a completely structured tour. Given the need for reservations at most accommodations, relatively few are thought to visit the area in an unstructured manner, unless they are visiting as Guests.

Semi-Structured Style

Many tourists visiting resorts are in a semi-structured event. Many arrive for conferences and other business meetings. Time devoted to business and playing is frequently

regulated by the organizer's agenda. Indeed, organizers pick this venue because they realize business relationships and business frequently occurs outside meeting rooms on courts and links. They want to ensure adequate time is allocated for meeting and playing together.

Free time, when available, is typically at the beginning and end of the conference. Even the time allowed for spouses of attendees to enjoy the area or recreational facilities can be regimented by the organizers. Therefore, to attract tourists to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road, it will be essential to promote the river to meeting hosts and organizers.

Self-Structured and Other Styles

There are many private family cabins, resorts, and hotels that cater to individual and families. Some resorts and hotels that offer conference facilities also attract significant self-structured clientele. The resorts and hotels are very popular and typically require an advance reservation of several weeks, if not months in popular seasons, prior to arriving.

Lindbergh State Park and Crow Wing State Park offer tent and RV camping, typically a self-structured travel style. The campgrounds are typically full only on weekends, even in the summer. Campers may reserve camping sites and most do on popular days. To reduce costs, the Department of Natural Resources has limited camping in Lindbergh State Park to the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Since accommodations are difficult to get without a reservation reason, most tourists have reservations and have therefore provided their own structure to their own trips. Nonetheless, the Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area is has



a significant population base and it is also within a two hour drive of the Twin Cities. This permits unstructured day tours by Guests, Players, and Explorers.

The self-structured and unstructured tourists have elected to see the Crossroads Demonstration themselves. Nonetheless, unless they are staying in one of the State Parks or partaking in a day trip that brings them to an attraction located on the river, they are unlikely to engage the Mississippi River or the Great River Road.

Geographic and Modal Characteristics

Tourists arrive mostly from the Twin Cities and other Minnesotan cities by automobile. Wisconsin and Illinois also provide visitors. The tourist typically arrives by automobile and can orient themselves at the Tourist Information Centers in Brainerd or Little Falls. Some, an increasing number, arrive by airplane. Airports exist in both Brainerd and Little Falls, although only Brainerd has scheduled commercial flights.

Several flights with reasonable fares fly in and out of the Brainerd Airport daily to the Twin Cities. For approximately an additional \$40.00 round-trip a person can connect through MSP to Brainerd from any of Northwest Airlines hundreds of flights daily into the Twin Cities from all over the world. Rental cars and taxi services are available at the airport.

The Target Market

The primary tourists that would be naturally attracted to the Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area would be a self-structured or semi-structured Player or Lounger staying at a resort, hotel, or campground and arriving by automobile. Another primary tourist would be the Spectator at the speedway's NASCAR races.

Attracting Players and Spectators to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road is daunting but not impossible. To attract Players and Loungers, the river and road must be positioned as a welcomed diversion from the recreational pursuits and the relaxed atmosphere found on the lakes and in the resorts. The easiest Player to transfer from lakes to the river may be people who are here to fish. Sport fishing is particularly good in this segment of the river. Loungers might be induced to visit the river and the road by effectively promoting cultural events, like riverfront orchestra concerts. Inducing Players and Loungers to visit the river may only be possible if adequate opportunities to recreate and relax next to the river are developed.

Defining the river and road as a scenic drive may sufficiently attract Players, Loungers, and Spectators to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. Spectators, especially those who are car buffs and NASCAR enthusiasts, may find driving the Great River Road and frequenting other river oriented attractions and services an enjoyable introduction or conclusion to the racing event. By introducing Players, Loungers, and Spectators to the Great River Road and the Mississippi River, it may induce them into becoming Explorers or even Accumulators for a few hours.

Secondary markets, include the unstructured Guest visiting a friend's or relative's private cabin or a Twin Cities resident out on a day trip being an Explorer, Player, or Pilgrim.

A speculative third market, could be developed which would promote the fly/drive semi-structured model of bringing Players to the Crossroads Destination Area, rent them a car, accommodating them in a lakeside resort but pro-

viding them with appropriate tourist information about the Mississippi River and the Great River Road.

Marketing Summary

The primary target market are the self-structured or semi-structured Players, Loungers, and Spectators looking for a diversion from their standard routines. The benefit to these tourists, is an expansion of their recreational opportunities. The benefit to the resort owners, where the Players and Loungers are currently staying, is an enhanced location with a wider range of recreational opportunities to offer visitors. The major attractions to Players is the excellent sport fishing available on the river. The recreational opportunities, particularly hiking and bicycling, found in riverfront parks, especially in Crow Wing and Lindbergh State Parks, would also be of interest to Players. Of interest to Loungers and Spectators would be the scenic drive, cultural events and celebrations in Brainerd and Little Falls, and selected historic sites, particularly the Lindbergh Home. Players may find the Minnesota Fishing Museum in Little Falls intriguing.

Capital Improvements

Capital improvements should first be oriented to establishing the Mississippi River and the Great River Road as a destination for Players, Loungers, and Spectators. First by supporting diversionary travel by Players, Loungers, and Spectators that structure their own itinerary; followed by promoting travel by structured groups. By following a strategy of accommodating Players, Loungers, and Spectators, the Mississippi River and the Great River Road would become more noticeable to the local residents. Since a significant amount of tourism in the area



is derived from Guests, making residents more aware of the river and road should increase unstructured tours of the Great River Road and its associated attractions by Guests.

Suggested capital improvements to enhance the tourist experience include several that are associated with the highway and could be implemented by state and county transportation agencies with assistance from other governmental agencies as necessary:

- Add distinctive mileage markers to enhance route identity and improve wayfinding. Mileage markers would clearly identify the route, reducing traveler anxiety. It would visually integrate the road, attractions, and services into a tourist-oriented system. Mileage markers would facilitate the development of private-sector authored tourist guides, including interpretative maps, guidebooks, and audio tours. Public and private attractions and services could describe their location using a mileage marker. By benefitting attractions and services the use of the system would be assured and awareness of the Great River Road as a destination would be enhanced.
- Install Great River Road route and directional markers at every junction with a state trunk highway and county roads with over 5,000 ADT. In particular, add or improve directional signs on TH 25, TH 210, TH 371, TH 27, and any county road with over 5,000 ADT, informing drivers of the junction with Great River Road.
- Re-designate the National Route in Brainerd to run concurrently with the less confusing State

Route, TH 210 and TH 371. From an Anchor Kiosk at the Tourist Information Center at the landmark Water Tower, direct tourists to the river.

- De-designate the National Route on TH 371 south of TH 115. Designate TH 115 past the Camp Ripley as the Great River Road National Route to Morrison County Road 213. Follow Morrison CR 213 to West River Road in Little Falls. Follow West River Road downstream to TH 27, or Broadway Street, which is the existing Great River Road. These segments of TH 115, Morrison County Road 213, and West River Road have superior views of the river than the existing National Route on TH 371. Designate these segments as the National Route.
- To accommodate bicycling, improve sidewalks and on-road trails on TH 210 and TH 371 in Brainerd. South of Brainerd create an off-road trail parallel to TH 371. Add 6- or 8-foot paved shoulders to TH 115 and Morrison County Road 213 to accommodate bicycling between TH 115 and West River Road. Create an off-road trail on West River Road to TH 27. Improve sidewalks and on-road trail on TH 27. Create off-road or improve on-road trail on Lindbergh Drive. Add, where necessary, 6- or 8-foot paved shoulders on Morrison County CSAH 52 south of Little Falls to accommodate bicycling.
- Add gateway sign to Crow Wing State Park on TH 371. Improve turning-movement safety from TH 371 at park entrance, if necessary to conform with traffic

engineering standards, or if perceived as necessary by tourists.

- Signify the importance of Brainerd and Little Falls to the Great River Road traveler by creating appropriate gateway monuments.
- Work with MOT and the cities of Brainerd and Little Falls to add Great River Road Anchor Kiosks at the Water Tower and Depot Tourist Information Centers. Use these kiosks to orient travelers to all of the other features that can be seen off of the Great River Road spine, highlighting especially those attractions and services in the individual anchor.
- Standardize and improve signs to existing rest areas and future attractions along the route, especially Fort Ripley Landing.
- Add rest area facilities and generally improve Fort Ripley Landing by creating views of the river from TH 371, adding a paved parking lot, a well and hand pump, bike racks, a picnic table and small shelter, interpretative markers, and signs identifying the landing as a rest area.

Capital improvement projects for public recreational facilities are generally outside the jurisdiction of Mn/DOT to fund but deserve consideration as projects that would enhance the experience of the Great River Road tourist. As recreational projects near highways, joint-development agreements between Mn/DOT and the provider may be a practical way to reduce construction costs. It is not uncommon for parking lots, for instance, to be paved at a significant savings when an adjacent road-



way is being paved. Typically these projects are funded by those federal, state, and local agencies charged with providing recreational facilities. Such projects include:

- Add standard graphic symbols for recreational facilities to existing brown information signs that are used to direct traffic to various attractions. For example, add symbols indicating that tent camping, RV and trailer camping, hiking, and boat launching are available at Crow Wing State Park to directional sign on TH 371.
- To avoid disappointing tourists, post notice of closures (season or days of the week) on the brown information signs that direct tourists to attractions if the attraction is not open daily throughout the year.
- Evaluate with managing agencies and improve, as necessary, the access to the river by canoes and boats. Accesses to be evaluated include those in Brainerd (Lum Park, Evergreen Landing, and the canoe access in Kiwanis Park), Crow Wing State Park, Fletcher Creek Landing, Belle Prairie County Park, Little Falls Dam, LeBourget Park in Little Falls, Pike Creek Landing, and the Minnesota Power Landing at the Blanchard Pool. Working with managing agencies, evaluate the need to locate and create a new carry-in access downstream from the Blanchard Dam.
- Improve docks and docking facilities in the pools above the Brainerd, Little Falls, and Blanchard dams for both docking boats and for fishing.

Capital improvement projects related to interpreting or preserving cultural resources are typically not funded by Mn/DOT unless a transportation function can be identified. Several projects that would enhance the tourist's understanding of cultural resources have been proposed by the community. Projects that may include an association with transportation include:

- The renovation and adaptive reuse of the Northern Pacific Railroad Shops.
- Expand existing heritage walking tour in Brainerd, by expanding the number of markers, emphasizing the community's "cross-roads" themes, especially those themes related to recreation, the river, and the railroad. Tie the heritage walking tour into the Great River Road Anchor at Brainerd's Water Tower Tourist Information Center.
- Develop and install interpretive markers as part of a similar heritage walking tour for Little Falls. Tie this heritage walking tour into the Great River Road Anchor at the Little Falls' Depot Tourist Information Center.
- Create, possibly with Crow Wing State Park, and interpretive program that discusses how the evolution of transportation effects settlement patterns, explaining how Old Crow Wing was originally dependent on river trade, then the ox cart trade; Brainerd on the railroad; Baxter on the car.
- Develop and improve overlooks of the three hydroelectric dams as part of an interpretive program for how the dams harness the river's energy.

Projects to improve cultural resource attractions have been discussed by the community and would be of benefit to tourists but probably would not be eligible for funding from Mn/DOT include:

- Developing the Little Elk Archaeological Site as an interpretive site open for tourists.
- Several projects that would be utilized primarily by residents but would improve the experience of tourists could be incorporated into a general strategy to enhance the attractiveness of the community to tourists. Typically none of these projects would receive financial support from Mn/DOT but could receive verbal support as important additions to Great River Road tourist facilities. These projects include:
- The joint development of shared parking, contact stations, trails, and interpretive facilities for Lindbergh State Park and the Lindbergh House State Historic Site.
 - The development of an outdoor amphitheater near the waterfront in downtown Brainerd and in downtown Little Falls.
 - Improve parking for Crow Wing County Museum.
 - Induce commercial development of the riverfront, especially restaurants and accommodations that overlook the river.

Promotional Strategies

Strategies for enhancing the experience of the Great River Road tourist could involve altering management or promotion of attractions and services in the Mississippi Headwaters Demonstration Area. These strategies could be implemented by Federal, State, Local



governmental authorities or private associations.

Several strategies could be implemented by state agencies. Those that could be implemented by Mn/DOT include:

- Verifying the existence and adequate condition of Great River Road route, directional, and mileage markers each spring prior to Memorial Day and the beginning of the tourist season.

Those strategies that could be implemented by DNR and MHS include:

- Selling discounted daily or weekly passes at resorts for trips to Lindbergh and Crow Wing state parks and the Lindbergh House Historic Site. This would give the resort owners another local attraction to include in their vacation packages and the DNR and MHS extra revenue.
- Jointly (DNR and MHS) manage parking services to increase visitation by group-structured and self-structured tourists of Lindbergh State Park and Lindbergh House Historic Site. Promote bus parking with tour bus operators.
- Establish discounted MHS tickets for campers; discounted camping with MHS ticket.
- Cross promote other local attractions at Lindbergh State Park and Lindbergh House Historic Site.
- If popular, consider adding more cabins to campground.
- Promoting bicycling on the Great River Road between Crow Wing and Lindbergh state parks.

- Developing (or encouraging the private development of) canoe and bicycle rental and retrieval services between the two state parks.

- Distributing Great River Road Mississippi Crossroads map illustrating the Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area to tourists at the two state parks.

Those strategies that could be developed by the Minnesota Office of Tourism (MOT) include:

- Exploit nationally and internationally the publicity that will follow the movie about Lindbergh by stressing his connections to Little Falls and the Mississippi River.
- Developing with Northwest Airlines ways to increase passenger traffic between the Twin Cities Airport (MSP) and the Brainerd Airport.
- Promote Little Falls as a destination for private aviators interested in Charles Lindbergh.
- Study the feasibility of developing fly/drive options between MSP and Brainerd.

Those strategies that could be implemented jointly by Mn/DOT, DNR, MOT, and others include:

- Develop a discounted single ticket for all of the museums in Little Falls that would admit people into the various venues for a single price. Try to include the Lindbergh House Historical Site, Lindbergh State Park, Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Memorial Museum, and the Minnesota Fishing Museum. Consider selling the tickets with a purchase of accommodations

at local resorts, inns, and hotels or a meal from a local restaurant.

- Creating a Great River Road Mississippi Crossroads Destination Area map for public distribution through agencies and private venues throughout the region. This would include Tourist Information Centers, state parks, regional bicycle shops, lodging accommodations, and car rental agencies at the Brainerd Airport.

Several strategies could be implemented by the cities of Brainerd or Little Falls or their tourism promotion or business organizations:

- Promote use of winter visitation on local snow mobile trails highlighting attractions along the river that remain open in the winter.
- Promote the archaeological digs at Elk River as a "camp" for Explorers.
- Discuss creating a tradition of acting historic plays in an outdoor amphitheater on the Mississippi river. Commission or use existing plays about historical figures, such as James J. Hill, Weyerhaeuser, and Charles Lindbergh to stage stories about local history and the Mississippi River. These could be a rotating annual performances that become widely known and attract many people.
- Use this outdoor amphitheater, adjacent to the lake or river for local dance, theater, and music productions.
- Expand promotion of Brainerd's heritage walking trail; Create one in Little Falls.



- Use local accommodations and restaurants to promote local tourist attractions, such as a using illustrative standard restaurant placemap.
- Develop and promote annual conferences about Lindbergh, Weyerhaeuser, the Mississippi River or other Great River Road topics for discussion at the Linden Hill Conference and Retreat Center in Little Falls.

Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area Geographic Description

The Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area is located in the heart of Hennepin and Ramsey Counties encompassing the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The downtown riverfronts of the two cities anchor the Demonstration Area. Between the downtowns, the Great River Road hugs the river, rarely more than a block away and frequently only separated by vegetation and terrain. The anchors are the original commercial heart of not only these cities but of the metropolitan region as a whole.

Indeed, Minneapolis and St. Paul are a gateway to the whole state. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) is a primary conduit for tourists entering the state. It is important to recognize that the marketing the Mississippi Gorge or even more generally, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) as a desirable destination, is not only important for developing the Twin Cities tourist market but it is critical to the success of marketing the Mississippi River and Great River Road throughout the state. The Twin Cities will be the initial contact many tourists will have of the Mississippi River and the Great River Road in Minnesota.

As the economy of the region has changed so has the relationship the two cities have had with the Mississippi River been altered. Today it is primarily recreational oriented. Nonetheless, the Mississippi is still a working river and many industrial activities still occur on its banks.

Resources The Mississippi River

The gorge is a remarkable landform. It is the only high narrow channel bounded by cliffs on both sides on the entire length of the 2,348 mile river. It is picturesque any time of the year: soft shades of green, yellow, and even red, as vegetation buds out in the spring, become a verdant wall in summer, changing into a virtual TRIX bowl of color in the autumn, and turning into a surreal black and white photograph of silhouetted tree trunks made crisp and clean in a wonderland of winter snow and ice.

The cliffs have made the river less accessible from the residential areas of the city. Logically, it was where the river was approachable that the original cities developed and the commercial cores remain.

In St. Paul, the city that developed first, the original settlers

located their town on the lower and upper landings, which was as far as steamboats could travel. Further upstream large rocks, remnants of an ancient waterfall that had by then migrated upstream, littered the river and made passage difficult. Upstream, Minneapolis waited patiently for the railroad to emerge as the major transportation mode. Nonetheless, its development was also deeply connected to the Mississippi River and the power sequestered in St. Anthony Falls.

The Great River Road Vehicular Transportation

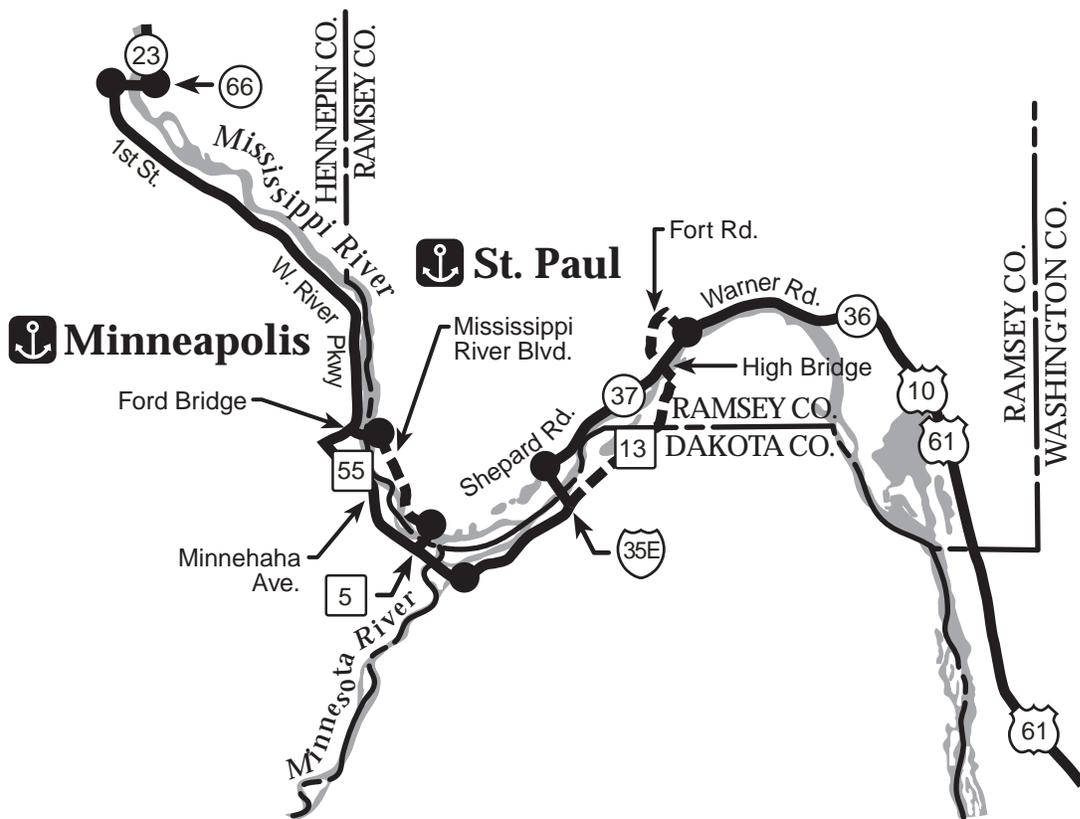
The designated Federal Route of the Great River Road follows the river closely, staying primarily on local municipal streets and county roads. Occasionally, it uses a trunk highway such as the Mendota Bridge and TH 55. Three Interstate Highways are used in the Twin Cities: I-494 is used to cross the Mississippi as it enters Minneapolis; I-35E as it enters St. Paul from Mendota; and I-494 just before it leaves the Capitol City.

