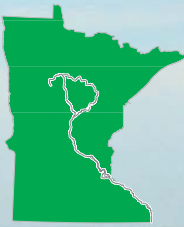


Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Marketing Toolbox

HEADWATERS TO THE IOWA BORDER



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION

JUNE 2011

MINNESOTA

Acknowledgements



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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*The MRT Marketing Toolbox was prepared by Bonestroo, Inc.
www.bonestroo.com.*



Executive Summary: TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXPONENTIAL POTENTIAL. EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE.

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway (MRT) has the potential to bring visitors to Minnesota communities and enhance the lives of local residents—but only if bicyclists know about its existence, are attracted to its amenities, and believe they will find a valuable experience riding it.

The main purpose of this marketing toolbox is to provide potential MRT marketers with the tools and information they need to effectively promote the MRT. *An annotated table of contents and marketing plan development flow chart are provided to help you quickly identify the information in the toolbox you need to make your marketing efforts a success.*



A successful MRT has potential benefits for Minnesota's economy, transportation, recreation, environment, and public health. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

MRT BIKEWAY VISION..... 1.1

This section identifies the MRT brand, key messages about the MRT, and overall objectives, as well as potential MRT benefits. All marketing efforts should reflect this vision.

SETTING 2.1

This section helps define the MRT's national, state, regional and local identity. You will find a ten state map, the MRT regional destination area descriptions and maps, and tips for enhancing the local setting in each community.

TOOLBOX CONTENTS

WHY MARKET 3.1

Use this section to build the case for marketing, identify critical steps in the process, and outline strategies to help you create a solid plan.

THE MRT PRODUCT 4.1

Use this section to expand your understanding of the MRT setting and characteristics. It includes detailed fact sheets on the MRT's history, bikeway data, connections to important amenities, and a table comparing Minnesota's six destination areas.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE..... 5.1

Use this section to identify types of bicyclists, types of bicycling trips, user needs, and other information that will help you to understand the potential users and appropriately target your marketing efforts.

The purpose of this marketing toolbox is to provide MRT partners with the tools and information they need to effectively market the MRT



Executive Summary: TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARKETING STRATEGIES 6.1

Use this section as a checklist of marketing ideas, strategies, and information to consider during implementation. We've provided a sample marketing plan for a community that shows how the marketing goals, target audience and tactics are combined.

MARKETING PARTNERS 7.1

Use this section to understand inherent partnerships and agencies interested in Minnesota's bicycling needs. This section outlines the responsibilities assigned to key organizations (MnDOT, Explore MN Tourism, and other state agencies) and the support they offer. This section also defines how partners at the state, regional and local level might work together for a collaborative marketing effort, and reviews how the Great River Road Scenic Byway and the MRT are related.

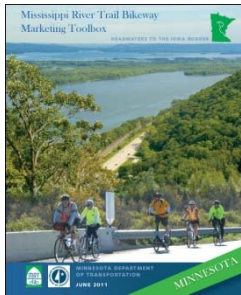
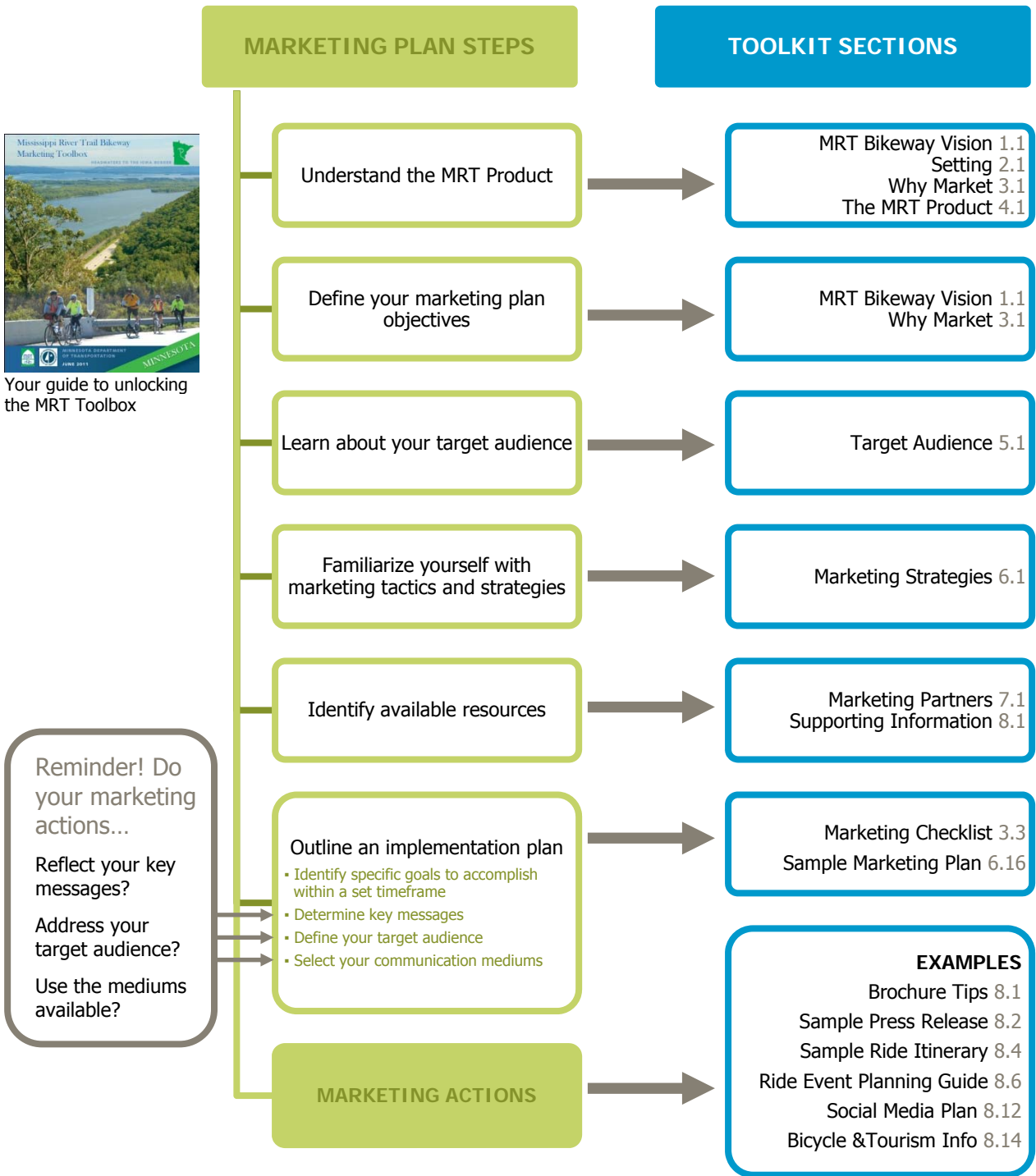
SUPPORTING INFORMATION 8.1

Use this section to support your individual marketing plan. We've compiled samples, templates, and checklists to help you get started, including a press release, a ride itinerary, ride ideas, a ride event planning guide, a social media plan, and lists of bicycling and tourism related websites, contacts and organizations.



Marketing Plan Development Flow Chart

Here's how to unlock the marketing toolbox to help you create an individualized marketing plan for the MRT.



Your guide to unlocking the MRT Toolbox

SECTION 1

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Vision

- This section identifies the MRT brand, key messages about the MRT, and overall objectives, as well as potential MRT benefits.

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Vision

MRT Brand: The MRT is a bikeway, primarily on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico



Use the MRT brand and key MRT messages to guide all marketing efforts



The MRT adds value to the existing infrastructure system and connects a variety of community assets and businesses

MRT VISION

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway in Minnesota is an international quality bicycling experience that safely connects riders to natural and cultural resources throughout one of the most bicycle-friendly states in America.

MRT BRAND

The MRT is a bikeway, primarily on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, that provides the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico

KEY MRT MESSAGES

- **A great adventure!** Visitors and residents can explore America's cultural and natural heritage and see what tourists in an automobile will never see.
- **Enrichment and social cohesiveness.** The trail celebrates important Mississippi River people, places, and stories that have made Minnesota's communities great.
- **Better health.** The MRT encourages healthy and life-extending outdoor activity.
- **Diverse terrain engages diverse riders.** The MRT is primarily an on-road bikeway, with some off road trail segments.
- **The right distance for all riders.** The MRT is a unique long distance route with opportunities for short rides.

REASONS TO SUPPORT THE MRT

Creating bicycle infrastructure provides significant environmental, health, economic, and transportation benefits.

Adds value to existing infrastructure. The bikeway provides new uses for an already maintained transportation network. The road, shoulders, and trails occupied by the MRT are now part of an internationally acclaimed bikeway.

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Vision

The University of Minnesota Tourism Center identifies bicycling as the state's second most popular outdoor recreation activity. In 2009, road bicyclists' total trip spending was \$337,641.



The MRT ties economic value to a beautiful and healthy Mississippi River

Increases bicycle-related tourism, which has had proven economic impact, even in an economic downturn. The MRT invites visitors and revenue to communities across the state. Businesses may develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the MRT by promoting their goods and services as MRT amenities. Certain businesses may find that bicyclists are a niche market waiting to be tapped!

Enhances quality of life, serves as an attraction for residents and businesses. Bicycle transportation is a key community component that supports active living, and a healthier population.

Serves as a positive addition to a network of parks, trails, and natural and cultural resources. As well as being a recreational opportunity, the MRT encourages contact with other community amenities, offering exploration and exercise.

Contributes to environmental stewardship. The MRT links fiscal value to the health and condition of the river, riverside parks, and adjacent natural areas. A low-impact form of transportation, it also helps reduce our carbon footprint.

Encourages social cohesiveness. The MRT not only connects diverse places, it also promotes an understanding of local and regional issues. The result is increased cooperative solutions.

Fulfills state statutes. The MRT helps MnDOT fulfill its statutory requirements to develop bikeways (Statute 160.265) to encourage tourism through transportation, and promote and increase bicycling and health forms of transportation (Statute 174.01).

The MRT is a tremendous opportunity to tie economic value to environmental and social well being. We believe the MRT will add value to your community, but we cannot guarantee benefits. Please remember the gains from the MRT will depend on many factors, including support from the local and regional communities and businesses.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BICYCLE ROUTE BENEFITS

Adventure Cycling Association, working with the Georgia Department of Transportation, provided a compilation of bicycling statistics. See four handouts on the Environmental, Economic, Health and Transportation benefits of bicycle routes:

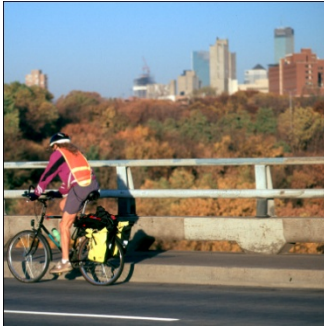
http://www.adventurecycling.org/routes/nbrn/resourcespage/USBR_S_Benefits.pdf

SECTION 2

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Setting

- This section helps define the MRT's national, state, regional and local identity. You will find a ten state map, the six destination area descriptions and maps, and tips for enhancing the local setting in each community.