The Great River Road in Minneapolis starts on Marshall Avenue near the Minneapolis Water Works and winds its way primarily on the Minneapolis Parkway system

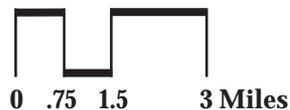


St. Anthony Falls, named by Father Louis Hennepin in the 17th Century, has been a major landmark on the Mississippi River ever since people populated the region. It is the largest waterfall on the Mississippi and is the reason Minneapolis was established. The waterfall represents the second highest amount of energy that any waterfall is capable of generating in North America. Only Niagara Falls is capable of generating more power.





- Interstate Route
- U.S. Route
- State Route
- County Route
- Anchor
- Junction
- Existing Great River Road Route
- Proposed Great River Road Route



Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area



through downtown, past St. Anthony Falls, on to the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway to Minnehaha Park where it meets TH 55 near Ft. Snelling. Crossing over the Mendota Bridge, the road follows the river downstream to I-35E where it crosses into St. Paul and on to Sheppard Road. By the lower landing, Sheppard Road becomes Warner Road and the Great River Road continues to TH 61. It follows TH 61 south to west I-494 where it crosses the river again and transverses through West St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights.

The Great River Road crosses the river five times in this destination area, on I-694, on the Broadway Bridge, on the Mendota Bridge, on I-35E, and on I-494.

Bicycle Transportation

Roads are not strictly for motorized vehicular transportation. The Great River Road especially was conceived to provide a route for recreational bicycling. The original Great River Road Design Guidelines, established in 1981, called for a four-foot paved shoulder or an eight-foot off-road trail where practical to accommodate bicycling. Design standards have changed significantly since those original guidelines were



Trails currently exist throughout much of the Metropolitan area. Completing the trails and connecting them to the larger MNRRRA Destination Area would improve recreational opportunities.

established. Currently, a ten-foot shoulder or eight-foot off-road trail is considered minimal for State-Aid Funded County Road projects. In practice, a ten-foot surface is preferred for off-road multi-modal trails also.

In Minneapolis and St. Paul, an extensive, although not complete, bicycle and pedestrian trail parallels the Great River Road. Shoulders exist on most other routes but traffic volumes and speeds may discourage all but the most experienced cyclists. Missing segments include Marshall Avenue in Northeast Minneapolis, TH 61 in St. Paul, add bike map and Concord in West St. Paul. There are not any trail facilities on the bridges on I-35E and I-494. A separate trail bridge does parallel the I-694 bridge.

Transportation System Summary

According to Mn/DOT data, all roads are adequately wide and paved. However, the Minneapolis parkway roads with 11-foot lanes are one foot narrower than is typical on the Great River Road. Trails and shoulders are generally theoretically adequate but traffic volumes



Mill Ruins, on the site of the original home of General Mills, and slated to become an interpretive and visitor center, will be a key component in attracting tourists to Minneapolis' riverfront.

and speed render them unsafe except for the most experienced riders. The use of Interstate Highways poses a particular problem for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Where the Great River Road in on Interstate Highways, bicycle and pedestrian traffic is prohibited and usually it has not been accommodated for with constructing parallel trails.

Attractions and Services

Recreational and cultural attractions abound by the hundreds throughout the demonstration area. The discussion is divided into three parts: the Minneapolis Anchor, the St. Paul Anchor, and the *Connecting Corridor* between and beyond the anchors.

Upstream Anchor

Although, Minneapolis emphasizes the historic aspects of the riverfront, particularly downtown, historic exploration is not the only activity that occurs along the river. Residents and tourists alike enjoy relaxing, playing, or being entertained along the riverfront.

Cultural Resources

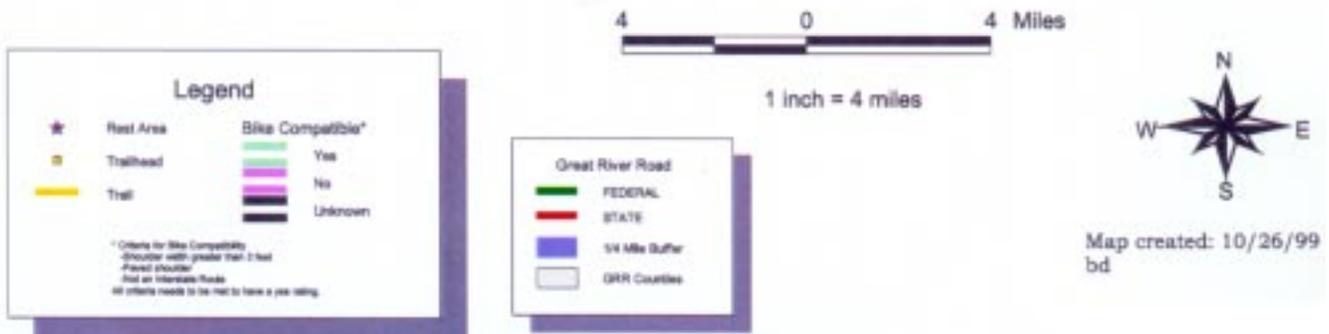
A good place to start touring historic buildings in Minneapolis is

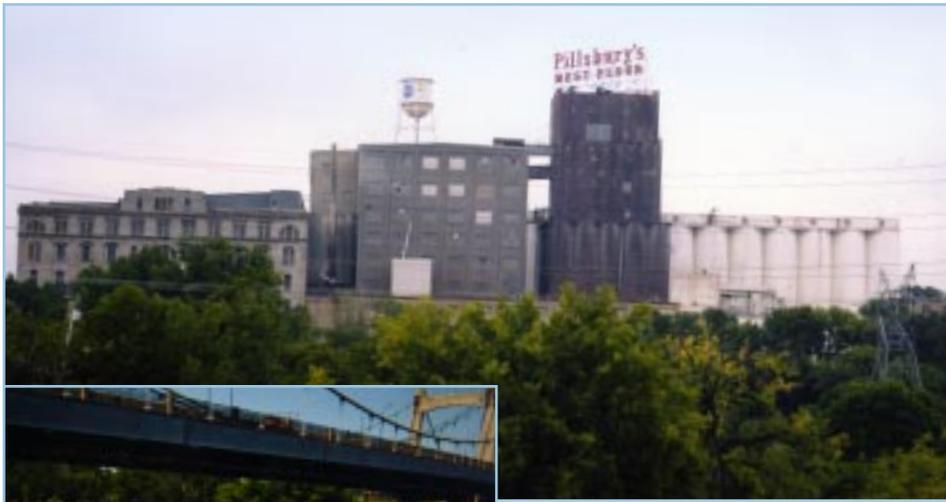


The Great River Road Development Study

Transportation Resources

“Mississippi Gorge” Minneapolis to St. Paul





Top: Global companies, such as Pillsbury, started by utilizing the inherent power of the Mississippi River. **Left:** The first bridge over the Mississippi was a suspension bridge in the same location as this modern structure. The interpretive panel explains the original structure.

the St. Anthony Falls area. With public interpretation at the planned Mill Ruins Park and the heritage trail as well as numerous historic buildings of national, state and local significance, this area provides a great amenity for explorers.

Holding the unique distinction of the only major waterfalls on the Mississippi River, St. Anthony Falls has been a focal point for human settlement for generations. The power of the falls combined with a unique geology that permitted the easy construction of tail races, made it especially desirable for industrial development. Beginning with the construction of the Falls of St. Anthony Dam in 1858, the falls became “the country’s greatest waterpower industrial district...[and] the country’s leading flour milling center” by the turn of the century. Although the primary use was initially for saw mills, by the 1870s, most lumber operations had moved upstream, and flour milling predominated. At the Falls of St. Anthony the “new

process” flour milling was developed, which allowed the hard wheat grown in western Minnesota and the Dakotas to be milled into a pure white flour. The water power provided by St. Anthony Falls created jobs, electrical power, some of the world’s finest flour, and two multinational corporations – Pillsbury and General Mills. While many of the mill complexes were demolished following the shift of the milling industry to cities like Chicago and Buffalo, the power of St. Anthony Falls and the remaining structures of the Washburn Crosby mills and the Pillsbury mills echo the area’s predominance as the milling center of the Midwest. The well-developed interpretive program that exists for the dam and the industrial complexes that grew around it add an important and informative element to the Great River Road corridor.

Transportation was also important to St. Anthony Falls. The flour, beer, and other goods manufactured near the falls would have gone to

waste without dependable means of transporting the goods to Eastern and Midwestern markets. The rail lines and barges carried these goods north to Lake Superior for transport to Canada, the eastern United States, and markets abroad or south to St. Louis, New Orleans, or other major ports. Along with other sites, the Great Northern Stone Arch Bridge and the Milwaukee Road Depot illustrate the role of the railroads. The Milwaukee Depot is currently being redeveloped and will include public historical interpretation.

The Minneapolis Brewing Company (Grain Belt) is significant as a property that illustrates the importance of the agricultural product processing industry in Minneapolis and the impact of German immigrants on the agricultural industry of the state. Founded in 1890 following the merger of four Minneapolis breweries run by German immigrants, the Minneapolis Brewing and Malting Company grew to be one of the largest breweries in the Midwest by the early part of the twentieth century. Prohibition caused the brewery to turn to soft drink production and eventually to close until Repeal in 1933. By the 1950s, the sales of Grain Belt beer brought the company back to its pre-Prohibition sales. The Minneapolis Brewing Company closed its doors in 1975. Although now vacant, the German and Richardsonian Romanesque brewery buildings convey the heritage and tradition of beer making in the Midwest. The Grain Belt sign has become an icon for the historic industrial development of Minneapolis’ riverfront. Another important group of historic buildings in Minneapolis is the warehouse district. This historic area illustrates Minneapolis’ early commercial development of the mid-nineteenth century as well as the city’s development as a major

wholesale center during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only did Minneapolis draw in and process agricultural produce from the Upper Midwest, the city was a distribution center for manufactured goods from the east to rural areas to the west. Thus, the warehouse district could compliment nicely the interpretive efforts at St. Anthony Falls.

As Minnesota's largest city, the history of the community development of Minneapolis is complex. Immigrants from all parts of the globe have come to Minneapolis to carve out a life from the resources and opportunities available in this city. One area in particular that exemplifies community development in Minneapolis is the Milwaukee Avenue Historic District. Located between St. Anthony Falls and Fort Snelling, this neighborhood represents the earliest controlled housing development in Minneapolis. Platted and designed in 1883, the housing was mainly occupied by Scandinavian workers from the nearby industrial plants or by common trade craftsmen, such as carpenters, blacksmiths, and buttermakers.

Minnesota recognized the need for an institution of higher learning for its residents and, after a few initial setbacks, the University of Minnesota was founded in 1867. The University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District illustrates development of the campus during the nineteenth century, including buildings for the arts, law, medicine, education, and nursing. The buildings were constructed in architectural styles ranging from Queen Anne to Richardsonian Romanesque to Jacobethan Revival. Campus design during the early twentieth century is illustrated in the Northrup Mall area. Originally planned by Cass Gilbert to overlook the Mississippi River, the mall, as



Things are rapidly changing on the riverfront. Within twelve months of this picture being taken the North Star Blankets building has been converted into housing. One of the first buildings to be renovated on the river is now the Hyatt. Note the earlier versions of interpretive markers.

designed by prominent landscape architects Morell and Nichols, retains a central open space at the campus that is closely linked to the river. Furthermore, the mall is lined with classically inspired buildings designed by the prolific Minnesota architect Clarence Johnston, Sr.

The development of the Mill Ruins Park or the redevelopment of the Grain Belt Brewery site would provide an excellent location for developing the Upstream Anchor Kiosk. Mill Ruins Park may be preferred because the discussion of how Minneapolis has employed the river will be discussed at this location. Moreover, the Minnesota Historical Society's plans for an interpretive center include a visitor information facility.

Recreational and River Resources

According the National Park Service the Mississippi River is a recreational river of national caliber. Minneapolis boasts a continuous park and parkway from Boom Island to Minnehaha Regional Park. These parklands are part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway and

provide excellent recreational, historic, and scenic opportunities for the tourist. Grand Rounds provides a scenic parkway for the tourist in a vehicle, bicycling, or walking along the river. A classic nineteenth century designed landscape, it was redesigned by InterDesign, a innovative design firm headed by

architect, Dewey Thorbeck, graphic designer, Peter Seitz, and landscape architect, Roger Martin in the mid-1970s. The architectural, graphic, and landscape architectural design features were coordinated to create an invitingly harmonious design, including the signature red pavement, wide concrete curbs, brown square sign and light posts, and rustic park amenities.

The park on Boom Island features riverboat tours, boat and canoe launches, fishing, hiking, and picnicking. Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park features boat and canoe launches, fishing, hiking, bicycling, a heritage trail, and picnicking. St. Anthony Falls itself is interpreted by a guided tours and a self-guided heritage trail. The Gorge Regional Park is primarily a linear experience for drivers, hikers, and bicyclists with scattered stops for scenic overlooks, picnicking, and exploring.

The Minneapolis Aquatennial, Independence Day, and even an annual New Year's Eve Celebration occur on the riverfront attracting thousands of people.



Probably the premier recreational attraction is Minnehaha Regional Park where Minnehaha Falls graces the landscape. Several ethnic celebrations occur in the park, notably a large Scandinavian Festival.

The park has extensive trails to explore the interesting geology of the falls and glen. A playground, a large refractory, a band stand, a heritage walk, and overlooks provide ample recreational opportunities. Early travelers, including Zebulon Pike, sought Minnehaha Falls. The park is now in the Minnehaha Historic District, encompassing not only the falls and glen, but also the Victorian "Princess" Station, the Greek Revival style John H. Stevens house (important for its role in early Minnesota government events), and the Longfellow House. (Longfellow and other 19th century transcendentalists inspired the park's original designers. A replica of Longfellow's

home is located in the park. The stream running through the park and several adjacent streets were named after Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha.") Later the "fashionable tour" always placed the splendid falls on their lists of stops. Now surrounded by a large city park, Minnehaha Falls continues to draw people for recreational activities.

One potential attraction for players and spectators would be the proposed white water park being contemplated by various interests and agencies. The park would utilize an abandoned aqueduct to create a white water run for kayakers and other daredevils. The costs and benefits of such a proposal are currently being examined. Excellent viewing from the Stone Arch Bridge and along Main Street would undoubtedly be attractive to tourists.

Tourist Services

Although the Gorge Destination Area is primarily a park, there are several restaurants, shops, and other entertainment outlets that line Main Street in Old St. Anthony, across the river from downtown. The downtown side also has dozens of establishments devoted to shopping and entertainment but most are oriented introspectively, not

to the river. Nonetheless, it is the downtown side of the river where hotels like the Hyatt and Nicollet Island Inn which by occupying old industrial buildings with views of the Mississippi that a tourist would feel the presence of the river.

There have been discussions about placing a sports stadium either for the Minnesota Twins, Vikings, or both on the riverfront. Many excursion boats travel through the Gorge each year. The University of Minnesota has traditionally been home to the Mississippi Showboat, a summer theater on a boat anchored in the river next to the University. The Showboat, however, is scheduled to move to St. Paul and Harriet Island Regional Park in the year 2000.

The Minneapolis Park Board in cooperation with the Minnesota Historical Society is developing Mill Ruins Park. The park will have the ability to orient tourists to the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway and thus Great River Road as well as Minneapolis, the upstream anchor of the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area.

Downstream Anchor

Like Minneapolis, the river in St. Paul is bounded by parks interspersed with industrial development, particularly near downtown. As the historical head of navigation, the St. Paul riverfront is known for its wealth of cultural resources related to earlier commercial activities. Although, the riverfront is still home to commercial enterprises, it has recently been transformed by an effort to enhance the recreational opportunities.

Cultural Resources

Several residences illustrate the impact that important individuals had on the development of St. Paul. As Minnesota Territorial governor, mayor of St. Paul, and as an early governor of the state, Alexander Ramsey's impact on the development of St. Paul and Minnesota was extensive. The Alexander Ramsey House connects the modern-day visitor with one of the most influential



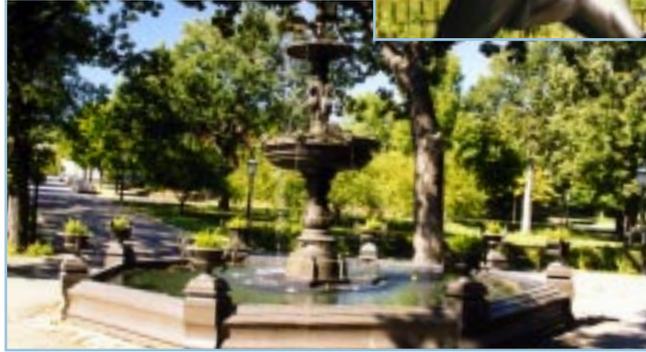
Top: Commercial attractions and community events abound along Main Street in old St. Anthony. Guided and Self-Guided Historical Walking Tours of the Mill District are increasingly popular. **Above:** Minnehaha Falls is a beautifully poetic falls in a wonderfully designed park that provides a relaxed and entertaining time for visitors.

men of Minnesota's early history.

The geographic isolation of the Historic Hill neighborhood above the industrial and business oriented portions of St. Paul and the largely undeveloped, open spaces made the area a prime focus for residential development during the late nineteenth century. As transportation and access continued to improve during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, more diversification in the ethnic, social, and economic status of the Historic Hill residents occurred. One of the first major expansions off the Historic Hill area was West Summit Avenue. Developed mainly between 1885 and 1938, the West Summit Avenue Historic District is "the largest unbroken avenue of Colonial Revival and Classical Revival-style architect-designed houses in the Twin Cities" The eastern end of Summit Avenue housed many wealthy and influential individuals, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote short stories and his first published novel, *This Side of Paradise*, at his parents' house at 559 Summit Avenue. Important not only for residential structures, the West Summit Avenue Historic District also includes schools, colleges, and churches that serviced the residents of St. Paul.

St. Paul also presents a unique property related to the railroad portion of this theme - the James J. Hill house. Hill is known as "one of the great railroad builders in the American West and one of the leading financiers of the nineteenth century." Hill purchased his first railroad in 1878 (the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad) and, along with his subsequent railroad purchases, formed the Great Northern Railway Company. Hill is known for his wise management style and fiscal conservatism in running his business, and for his leadership in expanding mar-

Right: Paul Manship's statue, *A boy and his dog*, graces a small park on Summit Avenue. Although not commonly known, Manship, a St. Paul native, has very highly regarded art. (One of his most famous statue, *Prometheus* is on display in Rockefeller Plaza in New York and is seen nightly during the introduction of *The David Letterman Show*.)



Left: Formal parks like Irvine Park connect modern tourists to the propriety of 19th Century America.

kets in the Midwest and Pacific regions. Both the Hill House and the nearby Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House were restored using Great River Road funds.

The former Schmidt Brewery, currently operated by the Minnesota Brewing Company, illustrates the agricultural processing industries that developed in St. Paul. Founded as the Stahlman Brewery in 1855, the plant was acquired by Jacob Schmidt in the 1890s, who rebuilt the plant to resemble a Bavarian castle with crenelated towers and arched windows. Other portions of the brewery are in the moderne style and illustrate the post-Prohibition expansion during the 1930s.

Another significant residential area of St. Paul is encompassed in the Uppertown area, including the Irvine Park Historic District. Developed during the mid to late nineteenth century, this area extends southwest from downtown between West Seventh Street and the river. The area is notable for its examples of early residential devel-

opment, its range of Victorian architectural styles, its range of housing types from workers' cottages to grand mansions. Due to the diversity of its built environment, the Uppertown area presents numerous interpretive possibilities.

The civic properties associated with this theme in St. Paul include the Rice Park Historic District, the Horace Irvine House, and the State Capital. Rice Park played an important role in the community development of St. Paul. It was designated originally as a public square in the 1849 plat of Henry M. Rice and John R. Irvine. The original basic public square has been redesigned over the last 150 years, including dramatic make-overs in 1898 as part of the "City Beautiful" movement and in the 1965 addition of a stepped, concrete bowl and statue. The area around it has been developed with office buildings, a library and a hotel. Although the layout of the park has evolved with landscape design trends, Rice Park continues its 150-year tradition as a popular St. Paul tourist destination. The last



properties associated with this theme for St. Paul are the State Capital and the Horace Irvine House. The Irvine House, an English Tudor mansion constructed for the St. Paul attorney and lumberman, was dedicated to the State of Minnesota in 1965. Following renovations, the house was allocated for use as the governor's mansion. The State Capital building holds significance on many levels. The structure was designed by the famous St. Paul architect Cass Gilbert, who executed the capital in the Classic Revival style and included the world's largest self-supporting marble dome as a primary feature. Housing the state legislature and governor's office, the building is associated with the decisions and directions of the state government. Finally, the Capital symbolizes the beliefs and ideals of Minnesota's public and allows for a tangible representation of our ideas of democracy and freedom.

St. Paul's industrial heritage is directly related to the presence of well-developed railroad tracks, accessible water routes, and good road conditions. St. Paul's history as a commercial center is embodied in the Lowertown Historic District. Extending to Jackson Street, the district borders the Mississippi River and surrounds Smith Park. Lowertown was platted at one of St. Paul's two steamboat landings in 1851 by Norman Kittson, and it quickly grew into the city's main warehouse and jobbing center. As the railroads came to St. Paul in the 1860s and 1870s, they were naturally attracted to the established commercial area. As a result of the transportation connections, four and five story brick warehouses and factories, designed by architects such as Cass Gilbert and J. Walter Stevens, came to line the streets of Lowertown. During the 1960s and

1970s, the efforts of Norman Mears and the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation paved the way for Lowertown's revitalization and redevelopment

The properties associated with the Community Development theme for St. Paul can be broken into three main categories: residential, civic, and religious. The religious category is represented by the St. Paul Cathedral. The cathedral complex, built over a roughly twenty-five year period, was the brainchild of Minnesota's Archbishop John Ireland. Ireland helped select Emmanuel L. Masqueray to design the new cathedral. Drawing heavy inspiration from St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Masqueray incorporated Byzantine, Greek, and Gothic architectural elements into the cathedral. Looming over the capital mall and downtown area, the Cathedral of St. Paul fulfilled Ireland's dream of being a symbol of "the strength and solidity of Catholicism in the Upper Midwest" Chapels dedicated to the patron saints of Minnesota's ethnic groups are located next to each other within the structure illustrating ethnic diversity united in Catholicism.

River and Recreational Resources

Harriet Island is located on the western bank of St. Paul and has served as a recreational center for most of the twentieth century. It is undergoing extensive renovation and will soon become the region's premier river-oriented urban park. While most of the structures from the park's early days have been demolished, the park still retains the feel of a recreational area. The

Harriet Island Pavilion, a Moderne Style structure constructed by the WPA in 1941 is considered "an important visual component in the public landscape of the City of St. Paul."

The revitalized park will include facilities for recreation and entertainment. It is anticipated that many outdoor festivals will occur on Harriet Island. The Mississippi Showboat is relocating to the park. Excursion "paddlewheelers" will continue to be docked. A unique floating restaurant and B&B are also anchored next to the park. Fishing, boat launching are permitted.

Lower Left: A park adjacent to Kellogg Boulevard in downtown St. Paul provides excellent views of the river. **Below:** The dynamic forms of commercial architecture and the vibrancy of the downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis create an irresistible attraction for tourists



Like its sister across the river, St. Paul's Mississippi Gorge Regional Park provides beautiful views of the river from trails and parkways. It is a popular destination for residents seeking relaxation and exercise.

Indian Mounds Park overlooks the Mississippi River from a high bluff providing panoramic views of downtown St. Paul and the river. The park contains six prehistoric burial mounds constructed over 2,000 years ago.

There are two marinas in St. Paul, the St. Paul Yacht Club on Harriet Island and the Watergate Marina across the river from Ft. Snelling.

The Children's Museum, the Science Museum, the Museum of American Art provide entertainment and the opportunity to explore in downtown St. Paul. The Ordway Music Theater provides a world-class venue for classical and other music. The Fitzgerald Theater is home to the Prairie Home Companion Radio Show which attracts a national audience. The new NHL hockey team, the Minnesota Wild, will be housed next to RiverCentre, St. Paul's convention center.

There are nearly 6000 hotel rooms in the Twin Cities with the plurality being in Bloomington near the airport and the Mall of America.

Transportation Resources

Most of the Great River Road is on parkway. However, the use of I-35E as the connection between Minneapolis and St. Paul via Mendota complicates the use of the Great River Road by non-vehicular traffic.

The downstream Anchor Kiosk should be developed in conjunction with the new Science Museum of Minnesota which will face the Mississippi River. The museum will feature displays on the ecology and human use of the Mississippi River.

The Connecting Corridor

This area illustrates Minnesota's history during the early nineteenth century, and it contains the oldest standing buildings and structures in the state. In particular, Fort Snelling and the Sibley House are historic sites with strong interpretive programs run by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Cultural Resources

Strategically located at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, Fort Snelling served as the first U.S. military outpost in the area, both as a supply depot and an Army training facility. During the 1820s and 1830s, the fort, along with Grand Portage on Lake Superior, was the focal point of Euro-American activity in the region. While some of the buildings associated with Fort Snelling's early history have been demolished, it still contains numerous historic buildings and has an active interpretation program. As a witness to the state's history from the 1820s to the present, the fort is now a popular tourist destination for those interested in the story of Minnesota's past.

Across the Minnesota River on the Mississippi is the Mendota Historic District. This district, which includes the Sibley and Faribault houses from the 1830s, was an early fur trade center and provides excellent interpretation for the contact period in Minnesota. The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers at Mendota area attracted American Indians, early explorers, and fur traders. Fur Trade agent Henry H. Sibley arrived in Mendota in 1835 and began a long career as a Minnesota entrepreneur and politician. Named first congressional representative from the Minnesota Territory, Sibley was elected as the first governor of the newly formed

State of Minnesota. Mendota served as a central location for the exchange of furs for trade goods, a traveler's stop, and was even considered as a location for the state capital.

Fort Snelling State Park provides abundant opportunities for the tourist especially recreation related to understanding nature. The park is located in a river bottom forest inhabited by countless animals. Hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycling, swimming, fishing and bird watching are favorite pastimes. A new visitor and interpretive center orient visitors to the park. A new monument to the 1862 War between the United States and the Dakota is under construction on the site where the Dakota were hung and interned as prisoners after the war.

The Tourist Motivation

The type of tourists that have been traditionally attracted to the Mississippi Metropolitan Gorge Demonstration Area are Spectators and Accumulators. The area also attracts some Loungers, Players, Explorers, Pilgrims and many Guests.

As a demonstration area, the Mississippi Gorge has many similarities with and attracts some of the same tourists as the other demonstration areas. But a large and attractive metropolitan area, it also offers the capability of attracting tourists corresponding to all seven of the standard motivations. Explorers, Loungers, Players, Spectators, Accumulators, Pilgrims, and Guests are all present in large numbers. The primary attribute that differentiating the Mississippi Metropolitan Gorge Demonstration Area from the other demonstration areas, is its unsurpassed ability to cater to Spectators and Accumulators. Resources that support Spectators and Accumulators—such as stadiums, department stores,



hotels, and restaurants—are plentiful in a variety of price ranges. Spectators can be entertained by sporting or artistic events. Accumulators can be satiated by goods ranging from locally produced boutique items and rare international merchandise to common everyday products and necessities. Small art galleries, community theater and minor league teams exist next to world class museums, international theatrical productions, and world-series winning teams.

Few of these attractions, however, are associated with the river. The primary attractions located along the river are historic venues. Restaurants, some theater, and in St. Paul, 'a convention center, science museum, and sport arena are in close proximity to the river. Both cities have extensive park land next to the waterfront. Recently, in downtown Minneapolis office buildings and residential housing have been increasingly oriented to the river.

Guests

Specifically Guests would be interested in the downtown anchors and other landmark attractions including, the Mall of America, St. Anthony Falls, the Stone Arch Bridge, Ft. Snelling, locks and dams, Grain Belt Brewery, Minnehaha Falls. They would also be intrigued by the great vistas from Cherokee Bluffs, Indian Mounds Park, the Stone Arch Bridge, Boom Island, and other sites along the gorge. They would be entertained by the distinctive riverside eateries, riverboat excursions, and numerous family attractions like, the Science Museum, Bell Museum, and the Children's Museum.

Loungers

loungers would enjoy the luxury hotels and quaint B&B's in riverside

neighborhoods. They could stroll or bicycle along the many riverside trails. Be pampered by local paddle-wheel cruises or enjoy an extended ramble on the one of the "Queen" riverboats. Visiting the area's many museums would also be relaxing to many tourists.

Players

The opportunity for urban fishing, kayaking, boating, golfing are here. The Twin Cities Marathon is an event that exposes many tourists to the beauty of the Mississippi Gorge. The potential development of a whitewater facility at St. Anthony Falls would be attractive to players. Players would also enjoy the recreational opportunities represented by the extensive riverside trail system and over 17,000 acres of parks that line the river in the Twin Cities. Bicycling in particular could be an activity that would attract many players to the Mississippi Gorge.

Explorers

The extensive opportunities to interpret nature represented by the parks and open space would be attractive to explorers interested in nature. The exploration of historic and archaeological sites would also be of interest. Exploring historic architecture or ethnic neighborhoods would be places that explorers would venture. Witnessing the raw power and beauty of the river, as seen in several locations in the gorge, particularly at St. Anthony Falls and the other six waterfalls that discharge into the Mississippi River), would also be inviting to explorers. To foster exploration, the National Park Service has introduced the Mississippi Passport which rewards people for discovering the natural and cultural resources associated with the river.

Spectators

Spectators are coveted throughout the destination area. Spectators include those who visit to see professional sports such as the Twins, Vikings, Wolves, or Wild. The University of Minnesota sports teams, state high school champions games, and even minor league sports attract spectators. Spectators also come to see the many art and entertainment venues that the Twin Cities have to offer from the Guthrie to the Jungle Theater and the Walker and Weisman to small art galleries. Eating is particularly important to spectators and the Twin Cities offers some superb dining opportunities right on the river. The restaurants on Main Street in Minneapolis are excellent in attracting tourists. Festivals occur throughout the year and throughout the community. Several are located on the river, typically in riverside parks. The Showboat brings spectators to river every summer to watch plays.

Pilgrims

Depending on the interests of a particular pilgrim, the Twin Cities offer several sites that could be valued by tourist. The history buff, for example, would be well-pleased, especially if they were interested in industrial archaeology, the creation of the modern corporation, early explorations, military history, or the history and culture of American Indians. The University of Minnesota and other learning institutions attract pilgrims as do conventions in both cities. Religious institutions and buildings also generate significant amounts of pilgrims from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to the Basilica of St. Mary and the St. Paul Cathedral.

Accumulators

The Twin Cities is the regional shopping center for those who like



to purchase goods and services. The world's largest enclosed mall, the Mall of America in Bloomington is only miles from the Great River Road. Its Underwater World is a major attraction that connects visitors to the Mississippi River by describing the ecology of the river. Neighborhood shopping districts like Grand Avenue, art galleries in the Minneapolis' warehouse district and in St. Paul's Lowertown attract accumulators specifically interested in art. Antiques and other speciality merchandisers are scattered throughout the corridor.

Tourist Styles

Tourists visiting the Mississippi Metropolitan Gorge Destination Area can be on structured, self-structured, semi-structured or unstructured visits. All styles are equally viable in the Twin Cities.

Structured and Semi-Structured Styles

Many tourists visit the Twin Cities on business or for business conventions. The structured conventions frequently create opportunities for people to see the river including excursion boat rides, riverfront meeting rooms, or riverside hotels and restaurants. Structured and Semi-Structured tourists typically have free time that they can spend sightseeing and "doing-the-town." Many arrive for conferences and other business meetings.

Free time, when available, is often at the beginning, end, or during the evening of the conference or meeting. Even spouses of attendees are frequently directed to a slate of activities by the organizers. Therefore, to attract tourists to the Mississippi River and the Great River Road, it will be essential to promote the river to meeting hosts and organizers.

Self-Structured and Unstructured Styles

Self-structured and Unstructured visitors faces a wealth of things to see and do in the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area. The challenge will be to convey the Great River Road and the Mississippi River as a cohesive set of experiences to visitors who bumble into part of it or consult guides and other information sources when designing their itineraries.

Mall of America shoppers represent an important subset of tourists visiting the Twin Cities region. Once again, the challenge entails getting them out of the Mall and into the region. Resources include the Explore Minnesota shop, where materials should reveal to megamall patrons how close they are to the River, and group tour packagers seeking to gain competitive advantage by offering a product that combines shopping and cultural activities.

Geographic and Modal Characteristics

Thousands of tourists arrive daily from all over the world in the Twin Cities by car, plane, train, and bicycle. Midwestern cities predominate but with the Mall of America a significant portion from Asia and Europe also find the Twin Cities a destination. Rental cars, shuttles, buses, and taxi services are available at the airport. Tourists frequently use rubber-wheeled trolleys and buses to sight-see.

An out-of-state tourist arriving by car typically comes by Interstate and finds the Tourist Information Centers on I-94 and I-35W useful. A Tourist Information Center is also staffed at the MSP International Airport.

Target Markets

Almost all tourists visiting the

Twin Cities would potentially be the Mississippi River and the Great River Road clientele. Many already visit river-oriented destinations. The largest return on a promotional investment, however, would be to focus on the Structured Accumulator and Spectator. They have come to the Twin Cities to see it and are prepared to spend money. The focus would be to alert these tourists to enjoyable riverfront locations which would extend their stay or hasten their return.

Capital Improvements

More so than any of the other areas, the Mississippi Metropolitan Gorge Demonstration Area caters to pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorized traffic. Its compact size, existing riverfront trails, and limited space for parking and/or pull-offs all combine to make recreation more desirable than pleasure driving along this section of the Great River Road. Since activities in this Demonstration Area are aimed primarily at Spectators and Accumulators, more must be done to provide access from the Mississippi River to existing and planned entertainment and shopping destinations in and between Minneapolis and St. Paul. In light of the existing nature of the urban riverfront, capital improvements undertaken in this Demonstration Area must respond to the need for enhanced linkages between the river and the cities. Ideas include:

- Link all existing riverfront trail systems together and unifying them with signage referencing the Great River Road and the Gorge demonstration area
- Provide interpretive signs along the trail system
- Create a Great River Road presence at the Visitors Center to be

incorporated into the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone

- Promote the Great River Road to residents by creating affiliated recreational events, e.g., a run for fun between the cities
- Designate and sign parking area
- Anchor the Great River Road Experience with visitor information centers at Mill Ruins State Historic Site in Minneapolis and the Science Museum in St. Paul which will be the riverfront destinations most likely to attract visitation independent of Great River Road promotion efforts.
- Focus interpretation on how the Mississippi relates to Minneapolis and St. Paul, incorporating such existing assets as: Sculling, art museum, Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, Hiawatha legend inspired parks, and Fort Snelling.

Promotional Strategies

The Gorge Demonstration Area offers a wealth of things to see and do. At the moment several obstacles to enhancing visitation to the Twin Cities need to be addressed, including:

- the Twin Cities' appeal as a leisure destination and particularly its relationship to the Mississippi River remains below the radar of the many business visitors, Mall of America shoppers and pass-through travelers bound for other parts of the State.
- regional residents, who control Guests' itineraries, view Minneapolis and St. Paul as functionally and culturally separate cities, connected

principally by several interstate caliber roadways rather than by the Mississippi River.

- these roadways are largely featureless and do little to illustrate how the cities are linked or the role the Mississippi River played in their evolution and their history.
- both communities are making strides in enhancing their waterfronts, but it is still a work in progress. Word has not yet reached Twin Cities residents that there are new and exciting things to do along the Mississippi

The Great River Road's alignment along the Mississippi River offers an alternative link between the two cities that knits them together both physically and thematically. It imposes a system for experiencing the Twin Cities as an integrated destination featuring two clusters of organized attractions and services.

The Great River Road makes the region more attractive as a destination because it creates critical mass, simply by making known and interpreting the themes and resources that connect them and assigning them an evocative and accurate name: the Mississippi Gorge.

Moreover, it creates a means of marketing the Twin Cities together; currently, each City has its own Convention and Visitors Bureau, although the Explore Minnesota web site addresses the Twin Cities as a region. Other regional initiatives are emerging, including the recent creation of a one-price joint ticket providing admission to ten area museums which can be used in conjunction with a \$3/day unlimited use transit pass to facilitate getting around the Twin Cities.

Marketing and promotions activ-

ities geared toward increasing visitation to the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area need to draw upon the Twin Cities role as the gateway to Minnesota and the region's potential to direct visitors to the rest of the Great River Road communities. Ideas include:

- Establish a presence at the Explore Minnesota USA store at the Mall of America
- Approach Northwest Orient about featuring the Great River Road in its in-flight magazine and entertainment video.
- Work with the State Travel Office and two CVBs to establish an identity for the Great River Road with group travel operators by participating in missions and trade shows, for example, the American Bus Association's annual convention, PowWow, etc.
- Enhance linkages with MNRRA and elevate the National Park Service's profile to capture the value of its imprimatur and offset its inability to market;
- Create a Great River Road-oriented day tour for people accompanying others attending conventions in the Twin Cities;
- Work with the area's professional sports teams to create Great River Road days, e.g., promotional opportunities incorporated into sporting events.
- Provide special events geared towards concierges at Twin Cities hotels.
- Identify area charities and work to create benefit events around the Great River Road, e.g., festivals and sports events.



Marketing the Mississippi Gorge should be aimed at promising a quality experience without overselling, which creates a risk that visitors will be disappointed and, hence, alienated. It should be geared primarily to structured and semi-structured groups; with self structured and unstructured groups, with an additional focus on rental car, airlines, hotels, CVBs and meeting organizers

Route Modifications

To improve the use of the roadway by vehicular and non-vehicular tourists, it is necessary that the existing route of the Great River Road be modified in the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area. Traveling downstream, no changes are necessary from Boom Island to Minnehaha Park. From Minnehaha Park, it is suggested that the Great River Road cross the Mississippi River on the Ford Bridge rather than continue to TH 55 on Godfrey Parkway.

The Ford Bridge supplies one of the best views of the river and the gorge. It visually explains the geographic and historic divide between the two cities. It connects Minneapolis and St. Paul directly, which to a tourist is logical. It also gives the tourist the ability to see that the Twin Cities is composed of vibrant neighborhood and neighborhoods shopping districts, like Highland Park in St. Paul.

After crossing the Ford Bridge into St. Paul, it is recommended that the Great River Road follow Mississippi River Boulevard to TH 5 (Fort Road) where it would again cross the Mississippi to access Historic Fort Snelling. After crossing the river, the Great River Road would immediately exit on to TH 55 and the Mendota Bridge, following the currently designated National Route until it reaches Smith Avenue.

It would follow Smith Avenue across the High Bridge, crossing the Mississippi River into St. Paul once more. It would follow Smith Avenue to West 7th Street (Fort Road) to Chestnut Street. Turning toward the river on Chestnut Street, the Great River Road would go by Irvine Park and the new Science Museum of Minnesota. It would follow Chestnut Street to Shepard Road where it would reconnect with the existing designated National Route.