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Setting



The MRT is oriented around the Mississippi River, a recognized national treasure, and an international icon, and offers a rewarding bicycling experience for visitors worldwide. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism*

Minnesota, where the Mississippi River originates, offers unique experiences. Here the Mississippi River changes from a tiny, meandering brook to a vast and powerful river. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism*



Minnesota is segmented into the same six regional destination areas as the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Each area offers a unique setting for promoting local and regional amenities and helping tourists navigate focused trips.

NATIONAL SETTING

TEN STATES. ONE RIVER.

The Mississippi River runs through ten states—Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi and Louisiana. The MRT is oriented around the Mississippi River, a recognized national treasure and an international icon, and offers a rewarding bicycling experience for visitors worldwide.

Each state designs their portion of the route independently, based on state standards, priorities, and resources, but collaborates with other states to provide a cohesive route. MRT Inc, a non-profit organization, was formed to help establish and advocate for the route in all ten states. *MRT, Inc. provided the 10-state map shown on the following pages.*

STATE SETTING

FROM THE HEADWATERS AT LAKE ITASCA TO THE IOWA BORDER

Minnesota contains the source of the Mississippi and has a special role within the MRT bikeway. Minnesota is the only state where people can see the mighty river as a small brook and easily walk across it. Where most states share the river with a neighboring state, Minnesota is unique in that a large portion of the river, and the route, is entirely within its borders.

You will find a 10-state MRT map and Minnesota MRT maps on the following pages. These maps and a detailed MRT mapbook can be downloaded for your use and information at MnDOT's website <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>.

REGIONAL SETTING

DESTINATION AREAS IDENTIFIED BY REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The authors of the Great River Road (GRR) Development Study established the basic destination areas used by the GRR and MRT. Dividing Minnesota into distinct destination areas promotes local and regional amenities and helps travelers navigate focused trips. Because the MRT experience varies significantly along the river, these recognizable areas will help marketing partners develop a



The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Setting



The monument at Lake Itasca marks the beginning of the Mississippi River in the Mississippi Headwaters Destination Area.
Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism



In the Mississippi Metro Destination Area, there is an MRT route on both sides of the river.
Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism

distinct regional identity and will help travelers anticipate their likely experience.

Each destination area is:

- Oriented to the river
- Geographically defined and anchored by a city at each end
- Locally supported
- Able to incorporate a practical marketing strategy related to the specific area

The six destination areas are:

- Mississippi Headwaters - from Itasca State Park to Bemidji
- Northwoods Mississippi - from Bemidji to Grand Rapids
- Mississippi Crossings - from Grand Rapids to Little Falls
- Scenic Mississippi - from Little Falls to Elk River
- Metro Mississippi - from Elk River to Hastings
- Mississippi Bluffs - from Hastings to the Iowa border

In addition to the six destination areas, the MRT includes an alternative, off road trail link in northern Minnesota that serves as a seventh area with a unique character:

- Paul Bunyan/Heartland State Trail Alternative MRT Route - from Cass Lake to Brainerd

Stock destination area brochures, including one of each destination area, the Paul Bunyan/Heartland Trail Alternative Route, and the State of Minnesota, are illustrated in this section to support and inform future marketing efforts. The stock brochures include the MRT maps, key themes, route and river characteristics, and a description of the bicycling experience along the route segment.

These brochures are available in PDF and executable files on the Marketing Toolbox CD and from MnDOT's website [www.http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html).

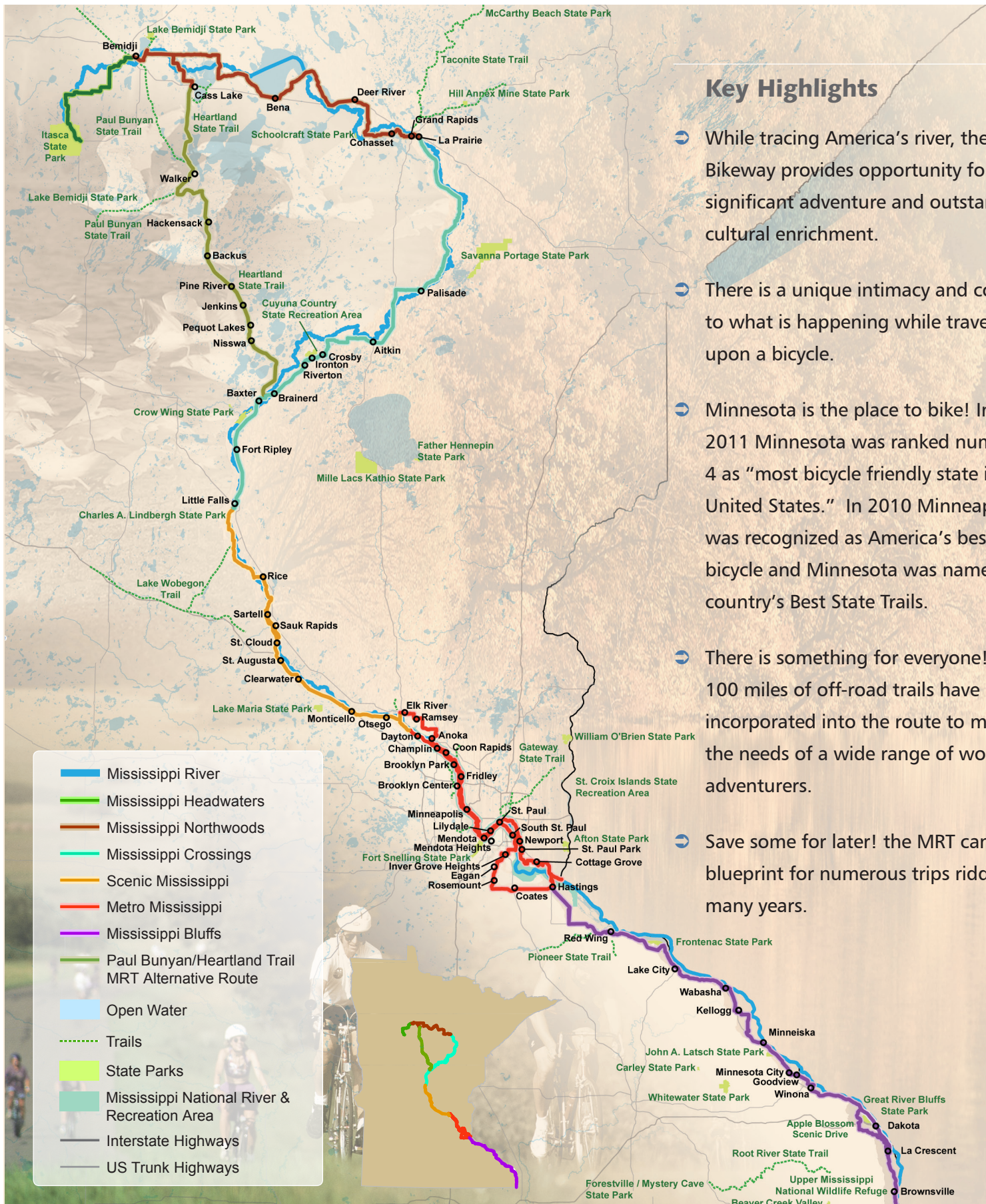
Use portions of the stock brochure to create your own custom MRT brochure. See Section 8.1, Tips for Creating a Successful Brochure.

10-State Mississippi River Trail Map



Source: MRT, Inc.





Key Highlights

- While tracing America's river, the MRT Bikeway provides opportunity for significant adventure and outstanding cultural enrichment.
- There is a unique intimacy and connection to what is happening while traveling upon a bicycle.
- Minnesota is the place to bike! In 2011 Minnesota was ranked number 4 as "most bicycle friendly state in the United States." In 2010 Minneapolis was recognized as America's best city to bicycle and Minnesota was named the country's Best State Trails.
- There is something for everyone! Over 100 miles of off-road trails have been incorporated into the route to match the needs of a wide range of would-be adventurers.
- Save some for later! the MRT can be the blueprint for numerous trips ridden over many years.

Connections

- The MRT travels through ten states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana
- The MRT travels through nearly 70 cities and 21 counties in Minnesota.
- The MRT connects with 3 states and 10 regional trails in Minnesota.
- The MRT connects to 8 state parks, 1 national park and numerous regional parks in Minnesota.
- The MRT travels through two bicycle friendly large urban areas - the St. Cloud metro area and the Twin Cities metro area.

Minnesota,

the source of the Mississippi River, is an ideal 833 mile beginning to your expedition on the 3000 mile Mississippi River Trail. Or, by itself, Minnesota can be a bicycling destination of international quality. Through small towns, and thriving metropolises, among pristine forests and historic landscapes, from the river's beginning as a meandering stream small enough to walk across, along it's transformation into a monumental waterway, you will find the MRT in Minnesota an awe-inspiring journey.

The industry, transportation and settlements that have lined the river throughout history still exist today. Enter traditional downtowns near the water that invite you in for glimpses of the past along with modern support and amenities. Find evidence of the logging trade, the era of mining, and learn about past and present day Native American cultures. Historical markers, interpretive museums, and remnants of industrial infrastructure offer views into the river's past and current influence.

The Mississippi River is a central part of Minnesota life today. The MRT links a wide array of trails, parks, and recreational opportunities such as canoeing, hiking and fishing. Accommodation possibilities range from rustic campgrounds to first class resorts. Throughout the state, experience challenging hills, and gentle trails, stately pine forests, and magnificent wetlands, birdwatching, wildlife and striking fall color in a variety of Minnesota communities.

"The Great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun"
Mark Twain



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway- The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MRT ROUTE COMPOSITION:
77 % On-road Route
23 % Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:
Surface: Paved
Distance: 817 miles

HEADWATERS TO THE IOWA BORDER

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL BIKEWAY

Pristine

natural resources dominate.

Begin your journey at the Mississippi Headwaters in Lake Itasca State Park and wade in the small brook that, slowly reaches the Gulf of Mexico. The 2,000 acre park contains remnants of Minnesota's pine forest, cultural landmarks, and interpretive displays, detailing the stories of explorers and settlers who searched for and lived near the Mississippi River Headwaters.

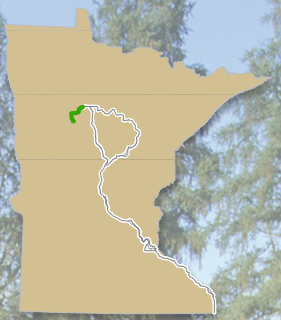
As you leave the park and continue onto county roads through miles of woods and wilderness, you'll occasionally cross the river's serpentine meanderings. The skyline is populated with dramatic tall pines, which provide a dark contrast to the vivid color of the hardwoods. The forest opens suddenly into wide marshes, rich in the sight and sounds of wildlife. As you approach small towns, the crisp, clean air, the frequent glimpses of eagles, and the low traffic volume roads embody the spirit of northern Minnesota.

The City of Bemidji is a thriving regional hub offering museums, art and many waterfront activities, as well as a state park on the shore of Lake Bemidji. This community welcomes bicyclists with bicycle shops, diverse lodging, public art, wifi access at the public library, and other amenities to enhance your journey.

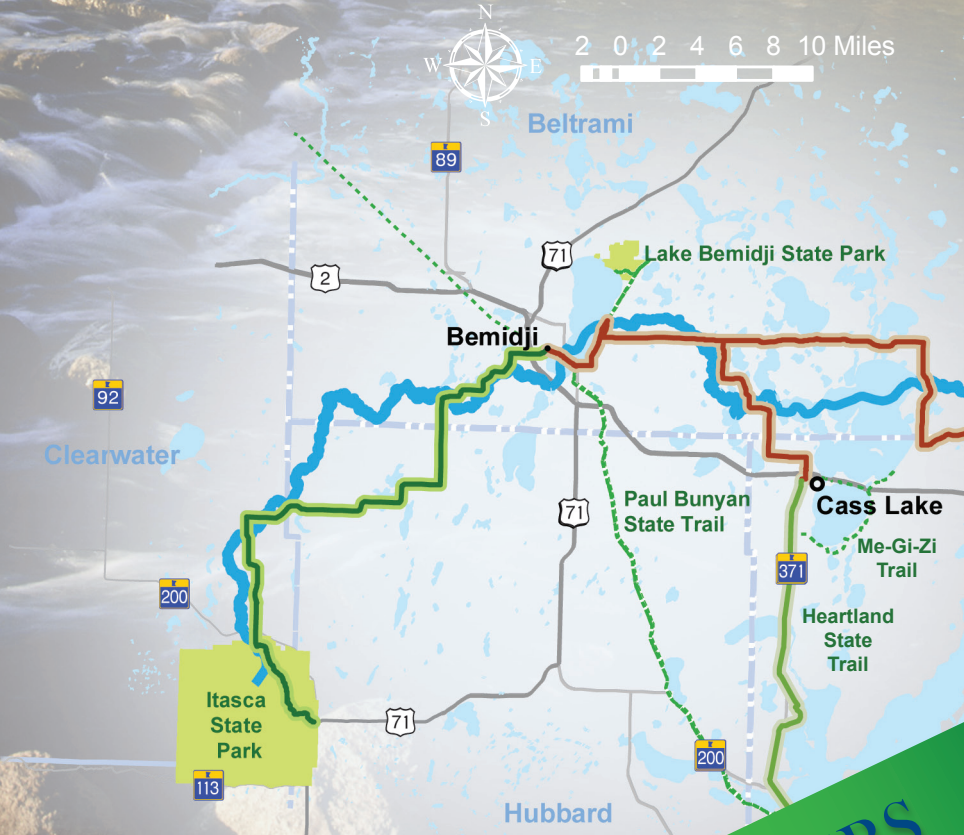
Key Themes

- Celebrate the beginnings of America's premier river by dipping your wheel in at the Headwaters in Lake Itasca State Park
 - In search of the Headwaters - mimic early explorers and settlers as they search for the start of the Mississippi River.
 - Time travelers ride - experience Minnesota's natural areas as the first settlers did in the 1800s, bicycling past pristine, untouched natural areas and forests.
 - Play by the lakes - detour around Lake Bemidji and enjoy life lakeside, partaking in the numerous recreational opportunities available in the city.
- ### Character of the River
- The river, near its source, begins as a small, meandering stream that disappears into abundant wetlands and reappears as a stream.

HERE 1475 FT
ABOVE
THE OCEAN
THE MIGHTY
MISSISSIPPI
BEGINS
TO FLOW
ON ITS
WINDING WAY
2552 MILES
TO THE
GULF OF MEXICO



- Mississippi River
- Mississippi Headwaters
- Mississippi Northwoods
- Paul Bunyan/Heartland Trail MRT Alternative Route
- Open Water
- - - Trails
- State Parks
- Interstate Highways
- US Trunk Highways
- State Trunk Highways
- County Boundary



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway - The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of paved roads, but using significant segments of off road paths along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS ROUTE COMPOSITION:

100% On-road Route
0% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 38 miles

ITASCA STATE PARK TO BEMIDJI

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

HEADWATERS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY



2 0 2 4 6 8 10 Miles



- Mississippi River
- Mississippi Northwoods
- Mississippi Headwaters
- Mississippi Crossings
- Paul Bunyan/Heartland Trail MRT Alternative Route
- Open Water
- - - Trails
- State Parks
- Interstate Highways
- US Trunk Highways
- State Trunk Highways
- County Boundary



Character of the River

- The river widens into lakes and transforms back into a tangible, gentle brook. Low bridges bring the route near the water.

Key Themes

- Rythms of the road - cycle to your own beat, attend a pow wow, and visit the fairs and festivals of the Northwoods.
- "Nopeming" (meaning place of rest in Ojibwe) - enter the Northwoods rustic and primitive natural areas to seek respite from your daily life and find rejuvenation in the crisp Northwoods air.
- Timber! - experience the influence of the logging industry in Minnesota's Northwoods.
- Bald eagles soar - The Chippewa National Forest is home to the highest breeding population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states.

Rustic

nature settings sheltering a variety of birds and an abundance of wildlife greet your every turn from Bemidji to Grand Rapids. Try to spot the elusive gray wolves amidst the boreal ecosystem and picturesque wetlands that wrap closely around the route. As you travel through the Chippewa National Forest enjoy opportunities for Bald Eagle watching and learning about the Native American Ojibwe culture and Minnesota's logging history. The Mississippi River gains strength while emerging from Lakes Bemidji, Cass, Winnebigoshish, Andrusia, and Pokegama.

In this rural setting, the culture and communities are linked inextricably with the land. The Mississippi Northwoods destination area is anchored by Bemidji and Grand Rapids. Many traditional practices, such as hand picking wild rice, harvesting maple syrup, and creating unique crafts from birch bark and local materials, still thrive in this region. Learn about the skills and processes used to create the distinctive products found in the local shops. The Forest History Center in Grand Rapids gives visitors an opportunity to experience a logging camp up close. You will also find a wide range of services, museums, lodging, and dining options.



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway- The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MISSISSIPPI NORTHWOODS ROUTE COMPOSITION:

96% On-road Route
4% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 124 miles

BEMIDJI TO GRAND RAPIDS

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

MISSISSIPPI NORTHWOODS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY



Key Themes

- Nature's Impact - experience the history of the landscape from former glaciers to mines to lakes and see three major North American biomes - the eastern deciduous woodlands, the northern boreal forests, and the western prairies.
- The river, the rail, and the dams - learn about the river's significant influence on area industry.
- Recreation and rest come together at the many lakeside resorts.
- Mountain biking offers you and your bike a different experience at the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.

Character of the River

- The river turns south, carving a serpentine path through the gentle terrain amid many lakes and rivertowns.

Crossroads of nature, culture, and transportation offer you ample opportunities to play and learn. Uncover layers of history within this quiet rural setting; the river was first a passageway for fur traders, then steamboats transporting logs. Many boats landed at ramps that are still in use today. Settlements rose where the lines of land travel met the river. Hydroelectric dams display the power of the Mississippi River and give insight into the river's influence on area industry.

Below Grand Rapids, the river flows south for the first time in Minnesota. The route links to off-road trails that provide side trips within the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. Iron ore pits and mine spoils have transformed the landscape from swamps and underground water to peaks and lakes which now hosts one of the country's best mountain biking trail systems. As you move south, fish, swim, golf, hike and enjoy the plentiful resorts and lakes in the Brainerd area. In Crow Wing State Park, a mile off the bikeway, discover a scenic natural area that is located around a former frontier town. Morrison County Road 213 is a pleasant route into Little Falls leading to the beautiful riverside state park and historic site where Charles Lindbergh grew up.



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway- The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MISSISSIPPI CROSSINGS ROUTE COMPOSITION:

96% On-road Route
4% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 138 miles

GRAND RAPIDS TO LITTLE FALLS

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

CROSSINGS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY

Scenery

abounds as the Mississippi River Trail connects the cities of Little Falls and Elk River. The river corridor provides a relaxing ride past farms, fields, and woodlands on pleasant rural roads while Midwestern hospitality awaits you in the small communities. In Sartell, Sauk Rapids and Monticello, you can enjoy access to the Mississippi River in numerous riverside parks, while local, off-road trail segments allow you to travel alongside the river through enchanting wooded corridors. Acting as a hub for Scenic Mississippi, St. Cloud celebrates its riverfront with Clemens and Munsinger Gardens, while nearby Lake Maria State Park offers you a nice out of the way hiking and camping experience.

Near Little Falls is the Lake Wobegon Trail that celebrates Garrison Keilor's imaginary town.