Downstream it would follow the existing designated route through the Mississippi Gorge Demonstration Area. However, other routing problems do occur in the MNRRA Destination Area that should be examined by the local stewardship organization. In particular, the existing National Route uses Interstates 694 and 494 to cross the Mississippi River. This is especially troublesome for bicycle and pedestrian use. It is suggested that alternative routes be found. The Camden Bridge appears to be a likely candidate for an I-694 substitute. For I-494, it is recommended that consideration be given to the recently abandoned combination rail and road swing bridge that connects 66th Street East in Inver Grove Heights with 3rd Avenue in St. Paul Park. By utilizing this bridge, non-vehicular traffic would be accommodated and an important historic resource would be preserved.

Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area Location and General Description

The Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area extends along the Great River Road between its two community anchors, Red Wing and Winona, on US Highway 61. Commonly referred to as the

“Hiawatha Valley,” it includes communities in Goodhue, Wabasha, and Winona counties, including the rivertowns of Red Wing, Frontenac, Lake City, Kellogg, Wabasha, and Winona. The Mississippi River is much wider in this portion of the Great River Road, acquiring the broad width that people who are more acquainted with the river outside Minnesota would recognize. In the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area, however, the valley is more defined than it is further downstream. Here it is distinctive, bounded by bluffs rising up almost immediately from the water’s edge with compact rivertowns nestled on terraces between the river and the bluff.

In this demonstration area, there is a balance between the natural and cultural environments. It is a major attraction for outdoor recreationists and home to extensive public land holdings, including the Upper Mississippi Federal Wildlife and Fish Refuge, the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, and two river-oriented state parks, Frontenac and Great River Bluffs. Fishing, boating, hunting, camping are all pursued in earnest by tourists from Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and of course, Minnesota.

The rivertowns are vibrant commercial centers and major tourist attractions. Although the railroads and the highway have long provided transportation for the valley’s communities, their early dependence on river transportation remains apparent. Tourism is now a major contributor to the vitality of the region. Except in Red Wing and Winona, the economies of the rivertowns had been traditionally dominated by the regional agricultural economy. Tourism has increased the diversity of local economies and increased significantly the variety of



businesses. Lodging, restaurants, and recreational attractions have dramatically increased in recent decades, providing residents and tourists with broader opportunities to enjoy the region.

Resources

The Mississippi River

The Upper Mississippi River downstream from St. Paul is a working river. Although, commercial barge traffic may be less than the Lower Mississippi, it still is responsible for the transport of millions of tons of commodities annually. It is bulk cargo that gets transported today—coal, gravel, lime, grain. The transfer of passenger and general merchandise to rail and road occurred during the past 150 years.

The demise of the river as a conduit of people and goods occurred approximately 20 years after the Civil War. The river was a less predictable way to conduct commerce. Passengers and merchandise moved first to rail and then to the roadway. The nature of the riverfront communities reflect this transfer. Most wholesale districts are oriented to the railroad; retail to the highway. The river was used primarily as a way to dispose of waste.

It was not until the interests of northern farmers (who had been unable to overcome the opposition of railroad magnates like James J. Hill) were linked with the interests of communities in the Lower Mississippi, that Congress voted to construct a series of dams on the river. Northern farmers wanted to increase competition for railroads by creating a water route to markets. The railroads managed to convince Congress not to support such improvements until a string of floods devastated the south. Southern Congressmen, who now wanted dams constructed for flood control, found allies in

northern Congressmen who wanted a deeper channel and a series of locks and dams to provide predictable water transportation. Coupled with the need to generate jobs during the Great Depression, the system of Locks and Dams operated today by the Army Corps of Engineers was developed during the early 1930's. The working river re-emerged.

Today, the river towns are still primarily oriented to the highway as a way of transporting people, goods, and services. Nonetheless, the river has taken on a new meaning as an icon of community identity and a wonderful recreational opportunity.

The Mississippi River downstream from Red Wing flows in a wide valley bounded by dramatically high bluffs. Here the river is virtually a lake or lost in a bundle of rivulets composed of a main channel, many backwaters, and countless islands.

The bluffs on both sides of the river are impressive. Father Louis Hennepin, passing through southeastern Minnesota in 1683, claimed that the river “runs between two chains of mountains.” To the uninitiated it is a fair description. Actually the valley is a result of erosion. The river is simply lower than the surrounding countryside. The valley is much wider than the river and formed not by the relatively tame modern stream that exists today but by a glacially fed torrent that cut the valley out of stone at the close of previous ice-ages.

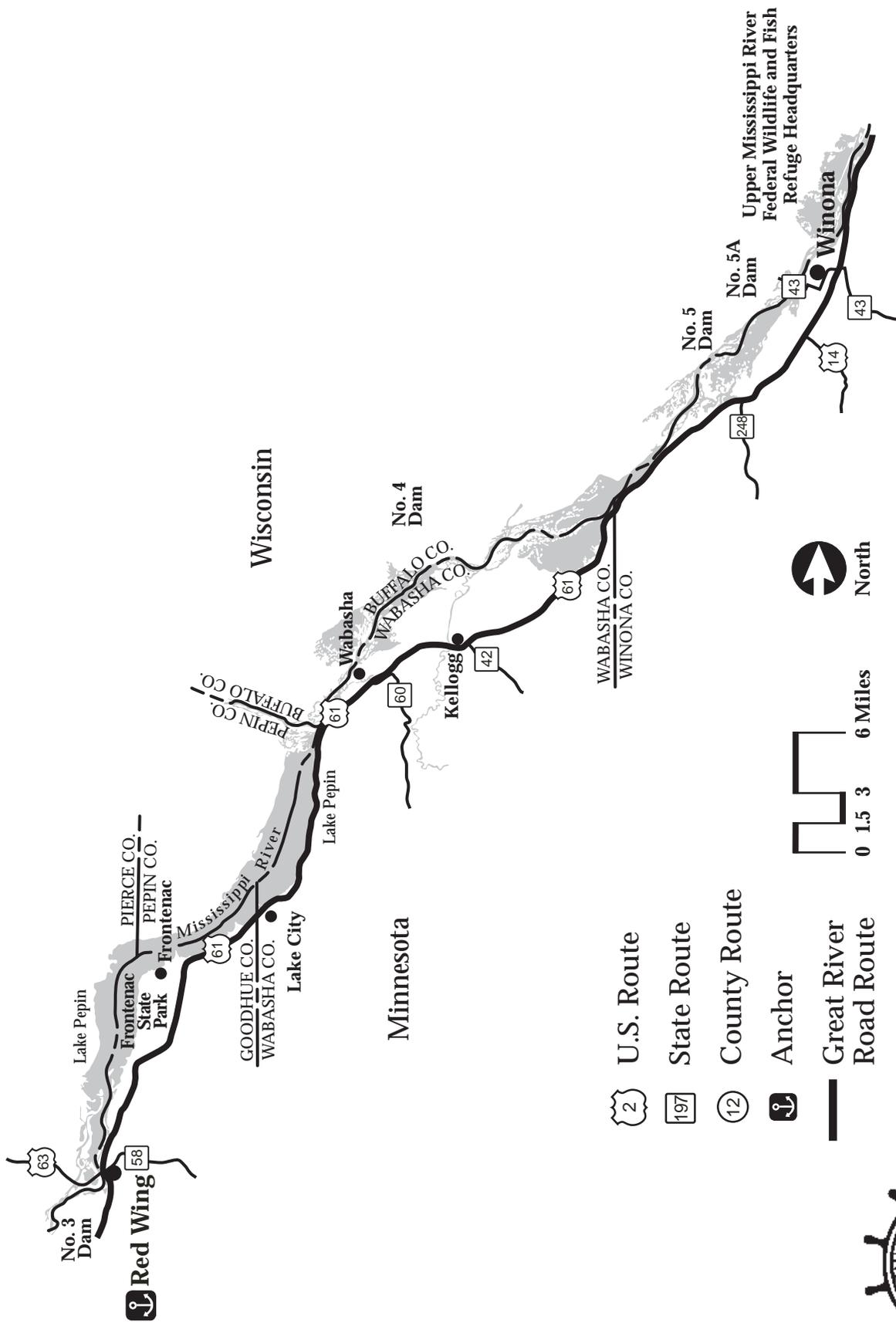
The river runs 64 miles between Red Wing and Winona, from River Mile 726 to 790, as measured by the Army Corps of Engineers. It has little change in elevation, approximately dropping only 6 feet in 50 miles from Frontenac to Winona, the most gentle gradient found in Minnesota. The elevation is controlled by a series of dams operated by the Army Corps of Engineers. Three locks and dams

occur on the river between Red Wing and Winona: Lock and Dam 4, near Alma, Wisconsin; Lock and Dam 5, adjacent to John Latsch State Wayside Park, and Lock and Dam 5A near Winona.

The present riverine habitat is the result of the extensive modifications to the river by the Army Corps of Engineers who maintain the navigational channel with its system of dams, locks and wing dams. The primary change to habitat has been the decrease in cyclic wetlands—wetlands that dry out in summer and fall, and become flooded in spring. The water level is more consistent now, although spring flooding is still a major ecological event. Despite this ecological change, the river, particularly its backwaters, are home to large populations of wildlife.

This segment of the Mississippi River that forms the border between Minnesota and Wisconsin is a major route for migratory birds including species that are of interest to hunters and wildlife watchers such as ducks, geese, swans, hawks, and eagles. It is estimated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources that there are 285 species of birds in this demonstration area—sixty percent of all species found in the contiguous United States. Fifty mammals are found between Hastings and Iowa, according to the DNR. Many have commercial or sporting value, including deer, beaver, and muskrat. There are 23 species of reptiles and 13 amphibians. There are 113 species of fish downstream from St. Anthony Falls. The falls inhibits migration of fish. Upstream of the falls, only half the species of fish exist. Unfortunately, the presence of contaminants limits the suggested ingestion of fish taken from this stretch of the Mississippi River.





Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area



Wildlife is an important tourist attraction. Fishing, hunting, and observing wildlife is an activity that many people enjoy throughout the year. There is commercial harvesting of fish in the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area, including carp, buffalo, and catfish. Freshwater mussels (clams) are also being commercially harvested. Once an important commercial commodity necessary for button manufacturing, the harvesting of freshwater mussels declined with the advent of synthetic buttons. Recently, the harvesting of mussels has been revived. Mussel shells are sold as a commodity to Japan's cultured pearl industry. (Fragments of the shells are a necessary ingredient for inducing the development of pearls.) Observing commercial fishing and clamming operations may be of interest to many tourists.

The river, especially Lake Pepin between Red Wing and Lake City, is a preferred destination for water recreationists. Sailboats, powerboats, yachts, fishing boats, sail boards, and personal watercraft share the expansive water. Canoeists and small watercraft are warned to stay near the shore or in backwaters to avoid the dangerous wakes of commercial barge traffic. There are several public and private marinas and docks. Notable facilities include marinas in Red Wing, Lake City, Wabasha, and Winona. Overnight docking is available at these locations although the river's islands also form impromptu campgrounds for boaters.

Although, the Mississippi River is important for commercial trade—it is a working river—the recreational use of the river has been, nonetheless, fundamental in creating a new focus on riverfront development and river access throughout the demonstration area.

The Great River Road

The National Route of the Great River Road crosses over to Wisconsin near Hastings, Minnesota. Only the State Route continues on the Minnesota side of the river downstream from Hastings. The State Route follows US Highway 61 without deviation through the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area. (Because there is no National Route on the Minnesota side of the river, throughout the rest of this narrative about the Mississippi Bluff Demonstration Area, reference to the Great River Road will be synonymous with the "Great River Road—State Route.")

The road is a major trunk highway, serving as an important north-south commercial corridor. Between Red Wing and Wabasha it is a two-lane highway with paved shoulders, typically. Between Wabasha and Winona it is a four-lane highway typically with paved shoulders. In Red Wing, Lake City, Wabasha, and Winona it is a four-lane highway. It travels through the commercial core of the communities of Red Wing and Lake City as a four-lane road with paved shoulders. In downtown Red Wing and Lake City, parallel parking occurs on both sides of the street. In Wabasha and Winona the Great River Road rides through town on the US 61 Bypass, avoiding the river and the historic district.

There are several designated spurs, or actually loops, in the Demonstration Area. They are usually mapped on Great River Road promotional material but are unsigned. One spur occurs immediately upstream of the Demonstration Area intersecting the Cannon River between Welch and Vasa, creating an alternative route on County Road 7 and TH 19 between Hastings and Red Wing. Another is an alternative drive from Red Wing to Frontenac, following TH 58 out of Red Wing to Hay Creek

and County Roads 5 and 7 back to US 61 and Frontenac. One, connects Wabasha to Kellogg by following TH 60 to the Zumbro River and back to US 61 on County Road 81. Between Kellogg and Weaver an alternative route follows Country Roads 18 and 84. Another meanders from Weaver to Beaver, Elba, and Rollingstone before returning to US Highway 61. Still another explores County Road 23 to Stockton and The Arches before returning to Winona on US Highway 14. There are three other designated spurs between Winona and the Iowa border.

The Minnesota side of the Great River Road is viewed with some consternation by local residents who consider the four-lane roadway downstream of Wabasha as evidence that the roadway is primarily a trunk highway not a tourist route. Compared to the Wisconsin side of the river, the Minnesota route has considerably more traffic, especially more heavy commercial traffic. Mn/DOT has recently identified US 61 as needing to be reconstructed into a four-lane facility between Red Wing and Lake City. Local residents have indicated a concern that the roadway not compromise the attractiveness of the area. Nonetheless, since this segment of US 61 is currently considered a hectic, dangerous highway by local residents, it is probably viewed similarly by tourists. As congestion worsens, it will repel the target market Lounger unless the roadway is improved. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Mn/DOT and the affected communities to develop a strategy for maintaining superb visual quality while increasing the number of lanes.

Bicycle Transportation

There is little accommodation for bicycle or pedestrian traffic except for sidewalks in towns and



The Great River Road Development Study

Transportation Resources

“Mississippi Bluffs” Red Wing to Winona



8 0 8 Miles

1 inch = 8 miles

Legend

★ Rest Area	Bike Compatible*
Trailhead	Yes
Trail	No
	Unknown

* Criteria for Bike Compatibility:
- Shoulder width greater than 5 feet
- Paved shoulder
- Road per Interstate Route
- All criteria needs to be met to have a yes rating.

Great River Road

Green line	FEDERAL
Red line	STATE
Blue shaded area	1/4 Mile Buffer
Grey shaded area	GRR Counties



Map created: 10/26/99
bd

the shoulder on the highway in rural segments. The only bicycle trail in the demonstration area that parallels the Great River Road is from downtown Red Wing downstream to Flower Valley Road, a distance of only a few miles. Sidewalks are adjacent to the Great River Road in Red Wing and Lake City and for short distances in several other smaller communities. A service road parallel to US 61 in Winona acts like a trail for bicyclists. Ten-foot paved shoulders are common in the area but offer little comfort, especially with inexperienced riders, with high speed heavy commercial traffic close to the unprotected pedestrian or bicyclist.

Transportation System Summary

According to Mn/DOT data, all roads are adequately wide and paved for vehicular traffic. Shoulders are typically paved but of various widths. There is only one trail and sidewalks are limited to Red Wing, Lake City, and short sections in other communities.

Attractions and Services

The Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area is the most developed of all the destination areas for river-oriented tourism. It has an extensive assortment of attractions and services for the river-oriented tourist. The Hiawatha Valley, as it is referred to by local boosters, is usually promoted as a two-state experience. Most tourist promotional material suggests the advantage of traveling on one side of the river and returning on the other. Attractions for both sides are promoted as complementary and contributing to the understanding of the river and valley. The two anchors selected for the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area, the cities of Red Wing and Winona, have ample attractions and services oriented to the Great River Road traveler in

Minnesota. The cities and countryside between the two anchors are not only very appealing, they have a similar ability to meet the expectations of tourists.

Upstream Anchor

The Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area begins in Red Wing. Red Wing is a well-developed tourist destination and is an excellent upstream anchor with superb recreational facilities, exciting retail, interesting historic sites, captivating manufacturing tours, fun entertainment, good lodging, and great food. Red Wing has its own tourist web site (www.touristinfo@redwing.org) and its own marketing logo (not unsurprisingly, it's a red wing) and slogan "Remarkable Red Wing." It has an active Downtown Council composed of business owners that coordinate the promotion and development of Red Wing as a tourist destination. In many respects, Red Wing demonstrates how a Great River Road destination area could best organize and enhance itself as a tourist attraction.



The Mississippi Queen approaching Red Wing.

Recreational Sites

The area's recreational facilities focus on the river. Barn Bluff, which dominates the terminal view of the Great River Road as one enters the town from upstream, is an appropri-

ate marker for entering Mississippi Bluff Country. Although Red Wing is surrounded by bluffs, Barn Bluff stands out. The site has been an awe-inspiring tourist and recreation destination since as early as the 1830's. The breathtaking view of the Mississippi River Valley from Barn Bluff has inspired painting, poetry, and prose since its days as a nineteenth century tourist destination. Henry David Thoreau climbed to the top in 1861 and "wrote glowingly of the grandeur and beauty of the region" according to a modern promotional brochure. It is possible for an able bodied tourist to ascend to the top of barn bluff for a panoramic view of Red Wing and the Mississippi River.

In nearby Memorial Park, Sorin's Bluff offers a similar view from spring through fall and is accessible by car. Memorial Park offers trails for hiking and mountain biking, picnic tables, and caves, for the intrepid tourist.

Covill Park, Levee Park, and Bay Point Park provide excellent opportunities to observe the river. Covill Park has a swimming pool and aquatic park, grills, and picnic tables attrac-

tive to tourists. Next to Covill Park is Bill's Bay Marina. It is a private full-service marina with a boat launch, 65 slips, and a gas dock. It has boat and motor repair with haul-out and winter storage available. Levee

Park and Bay Point Park are popular promenades. Levee Park is a formal park. Levee Park was established as a City Beautiful gateway into town during 1905-1906. In conjunction with the park improvements, the



Milwaukee Road built a classically inspired depot. The Milwaukee Road Depot, an example of Beaux Arts classicism completed in 1906, currently serves as offices for Red Wing's Chamber of Commerce and its Convention and Visitors Bureau. Adjacent to Bay Point Park is Boathouse Village. Boathouse Village is an intriguing collection of floating boathouses using "gin-pole" technology whereby a boathouse would ride up and down on the water while secured to poles. This allows docks to remain a constant height above the height from the surface of the water.

Golf is a popular sport and Red Wing has three respected courses, the Red Wing Country Club, Mississippi National Golf Links, and nearby Mt. Frontenac. Red Wing Country Club is a semi-private 18 hole course that is open April 15 to late October. Mississippi Golf Links is a 36-hole municipal course open from early spring to first snowfall. The clubhouse, bar and pro shop are open throughout the year. Food service takes a two month break in winter but the course remains open for cross-country skiing. Mt. Frontenac Ski Area and Golf course is an 18-hole course at the top of the bluffs with panoramic views of Lake Pepin. It is claimed that the ski resort offers the highest vertical drop in southeast Minnesota. Equipment rental for both sports is available.

Bicycling is a recreational activity that encourages tourism. Red Wing is the terminus of the extremely popular, privately funded, Cannon Valley Trail. A Trail Head for the Cannon Valley Trail is situated near the Pottery District. A short extension of the trail system to Flower Valley Road is a precursor of a longer Great River Road Trail that is currently under discussion with Lake

City and other communities in the Hiawatha Valley.

The river between Red Wing and Winona is a paradise for large cruisers and houseboats. Houseboats are available to rent in both Red Wing and Winona. In Red Wing, Houseboats Charters by Marine Services rents boats. A three or four day trip costs about \$750.00. A week approximately, \$1,200.

Retail Establishments

There is an inviting array of retail shops for tourists. Historic Pottery Place Mall is a collection of unique specialty shops, antique stores, and factory outlets. Al's Antique Mall has spaces for over 100 dealers is one of several antique shops on Historic Old West Main Street. The Red Wing Antique Emporium on West 3rd Street boasts that it is the largest antique mall in the Midwest. Fine candy shops, art galleries, and stores that feature Scandinavian and Amish products are downtown fixtures. Riverfront Centre, adjacent to the St. James Hotel caters to the carriage trade. Standard retail enterprises are thriving downtown including grocery, drug, and apparel stores that would be useful to tourists. Gas and service stations are also present as are sporting goods shops that provide fishing and hunting equipment and apparel.