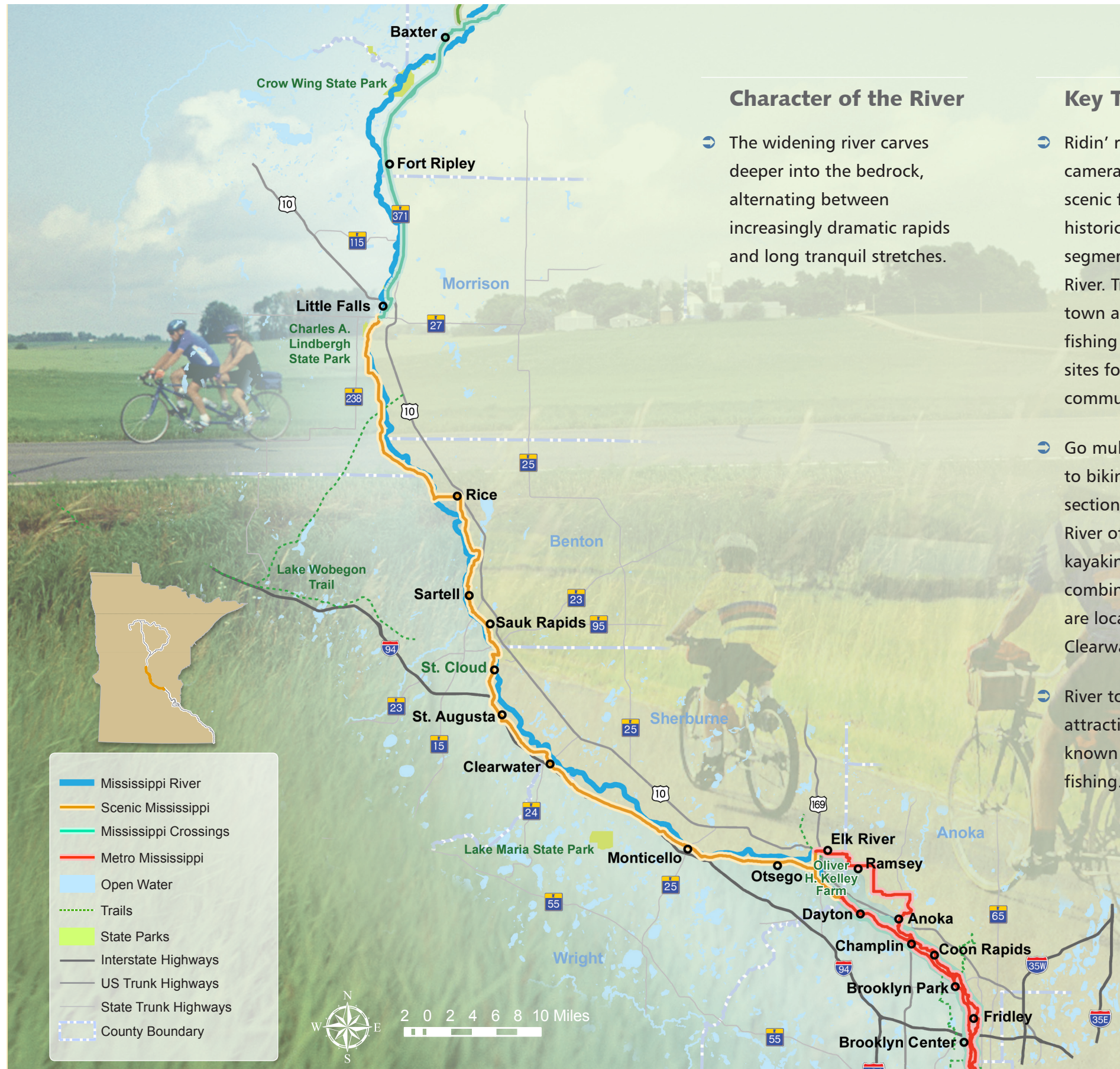
Monticello has an inviting downtown just off the river, and other historic sites are concentrated in the communities of St. Cloud, Clearwater, and Elk River. Break your ride to journey back in time at the nearby Oliver H. Kelley Farm in Elk River. At this working museum, you can pick heirloom vegetables, churn butter, make homemade soap and participate in other farm activities, while costumed guides offer insight into rural Minnesota life in the 1860s.

Character of the River

- The widening river carves deeper into the bedrock, alternating between increasingly dramatic rapids and long tranquil stretches.

Key Themes

- Ridin' rural - grab your camera and photograph scenic farm-scapes and historic barns along this segment of the Mississippi River. Travel from town to town and enjoy the markets, fishing piers and picnic sites found in several of the communities.
- Go multimodal - in addition to biking, this pastoral section of the Mississippi River offers canoeing, kayaking and other travel combinations. Outfitters are located in St. Cloud, Clearwater, and Monticello.
- River tourism is a great attraction, and the water is known for excellent sport fishing.



LITTLE FALLS TO ELK RIVER

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 85 miles

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI ROUTE COMPOSITION:





97% On-road Route
3% Off-road Trail

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway - The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

SCENIC MISSISSIPPI
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY

-  Mississippi River
-  Metro Mississippi
-  Scenic Mississippi
-  Mississippi Bluffs
-  Open Water
-  Trails
-  State Parks
-  Mississippi National River & Recreation Area
-  Interstate Highways
-  US Trunk Highways
-  State Trunk Highways
-  County Boundary



Key Themes

- Go multi-modal! Bicycles, buses, trains and light rail expands metro travel and exploration opportunities.
- Indulge! Whatever you desire, you can find along the Metro Mississippi - great food, museums, sporting events, recreation, and theater are waiting for you.
- Bicycling Magazine named Minneapolis as America's best city to bike in!
- Invent and Innovate - explore Minnesota's past and future relationship with the river - its influence on industry and its celebrated status as a community resource.
- Experiment - Nice Ride Minnesota, the public bike sharing program, allows you to easily pick up and drop off a rented bike at locations in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Character of the River

- The river transforms from a winding, northern watercourse to deeper, more powerful waters rushing through scenic gorges and over dramatic falls.

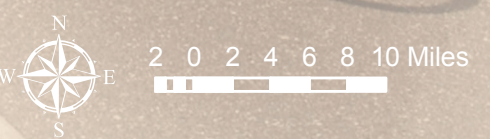
Cultural

experience abounds in the Metro Mississippi. Home to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, this northernmost national park is fashioned from a mosaic of local, regional and state parks that line the shores. From the edges of the Twin Cities metro area, watch the rolling topography and rural, agricultural areas rise slowly into the immense metropolis. On a diverse mix of quiet roads and trails, through small outlying communities, you can travel through a variety of cities shaped by the river.

You can choose to bicycle on the east or west side of the river, although you may find reasons to ride both. The MRT bikeway follows much of the Grand Rounds, a national scenic byway that connects a series of parks and greenways. The connecting Midtown Greenway provides travelers a cross section of Minneapolis neighborhoods.

Explore Minnesota's State Capitol and discover an abundance of historic sites, theaters, major league sports, museums, concerts, pubs, coffee houses, fine dining and shopping in the Twin Cities.

The high quality and connectivity of the riverside trails, as well as the accessible attractions and amenities make this a premier segment of the MRT.



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway- The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MISSISSIPPI METRO ROUTE COMPOSITION:

58% On-road Route
42% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 174 miles

ELK RIVER TO HASTINGS

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

METRO MISSISSIPPI
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY



Character of the River

- The river is part of an immense valley, steeply lined with exposed bluffs and hardwood forests, and visible as a vast opening even from great distances.

Key Themes

- The Mississippi Bluffs segment offers many opportunities to prove your physical valor amongst the bikeway's numerous valleys and peaks. North of La Crescent ascend (and descend) 600' up the bluff on the Apple Blossom scenic drive.
- See the unique driftless environment where the glaciers, that defined much of Minnesota's wild character, did not cover the landscape.
- Historic river towns offer glimpses of the past. See how the Mississippi River influenced early development in Minnesota.

Challenge

awaits you in the bluffs. Steep climbs and descents will test your abilities, but the high ridges will reward you with breathtaking panoramas of the river valley. In the unglaciated corner of Minnesota, the hills remain steep and the views are unrivaled, presenting mile after mile of beautiful scenery. From the peaks, open vistas of the river gorge alternate with the vibrant hardwood forests. In the lowlands, the bluffs create a dramatic backdrop to the vast floodplain of the Mississippi River. Many communities have prospered because of trade and travel along the waterway. Lake City is the birthplace of waterskiing.

Bird watching is well loved in the bluff country. The river valley is a major flyway for waterfowl, eagles and hawks. Protected wild areas support diverse songbirds, grouse and wild turkey as well as other forms of wildlife. You'll discover other attractions such as the Vermillion River Bottoms, Frontenac State Park, the charming riverfronts of Wabasha and Frontenac, Great River Bluffs State Park, Apple Blossom Scenic Drive, and the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge.

- Mississippi River
- Mississippi Bluffs
- Metro Mississippi
- Open Water
- Trails
- State Parks
- Mississippi National River & Recreation Area
- Interstate Highways
- US Trunk Highways
- State Trunk Highways
- County Boundary

2 0 2 4 6 8 10 Miles



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway - The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

MISSISSIPPI BLUFFS ROUTE COMPOSITION:

94% On-road Route
6% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:

Surface: Paved
Distance: 165 miles

HASTINGS TO THE IOWA BORDER

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

MISSISSIPPI BLUFFS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY

- Mississippi River
- Paul Bunyan/Heartland Trail MRT Alternative Route
- Mississippi Headwaters
- Mississippi Northwoods
- Mississippi Crossings
- Open Water
- Trails
- State Parks
- Interstate Highways
- US Trunk Highways
- State Trunk Highways
- County Boundary



Key Themes

- Bike, hike and rollerblade - this fully accessible trail offers a variety of travel opportunities, and equipment rental is available in many of the adjacent towns.
- Family fun - this off-road, trail segment is a great place for children to enjoy a longer trek. Find plenty of amenities for a comfortable ride, and recreation of all kinds in the nearby towns, from fishing and swimming to amusement and water parks.

Character

- Away from the river, the trail provides an opportunity to experience the picturesque Central Minnesota Lakes Region.

Tranquility

surrounds the Paul Bunyan Trail / Heartland State Trail link. This link provides an alternative way to travel between Cass Lake and Brainerd. While riding on an off-road bikeway nearly 100 miles long. You will witness change as the landscape varies from deep pine forest to meadows ablaze with wildflowers and lakes and historic sites richly scattered throughout the countryside. Characterized by the gentle terrain of a former railroad bed, you'll experience a serene ride through a patchwork of farmlands, small towns, beaches, and parks within a region that retains its wild character.

The trails link some of the best amenities northern Minnesota has to offer. In fact the Paul Bunyan Trail has been inducted into the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. Break your journey among the ample swimming and fishing prospects, like Leech Lake and its renowned recreational opportunities. The route winds and rolls through nine miles of the Chippewa National Forest - home to the highest breeding population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. In the towns, find restaurants and shopping in popular tourist districts, and resorts and camping where you can relax and enjoy the surroundings.



Mississippi River Trail Bikeway - The MRT is a bikeway, largely on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, offering the safest and best bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River through ten states, from the headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.

PAUL BUNYAN/HEARTLAND ROUTE COMPOSITION:
1% On-road Route
99% Off-road Trail

ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS:
Surface: Paved
Distance: 93 miles

CASS LAKE TO BRAINERD

For more information: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

**PAUL BUNYAN/
HEARTLAND TRAILS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL
BIKEWAY**

The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Setting



When it comes to defining your local identity, look for ways the Mississippi River has influenced culture and industry

LOCAL SETTING

If you're promoting MRT segments running through a specific community or small group of communities, it's important to define your local setting. The local setting changes invariably along the MRT, as it is the inherent values and individual cultures that make local places great. Communities already have a strong local character, but their connection to the river and bicycle accommodations vary.