Historic Sites and Tours

Many historic buildings in Red Wing still remain and most have been restored in recent years. The flagship of the community is the St. James Hotel and Riverfront Centre. They are striking, beautifully restored, historic buildings in downtown Red Wing. They were restored by the Red Wing Shoe Company and illustrate two important aspects of local history: commerce and manu-

facturing. Commerce was important to the initial development of Red Wing in the nineteenth century, and its manufacturing operations assured continued prosperity through the twentieth century. Manufacturing developed quickly in the late 19th Century, replacing a waning agricultural economy. This prosperity is illustrated in the historic commercial area, the public buildings and churches around the historic mall, and the rich collection of historic homes.

A walking tour brochure has been produced and is distributed by at the travel information center in the old Milwaukee Road Depot. It provides extensive information on Red Wing's historic architecture and its heritage. A private firm, Roaming Red Wing Tours, provides a detailed personal tour of Red Wing, including historical and scenic sites.

To a tourist, Red Wing is also known as the home of two nationally known products, Red Wing Shoes and Red Wing Potteries. The original building of Red Wing Shoe Factory on Main Street is still occupied by the company and additional factories are located in an industrial park on the edge of town. In downtown Red Wing, Hughes Shoes is a popular source for new Red Wing shoes and factory seconds. In Riverfront Center, the Red Wing Shoe Museum provides insights into the company's history and popularity while illustrating how the shoes are made. The company's flagship shoe store is now in the Mall of America, featuring its full line of shoes plus an interactive museum of the company's history.

Although Red Wing Potteries went bankrupt after a long and bitter strike in 1967, Red Wing Pottery still attracts tourist interest. Many of the town's antique shops specialize in Red Wing Pottery, which still attracts a significant number of



tourists. (Prior to 1967, the potteries were the town's primary tourist attraction. It was not unusual, according to a former company executive, to have the showroom parking lot full of out-of-state cars with people buying merchandise or receiving tours of the factory.) The Minnesota Stoneware Company building, (later merged with the Red Wing Stoneware Company to form Red Wing Potteries, Inc.), is currently the Pottery Mall on West Main Street. The Pottery Mall and the associated Historic Pottery District are major tourist attractions. The Pottery Mall includes Red Wing Pottery and the Original Pottery Salesroom. Potters can be observed throwing and hand decorating pottery.

Red Wing Stoneware, in a new modern building on US 61 north of downtown, continues to market stoneware using traditional techniques and motifs. Tours are conducted twice daily in the summer at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. From Fall through Spring it conducts tours once a day at 1 p.m. Typically about 30 people attend each tour. Many of the visitors are from bus tours from Iowa going to nearby Treasure Island Casino.

Entertainment

The Sheldon Theatre is a completely restored auditorium featuring live performances of national and regional talent. Restored to its original 1904 splendor in 1987, Red Wing's "jewel box" will host performances from nationally acclaimed performers ranging from Leon Redbone to the Guthrie Theater this year. It screens several historically important movies, like *Its a Wonderful Life* during the holiday season and the silent classic *Birth of a Nation*. Locally produced plays and music are also featured. A night

at the Sheldon is frequently tied with lodging at the St. James Hotel and fine dining at local restaurants into a complete package for tourists.

In early August, Red Wing hosts River City Days, a community festival and in early October the Fall Festival of the Arts, attracting thousands of people to the community for each event.

Lodging

The 1999 Minnesota Office of Tourism's lodging guides suggests that there are five motels and five bed and breakfasts with over 250 rooms in the City of Red Wing. Nearby Treasure Island Casino has 250 rooms, doubling the anchor's capacity. Rooms range from quaintly unique historic accommodations to modern chain motels. The tourist should be able to find accommodations to fit their budget and travel style. One hotel, the St. James, is frequently mentioned as a preferred destination in travel articles aimed at Twin Cities audiences. The renovation of the hotel and its skillful promotion to nearby metropolitan residents has been a significant catalyst for developing Red Wing as a tourist destination.

The St. James Hotel is one of the state's premiere historic properties. As the town of Red Wing grew into an economic power in southern Minnesota, city businessmen felt that a quality hotel was needed for travelers from steamboats and railroads. Designed by St. Paul architect Edward P. Bassford, the St. James Hotel was finished in 1875 and was soon hailed as the best hotel along the Mississippi River in the state. Restored by the Red Wing Shoe company, the elegant and formal Italianate building is still used as a hotel. The history of early travel and commerce along the Mississippi River is easily con-

veyed by the hotel's riverside location and its period-decorated rooms. Adjoining shops catering to the carriage-trade and an elegant restaurant make the St. James a major tourist attraction.

Food

There are several interesting and varied restaurants for tourists to eat. Bars, grills, family restaurants, and fine dining are plentiful. Locally owned and operated establishments and national franchises co-exist. Many are located in renovated historic structures. Even national fast food franchises have interesting locations; the local Hardee's occupies a restored Chicago Northwestern Freight Depot. Groceries can be purchased at supermarkets or convenience stores, even downtown.

Downstream Anchor

Winona is an old river town. At Levee Park, the Julius Wilkie Steamboat Museum tempts visitors with an replica of a vintage steamboat and an adjoining floodwall celebrates nature's bounty with a concrete relief of the river's wetlands and wildlife. The two are symbols of Winona's primary attractions: its history and its native environment.

Cultural Attractions

Like her sister cities to the north, Winona's development and growth was related to the opportunities presented by the Mississippi River. As the largest of the rivertowns in this demonstration area, Winona has the largest commercial historic district, as well as a number of other interesting historic sites. However, the historic sites are more spread out than in the other towns, increasing the challenges for public interpretation, and, as is the case in Wabasha, the Great River Road bypasses the historic downtown area.





Winona has long been a prosperous community attracting the founder of Prairie School Architecture, Louis Sullivan, with commissions for commercial structures.

Winona offers a wide variety of properties useful in interpreting both local and regional history. A good first stop is the Winona County Historic Society on Johnson Street in the historic Armory. Winona County Historical Society Museum provides a good overview of the history of the region. It is located on the edge of Winona's historic commercial area. Rivalled only by Red Wing as a prime economic center in southern Minnesota, Winona flourished due to its access to good landing sites along the Mississippi River and as an early recipient of rail lines. A commercial district was already established by the early 1860's, but most of it was destroyed by a fire. Wasting no time, residents rebuilt. Development progressed through the nineteenth century as lumber and agricultural trade expanded as a result of river and railroad connections. Between the East Second Street Commercial District, the Third Street Commercial Historic District, and individual buildings like the Angers Block and Winona Savings Bank, Winona maintains one of the most intact and relatively large examples of a nineteenth century business district in the Great River Road corridor. The Winona Saving Bank (1914-1916) also pro-

vides a unique interpretive opportunity through its association with Chicago architect George W. Maher and its unique status as one of the few Egyptian Revival style buildings in Minnesota.

Logs from the Wisconsin timberlands were floated down the Chippewa and Mississippi rivers to Winona, where they were milled into lumber. Within a few years of being incorporated, the City of Winona had grown to become the state's third leading lumber district after Stillwater and St. Anthony Falls. Furthermore, the proximity to the productive agricultural fields of southern Minnesota made the city an ideal point for the storage and distribution of grain reserves. The Grain and Lumber Exchange of Winona, on E. Fourth Street, served an important role in the distribution and pricing of such goods in the area. The building's Renaissance Revival style, with its emphasis on allocating enough wall space to window openings for sufficient light, lends an air of authority and importance that is retained to this day. The Winona & St. Peter Railroad Freight House, on Center Street, was operated from 1883 to 1961 and aided in the expansion of the agricultural and lumber industries by providing a conduit through which wheat could be purchased and sawmill and grain miller agents

could distribute their goods to nearby small communities.

Benefitting from the city's early commercial success, Winona has some of the state's most significant commercial and residential buildings. Winona's most affluent residents built houses in a residential district surrounding the open green spaces, gazebo, and fountain of Windom Park. The houses built around the park represent most of the nationally popular styles of the Victorian Era. Several notable examples include the following: The Huff-Lamberton House was built in the popular Italian Villa style by Henry D. Huff. The exotic Moorish-influenced porch and gazebo were added by the new owner, Henry W. Lamberton, after 1873. The house of lumberman Abner F. Hodgkins is a fine example of the Queen Anne style influenced by the Colonial Revival. The J.W.S. Gallagher House presents a more modern flare to the built environment of Winona through its Prairie School style designed by noted architects Purcell & Elmslie.

Winona's civic history is represented by a public library, a courthouse, a Catholic church, and a waterworks. The Neo-Classical style Winona Public Library, built in 1899, has long been considered an important cultural center for the city. The murals, statues, and



The rivertowns in the Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area have functioning Main Street commercial districts with significant amounts of 19th Century to early 20th Century architecture.

art glass combined with the classical architectural design were intended to lend an air of culture to the building. The Richardsonian Romanesque style Winona County Courthouse was built during the height of the city's affluence from the river trade and "represents the ambitious hopes and aspirations of the community during this period." Another significant public building in Winona is St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church. Polish immigrants first settled in Winona during the mid-1850s, and this imposing edifice illustrates the contributions of these people to the social and religious environment of Winona. This ethnic history is relayed at the Polish Cultural Institute, a museum open to the public. An example of early public works is the Winona Waterworks. It is an early example of a community-sponsored sanitation project that purified, stored, and distributed water from the river for residential, commercial, and industrial use.

Winona is home to some of the most impressive stained-glass studios in the United States. Consequently it also has some of the most elaborate display of stained glass in Minnesota. The Winona website has a virtual guided tour of several of important landmarks. Guided tours can be arranged by the Winona convention and Visitor's Bureau for groups of fifteen or more people. One studio, Conway Universal Studios, has been in production for generations and hosts group tours.

Programs for self-guided her-

itage walking tours are available from the Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB). Personal guides are also available for larger groups through the CVB.

Recreational Attractions

Winona has several interesting bluffs. Sugar Loaf is an appropriate terminus to the Mississippi Bluff Country. With Barn Bluff in Red Wing, it creates two well-known geological anchors. Similar to Barn Bluff, Sugarloaf has served as a prime destination for travelers along the Mississippi River for a century and a half. The bluff's dramatic presence was threatened during the 1880s and 1890s by quarrying of its Oneota Dolomite. Thanks to the preservation efforts of several Winona civic groups, the geological landmark was purchased and preserved so that future generations of travelers could enjoy its sculpted beauty. Sugarloaf's unique landform is the result of quarrying. The pinnacle that remains is where the crane was erected while rock was mined all around its base. Although Sugar Loaf is the basis of many local legends that explain its unusual shape—it has a peak that towers like a butte 85 feet above the bluff below—it is actually the result of a 19th century quarry.



Sugar Loaf in Winona and Barn Bluff in Red Wing are major gateway icons for the Mississippi Bluff Destination Area.

Garvin Heights Park, west of the Great River Road, has a traditional picnic grounds and provides an excellent twenty to thirty-mile view upstream and downstream of the Mississippi. The Mississippi can also be seen from Levee Park where the Mississippi Queen, American Queen, and Delta Queen steamboats dock. Appropriately, as part of Levee Park, the Julius C. Wilkie Steamboat Center, a full size replica of a river steamboat, houses a museum dedicated to interpreting the steamboat and the steamboat era. Several community events are oriented to the river including, the Winter Carnival, the Art and River Festival, and Steamboat Days.

Winona has three golf courses. Westfield Municipal Golf Course is a 9-hole public course and country club in the heart of Winona. Cedar Valley Golf Course is an 18 hole semi-private course 10 miles south of Winona. Winona Country Club is a private 18-hole course with reciprocity arrangements.

The river in Winona is a paradise for large cruisers and houseboats. Houseboats are available to rent from Great River Houseboats. A three or four day trip costs about \$750.00. A week approximately, \$1,200. There are eight boat landings on the river. Four above Lock and

Dam Number 5, four below. Lock and Dams 5 and 6 operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are nearby intriguing attractions with observation sites. With an average of 8 million tons of cargo being hauled on this



portion of the river during each eight-month shipping season (the equivalent of adding about 3,000 trucks/day on US 61 for the same period), the locks are in frequent demand and easily observed working.

The river and other natural resources, particularly fish and birds, are important to tourism in Winona. Fishing, beleaguered for years by pollutants and consumption warnings, is considered to be improving because of enhancements to upstream sewage treatment facilities, especially the treatment plant located in St. Paul. Walleye fishing is set for making a strong re-emergence according to the DNR. Trout fishing is good in tributary streams and attracts many anglers. Bird watching, particularly watching Eagles and Tundra Swans, have created a substantial industry. Winona hotels offer a package tour including lodging, meals, an orientation by a wildlife expert, and a 4 hour bus tour of swan sites. Excursions into native landscapes are promoted in tourist materials including the three nearby state parks and national wildlife refuges.

Commercial Attractions and Travel Services

There are several speciality shops that cater to the tourist including antiques stores, bakeries, gift shops, and outlet stores. Winona Knitting Mills and Winona Knits are significant attractions. Winona Knits is America's oldest and largest sweater retailer and has a significant following. Another local manufacturer is Weno-nah canoe, marker of premium canoes for discriminating canoeists.

Winona is well situated to support tourism with almost 650 rooms in eleven lodging accommodations, three of which have more than 100 rooms. There are several public and private campgrounds with several

hundred camping sites available in the immediate vicinity of Winona. Great River Bluffs State Park (formerly O.L. Kipp State Park) has spectacular views of the river and features 31 camp sites with picnic tables and fire rings. It has one pioneer group camp that has a capacity for 80 people and a camping area dedicated to bicyclists.

Winona has a wide range of restaurants and a full complement of grocery stores. Over 60 restaurants are listed by the Winona CVB. They range from standard fast food to family restaurants to bar and grills. American, Oriental, and Italian food is available. A handful of restaurants have either river themes, overlook the river, or are located in historic buildings, such as the Jefferson Pub and Grill in the historic Winona-St. Peter Railroad Freight House.

Connecting Corridor Frontenac

Old Frontenac is oriented to the river, located on Lake Pepin on a bend in the Mississippi. It is removed two miles from the Great River Road on County Road 2. It is the site of the first Christian chapel in Minnesota built by the French who established Fort Beauharnois on the river near here in 1727. The post was abandoned after the land was ceded to the British in 1736. Originally, Frontenac—named after a governor of New France who had sponsored many of the early French explorations of the Mississippi—was conceived of as a Utopian



Attractive residential structure in Old Frontenac.

Community. Later, catering to fashionable elites from New Orleans, St. Louis, and St. Paul, it flowered as a resort during the late 1860's through the 1880's. The Lakeside Hotel (1867-1939) was the first summer hotel in Minnesota and was known as the "Newport of the Northwest." This small river town maintains a remarkably intact group of buildings from the mid to late nineteenth century with many surviving Greek Revival and Gothic Revival style structures still present in the Old Frontenac Historic District. According to local lore, it was purposely bypassed by the railroads because the developers of Frontenac didn't want their tranquility disrupted by trains. New Frontenac or Frontenac Station was thus born on the railroad and eventually, sustained by the highway, granting Old Frontenac its desired status as a tranquil backwater.

Recreational activities are accommodated at Frontenac Ski Area and Golf Course (previously discussed under Red Wing attractions) and in Frontenac State Park. Frontenac State Park has 58 pull-in campsites, 19 with electricity, and 6 rustic walk-in camp sites. A primitive group camp holds 20 people. It has a dump station, showers, flush toilets, and a picnic site capable of accommodating 40 people with fantastic views on a



bluff overlooking the river. It has 15 miles of hiking trails, over 6 miles of cross-country skiing trails, and over 8 miles of snowmobiling trails. Birds, particularly rare Warblers, nest in the area, attracting many bird watchers. In the park, there is evidence of habitation and burial sites from the Hopewellian culture (400 B.C. to 300 A.D.)

Lake City

Lake City means recreation. Lake City provides the best access to Lake Pepin. It is the birthplace of waterskiing and home to hundreds of sailboats and large cruisers. The municipal marina has overnight docking facilities and gas. The breakwater acts as a municipal fishing pier attracting thousands of anglers each year. Four miles north of Lake City, Hansen's Harbor has similar facilities with a full service for sail and power boats, a complete ship's store and gas dock, a launching ramp, short term transient slips, seasonal docking slips, and winter storage. Regattas attract sailors and spectators. Water Ski Days is the community's annual summer festival. A winter ice fishing contest on Lake

Pepin attracts over 4,000 contestants.

The city has hundreds of acres of parkland, several of which line the river overlooking Lake Pepin. Hok-Si-La Park located on the northside of town on the river, is the city's largest park. A former Boy Scout Camp, several former Scout buildings serve as picnic shelters and activity centers. Camping, trails, picnic tables, a swimming beach, and public boat launch make the area attractive to boating and vehicular tourists. Several other parks line the shore of Lake Pepin. A lakeshore sidewalk parallels the Great River Road connecting these parks. Lake City is currently studying the feasibility of improving this sidewalk and extending it as a trail to Red Wing. At both ends of the lakeshore sidewalk are roadside turnouts. On the upstream end, Mn/DOT maintains a rest area with flush toilets, picnic areas, and several interpretive markers. One of the markers is a Great River Road marker that discusses mussel harvesting and Lake City's button manufactories. The southern turnout is a simple WPA-vintage stone overlook with a monument to the invention of water

skiing by Ralph Samuelson in 1922. Lake City has an established walking tour of historic sites.

Lake City Country Club is an attractive, recently refurbished, semi-private golf course.

Lake City was platted in 1855 as a steamboat landing. By 1871, the Chicago, St. Paul, and Milwaukee (Milwaukee Road) Railroad ran along the edge of town, solidifying its position as a trading center. Its access to the river and railroad made it a natural distribution point for businesses, area farmers, and residents to buy and sell agricultural and manufactured products. Lake City's historic commercial area is related to this era of expansion and growth. The buildings were primarily constructed between 1882 and 1910 and possess a continuity in stylistic elements such as brick wall finish, corbelled cornices, limestone foundations, limestone window sills and lintels, and general window patterns that lend a sense of continuity to the district.

Lake City's community development can be interpreted through the Patton Park area, which contains handsome public buildings and a variety of Victorian residential styles. The park itself is a pleasant City Beautiful monument with a classically inspired bandstand (ca. 1910). Around the park, there are the two main public buildings: the Richardsonian Romanesque styled City Hall (1899) and the Beaux Arts styled Post Office (1916). The historic district embodies the role of public services in the development of the community. The Post Office, built in 1916, presents a feeling of tradition through the use of an engaged Ionic order portico supporting a cornice with dentils. The lines between residential and business areas were often blurred during the nineteenth century, and



Lake City, home of waterskiing, continues to attract visitors who recreate on expansive Lake Pepin.

this sense of community planning is apparent in the district as homes varying from Greek Revival to Queen Ann surround the civic buildings. A premiere residence in Lake City is the Patrick Henry Rahilly House. As a prominent farmer and local politician, Rahilly's Italian Villa style home is considered the prototype for the style in southern Minnesota.

According to the Minnesota Office of Tourism, Lake City has nine hotels with approximately 170 rooms and two B&B's with five rooms each. Hok-Si-La park has camping accommodations. Restaurants range from national fast food franchises to standard family fare and a few bars. Restaurants such as The Galley, promote a riverine theme. Zuber's Grill and Pub overlooks the fascinating Lake City Marina and Lake Pepin. Gas stations, grocery stores, and other retail stores are readily available to the tourist. The headquarters and catalog showroom of Wild Wings Gallery is in Lake City. Nestled in an attractive pine grove and as one of the nation's premier wildlife art galleries, it attracts people from all over the country.

Reads Landing

Reads Landing is notable for its natural resources—it is at the head to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, and bald eagles abound. It has a rich history, as well, though the building stock to illustrate the town's past is limited.

The small community of Reads Landing thrived as a primary port for river boats and as a major lumbering and milling center in the mid-nineteenth century. It was during this economic peak that the Reads Landing School was created in 1872. As with many public structures in the southeastern portion of the state, the Reads Landing School was Italianate in design and is a

“rare surviving example of the nearly universal mode of first generation brick school design in Minnesota: the bracketed, Italianate box.” The decision by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad to run its tracks through Wabasha instead of Reads Landing led to the steady decline in the city's population and economy. The Reads Landing School is one of the few remaining structures associated with the city's prosperous days in the nineteenth century.



Reads Landing School.

Wabasha

Wabasha was thrust into national notice with the *Grumpy Old Men* movie series. Slippery's Tavern and Chuck's Bait Shop cater to tourists interested in seeing the sights from the popular movie. Slippery's features a bar and grill with an overview of the Mississippi River and original sets from the movie. It is an integral part of the community festival, Grumpy Old Men Days.

Wabasha is known for its spectacular views of Bald Eagles. An Eagle Observation Deck is located on the riverfront. The deck has three interpretive panels donated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. EagleWatch, a non-profit interest group, staffs the deck from November through March and provides binoculars and spotting scopes for visitors. The deck draws an estimated 10,000

visitors annually. A \$3 million National Eagle Center is proposed in Wabasha to promote viewing and interpretation. The project is a partnership between state and federal agencies and the City of Wabasha. The project is being coordinated by the National Audubon Society, with assistance from Eagle Watch, Inc. and the City of Wabasha. When the project is constructed in 2001, it will be a major contributor to the area's economy. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Americans pay \$18 billion annually on bird-watching products and services, three times the amount they spend on professional sports. The appeal of our national bird wil

I draw many tourists to this easily accessible location. From this location it will be simple to direct tourists to other birding hot spots in the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area. There are several turnouts off of the Great River Road, accommodating bird watching and providing scenic views of the river valley downstream from Wabasha on Lake Pepin. *Soar with the Eagles* is an annual community celebration.

There are two marinas offering 400 open slips and 200 closed slips on the Wabasha riverfront. A municipal dock provides river access to the public. Beach Park on the river has picnic and camping facilities. Coffee Mill Golf and Country Club offers a bluff top view of the Mississippi valley with no tee time required. In the winter, Coffee Mill becomes a full-service 11-run ski park with two chair lifts. It also offers half pipe snow boarding. At 425 feet of vertical drop it is one of the highest slopes in Minnesota.

Wabasha has a long history as a commercial center. Today it has a growing number of retail stores aimed at the tourist. Several businesses in Wabasha's Old City Hall are



indicative of this trend. Established in 1843 as a fur trading post, platted in 1854 as a steamboat landing, Wabasha developed as a local trade center along the Milwaukee Road tracks after 1871. The Wabasha Commercial Historic District maintains a fine collection of nineteenth century buildings that illustrate the city's development as a commercial center. This highly intact group of two-story brick buildings on Main Street maintains its traditional use pattern - small shops and restaurants with offices or apartments upstairs. On the west end of the commercial district, the Anderson House, which dates to 1856, is the oldest operating hotel in Minnesota and a significant tourist attraction. The Milwaukee Road Railroad Roundhouse is a unique property in the Great River Road corridor and throughout Minnesota generally.

Below: Even simple buildings, like Wabasha's Green Bay Hotel, have interesting stories to tell. **Bottom:** At one time, Wabasha was the flour capital of the world.



Located outside of downtown, the roundhouse could help tell Wabasha's story as well as illustrate the engineering and technical aspects of railroad operations during the late nineteenth century.

Wabasha's location near the productive wheat fields of southern Minnesota and the Mississippi River created a natural setting for the development of an agricultural industry-based economy. The office and grain elevator of the J.C. Dill Company of Wabasha are associated with the agriculture and played a crucial part in the storage and distribution of grains in the area. While currently used as a veterinary clinic, the unique variegated buff brick and original window pattern of the office building are intact, and the grain elevator still functions and retains all of its original elements. Wabasha remains an important commercial center for the local agricultural economy. The old Post Office houses an historical museum.

Wabasha presents a unique residential pattern for interpretive purposes. In nineteenth century communities, houses were usually constructed of wood. This preference was both based on Victorian aesthetics and on practical factors, namely the fact that lumber could easily be shipped on railroads or floated down rivers. Wabasha differed in that, even



Downtown Wabasha is another example of the continuous use of commercial buildings from an earlier era.

prior to the time of industrial brick manufacturing in the city, local residents sought bricks for the construction of their homes. The brick structures are represented by Greek Revival and Federal styles, built primarily for the early merchant class of the city, and the Italianate style, seen in the homes of individuals associated with the developing agriculture and railroad economies later in the nineteenth century. In addition, the Green Bay Hotel was constructed in 1869 and is an excellent early example of a small, roadside inn. Nineteenth century travelers along the Mississippi River could take shelter in this simple inn during their visits to the growing town of Wabasha. The Green Bay Hotel, although physically altered, still tells a story of early travel and recreation as evidenced by its modest Greek Revival style.

During the late nineteenth century, socially progressive laws were passed that stipulated that each county construct a house, farm, or like facility for the relief of the county's poor people. The Wabasha County Poor House was constructed near Wabasha on a 32-acre tract of land that the county provided. The two-story brick hospital, which was built in 1879, was economically and efficiently designed, with only minor embellishments,



such as the brick window hoods. Four years later a detached building was constructed for the housing of the Poor Farm's resident workers and the kitchen/dining room. The Wabasha County Poor House is one of only a few such structures left standing in Minnesota and represents early attempts at social reform.

Wabasha is a frequent stop of the steamboats, the *Delta Queen*, *Mississippi Queen*, and the *American Queen*. Unfortunately, for tourists and tourist related businesses, scheduled stops are only known a few months in advance making it difficult to promote their arrival.

In addition to the Anderson House, the Minnesota Office of Tourism lists 3 other lodging accommodations with 28 additional rooms in Wabasha.

Kellogg and Minneiska

Kellogg and Minneiska are known for its carvers and woodcraft. Kellogg is home to LARK Toys. LARK Toys, began as a manufacturer of simple wooden toys but has expanded into a major tourist attraction, with five shops specializing in wood and tin toys and children's books. The fantastic hand-carved LARK Carousel is a unique menagerie of twenty real and imaginary animals welcoming riders of all ages. A cafe and antique toy museum round out Kellogg's unique attraction. Minneiska has two prominent wood carving shops, one carving carousel animals and trolls, another carving Scandinavian furniture. Both are open to the public.

The Eagle View Bar and Grill offers full service family dining overlooking the Mississippi River daily except Mondays.

The Big Story A Fish with a View

The Big Story is the view. The all encompassing, overarching,



Scenic views of the Mississippi River, like this one from Frontenac State Park, are significant for attracting tourists to the Mississippi Bluffs Demonstration Area.

panoramic view. The view of the river, the towns, and how it is framed by the steadfast bluffs. The view that explains the context, frames the composition, and provides wonder and awe. The view that tells the story of a majestic river and the hearty yet visionary communities nestled on its terraces. A view that reveals history while illustrating the industry of contemporary society. An inviting view that offers refreshment, bounty, and rejuvenation.

It is primarily the view seen from the bluffs. Other less dramatic views closer to the river are important corollaries of the proof and provide interesting details but it is the larger view that inspires, instructs, and is sufficiently seductive to induce repeat visitation—if only to witness the scene during a different season.

To see wide, panoramic vistas, is to put life in perspective. To see the same sights that Father Louis Hennepin saw and described over 300 years ago, the same solid “mountains” guiding the course of a powerful river, is mystically resonating. To understand that over 2,000 years ago, a native culture spreading from Ohio throughout the eastern United States, reached this

fertile valley, settled, and called it good for perhaps as long as 1,000 years, provides hope that perhaps we can be as enduring as the Hopewellians who left behind, 1500 years ago, those still visible scared mounds. A view of a town, a town perhaps only 150 years old, but one that has adjusted to the vicissitudes of nature and society or succumbed to society's fickle use of technology. This ancient geological, archaeological, and historical evidence provides us with a reassuring steadfastness, provides us with evidence of the veracity of our cherished eternal beliefs. This is what attracts the tourist, not just the view, but what the view can personally mean.

Metaphorically, near Kellogg, is a large weathervane made of metal and shaped like a fish. This is a replacement for an earlier wooden model that was used as a navigational aid for 19th century river pilots. This “fish with a view” seems like an appropriate metaphor for the tourist experience.

Applying the Story

The potential to provide perspective and insight, both actually and metaphorically, to tourists is an opportunity to be valued. Views of the river, views of nature, views of



settlements placed in their larger river context should be developed and promoted. It is the connectivity, the ability to see thirty miles and see that this community and that community and that forest and that stream and this river and our state and that state are all part of the same landscape, the same ecological and social system—that we are all in this together—e pluribus unum, out of many, one. This is a powerfully unifying and healing message to a society fraught with distrust, discord, and disunity.

To slow down, to re-connect with those values we hold sacred is what attracts the tourist to this particular destination area.

The Tourist Motivation

The tourist that would be attracted to the Mississippi Bluff Destination Area is primarily the Lounger, someone coming to relax and be refreshed by the experience. Although Guests of family and friends are a significant addition to the tourism base and Pilgrims, Accumulators, Players, and Explorers frequently travel on this segment of the Great River Road, it is nonetheless, the Lounger that colors all motivations in this demonstration area. People come here to relax and unwind. Play is less intense—a peaceful day on a boat, is a typical adventure. Accumulating goods is a leisurely excursion into quiet quaint shops. Exploring comes easy, information is practically spoon-fed from drive-up interpretive signs. Even spectating, typically involves watching the slow cycles of natural rhythms, returning swans, the turning of leaves. That a pilgrimage was undertaken only becomes obvious after the journey is complete. The primary motivation is leisure.

Most of the natural and cultural

resources found in the demonstration area support Loungers.

Travel Styles

Tourists visiting the Mississippi Bluff Demonstration Area have a variety of travel styles. Self-structured and unstructured tourists are common, especially those arriving from the Twin Cities in their own vehicles. The Visitor Survey revealed that a significant portion of people traveling on this segment of the Great River Road were on a day trip and planned on returning home to the Twin Cities that evening. Many of these tourists had no pre-arranged plans and were simply traveling spontaneously. They knew of the beauty of the Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area and the wealth of attractions and simply took advantage of a nice day and some free time to visit the area. This type of travel is probably restricted to summer and fall. Fall, in particular, with its colorful displays and apple harvest is anticipated to be a traditional time for spontaneous travel.

Self-structured tourists typically stay longer in the destination area. They commonly make reservations for a local bed and breakfast or tourist-oriented hotels like the St. James in Red Wing or the Anderson House in Wabasha. Self-structured tourists will also stay at the campgrounds in Frontenac or Great River Bluffs state parks. The self-structured tourist organize their travel around their particular interests: antiquing, artistic events, community festivals, observing nature. The Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area has enough variety to support a wide-range of self-structured tourists.

Structured tourists are also common arriving on buses from throughout the Midwest. Many are on casino tours, traveling to casinos in Minnesota from Iowa or Minne-

sotans traveling to casinos in Iowa.

Hotels in Red Wing and Winona have created several packages for semi-structured travelers. In Red Wing, the Sheldon Theatre and local hotels have created semi-structured bed, meals, and theater packages. On a variation of the fly/drive package, the St. James Hotel runs a special for Amtrak travelers. However, the traveler has to arrange their own rail transportation. In Winona, local hotels have formed a semi-structured package that includes a guided tour observing migrating tundra swans. Packages, weekend getaways or holiday specials, are a frequent marketing strategy used to fill rooms throughout the destination area.

Geographic and Modal Characteristics

Most tourists arrive by automobile; many by bus; and a few by train. Those arriving by automobile come primarily from the Twin Cities and Rochester. Visitors arriving by automobile also come from elsewhere in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. Bus tours originate frequently from Iowa and sometimes, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Greyhound Bus services the whole Great River Road route. Amtrak, traveling between the Twin Cities and Chicago, stops at both Red Wing and Winona. Airports in Winona and Red Wing are not served by Northwest Airlines or its affiliates which limits their ability to become destinations for airline passengers arriving in the Twin Cities. To overcome this obstacle, Red Wing promotes itself as only 45 minutes from MSP.

Target Market

The primary tourist that would be naturally attracted to the Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area would be an unstructured or self-structured Lounger who needs to be



convinced to extend their day trip into a longer vacation. A secondary market would be the structured or semi-structured Lounger.

Market Summary

The primary target market are the un-structured, self-structured, semi-structured or structured Loungers, Pilgrims, and Accumulators. The benefit of enhancing the Great River Road for these tourists, is an expansion of their opportunities to relax and enjoy quite pastimes. The benefit to the private for profit business owners, will be a more consistent population of tourists. The benefit for residents will be an increased variety of recreational opportunities and increased economic alternatives.

Capital Improvements

Capital improvements should first be oriented to establishing the Mississippi River and the Great River Road as a destination for Loungers, Players, and Accumulators. First by supporting travel by tourists who travel spontaneously or structure their own itinerary; followed by promoting travel by structured or semi-structured groups.

Capital improvements are listed by four primary resources types, transportation services, heritage attractions, river and recreational attractions, and commercial attractions and services.

Improvements to Transportation Services

Suggested capital improvements to enhance the tourist experience include several that are associated with the highway and could be implemented by state and county transportation agencies with assistance from other governmental agencies as necessary:

Highway Improvements

- Any improvements to US 61, especially reconstruction as a 4-lane facility, should maintain the existing visual quality of the the Great River Road.

Parking

- Improve parking for tour bus operators.
- Sign off-street parking.
- Place parking sensitively so as not to adversely affect river views or historic integrity.

Wayfinding

- Install Great River Road route and directional markers at every junction with a state trunk highway and county roads with over 5,000 ADT. In particular, add or improve directional signs on TH 63, TH 58, TH 60, TH 42, TH 74, TH 14, and any county road with over 5,000 ADT, informing drivers of the junction with the Great River Road.
- Add distinctive mileage markers to enhance route identity and improve wayfinding. Mileage markers would clearly identify the route, reducing traveler anxiety. It would visually integrate the road, attractions, and services into a tourist-oriented system. Mileage markers would facilitate the development of private-sector authored tourist guides, including interpretative maps, guidebooks, and audio tours. Public and private attractions and services could describe their location using a mileage marker. By benefitting attractions and services the use of the system would be assured and awareness of the Great River Road as a destination would be enhanced.

- Signify the importance of Red Wing and Winona to the Great River Road traveler by creating appropriate gateway monuments to “Mississippi Bluff Country.” Consider creating additional scenic byway monuments in other cities, particularly in Lake City and Wabasha.

- Although the designated Great River Road spurs and attractions bring people to interesting sites, they are actually counterproductive. Existing signing of a small number of attractions implies that only a few sites deserve a visit by the Great River Road tourist. All officially designated spurs and attractions should be de-designated and any official Great River Road signage removed. It is recommended that communities install their own wayfinding system. Coordinating this wayfinding system so similar signs are used in each community would establish the Mississippi Bluffs as a single, coherent destination area.

- Standardize and improve wayfinding signs in each community and to each attraction. Work with MOT and the cities of Red Wing and Winona to add Great River Road Anchor Kiosks at their Tourist Information Centers. Use these kiosks to orient travelers to all of the other features that can be seen off of the Great River Road spine, highlighting especially those attractions and services in the individual anchor. Add similar kiosks in their communities on TH 61 to orient the tourist to public and private attractions and services.



Trails

- To accommodate bicycling, improve sidewalks and on-road trails on TH 61 in Red Wing, Frontenac, Lake City, Wabasha, and Winona. Between cities create a 10-foot off-road trail to accommodate bicycling, roller blading, and walkers.
- Trails adjacent to the Great River Road are non-existent except for a short segment immediately south of Red Wing. The shoulder of the Great River Road is a poor substitute for a trail, except for very experienced bicyclists. The Cannon River Trail, a privately financed facility, is one of the state's most popular trails but it ends in Red Wing. An extension to the what is probably the state's most popular public trail, the Root River Trail, has been authorized by the State Legislature. It would connect Winona with Lanesboro, Minnesota's premier bicycling destination. Connecting the Cannon River Trail with the Root River Trail via a Mississippi Trail would be a valuable connection. As a first phase of this project, Lake City, with the support of Red Wing, is exploring the possibility of extending a trail from Red Wing to Lake City.
- Great River Bluffs State Park has developed a campground oriented to bicyclists. Extending a bikeway to Frontenac State Park and developing similar facilities there would induce more bicycle tourism.

Improvements to River and Recreational Attractions

Capital improvement projects for public recreational facilities are gen-

erally the jurisdiction of federal, state, and local natural resource management agencies and significantly enhance the experience of the Great River Road tourist. As recreational projects near highways, joint-development agreements between Mn/DOT and the provider may be a practical way to reduce construction costs. It is not uncommon for parking lots, for instance, to be paved at a significant savings when an adjacent roadway is being paved. Typically these projects are funded by those federal, state, and local agencies charged with providing recreational facilities. Such projects include:

- tourism is enhancing access to the river. One good way to attract attention to the river would be to enhance private river excursions. Linking Red Wing, Lake City, Wabasha, Winona, and selected cities in Wisconsin by boat would be fascinating for the Lounger. Scheduled inter-community shuttles could bring people back to where they embarked on their journey if they didn't want to return by boat. These shuttles could also provide inter-community transportation for local residents. This might be extremely useful for teenagers or elderly people. Public docking facilities may need to be improved to accommodate the excursions.
- Evaluate with managing agencies and improve, as necessary, the access to the river using boat ramps and public docks. Ramps and docks to be evaluated include those in Red Wing, Frontenac, Lake City, Wabasha, and Winona.
- Many people in Minnesota and

Wisconsin have their own boats. Maintaining and enhancing public access to the river will be crucial in attracting Players and Loungers to the Great River Road and the adjacent river communities. Many of these people may arrive via the river. Currently the St. Croix River above Hastings is a favorite destination of the area's boaters. Extending the normal range to include the Mississippi between Red Wing and Winona would be a reasonable goal. Municipal or private transient docking, currently in short supply in many communities, would need to be expanded to accommodate increases in boat traffic. Free docking with a purchase from a local hotel, restaurant, or shop would be advantageous to promoting the community.

- The riverboats, *Delta Queen*, *Mississippi Queen*, and *American Queen* make stops in several communities along the river but not in any predictable manner year to year. It would help promote these excursions and the river communities, if the arrival of these boats could be organized on a more regular schedule. Winona, Wabasha, Lake City, and Red Wing remain good candidates for stops.
- Add gateway signs to Frontenac State Park, John Latsch State Park, and Great River Bluff State Park from TH 61. Improve turning-movement safety from TH 61 at park entrance, if necessary to conform with traffic engineering standards, *or if perceived as necessary by tourists.*



Overlooks

- The defining tourist experience, a visit to the top of the bluffs, is not well-orchestrated for the Great River Road tourist. Scenic overlooks are typically not signed off the route. Views from bluffs in Red Wing, Frontenac, Wabasha, and Winona are excellent but difficult to find or subject to fees. Additional overlooks should be developed, particularly between Frontenac and Wabasha, and between Wabasha and Winona. Interpretive signage at these sites would be valued by tourists. Developing these overlooks and access to them would require a capital investment by public agencies.
- Identify, develop or improve scenic overlooks throughout the corridor. Improve access or wayfinding to existing overlooks in Red Wing, Frontenac, Wabasha, and Winona
- Identify, develop, and sign overlooks for Watchable Wildlife.

Improvements to Heritage Tourism Attractions

Capital improvement projects related to interpreting or preserving cultural resources are typically not funded by Mn/DOT unless a transportation function can be identified. Several projects that would enhance the tourist's understanding of cultural resources have been proposed by the community. Such projects may include:

Rivertowns

- Expand existing heritage walking tours in rivertown communities, by adding or expanding the number of markers and emphasizing the community's ties to the river and scenic views of it. Tie the heritage walking tours

into the Great River Road Kiosks at the Tourist Information Centers.