We've provided a few questions that should result in answers unique to your community and help you define your local setting.

- What does your existing community identity offer to MRT riders? Is there an opportunity to expand on your setting?
- What cultural characteristics or values distinguish your community from others?
- How has the Mississippi River influenced the culture and industry in your community?
- How might MRT riders experience the bikeway through your community differently than in a community 50 miles away?
 - Is the terrain flat or hilly?
 - Do you have local bicycle trails users can connect to for the purpose of exploring your community?
 - Does the route travel through your downtown area?
 - Can users view or access the river?
- What amenities do you have to offer bicyclists?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Festivals/fairs – Complimentary recreation (swimming, hiking) – History centers/museums – Downtown areas – Historic sites – State and national parks/forests – Casinos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local and regional trails – Regional/county/local parks – Mountain bike trails – Resorts – Mines – Bicycle rentals – Outfitters for recreational equipment
--	--



The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Setting

- What support do you have to offer bicyclists?
 - Hotels
 - Camping
 - Resorts
 - Restrooms
 - Bicycle racks / bicycle storage
 - Internet access
 - Libraries
 - Cell phone coverage/pay phones
 - Showers
 - Bicycle repair
 - Hospitals /medical services
 - Restaurants
 - Grocery stores



ToolBox Contents

WHY MARKET **3.1**

Use this section to build the case for marketing, identify critical steps in the process, and outline strategies to help you create a solid plan.

THE MRT PRODUCT **4.1**

Use this section to expand your understanding of the MRT setting and characteristics. It includes detailed fact sheets on the MRT's history, bikeway data, connections to important amenities, and a table comparing Minnesota's six destination areas.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE **5.1**

Use this section to identify types of bicyclists, types of bicycling trips, user needs, and other information that will help you to understand the potential users and appropriately target your marketing efforts.

MARKETING STRATEGIES **6.1**

Use this section as a checklist of marketing ideas, strategies, and information to consider during implementation. We've provided a sample marketing plan for a community that shows how the marketing goals, target audience and tactics are combined.

MARKETING PARTNERS **7.1**

Use this section to understand inherent partnerships and agencies interested in Minnesota's bicycling needs. This section outlines the responsibilities assigned to key organizations (MnDOT, Explore MN Tourism, and other state agencies) and the support they offer. This section also defines how partners at the state, regional and local level might work together for a collaborative marketing effort, and reviews how the Great River Road Scenic Byway and the MRT are related.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION **8.1**

Use this section for support while working out your individual marketing plan. We've compiled samples, templates, and checklists to help you get started, including a press release, a ride itinerary, ride ideas, a ride event planning guide, a social media plan, and lists of bicycling and tourism related websites, contacts and organizations.

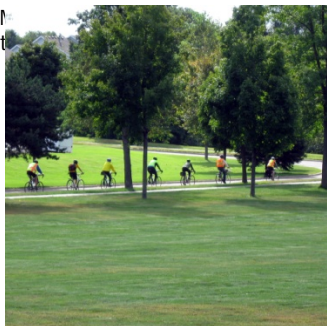
SECTION 3

Why Market?

- Use this section to build the case for marketing, identify critical steps in the process, and outline strategies to help you create a solid plan.

Why Market the MRT?

THE MARKETING NEED



According to Explore Minnesota, tourism is an \$11.2 billion industry in Minnesota and every \$1 invested in marketing Minnesota's amenities, results in a return of \$53 in gross sales.

<http://industry.exploreminnesota.com/side2/emt-tourism-council/value-of-tourism/>

It is not enough to just establish the MRT bikeway; you must also build awareness of the route and promote its value over time. MRT designation and signing alone will not result in use. To justify the resources spent mapping and signing the route, resources must also be allocated for long-term marketing to build a positive perception. It is imperative to communicate with potential users regularly to maximize bikeway use and benefits.

The MRT product is not just the route, but the experience found along the way. Because many factors contribute to the overall experience, from the scenery to the bikeway conditions to the hospitality in each community, it is important to have a consistent marketing effort across agencies, businesses, and people.



Many types of agencies, businesses and people must collaboratively market in order to build an all around positive experience

CREATE MRT AWARENESS

Unfortunately the motto, "If you build it, they will come," rarely manifests itself. Defining and building MRT awareness is an important first step to marketing. Route maps and signs, ribbon cutting ceremonies, inaugural rides, social media and press releases announcing the MRT are viable ways of building awareness. Partnering with local businesses along the way will also help build MRT awareness.

CONSUMERS ARE INUNDATED WITH MESSAGES – DON'T NEGLECT YOURS

Consumers have unlimited choices and are constantly inundated with advertising and promotions enticing them to spend their time and money. Don't let the MRT get lost in the crowd. Web, radio, social media, television advertisements, and events can serve as a reminder to potential users that the MRT is ready and waiting.

BUILD MRT IMAGE, REPUTATION, AND PERCEIVED VALUE OVER TIME

Establishing the MRT as a destination worthy of experiencing will require consistent and long-term branding efforts. It is important to identify target users and define an experience that is attractive to them.

Why Market the MRT?



Marketing the MRT will require consistent and long term branding efforts. It is critical to identify target users and define an experience that is attractive to them. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

Identifying MRT amenities and creating itineraries, websites and brochures are ways to help communicate the experience awaiting bicyclists. However, it is equally important to nurture the MRT image over time. Feature articles, blogs, and op-eds that intimately communicate the experience along the MRT will help demonstrate the route's value. Sponsoring a regular media-fam ride, will help keep the MRT in the minds of travel writers.

THINK BIG MINNESOTA

According to MRT Inc., no other state has compiled a marketing toolbox for the MRT, thus far. Minnesota's MRT offers premiere river bicycling opportunities as part of an iconic internationally known trail. The bikeway will be inherently attractive to visitors worldwide, and marketing efforts should reflect this. A consistent and enthusiastic marketing effort can leverage the bikeway's potential for economic development and a great experience.

For more information about the economic benefits of Minnesota tourism, view Explore Minnesota's article, *Why Funding is Needed*: <http://industry.exploreminnesota.com/why-funding-is-needed/>. Additional funding articles are also available on www.bikesbelong.org.

How can I define a process to market the MRT?

The goal of marketing is to match the right product or service with the right audience. The checklist below will help you with your planning efforts, or serve to evaluate your readiness to create a specific marketing plan.



Use the marketing checklist to help you get started, or to evaluate your readiness to market

MARKETING PLAN CHECKLIST

DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES, SCHEDULE, AND BUDGET.

- What are your overall goals? Do you want to:
 - Raise MRT awareness?
 - Gain community support?
 - Attract bicyclists?
 - Facilitate planning a trip?
 - Promote businesses and services along the route?
 - Create a memorable experience for bicyclists?
- How do your efforts to market the MRT align with other goals for your organization, business, or community?
- Have you identified your budget and funding sources?
- What is the timeframe for completing your objectives? (Are you aware of publication deadlines for local newspapers, community newsletters, or other publications. Are complementary events or marketing efforts occurring that could create synergy with the MRT marketing)

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND THEIR NEEDS.

- Have you conducted an inventory and assessment of community assets, including bicycle facilities, services, amenities, events, and support that bicyclists may find attractive? A bicycle-friendly community checklist can be found at: <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communityscorecard/>.
- Are you targeting a specific type of bicyclist or a specific type of trip? (Make sure to consider existing users)
- Is the product you are marketing suitable to the audience you are targeting?
- Do you have diverse marketing strategies tailored to specific bicyclist types on different types of trips?

SELECT MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE. CONSIDER THE FOUR P'S (PRODUCT, PRICE, PLACE AND PROMOTION).

- Is the segment of the MRT that you are promoting a good match for the age and ability of the bicyclist you want to attract?

How can I define a process to market the MRT?

- How easy is it for a bicyclist to connect with your product? Have you addressed:
 - The ability of a bicyclist to plan a trip to your destination?
 - The journey to and from your destination?
 - The experience at your destination?
 - The memories they will experience?
- What publications does your target audience read? – Send press release or place an advertisement here!
- What types of events does your target audience currently attend? Have a presence there—sponsor the event, purchase a booth, or pass out fliers to the crowd.
- What types of events would your target audience attend? Host one! (Keep in mind the event cost must meet your audiences' budget and the location must be easily accessible)
- Where can you find large numbers of your target audience (church, community center, athletic clubs, restaurants)? – Place brochures or advertisements here.
- What web and social networking sites does your target audience use? Join them!

This marketing toolbox offers resources and support to enable you to create an individual, detailed marketing plan.

IDENTIFY RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU.

- Are you familiar with the support and resources provided by other MRT marketing partners? (See Marketing Partners section)
- Can you link the MRT to existing marketing efforts community newsletters, social media accounts, and events.

OUTLINE AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

We recommend you consider the following procedures while creating your plan:

- Specify a budget
- Identify specific tasks
- Assign responsibility
- Define deadlines
- Provide necessary information to people to carry out tasks
- Monitor progress

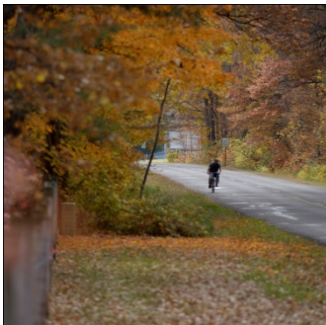
See the Sample Marketing Plan with a general timeframe, goals, target audience and tactics in the Strategy section.

SECTION 4

The MRT Product

- Use this section to expand your understanding of the MRT setting and characteristics. It includes detailed fact sheets on the MRT's history, bikeway data, connections to important amenities, and a table comparing Minnesota's six destination areas.

MRT Route – Quick Facts



It is the variety of experiences at the local, regional and state level that define the MRT



At each level, marketers should strive to create a distinct identity, but also understand and reinforce the larger MRT brand

NATIONAL BIKEWAY

- The Mississippi River Trail Bikeway begins at the Headwaters at Lake Itasca in Minnesota and ends at the Gulf of Mexico Delta in Louisiana.
- The MRT travels through ten states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana.
- President Clinton designated the MRT as one of 16 National Millennium Trails in 2000.

STATE BIKEWAY

- The MRT is 817 miles in Minnesota.
- The MRT is primarily an on-road bikeway following the Mississippi River:
 - 629 miles (77%) of the Minnesota MRT are on state, county, township or city roads
 - 188 miles (23%) are on off road paths and trails
- The Minnesota MRT passes through nearly 70 cities, 2 reservations and tribal lands, 21 counties and 88 townships.
- The Minnesota MRT connects with 3 state trails.
- The Minnesota MRT connects with 10 regional trails.
- The MRT connects to 8 state parks.
- The MRT connects to 1 national park (Mississippi National River and Recreation Area).

REGIONAL BIKEWAY

- There are six destination areas in Minnesota:
 - Mississippi Headwaters (Itasca State Park to Bemidji)
 - Mississippi Northwoods (Bemidji to Grand Rapids)
 - Mississippi Crossroads (Grand Rapids to Little Falls)
 - Scenic Mississippi (Little Falls to Elk River)
 - Metro Mississippi (Elk River to Hastings)
 - Mississippi Bluffs (Hastings to the Iowa border)
- A seventh area is the Paul Bunyan/Heartland State Trail Alternative Route (Cass Lake to Brainerd).

MRT Route – Destination Areas at a Glance

The following spreadsheet is for a convenient comparison of destination area information. *For destination area descriptions and stock brochures see the Setting section. A detailed MRT mapbook can be downloaded from MnDOT's website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>.*

Destination Area	On road	Off-road, trail	State Trail Connections	State Park Connections
Headwaters 38 miles	38 miles (100%) on road	0 miles (0%) off road		Itasca State Park
Northwoods 124 miles	119 miles (96%) on road	5 miles (4%) off road	Paul Bunyan and Heartland State Trails	Lake Bemidji State Park
Crossings 138 miles	132 miles (96%) on road	6 miles (4%) off road	Paul Bunyan, Heartland, and Cuyuna Lake State Trails	Crow Wing State Park
Scenic 85 miles	82 miles (97%) on road	3 miles (3%) off road		Charles A. Lindbergh State Park
Metro 174 miles	100 miles (58%) on road	74 miles (42%) off road (Significant trails in the metro offer the maximum amount of off-road MRT bicycling)		Fort Snelling State Park
Bluffs 165 miles	155 miles (94%) on road	10 miles (6%) off road		Frontenac State Park John A. Latsch State Park Great River Bluff State Park
Paul Bunyan/Heartland State Trail Alternative 93 miles	>1 miles (1%) on road	93 (99+%) off road (This connection is almost entirely on the Paul Bunyan and Heartland State Trails)	The MRT connects to additional Paul Bunyan Trail and Heartland Trail segments that are not part of the MRT bikeway	

How has the Minnesota MRT Developed?

The MRT is one of 16 National Millennium Trails. Millennium Trails honor the past and imagine the future by preserving and commemorating major events in our nation's history and reflect defining aspects of America's culture



The MRT is 817 miles in Minnesota, connects 67 cities, 9 state or national parks and 2 state trails

NATIONAL BEGINNINGS

Established between 1996 and 2000, the Mississippi River Trail Bikeway (MRT) began as a community and economic development project for the lower Mississippi River delta region. Multiple century floods had devastated the delta. In addition to recreational and tourism benefits, a bicycle route along the river could help develop a sustainable economy tolerant of occasional flooding.

The MRT was first signed and marketed south of Hannibal Missouri to the Gulf of Mexico. The route was hoped to:

- Improve public health
- Create appropriate land use in areas prone to flooding
- Protect area ecology
- Create new business opportunities

In May 1999, MRT Inc., a non-profit group that develops and markets the MRT route, invited Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois and northern Missouri to help extend the route north to the headwaters in Itasca State Park in northern Minnesota. Indicating its national importance, President Clinton designated the MRT in 2000 as one of only 16 National Millennium Trails.

Millennium Trails honor the past and imagine the future by preserving and commemorating major events in our nation's history and reflect defining aspects of America's culture.

HISTORY OF MINNESOTA'S MRT

Minnesota was introduced to the MRT when MRT, Inc. presented the route established in the Delta states at the Millard Fillmore Mississippi River Conference in May 1999. Following the meeting, MnDOT and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administrations approved staff and resources for initial route development.

How has the Minnesota MRT Developed?

Because the MRT is substantially an on-road bicycle route on existing infrastructure, MnDOT led the effort. MnDOT partnered with various federal, state, and regional agencies, as well as non-profit groups and river and bicycle enthusiasts to establish a conceptual MRT route in 2003. Local, county, and state road and trail authorities provided input.

MnDOT, with its partners, developed an initial conceptual route. Minnesota's initial MRT route and marketing efforts are chronicled in a report titled *"The Mississippi River Trail in Minnesota: A Masterpiece in the Making - Draft Feasibility Report"* (2004).

MINNESOTA'S MRT TODAY

In 2010, MnDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Section secured funding to broadly introduce the MRT to the various local, county, and state road and trail authorities and other interested stakeholders. MnDOT facilitated a series of two meetings in each of the six MRT destination areas.

The focus of the community engagement activities was to revisit the conceptual MRT route and expand collaborative partnerships to implement, market, and maintain the MRT route. The funding also allowed for MnDOT to prepare a signage plan for MRT's Trunk Highway segments (approximately 25% of the route), develop a detailed mapbook, and prepare this marketing toolbox.

In 2011, MnDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Section will continue to work with the MRT road and trail authorities and stakeholders, building on the 2010 work accomplished by MnDOT and MRT stakeholders. Ongoing work includes developing bikeway guidelines, interim alignments within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) corridor and elsewhere, updating MRT maps, implementing marketing outreach and multijurisdictional MRT administration, and developing a full route signage plan set.

1996	MRT established in southern states
1999	MN introduced to MRT at Millard Fillmore Mississippi River Conference
2000	Mn/DOT and MN DNR allocate staff and resources to designate the trail in Minnesota President Clinton designates MRT as one of 16 National Millennium Trails
2001	MN State Bicycle Advisory Committee champions MRT providing substantial assistance in route analysis Reviewed possible MRT routes by car
2002 - 2003	Full route ground truthing analysis bicycle rides occurred over 19 days
2004	MnDOT prepares draft feasibility report
2005	MnDOT Bicycle Model Plan introduces State Scenic Byway Program featuring MRT
2006	National Park Service Alternative Transportation Project Partner Grant to help sign project
2009	MNRRA/Metro area partially signed
2010	MnDOT met with local units of government and partners to revise trail routes and signage plans, and inform marketing toolbox Conducted eight route evaluation rides Launched MN MRT website and online route map
2011	MnDOT continues to build collaborative partnerships and establish MRT governance Confirms MRT Routing Establishes minimum design guidelines Launches collaborative marketing effort
2012	Completes signage plan Installs signs Ribbon cutting rides



SECTION 5

Target Audience

- Use this section to identify types of bicyclists, types of bicycling trips, user needs, and other information that will help you to understand the potential users and appropriately target your marketing efforts.

Target Audience



Marketing efforts should reach across the full spectrum of bicyclists, and include non-bicyclists. However, each marketing action should be tailored to appeal to a specific target audience. Reaching the full range of potential users will require ongoing, widespread marketing.



It can be challenging to deal with the diverse needs of individual family members.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding potential target audiences is crucial to successful marketing. This section gives an overview of bicyclist classifications and types of trips. While these groupings are not definitive, it is important to understand that not all marketing efforts will reach all bicyclist types, and not all sections of the MRT will appeal to all bicyclists. When making choices of where and how to promote the trail, marketers need insight into the spectrum of riders to tailor and diversify their efforts.

Just remember, bicyclists come in many shapes and sizes depending on their age, family status, interests, and commitment to physical exercise, as well as their physical abilities. These factors will obviously change during one's lifetime. So the challenge is to appeal to their immediate needs.

GENERAL MARKETING GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SELECTING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

- Focus on a specific market segment, not the mass market
- Consider existing users. Local bicyclists are a promising target market.
- It is often wise to pursue small market segments that are not served or are inadequately served, rather than larger segments with significant competition.
- Be aware of the diverse needs of families and groups who often travel together.

IDENTIFY MARKET SEGMENTS

Market segments may be grouped by:

- Bicycle abilities and enthusiasm
- Location of residence – local, regional, in-state, multistate, national, international
- Demographics – age, sex, income, education
- Lifestyle attributes – activities, interests, opinions

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Determine what segment of the market you want to serve. Consider:

- What is the potential of this market segment?
- Will you face significant competition for this audience?
- What is your ability to serve this segment? *See the User Needs table on page 5-7.*
- What is the cost of serving this segment?
- How does serving this segment align with your overall business or community objectives?

Segmenting Bicyclists by Abilities and Enthusiasm Levels



Type A riders will be challenged by the magnitude of the MRT bikeway.



Most of the MRT is suitable for Type B riders.



The MRT offers opportunities for river exploration in many off-road trail sections ideal for Type C riders.

LEVEL OF ABILITY

The MRT offers bicycling experiences attractive to all types of bicyclists, but not all segments will appeal to all bicyclist types. It is critical to lead each type of rider to appropriate segments, through targeted marketing efforts that accurately portray the character of the route. Types of riders include:

- Type A (Advanced)** – Advanced bicyclists are confident bikers, who can navigate heavy or high speed traffic. These riders often travel at speeds over 14 mph. In a route, advanced bicyclists typically seek directness, speed, and minimal interference. Because they often move at high speeds, they may prefer to be on road and to avoid sharing paths with pedestrians, strollers, dogs, and other slower moving users.
- Type B (Basic)** – Most people fall into the basic bicyclist category. Basic bicyclists are comfortable interacting with some traffic, but prefer some separation from motor vehicles. These riders are often teenagers, or new or occasional adult riders who understand basic bike safety and ride at speeds from 8-14 mph. Basic bicyclists will look for routes that are either shared use paths, or on roads with lower traffic volumes, lower speeds, or provisions such as bike lanes or wide, paved shoulders.
- Type C (Off-road)** – These bicyclists may be children or inexperienced riders who are uncomfortable mixing with traffic. They feel safer on paved, off road trails, very low volume streets, or those that are clearly marked and designed to accommodate bicycles. Type C bicyclists may be able to ride with supervision on routes that are otherwise too busy or too difficult to navigate for their comfort.
- Non-bicyclists** – The MRT should appeal to a large audience of non-bicyclists. People may become riders at any time and can be enticed by this famous bikeway at their doorstep. However, people who will never ride a bike will also determine the MRT's success. It is vital that non-bicyclists, who may own bike related businesses, organize community events, manage the roads and trails that comprise the MRT, or develop public policies, recognize the value of the route and contribute to it's success.

Segmenting Bicyclists by Abilities and Enthusiasm Levels

Because the majority of the route is on road, MnDOT presumes that Type A and B bicyclists will be the primary MRT users. Targeted marketing can introduce off road segments to Type C riders. Over time these bicyclists may grow to enjoy more challenging segments. In addition, some MRT segments do connect with other off-road trails, allowing a group with inexperienced riders to access its historic and cultural experiences.

ENTHUSIASTS –OR CASUAL TRAVELER?

It is useful to consider the difference between avid and casual bicyclists.