Downtown Streetscapes

- Improvements to community aesthetics have been credited with establishing a community identity and revitalizing aging commercial districts. Streetscape improvements must include the restoration of historic storefronts, frequently the community's most important commercial asset. Improvements to sidewalks, particularly providing adequate width for commercial pedestrian traffic, handicapped access ramps at corners, and short, well-marked pedestrian crossings, are also critical for creating a downtown attractive to tourists. Sufficient parking, including off-street and on-street parking is a necessary component for inducing visitation. Parking for buses is required if tour buses are to be lured to the community. The addition of street furniture, such as awnings, benches, lights, paving, kiosks, bike racks, and planters are needed to provide the amenities that tourists desire. The addition of boulevard plantings, particularly street trees and the use of perennial or annual flowers create a manicured, inviting cared-for scene in the summer. In spring, fall, and winter banners, twinkle lights, or a sound system have proved valuable in creating a similar inviting atmosphere.
- Red Wing is an example of an excellent streetscape program. Its lush and colorful hanging flower baskets in particular have attracted attention from communities throughout the state.

Lake City's banners, celebrating the invention of waterskiing, are simple, yet effective. Although elements may be similar, it is important that each community creates a distinct identity for itself based on its historical and social context.

- Red Wing, Wabasha and Winona have downtown commercial districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These properties are eligible for 20% preservation tax credits.
- Lake City's downtown has been recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently recommending design guidelines for property owners. If a national register nomination is pursued this will enable buildings owners to receive the 20% preservation tax credit. If the historic buildings in town are restored appropriately and interpreted in an interesting and engaging way, travelers along the Great River Road would be more inclined to stop and visit the town.

Interpretive Sites

- Develop the Red Wing's Oneota Archaeological Site as an interpretive attraction.
- Work with the Prairie Island Mdewakanton Dakota Community and other American Indian communities to identify ways to present the extensive heritage of the American Indian in the Mississippi River Valley to tourists.

Improvements to Commercial Attractions

River Orientation

- Induce commercial development



of the riverfront, especially restaurants and accommodations that overlook the river.

Lodging

- The most significant capital improvement that would assist unstructured and self-structured Loungers would be to increase the number of rooms available for overnight accommodations. These rooms should be oriented to provide views of the river. Although this is strictly a private-sector initiative, public-sector resources, such as assistance with access roads and utilities, is crucial in the success of these enterprises. Increasing the number of rooms will also enhance the desirability of the area for convention organizers and tour operators. This will increase the likelihood that semi-structured and structured tourists will visit the area.
- If popular, consider adding cabins to state park campgrounds.
- Add bicycle camping at Frontenac State Park.

Promotional Strategies Travel Aids

Currently there are several different groups with varied promotional strategies, geared to getting people to visit the Mississippi Bluff Country Destination Area. Their efforts are not coordinated. Coordinating promotions would increase the effectiveness of each promotion and the perception that the Mississippi Bluffs is a desirable destination for tourists.

Public Sector Promotional Materials

To coordinate public sector promotional materials have:

- The Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission developed a brochure and a booklet about Great River Road attractions or distribution through Mn/DOT, MOT, and Travel Information Centers. The brochure fits in a standard rack and is free. It is a two-sided, six-panel brochure featuring a map and a narrative about the route. The map features major roads, cities, the State and National routes, the designated spurs and key parks and recreation areas. The narrative focuses on the history and historic attractions. The only mention of commercial attractions is for the many roadside produce stands that line Apple Blossom Drive. Few scenic or recreational attractions are listed. Scenic attractions are limited to identifying good views of the river. Those recreational attractions listed are primarily related to camping, some to fishing. The booklet is similar but provides more detailed information. It is not free and is sold through Mn/DOT, MOT, Travel Information Centers, and private retailers.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has several promotional and informational pieces including PRIM (Public Recreation Information Map) Maps, Mississippi Canoe Route Maps, and individual maps for each state park. It also has a boat access map for the whole state. The information is good but again, limited, reflecting only those resources that the agency by law manages.
- Other agencies review their promotional material. Similar cri-

tiques could be made about brochures produced by other government agencies. In particular, there is no sense that they are being created for the same area so taken together they start to give the tourist a more complete picture of the destination. The biggest drawback with brochures produced by state agencies is that they focus only on one state. People in this destination area consider the whole valley as one destination area. They market the area jointly not as rivals.

Private Sector Promotional Materials

To coordinate private sector promotional materials recognize that:

- This problem of coordinating promotional materials is not isolated to the public sector, however. Numerous travel guides are produced by the private sector for this destination area. The Mississippi Valley Guide Magazine is produced by The Buyer Ex-Press Shopping Guide in La Crosse; the Best of the Mississippi is produced by the Winona Daily News; and Applause: Arts and Entertainment of the River Region is produced by the publisher of the Red Wing Republican Eagle. Obviously, there is a significant market for tourist information that each publication finds it profitable to produce its own publication. Red Wing's and Winona's publications have the most complete and thorough information on their respective communities providing details about public and private attractions. Both have limited information on the other anchor community. Generally, the Red Wing publication provides information about

communities downstream to Wabasha. The Winona publication generally provides information about communities upstream to Wabasha. The La Crosse publication covers both Minnesota and Wisconsin communities. It is probably the most even-handed and gives reasonable detailed information on attractions. Nonetheless the information is general and except for advertising, lacks articles on commercial attractions and a calendar of events. Applause is published monthly, the others are published quarterly by season. Compiling pertinent information into a single publication is probably not practical. But coordinating their looks, defining their geographic areas, and what their editorial content may be in tourist's and the destination area's best interest.

Creating New Marketing Materials

- The cartoon maps that found in the recent issues of these publications provide a tourist with an excellent overview of the destination area. Developing a similar map and using it for place mats in local restaurants would be a simple way of marketing the valley as a single destination area.
- Distributing Great River Road Mississippi Bluffs map illustrating the Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area to tourists where they stay overnight, at hotels, at a B&B, or at the two state parks.

Agency Strategies

Several strategies could be implemented by state agencies. Those that could be implemented by Mn/DOT include:

- Verifying the existence and adequate condition of Great River Road route, directional, and mileage makers each spring prior to Memorial Day and the beginning of the tourist season.
- To avoid disappointing tourists, post notice of closures (season or days of the week) on the brown information signs that direct tourists to attractions if the attraction is not open daily throughout the year.

Those strategies that could be implemented by DNR include:

- Selling discounted daily or weekly passes at hotels for trips to Frontenac and Great River Bluffs State Parks. This would give the hotel owners another local attraction to include in their vacation packages and the DNR with extra revenue.
- Promoting bicycling on the Great River Road between the two state parks.
- Developing (or encouraging the private development of) canoe and bicycle rental and retrieval services between the two state parks.

Those strategies that could be implemented by tourist promotion organizations:

- Exploit nationally and internationally the publicity that will follow the *Grumpy Old Men* movie series.
- Promote Winona as a destination for private aviators. Red Wing as a Metro-reliver.
- Assist Red Wing and Winona in developing Train/Drive packages.

- Creating a Great River Road Mississippi Bluffs Destination Area map for public distribution through agencies and private venues throughout the region. This would include Tourist Information Centers, state parks, regional bicycle shops, lodging accommodations, and car rental agencies.
- Promote use of winter visitation on local snow mobile trails highlighting attractions along the river that remain open in the winter.
- Use outdoor amphitheaters, adjacent to the river for local dance, theater, and music productions.
- Expand promotion of heritage walking trail.
- Use local accommodations and restaurants to promote local tourist attractions, such as a using illustrative standard restaurant placemap.
- Develop and promote annual conferences about migratory birds or other watchable wildlife.
- Develop package tours for the structured tourist.



Section 8 Implementation Program

This final section sets forth recommendations for expanding tourism and advancing community development along the Great River Road. While some recommendations address implementing specific initiatives, others propose establishing policies and practices to help set priorities and make investment decisions in the future.

Stewarding the Future

Over the years, a variety of public and non-profit organizations have assumed responsibility for stewarding the Great River Road in Minnesota including the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). For the Great River Road to attract tourists to Minnesota, however, an organization needs to direct its development and ensure continuity, particularly in regard to marketing activities. This organization must have the resources—funding, staffing, and clout—necessary to implement this plan and guide ongoing Great River Road Initiatives.

Interests

The stewardship organization must weave together the diverse interests of a wide array of stakeholders including:

- Minnesota state commissions, councils, and agencies, such as:
 - Mississippi River Parkway Commission
 - Department of Transportation
 - Office of Tourism
 - Department of Natural Resources
 - Minnesota Historical Society
 - Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
 - Mississippi Headwaters Board

- National commissions and federal agencies, such as:
 - Army Corps of Engineers
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - National Park Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - Mississippi River Trail
- Tribal Councils
- Local Units of Government
 - Counties
 - Municipalities
 - Watershed Management Organizations
- Associations
 - Convention and Visitor Bureaus
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Homeowner Associations
 - Business Associations
 - River Interest Groups
 - Recreational Interest Groups

Organizational Structure

To be effective, stewardship must be local and statewide. Therefore, it is recommended that stewardship occur at both the local and state levels.

Local Organization

A local stewardship organization needs to be formed for each Destination Area. It would be a microcosm of the state organization, except it would more accurately reflect local interests. It would weave together tourism promotion and community development efforts focused on the Great River Road. The local stewardship organization would provide direction for capital improvements. It would create marketing plans and materials. A representative from the local stewardship organization would attend the state meetings and act as a conduit for coordinating the marketing and development of the Great River Road.

State Organization

Many of the stakeholders previously listed have been represented on the existing organization that develops and promotes the Great River Road, the *Mississippi River Parkway Commission*. Many others are represented on the existing Great River Road Development Study Advisory Committee guiding the development of this plan.

It is the suggestion of the Study Team that the new statewide stewardship organization be initiated by reformulating the *Mississippi River Parkway Commission* (MRPC). It is suggested that when legislation reauthorizing the MRPC is presented at an upcoming legislative session, that the MRPC be reconstituted and given the authority and resources to implement this plan. In particular, it is recommended that the Commissioners (or a high ranking agency staff member) of Economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources, and the Director the Historical Society be made the core of the commission and charged with implementing the recommendations of this report and providing assistance to communities seeking to develop tourism along the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. It is recommended that a local representative involved in tourism development from each of the Destination Areas be placed on the board by the Governor and confirmed by the State Legislature to better foster local stewardship of the Byway. To ensure legislative involvement, it is recommended that the commission also include four at-large members from the state legislature, (two from the House and two from the Senate) whose districts include or are bounded by the Mississippi River.

It may be useful for the MRPC to attain status as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit or public-benefit corporation



to enable it to attain grants from foundations and donations from concerned individuals.

Deciding on a name for this statewide stewardship organization may prove difficult. Adopting the current name— *Mississippi River Parkway Commission*— may be the most expedient solution. The Study Team, however, recommends that the name be changed to the *Mississippi Heritage Byway Commission of Minnesota*. (Such a name change would be the first step in changing the name of the Great River Road itself. The name would be intuitive to both commissioners and the tourists using the route.) Nonetheless, for this report, the statewide body will continue to be referred to as the *Mississippi River Parkway Commission* or MRPC.

Organizational Purpose

Ultimately the MRPC should become a key regional player by virtue of its willingness to:

- Capitalize on the Great River Road's opportunities vis-a-vis tourism development, marketing and wise economic growth.
- Coordinate activities and facilitate communication among public sector and private sector players in the regional tourism industry, creating fruitful partnerships.
- Provide a regional voice for tourism and the state and local levels on behalf of area public, private and non-profit entities serving visitors.
- Provide visitor products and community development services that are not now available and/or that can be furnished more effectively on a regional basis.
- Create a membership structure

and implement an equitable reality-based funding system

- Support those who provide services that improve the region's ability to cater to tourists and increase cost efficiency
- Create a graphic system of regional tourism maps and signage (wayside and wayfinding) for implementation by local entities.

➤ Implement this Plan

As the Great River Road develops and matures as a destination, the stewardship organization's responsibilities will also include:

- Support the coordination of tourism product development by MOT
- Support regional marketing and promotion of the Great River Road experience
- Advance the cause of Great River Road tourism at the state level
- Identify sources of funding for itself and its partners
- Cultivate regional communication and coordination on tourism matters
- Work with Great River Road communities to improve local services and amenities that benefit residents and visitors alike
- Provide technical assistance or facilitate access to appropriate resources, including financial assistance
- Obtain funding from federal, state, corporate, private, and foundation sources to advance the Great River Road

Product Development

Product development focuses on ways to enhance the existing package of attractions along the Great River Road, including facilitating the introduction of new attractions that can draw additional visitors or extend lengths of stay. This is essentially a process of community development. Enhancements that are undertaken for the development of tourism must fit with the vision the community has for itself. Some of these recommendations pertain to the entire region while others promote specific initiatives. New attraction development, as well as expansion of existing attractions, will be supported by development of appropriate infrastructure, signage, and marketing activities.

In general, the MRPC should provide technical assistance to Great River Road communities, within the established destination areas. Assistance could occur in the development of tourism products, organizing special events, fostering community development and placemaking, improving tourist services, and supporting local and regional promotional efforts.

Facilitate Development of Tourism Products

Help existing and planned commercial attractions expand their facilities by providing access to technical assistance, e.g. via workshops and seminars on such subjects as:

- Interpretation and Exhibit Design
- Marketing
- Potential Partnering Opportunities

Provide assistance to communities organizing special events, e.g., by facilitating efforts to:

- Identify potential local themes and resources



- Maintain calendar for intra-regional coordination
- Create logistics manual
- Identify and maintain shared resources, e.g., tents
- Negotiate joint service provision, e.g., insurance
- Advise on contracting and procurement issues

Further placemaking activity, including historic preservation and downtown revitalization by:

- Provide grantsmanship assistance
- Identify sources of matching funds
- Promote and explain tax credits
- Make explicit tourism/community character link and help communities articulate visions
- Advocate built environment-enhancing land use controls and regulations, e.g., signage ordinances and zoning
- Promote other community improvements that contribute to sense of place, e.g., public arts projects

Improve provision of tourist services by attractions and commercial establishments by:

- Support hospitality and merchandising training
- Institute awards program to provide regional role models
- Link to existing resources for entrepreneur/small business training
- Identify missing links and potential providers
- Support marketing/promotions training
- Implement regional trivia contests
- Coordinate peer support groups

Work with interpretive partners and demonstration communities to enhance the presentation of the regional story by:

- Enhancing the efforts of partners to increase the type and quality of things to see and do
- Developing a broad constituency for recreational and heritage tourism
- Establish productive partnerships with entities from the public sector (federal, state and local), the private sector (existing attractions and hospitality providers) and the non-profit realm
- Attracting additional market niches
- Reinforcing the Great River Road's identity
- Furthering regional marketing goals
- Promoting the Great River Road experience to residents as well as visitors, thereby encouraging them to explore the region and spend money at home.

Work to increase tourism funding for the region by:

- Support regional marketing and promotional efforts
- Link with other tourism promotion agencies to facilitate cooperative and other regional marketing activities, e.g., establish and maintain a web site and coordinate fam tours and travel writer visits.
- Completing the development of a Corridor Management Plan for the Great River Road Scenic Byway and applying for National Scenic Byway status.

Ensuring that the Great River Road reaps the benefits available through TEA-21 and other federal scenic byway funding programs represents an important short-term priority for the stewardship organization. The designation creates interest for interstate travelers

which may entice tourism travel into communities along the Great River Road. Finally, this initiative is cost-efficient, requiring devotion of staff time but little in the way of capital investment.

Information

The network of roadway linkages across the Great River Road will offer little assistance to visitors unless a consistent and distinguishable system of signage is available to guide these tourists to area attractions. A regional approach to signage is crucial to welcome visitors, notify them of opportunities within the region, and provide direction and guidance for their travel within the region. Some existing signs for spurs, amenities, and state routes may be sacrificed to implement this program. These sacrifices are proposed with the strong belief that identifying and promoting the entire region will produce benefits which may be greater than the benefits accruing to the existing individual attractions. Funding for a new Master Signage Program as outlined below must be secured and support for the overall program galvanized at each level of government.

A signage summit is proposed to consolidate regional support for the concepts and details proposed. With this political support and funding secured, another piece of the information network can be created (i.e. guidance, directional and identification signs that assist travelers in finding attractions).

The Master Signage Program should address installing Great River Road kiosks at the anchors of each destination area. These kiosks would identify the destination area, major and minor attractions, and recreational and travel services available in the vicinity. As previously discussed new route markers, with punchier



graphics, should be utilized not only on the roadway but on intersecting trunk highways, scenic byways, and well-traveled county roads. The program should also include the development of a mileage marker systems to support attractions and services available to the tourist. Mileage markers would assist tourists in staying on the byway while enhancing the ability of attractions to market their location. The program could also include the identification of private and public Great River Road Individual attractions and services would become members of the Signage Program and thereby provide continuing funding for new signs, maintenance and other improvements.

The signage system initiative represents an enormous value-added opportunity for the Great River Road in the short term. It is recommended that this be one of the first tasks by the newly reconstituted MRPC.

Marketing

Tourism is an industry. Consequently, it requires a business-like approach to marketing, including correcting such significant deficiencies as lack of funding and research, and failure to coordinate and implement programs designed to increase tourism and visitor spending. The modest marketing spending, not only on the State and Regional level, but also by local attractions, has put the tourism business at a serious competitive disadvantage. This disadvantage will only intensify in the future as more and more destinations—locally, nationally and internationally— increase the spending and sophistication behind their marketing efforts.

The Great River Road can compete effectively on the national and even international stage. However, to do so it must receive additional State support, devise its own funding

sources for marketing, and maintain a lean yet highly focused business-like approach to promoting tourism. The MRPC needs to nurture strong working partnerships with all state, regional and local tourism promotion agencies in order to pursue such strategic initiatives as developing a regional web site strategy, brochures, and kiosks.

Web Site

A web site for the Great River Road should reflect the individual destination area, its position in the marketplace, and allow for easy access to individual attractions and information. A good database can significantly decrease distribution costs because promotional messages can be sent to highly qualified prospects at very advantageous rates.

The first step in this process is to understand just what kind of a web presence the Great River Road enjoys now. What has the state incorporated into its web site? And what individual attractions and businesses in the region have a site? How can these sites be linked together? From there a plan to enhance the area's presence on the Web can be developed, including how the MRPC needs to advertise, work with partners, link to other sites and maneuver within the growing league of large virtual travel agencies. To be effective the website must incorporate the services provided by the private sector that a traveler on the Great River Road would utilize.

Brochure

Another effective strategy is to expand the development and distribution of regional brochures. Great River Road information should be incorporated into existing brochures for communities and attractions. Brochures mailed to

potential travelers or distributed at visitor welcome centers along major traffic arteries prove effective in influencing travel behavior. While brochures distributed at welcome centers may influence travelers to spend more or alter the places they visit, they do not motivate visitors to extend their stays. Consequently, it is important to reach travelers both prior to their trip planning process as well as during their trip as they visit or pass through a particular area.

Multiple product brochures carry the advantage of shared cost for both production and distribution of literature. Distribution savings are particularly acute when direct mail is involved in promoting an area. Providing more options with a multiple product brochure can help generate more business for individual products and the region as a whole.

Kiosks

The development of interpretive community kiosks provides interactive devices linked to a database or web-site which provide information about attractions and hospitality services. These have the advantage of being easily updated. They also allow the tourist to receive detailed information, including images of prospective attractions and make reservations on-line.

The MRPC should involve experts from the Minnesota Office of Tourism to determine if this would be an effective method for promoting tourism along the Great River Road. If electronic kiosks are not practical, standard informational kiosks would be sufficient. To assist in wayfinding and branding, the kiosks should be designed as a complementary set regardless of which technology is used to display information.



Cooperative Advertising

Increasing the use of cooperative advertising/marketing materials develops and promotes value oriented travel packages for tourists. Travelers will purchase well-conceived promotional packages and even change plans and stay longer as a result. The private sector should be responsible for development of packages that enhance the area's position, and the MRPC should serve as a facilitator in the packaging and marketing process.