Bicyclists get their news from a variety of sources. Avid bicyclists may seek bicycling oriented news. Casual bicyclists are more likely to be informed by a feature story in a non-bicycling publication. It is important to consider your target market and what tactic is appropriate to reach them.

- **Avid Bicyclists** – Avid riders are bicycling enthusiasts. They are more likely to seek bicycling-oriented vacations, with the ride being the primary attraction. While avid bicyclists may find information from all sources, certain marketing tools are more likely to reach mainly avid riders, such as bicycle magazines and books, bicycle tourism organizations, charity rides, bicycling blogs, and websites targeted to experienced riders.
- **Casual Bicyclists** - Casual bicyclists span a wide range of people who may ride daily, or very rarely. From a marketing perspective, what defines this group is that casual bicyclists are less likely to regularly follow bicycling related news. A casual bicyclist may find stories and news that interest them from a broad array of mediums, which will then prompt them to actively seek information. Newspapers, newsletters, route maps available at libraries and businesses, community websites, and other general information sources are important ways to reach casual bicyclists.

There is not an exact correlation between the ability of the rider and whether they are avid or casual bicyclists. Always remember bicyclists vary widely in their abilities and preferences for riding environment.

Understanding Types of Bicycling Trips



Bicyclists on tours will need support in order to spend at least one night on the road.

Although there are infinite possibilities for bicycle journeys, it is useful to classify types of trips.

TOURS (OVERNIGHT)

A touring trip includes at least one night spent along the route. Bicyclists on a tour might ride alone or in groups, and may be part of an organized tour group. These bicyclists may be local, but are often travelers coming specifically for an extended weekend or multi-week ride. Most bicyclists on tours prefer to move at higher speeds and directly between destinations, though speed may vary considerably. These riders may also be carrying significant amounts of gear. Touring bicyclists often travel long distances, and seek challenging routes and topography and variety along the way.



Riders of all ages and abilities may enjoy day trips, which are often near their home, and include area attractions. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

DAY TRIPS

These trips are often made by local bicyclists who ride occasionally for recreation. They may begin from home or drive to a convenient starting point and bike for a few hours up to a long day. The level of experience of these bicyclists varies widely, and they are more likely to avoid route segments with challenging terrain or heavy traffic, but will share the road with traffic. Riders on a day trip typically stop more frequently than touring bicyclists, often to rest and enjoy area attractions.

OFF ROAD, TRAIL TRIPS

Families, nature enthusiasts, and bicyclists seeking a quiet, relaxing outing often enjoy a trip entirely separated from the roadway. A route may be considered off road if it is separated from motor vehicles by a barrier, but the path may be adjacent to a road and within the public right of way. These trips are often shorter in duration and benefit from access to a range of amenities, including picnic areas, water access, educational markers, restrooms, and food.



Families with Type C bicyclists, nature enthusiasts, and bicyclists seeking a quiet, relaxing outing are often drawn to off road routes. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

COMMUTING TRIPS

The bicycle commuting network will overlap with segments of the MRT. While commuting is generally regarded as necessary transportation and the MRT is designed for recreational purposes, establishing the MRT bikeway can offer advantages for commuters. Over time, a known bikeway may lead to roadway design more supportive of bicycles, increased support and services for riders,

Understanding Types of Bicycling Trips

drivers conditioned to share the road, and an increasingly strong non-motorized transportation system.

WHAT TYPE OF TRIP IS APPROPRIATE FOR WHOM?

A tour is often associated with Type A, avid bicyclists; a day trip with Type B, casual bicyclists; and an off-road, trail trip with Type C. However, while that association may often be accurate, there is no exact correlation.

***Please note:** Many types of bicyclists may take many types of trips over a lifetime of riding.*

Understanding Types of Bicycling Trips

The following table identifies typical user needs and compares how they may vary depending on the type of trip. Marketers who understand the relationship of user needs to the bikeway segment and bicyclist type will be better able to identify and communicate attractions.

User Needs		Touring Bicyclist	Day-trip Bicyclist	Off-road, trail Bicyclist
Trail Conditions and Access	Paved or well groomed surface	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Access to the river	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
	Off road side trips	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
	Adventure attractions	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Informational	Knowledge of bikeway conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Distance to destinations	Yes	Yes	Yes
	History and learning opportunities	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
	Potential itineraries	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Multi-modal connections	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Route lengths	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Latitude/longitude/elevation	Yes	Rarely	Rarely
Services and Amenities	Internet access	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Cell phone access	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Emergency call options	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Showers	Yes	Rarely	Rarely
	Restrooms	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Bike storage	Covered, secured	Bike racks	Bike racks
	Bike repair	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
	Laundromats	Yes	No	No
	Food	Restaurants, convenience shops and grocery stores	Restaurants may be a destination, convenience shops	Restaurants may be a destination
	Lodging	Hotels, resorts, camping or hostels	No	No
	Medical/hospitals	Yes	Rarely	Rarely
	Entertainment/attractions	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
	Bicycle rentals / outfitters	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes

SECTION 6

Marketing Strategies

- Use this section as a checklist of marketing ideas, strategies, and information to consider during implementation. We've provided a sample marketing plan for a community that shows how marketing goals, target audience and tactics can be combined.

The following examples illustrate typical marketing efforts and are intended to help generate ideas. We encourage you to incorporate other ideas and strategies into your plan as appropriate.

State Level Marketing Strategies

TACTIC		GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
BROCHURES	State Maps Include the MRT on all state maps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Distribute MRT information to all state level partners with requests that it be included in digital and printed maps.
	Bicycling Itineraries Provide a variety of pre-planned trip ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Distribute to local and regional communities and post at all major state partner websites. <i>See Supporting Information Section for a sample itinerary and a list of ride ideas.</i>
EVENTS	Ribbon Cutting Coordinate a statewide ribbon cutting effort and encourage communities to conduct their own events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan the event to accommodate all types of bicyclists, and both locals and tourists. <u>Target Audience:</u> Government and elected officials, and business owners should be invited to show support.
	One-day Rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Utilize bikeway segments going through communities and local and regional trails. Solicit sponsors from advocacy groups and businesses.
	Multi-day Rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time rides to take advantage of local events or other attractions, and to highlight the best of each season. <u>Target Audience:</u> Touring bicyclists and local bicyclists who typically participate in day trips may be encouraged to ride.



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
EVENTS	Multi-modal Ride Combine rides with canoeing, kayaking, hiking, or walking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with recreational organizations other than bicycling groups. Seek support from outfitters and related businesses.
	Fundraising Rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with organizations with fundraising experience and appeal. Begin and end rides in communities that can be engaged in the fundraising efforts.
	Celebrity Ride Invite a celebrity in to lead a ride	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tailor the ride and the promotion to the specific celebrity. Lead a broader effort across many communities with local celebrities - "Ride with the Mayors." <u>Target Audience:</u> Non-bicyclists as well as all bicyclists may be enticed to try a ride.
	Media Fam Tours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invite the media in to ride and write about the experience. Highlight a particular season, or destination area, or combine with other events in Minnesota. <u>Target Audience:</u> Tour planners as well as bicyclists.
	Government Official Tours Provide rides with officials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Target Audience:</u> A variety of officials: elected officials, funders, rangers, police, school officials. Link to other events or highlight Minnesota amenities. Highlight a particular season, destination area, or segment.
	Educational Events Use a ride or presentation to teach awareness about bicycling benefits, rights and responsibilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with an active living organization or a school/college. Partner with a Safe Routes to School effort or a bike to work week. Present information on the economic, social, public health, and aesthetic benefits of bicycling to a community. <u>Target Audience:</u> Motor vehicle drivers, residents, bicyclists, law enforcement. <u>Timing:</u> Late spring at the start of the primary bicycling season and late summer just before the academic year begins.



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
PRINT MEDIA	Newspapers Announce MRT opening, events and route opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide key announcements in state, regional and local papers. Announce the MRT opening, ribbon cuttings and MRT events.
	Newspaper feature stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Profile bicyclists in Minnesota. Profile Minnesota bikeways. Feature the Mississippi River Trail, the MRT history, interviews with riders, or interviews with local communities on the effects the MRT has had.
	Magazines Publish regular articles including MRT information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature a trial diary story from beginning to end in Minnesota or organize a contest for articles from riders. Highlight MRT communities and attractions. <u>Target audience:</u> This will depend on the magazine. Avid bicyclists are more likely to read bicycling oriented magazines. Casual bicyclists and other residents may become interested in the MRT through more general publications. <u>Example publications:</u> Minnesota Trails, Big River Magazine, Minnesota Monthly, Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine, American Bicyclists, Bicycling.
	Outdoor Literature Increase MRT awareness in popular culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact recognized authors about the potential adventures and experiences found along the river and MRT. <u>Example publications:</u> Non-fiction books featuring outdoor experiences in Minnesota or travel literature.
	Travel Guides Include the MRT and related information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Provide detailed information and suggestions about bicycling in Minnesota, including attractions, communities, accommodations, and route conditions. Send links and trail information to be included in popular travel guides. <u>Target Audience:</u> Tour operators and all bicyclists. <u>Example publications:</u> Minnesota Explorer, Minnesota Travel Guide, Minnesota Biking Guide.



TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS	
	Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience		
Travel Guidebooks Include the MRT and related information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Provide detailed information and suggestions about bicycling in Minnesota, including attractions, communities, accommodations, and route conditions. Send links and trail information to be included in popular travel books. <u>Target Audience:</u> Tour operators and all bicyclists. <u>Example publications:</u> Lonely Planet, Hostelling International.	
ELECTRONIC MEDIA	Blogs Post personal experiences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage blogs from organized and personal rides. <u>Target Audience:</u> Use a variety of blogs to reach a wider audience. Avid bicyclists may frequently check bicycling blogs for personal insight. Blogs that address general outdoor enthusiasts or recreation in a particular area may reach more casual bicyclists and non-bicyclists.
	Social Media Provide active updates with short snippets of information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create fan pages on widely used social websites such as Facebook and Twitter where a variety of people and stakeholders can interact, receive news and updates and show support. See Sample Social Media Broadcast in the Supporting Information section. <u>Target Audience:</u> Bicyclists, businesses and residents.
	Primary MRT Website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Explore Minnesota Tourism may host the primary MRT website for information with links to MnDOT for the route maps in the future. (www.exploreminnesota.com). The primary website is currently found at MnDOT (www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html). See the Marketing Partners section for a detailed list of what will be found on these websites. <u>Target audience:</u> All bicyclists, residents, public officials and partner organizations, agencies and businesses.
	State Websites Post MRT information and important links	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	State organizations should provide links to the primary MRT website and include the MRT on all maps, listings and promotions. Examples of state organizations are provided in the Marketing Partners section.
	National Websites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National organizations should provide links to the primary MRT website, and include the MRT on all maps, listings and promotions. Examples of national organizations are provided in the Marketing Partners section.