Public Relations

Expanding public relations activities to develop and promote newsworthy events and stories will enhance the positioning of the Great River Road region.

Interpretation

By helping direct and coordinate interpretation throughout the region, the MRPC can ensure that the pieces of the 'story' hang together, that suitable places tell suitable parts of the story, and that endangered resources are preserved (including the potential to collect oral histories from the area's senior residents). Moreover, such activities as writing capsule histories of each village and town create an opportunity to form partnerships for future endeavors, from upgrading existing attractions to encouraging collections donations. In addition to furthering educational goals vis-a-vis residents and tourists, such activity also improves the skills available at the local level, for example, at small town historical societies.

Capital Improvements

Several suggestions for capital improvements have been offered as part of the discussion of individual demonstration areas. These can be

generalized and augmented to include the interests of those destination areas that were not examined in detail as demonstration areas. The Study Team makes the following suggestions for the MRPC and the local stewardship organizations to pursue:

➤ **Pave all remaining unpaved segments.**

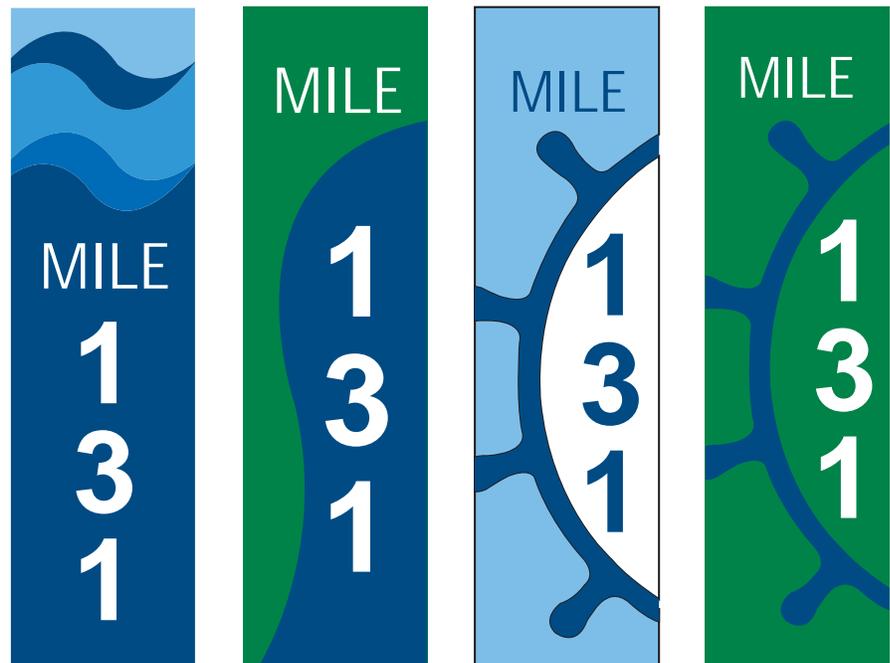
Unpaved segments in the Mississippi Headwaters and Mississippi Mines destination areas degrade the whole system. It is imperative that the expectations of a tourist are met along the whole designated route. Tourists are increasingly sophisticated and familiar with other national byways that are typically well-maintained and paved. Unpaved roads are not viewed favorably by most tourists, except for certain types of explorers. Touring bicyclists especially dislike unpaved roadways. Approximately

25 miles of the 450 mile Great River Road is not paved. Paving the remaining unpaved segments should be a primary goal of the MRPC and the two affected destination areas.

➤ **Create a system of unique mileage markers.**

A mileage marker system unique to the Great River Road would assist the tourist in staying on the route. This is especially important since the fear of becoming lost is one of the major reasons tourists avoid a particular destination. Currently, it is very difficult to follow the route, even with a map and knowledge of where the road goes. A mileage marker system coupled with improved directional signing at intersections would greatly decrease any foreboding a tourist may have toward traveling on the Great River Road.

A system of unique mileage



Mock-ups for unique Great River Road mileage markers. Such markers would make it easier for tourist to follow the road and find the attractions and services they are seeking.



markers would also make it possible for local attractions and services to advertise their location as being on Mile “x” of the Great River Road. Not only would this be useful to the merchant it simultaneously increases the visibility of the Great River Road to residents and visitors. The value of the markers would make it possible for private interests in each destination area to create guide-books based on the markers.

► **Create a system of gateway kiosks in the anchors of each destination area.**

Design and construct a unique Great River Road Gateway Kiosk in each anchor community. Kiosks should be built, preferably at a travel information center or other major attraction for tourists on the river in Itasca State Park, Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, Little Falls, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Red Wing, and Winona. The exact location should be determined by the local stewardship organization. Adding kiosks in other communities may be included as determined by the local stewardship organization.

The kiosks would be designed to provide information on public attractions along the Great River Road. It would also incorporate information important to tourists such as advertisements for lodging, restaurants, recreation, entertainment, and travel services provided by the for-profit private sector. Interpretive information about the natural history of the Mississippi River Valley and the cultural heritage of the river communities would also be included.

The kiosk, as part of a general

marketing strategy, would be the hub where several radiating trips to various attractions and services scattered throughout the destination area would be promoted. By using a hub and spoke strategy, not all attractions would need to be on the Great River Road, merely accessible from the hub. This will allow the route of the Great River Road to simplified into a spine that will connect the anchor communities and specifically, the anchor kiosks. The anchor kiosks will act as gateways to visiting the whole community.

► **Complete the bicycle and pedestrian trail parallel to the Mississippi River from Lake Itasca to the Iowa border.**

It is unlikely that many tourists would bicycle or hike the whole route in one trip from Lake Itasca to the Iowa border. In this, they are like their motorized brethren. Nonetheless, bicyclists and pedestrians are requesting improved facilities throughout the Mississippi River corridor. Many improvements have been completed. If these improvements could be linked, a complete system of trails paralleling the river and linking various attractions and services could be created.

Twenty years ago, it was envisioned that the Great River Road would provide such an opportunity. Much of the system was paved with four foot shoulders which was considered adequate for bicycling at the time. Unfortunately, as a modern bicycle facility, a four foot shoulder is not considered sufficient.

Recently, an organization

called the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) has promoted the concept of creating a national trail along the river. MRT has received federal support for its effort. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has supported the development of several trails, particularly with the National Park Service (NPS) in the Twin Cities.

It is recommended that the MRPC, the local stewardship organizations, MRT, DNR, NPS, and other agencies and organizations work together to complete the system. Typically, this could be accomplished by paving the shoulder of the Great River Road or creating an off-road trail where traffic volumes make it unsafe to pedal on the highway. It is recommended that the state-aid 8-foot shoulders standard not be applied if traffic volumes are low and paving an 8-foot shoulder would adversely impact visual quality or some other environmental or social value.

► **Assist local communities in developing their riverfronts.**

The Mississippi River and the communities that grew along its banks are major attractions to a tourist. Redeveloping the riverfront provides a way for a community to conserve and share with tourists its natural and cultural heritage. The authenticity and charm of old buildings, the commercial activity found in the river and the riverbanks, and the inspiring natural landscape provide value to residents and tourists. By improving access to the river, renovating buildings, creating scenic lookouts, and developing riverfront recreational facilities, a community naturally promotes



travel to the Mississippi River, the Great River Road, and every other river community throughout Minnesota.

Funding

The MRPC should maintain an inventory of the myriad state and federal programs that offer funding for qualified projects consistent with its mandate and mission. In addition, public and private foundations can often be tapped for funding; implementing a system for tracking these programs' eligibility guidelines, submission deadlines, matching provisions, and other requirements is the only way to preserve the utility of this information for the MRPC, Great River Road communities and their partners. In addition, the MRPC can increase award probability by providing grantsmanship assistance on both a direct and indirect basis. In addition to State of Minnesota programs, the Stewardship Organization should track such funding sources as:

- ▶ United States Department of Agriculture – money available for rural community facilities; funds for eco-tourism, marketing and tourism development in rural areas.
- ▶ Department of Housing and Urban Development – funds for capital projects as part of the Canal Corridor Initiative

- ▶ National Endowment for the Humanities – Grants to individuals and institutions support programs for research in the humanities, educational opportunities for teachers, preservation of texts and materials, museum exhibitions, media programs, and public discussion and study; also collaborative research projects, fellowships, seminars, and institutes.

- ▶ National Trust for Historic Preservation—Preservation Services Fund – consultant services, feasibility studies, and education.

- ▶ Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation – grants of \$5,000-25,000 for activities such as obtaining professional services, producing marketing and communications materials, sponsoring conferences, and implementing educational programs.

- ▶ TEA-21 – Projects to protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life; scenic and historic preservation, community planning, improvements to livability of communities: social cohesion, physical connections, urban design and potential for growth; coordinating

land use and transportation decisions.

- ▶ Mississippi River Trail and the Millennium Trails project – designation of national, state and community trails, development of pedestrian and bike paths, connecting people, their land, their culture and their history.

Conclusion

In its role as the Great River Road's voice for a regional approach to tourism and community development, the MRPC can provide value-added services that enhance the existing menu of available financial and technical assistance. Its role as a facilitator of new initiatives, partnership broker, information provider, and, moreover, keeper of a region-wide vision for heritage-based revitalization and tourism, offers a means to sustainable community development that emphasizes stewardship and respect for the region's cultural and natural resources.



Great River Road VISITOR Survey

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the Great River Road study sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. You are one of only a select number that have received this questionnaire. Your responses are critical to the study's success. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. It is important that the person receiving this questionnaire is the one that fills it out. Please complete the questionnaire this evening and place it in the provided envelope and mail (**no postage required!**).

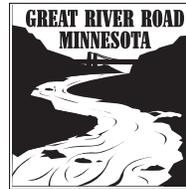
Your responses are confidential. The number in the upper corner of the questionnaire identifies the road segment where you were contacted. There is no way we can connect the completed questionnaire to you.

Thank you for taking the time to help us. Responses to this questionnaire will be used to improve visitor services along the entire length of the Great River Road in Minnesota. By completing the questionnaire and mailing it back promptly you will help decide what needs to be done to make your travel experience in Minnesota more enjoyable.

SECTION 1

The questions in this section are intended to provide general information about your trip.

1. Please circle the symbol that you believe represents the official designation for the Great River Road.



2. Are you now, have you been, or will you be more than 100 miles away from home on this trip?

- YES
 NO

3. What is the main purpose of your trip?

- BUSINESS
 PLEASURE
 BOTH

4. Please write in the name of the nearest city or town where you are spending the night.

5. Have you ever traveled to the area before where you were presented with this questionnaire?

- YES (if yes how many times _____)
 NO

6. What is the length of this trip in days?

_____ (number of days)

7. When did you begin to plan for this trip?

- WITHIN THE LAST WEEK
 WITHIN THE LAST MONTH
 WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS
 MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO

8. Do you belong to an automobile club?

- YES
 NO

9. Did you use the services of an automobile club (even if you are not a member) to help plan your route for this trip?

- YES
 NO

10. Did you use the services of the Minnesota Office of Tourism when planning for this trip?

- YES
 NO

	Completely Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Completely Disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1 2 3 4 5						22. I prefer to travel at a high rate of speed provided the roadway is safe.
1 2 3 4 5						23. While traveling, billboards are an important way to find out about the services and activities available to me.
1 2 3 4 5						24. While driving I prefer to listen to local or talk news radio which provides me with some interesting information about the area I am driving through.
1 2 3 4 5						25. I wish there were more restaurants near the highway.
1 2 3 4 5						26. I wish the food was better at the restaurants found along the highway.
1 2 3 4 5						27. I often stop at historical sites to find out more about the history of the area I am passing through.
1 2 3 4 5						28. For me to enjoy the drive I want a natural scenic highway corridor free of unnecessary commercial activity (e.g. businesses, billboards etc.)
1 2 3 4 5						29. I often stop at national museums or historical sites along my route.
1 2 3 4 5						30. I often stop at state museums or historical sites along my route.
1 2 3 4 5						31. I often stop at local museums or historical sites along my route.
1 2 3 4 5						32. Interpretive signs along a highway are useful ways for me to learn more about the historical and natural history of the area I am passing through.
1 2 3 4 5						33. I do not enjoy driving.
1 2 3 4 5						34. I don't care what a road is called as long as it is fast and safe.
1 2 3 4 5						35. If a road is designated as a scenic highway I will choose it even if it means increasing the amount of time it takes me to get to my destination.
1 2 3 4 5						36. I am interested in the activities available to me at the destination not the activities available to me along the way.
1 2 3 4 5						37. Secondary highways should be designed to make trips slower and more scenic.
1 2 3 4 5						38. Before leaving home, I collect information about the area I will be traveling through.
1 2 3 4 5						39. When staying at commercial lodging establishments I make travel reservations at least 24 hours in advance to ensure that I will have a place to spend the night.
1 2 3 4 5						40. I prefer to fly rather than drive to my destination.
1 2 3 4 5						41. When driving in unfamiliar areas I choose secondary routes to find out more about the area's resources, activities, people etc.
1 2 3 4 5						42. I consider myself to be an outdoors type person.
1 2 3 4 5						43. Once I arrive at my destination I drive for pleasure in the local area.
1 2 3 4 5						44. Highway taxes should be used to create and manage more scenic highways.
1 2 3 4 5						45. I consider driving with family and friends to be an enjoyable experience.
1 2 3 4 5						46. Before leaving home I use the Internet to find out more about areas I will be passing through.
1 2 3 4 5						47. Before leaving home I use the Internet to find out more about the destination I will be visiting.
1 2 3 4 5						48. Viewing wildlife in their natural environment is an important part of the driving experience.
1 2 3 4 5						49. I stop to read interpretive signs located along the road when traveling
1 2 3 4 5						50. I never drive for pleasure.
1 2 3 4 5						51. When in unfamiliar territory I avoid driving in urban areas.
1 2 3 4 5						52. Scenic highways are a safety hazard as too many people are distracted by the scenery and do not pay attention to their driving.
1 2 3 4 5						53. Small, local historic sites are more interesting than national sites.
1 2 3 4 5						54. I find small towns located on secondary highways to be more of a pleasure than a nuisance.
1 2 3 4 5						55. The Mississippi River is one of the most polluted in the nation.
1 2 3 4 5						56. I consider myself a history buff.
1 2 3 4 5						57. Minnesota people are nice and helpful.
1 2 3 4 5						58. Some day I hope to drive the entire length of the Mississippi River.
1 2 3 4 5						59. I would make use of a website that provided a detailed look at the activities or attractions found along a highway route.

Completely Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Completely Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

- 1 2 3 4 5 60. Highways that are designed with turnouts for scenic vistas or historical sites pose no safety threat.
- 1 2 3 4 5 61. I would go out of my way when driving if it meant that the chances of seeing a threatened or endangered species was high.
- 1 2 3 4 5 62. Communities with historic attractions should be linked by some type of highway system.
- 1 2 3 4 5 63. During my trips I will often stop spontaneously to engage in some activity (e.g. golf, bird-watching, shopping, etc.) along the way.
- 1 2 3 4 5 64. Industrial tours are of interest to me.
- 1 2 3 4 5 65. When vacationing I stop at a road side rest or Travel Information Center to find out more about the area.
- 1 2 3 4 5 66. I would use an audio tape tour to find out more about an area I am traveling through.
- 1 2 3 4 5 67. I would use an interpretive brochure/map that locates points of interest by mile marker or numbered sites to find out more about an area I am traveling through.

SECTION 4

This section deals with expenditure information. Please record the total number of dollars your group (the total number of people in the vehicle) spent in each category during the last 24 HOURS.

68. Within the last 24 hours my group spent:

- \$ _____ LODGING
- \$ _____ FOOD
- \$ _____ GAS/OIL
- \$ _____ ENTERTAINMENT (includes gambling)
- \$ _____ SHOPPING (gifts, clothes, handicrafts etc)
- \$ _____ OUTFITTING/BAIT
- \$ _____ OTHER (please list _____)

69. How many people, including yourself, are traveling with you in one vehicle?

70. Of the total in the question above how many are 19 years old or older?

SECTION 5

This last section asks for demographic information so that we can better understand who is using the highways in this area. Please make sure you complete all questions and remember your answers are strictly confidential.

71. How many people, including yourself, are in your household?

72. Of the total in the question above how many are 19 years old or older?

73. What is your age?

_____ YEARS

74. What is your gender?

- MALE
- FEMALE

75. What is your total household income (round off to the nearest \$1,000)?

\$ _____

76. What is your Zip Code?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please seal it in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope and mail it as soon as possible.

Acknowledgments

The Great River Road Development Study involved scores of dedicated people serving in various capacities. Many volunteered their knowledge and time primarily because they loved the Mississippi River and the Great River Road. In particular, the effort was guided by the unflagging assistance from a talented Advisory Committee. Without the guidance and insight provided by the Advisory Committee, this study would not have reached its final scope or resulted in anything other than predictable pedestrian musings. By keeping the study focused on the river and the tourist, the Advisory Committee has created a document that will serve as a blueprint for people and organizations trying to improve the experience of a tourist and enhance the quality of life of those people who call the Mississippi River valley their home.

For all of their talented assistance, grateful acknowledgment is made to the following individuals:

Mr. Bob Brown, *State Aid Engineer, Metro Division, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Roseville*

Mr. Craig Collison, *Transportation Planner, Northwest Transportation District, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Bemidji*

Mr. John Edman, *Executive Director, Mississippi Parkway Commission of Minnesota, Minneapolis*

Mr. Dennis Erickson, *Construction and Operations Division, St. Paul District, United States Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul*

Mr. Ron Erickson, *Educational Programs Manager, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Minneapolis*

Mr. Andy Golfis, *Secretary, Mississippi Parkway Commission of Minnesota, St. Paul*

Mr. Dick Haskett, *Assistant Director of Tourism, Minnesota Office of Tourism, Department of Trade and Economic Development, St. Paul*

Mr. David Kelliher, *Legislative Liaison, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul*

Ms. Sue McDonald, *Director of Interpretive Programs, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, United States Fish and Wildlife Services, United States Department of the Interior, Bloomington*

Mr. Bob Mayhew, P.E., *Project Manager, District 6, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Rochester*

Mr. Marvin Moriarty, *Deputy Regional Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Services, United States Department of the Interior, Bloomington*

Mr. Jim Pederson, *Legislative Liaison, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul*

Mr. Dan Ray, *Program Officer, The McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis*

Mrs. Margaret Sherman, *former Board Member, Mississippi Headwaters Board, Palisade*

Mr. John Strohkirch, *Development and Acquisition Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul*

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This Great River Road Development Study was instigated and directed by three dedicated employees of the State of Minnesota:

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The Great River Road Development Study was conducted by a team of consultants including:

Economics Research Associates, Inc.

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Gartner Consulting

Bill Gartner, *Lead Investigator and Analyst*

Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.

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Tricia Rezin, *Graphic Designer*

Mark Salzman, *Urban Designer*

April Warwick, *Lead Graphic Designer*

The 106 Group

Anne Ketz, *Project Advisor*

David Ketz, *Project Manager*

Andrew Schmidt, *Lead Cultural Resource Investigator*

All photographs, unless noted otherwise, are by Craig Churchward or Andrew Schmidt. Text is by Craig Churchward, except the discussions of cultural resources in the four demonstration areas found in Section 7 which are by Andrew Schmidt or the economic development discussions in Sections 5, 6, and 8 which are by Elaine Carmichael and David Versel. Veronica Anderson was instrumental in keeping the project moving ahead and Becky Blue doggedly developed the GIS database. April Warwick developed the graphic format and laid out the entire report.

Several communities, agencies, or organizations sponsored open houses or provided valuable assistance. The study team appreciates the welcome and information they received from International Falls, Itasca State Park, Mississippi River Headwaters Board, Bemidji, Schoolcraft State Park, the Forest History Center, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, Crow Wing Historical Society, Little Falls, Charles Lindbergh Historical Site, Charles A. Weyerhauser Memorial Museum, Camp Ripley, St. Cloud, Breckenridge Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, St. Anthony Lock and Dam, Historic Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Red Wing, and Winona.

This work is a direct result of the vision, dedication, and enthusiasm of Carol Zoff Pelton.