SUMMARY VISION SETTING MARKETING PRODUCT AUDIENCE **STRATEGY** PARTNERS SUPPORT



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
ELECTRONIC MEDIA	Tourism Websites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send MRT links and bikeway information to tourism organizations for website postings. Encourage tourism organizations and agencies to include the MRT in itineraries and promotions of other statewide attractions. <u>Example websites:</u> Tour Minnesota Association, Metro Tourism Committee and Minnesota Heartland Tourism Association. <i>See the Informational Support section for additional listings of tourism organizations.</i>
	Bicycling Websites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send MRT links and information to bicycling websites. <u>Example websites:</u> https://mntrails.com , www.Bikely.com , www.adventurecycling.org . <i>See Appendix for additional listings.</i>
	Transportation Websites Include MRT info on online maps	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send MRT information to internet map websites. Update route information as needed. <u>Target Audience:</u> Multimodal trip planners and transportation related businesses, as well as all bicyclists. <u>Example Map Websites:</u> Google Maps, Mapquest, Bing, Map My Route, Cyclopath.
	Search Engine Optimization Ensure that searches for MRT related words lead to primary website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	List and purchase key search words for various search engines. <u>Examples:</u> Google, Yahoo, Safari.
	Interactive Phone Applications Create a MRT app to help bicyclists with route information and wayfinding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Identify critical route information and team with a software developer such as Apple. <u>Target Audience:</u> Avid bicyclists and bicyclists on tours may find this especially helpful.
	Audio Tours Enrich the MRT experience with an audio guide downloadable/app.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Develop audio tours per destination area/key theme. <u>Target Audience:</u> Avid and casual bicyclists, tour groups, or bicyclists seeking enrichment. See the Lifecycle of a Bicyclist Table in the Target Audience section.



TACTIC		GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
TOURS	Bike Tour Groups Encourage MRT oriented and related tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send route information and establish contact with tour groups. <u>Example Tour Groups:</u> Adventure Cycling Association and Cycle America. <u>Target Audience:</u> National Bicycle Tour Directors Association, avid and touring bicyclists are typically the main customers.
	General Tour Groups Encourage MRT oriented and related tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send route information and establish contact with tour groups. Encourage tour groups to include the MRT as an attraction even on non-bicycling oriented tours. <u>Example Tour Groups:</u> Trek, Vermont Tours.
BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT	Company Sponsorship Form an MRT partnership with a company	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Seek a Fortune 500 company to support the MRT and sponsor specific events at the national level. <u>Example resource/business partnership:</u> Nature Valley Bicycle Festival.
	MRT Business Certification Program Work with businesses and stakeholders to create an MRT Business Certification program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine tangible certification criteria that can be easily measured to identify a business as MRT certified. Also develop benefits of becoming certified. <u>Target Audience:</u> Businesses on or near the MRT route.



Regional and Local Level Marketing Strategies

	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
BROCHURES	Community brochures Ensure that existing maps and literature refer to the MRT	☒	☒	☒	☒	Highlight the MRT as a new attraction in all updated material. Distribute at public offices, libraries, community centers, schools, hospitals, bicycle advocacy groups, and city/county websites. Work with the business community to have maps available at restaurants, hotels, outfitters and other businesses that might attract bicyclists. <u>Target Audience:</u> Include government officials, Chamber of Commerce and Visitor and Convention Bureaus in efforts.
	Local maps Create local MRT maps showing support and attractions	☒	☒	☒	☒	Distribute at public offices, libraries, community centers, schools, hospitals, bicycle advocacy groups, and city/county websites. Work with the business community to have maps available at restaurants, hotels, outfitters and other businesses that might attract bicyclists.
	Destination Area Maps Develop regional MRT maps and brochures	☒	☒	☒	☒	Distribute at public offices, libraries, community center, hotels, visitor information centers, and schools. Work with businesses to distribute brochures, post in windows, incorporate as placemats etc. <i>Sample destination area maps and descriptions have been provided in this marketing toolbox and are available for use. See the Setting section.</i>
	Bicycling Itineraries Create local and regional ride recommendations	☐	☒	☒	☒	Incorporate unique area attractions and promote a strong local and regional identity. Integrate MRT trips with local and regional bikeways. Collaborate with businesses along the route. Distribute at public offices, libraries, businesses, community centers and schools. <u>Target Audience:</u> All bicyclists, all tourism offices.



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
EVENTS	Local Ribbon Cutting Conduct local ceremonies to celebrate MRT opening	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate efforts with other communities as part of a larger statewide effort. <u>Target Audience:</u> Government and elected officials, public employees and business owners should be invited to show support.
	Destination Area Ribbon Cutting Conduct regional ceremonies and celebrate MRT opening	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate events between communities within a destination area and highlight the gateways to a destination area. <u>Target Audience:</u> Government and elected officials, public employees and business owners should be invited to show support.
	One-day Rides Promote local businesses and events through planned rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Connect with the National Park Service's Bike with a Ranger program. Use bikeway segments going to/through communities connecting local and regional bikeways. Coordinate timing to capitalize on existing community fairs, festivals and other events. Solicit sponsors from advocacy groups and businesses. <u>Target Audience:</u> Consider having a family ride, and another ride/race for Type A bicyclists. The target audience may depend on the character of the local MRT segment (see Segmenting Bicyclists by Abilities in the Target Audience section).
	Multi-day Rides Promote local businesses and events through planned rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with nearby communities for longer rides. Time rides to take advantage of local events or other attractions, and to highlight the best of each season.
	Multi-modal Rides Combine rides with canoeing, kayaking, hiking, or walking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Partner with recreational organizations other than bicycling groups. Solicit sponsors from advocacy groups, outfitters and businesses. <u>Target Audience:</u> River and outdoor enthusiasts, all bicyclists.



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
EVENTS	Fundraising Rides Use a ride to raise money and awareness of a local cause	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with organizations related to the cause. Mississippi River enhancement, local parks, local businesses awareness, healthy living and environmental causes all have synergy with the MRT. Begin and end rides at businesses or agencies that can be engaged in the fundraising efforts.
	Educational Events Use a ride or presentation to teach awareness about bicycling benefits, rights and responsibilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner with an active living organization, school/college—consider summer school or community education programs. Partner with a Safe Routes to School effort or a bike to work week. Present information on the economic, social, public health, and aesthetic benefits of bicycling to a community . <u>Target Audience:</u> Motor vehicle drivers, residents, bicyclists, law enforcement. <u>Timing:</u> Late spring at the start of the primary bicycling season and late summer just before the academic year begins.
	Destination Area Rides Reinforce regional identity with a ride through each destination area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with resort and other business owners on ride specials, packages and promotions. <u>Target Audience:</u> Tour planners as well as bicyclists.
	Specialty Events Incorporate the MRT into scavenger hunts, contests, and displays at a museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consider expanding beyond the MRT to larger river related events. <u>Target Audience:</u> All residents as well as bicyclists.



	TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
PRINT MEDIA	Newspapers Announce MRT opening, events and route opportunities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide key announcements in regional and local and papers. Announce the MRT opening, ribbon cuttings and MRT events. Include information about Share the Road rules and bicycle rights and responsibilities. <i>See Supporting Information section for a sample press release and a blank press release template with a boilerplate informational section.</i>
	Newspaper feature stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Profile bicyclists in Minnesota. Profile Minnesota bikeways. Feature the Mississippi River Trail, the MRT history, interviews with riders, or interviews with local communities on the impact of the MRT. Offer recommendations for communities and businesses to further capitalize on the MRT.
	Magazines Share MRT stories with a depth and breadth of information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Profile a bicyclists journey through a particular destination area or community and showcase the value of the MRT to the larger community. <u>Target audience:</u> The target audience will depend on the magazine. Consider non-bicycling magazines such as business trade journals. <i>For example: The AARP ran a story on the value of bicycle packages to the Sheraton Hotel.</i>
	Community Newsletters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Publish regular MRT updates on new amenities, bikeway conditions, increased bicycle traffic and bicycle related businesses. <u>Target Audience:</u> residents, government officials, public employees and local bicyclists.



TACTIC		GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
ELECTRONIC	Social Media Provide active updates with short snippets of information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create fan pages on widely used social websites such as Facebook and Twitter where a variety of people and stakeholders can interact, receive news and updates and show support. Consider a weekly post for the duration of 12 weeks or longer. Post during the peak bicycling months in Minnesota. Social media posts are most effective when they are consistent and your audience can anticipate the posts. <i>The Supporting Information section includes a sample 12 week social media plan.</i>
ELECTRONIC MEDIA	Community Websites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add a description of the local MRT segment and its amenities to existing park brochures and tourism materials. Provide a link to the primary Minnesota MRT information website. Maintain current business information on the Chamber of Commerce website.
	Maintain current website information with Explore Minnesota	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Send Chamber of Commerce and local/regional tourism office information to Explore Minnesota. Maintain updated information with Explore Minnesota and ensure that the information appears in the searchable database of events, accommodations and local/regional websites. <u>Target Audience:</u> Trip planners, tour groups and bicyclists.
	Become listed on Tourism/Bicycling websites as a community that supports bicyclists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Add a description of the local MRT segment and its amenities. Look for ways to make the community more welcoming to bicyclists (such as bicycle parking, signage, and bikeways) and publish efforts. Review bike-friendly city information at the Bike Alliance of MN (www.bikemn.org) or League of American Bicyclists (www.bikeleague.org).
	Blogs Post personal experiences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Use blogs to 'report' on local events. Provide blog space or links to blogs primarily oriented toward experiences within the community.



TACTIC		GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
		Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
	Create MRT Audio Tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Develop and audio tour per destination area/key theme.</p> <p><u>Target Audience:</u> See the Lifecycle of a Bicyclist Table. Consider a audio tour for a touring bicyclist from out of town, and a different one for a local day tripping bicyclist.</p>
OTHER	<p>Become a Bicycle Friendly Community</p> <p>Participate in the program to make your community more welcoming and safer for bicyclists and review recognition and assistance</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Take concrete steps to provide a community that is welcoming to and supportive of bicyclists.</p> <p>Encourage and promote bicycle tourism within your community. Become known through this system of recognition that can also have economic impact and encourage physical activity.</p> <p><u>Timeline:</u> Applications are due twice a year in February and July.</p> <p><i>Visit the League of American Bicyclists to see steps to quality and apply (www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities).</i></p>



Business Marketing Strategies

TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
	Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
Distribute MRT Information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Distribute maps, brochures, itineraries and MRT literature. <u>Target Audience:</u> Customers may become aware of the MRT through brochure and map availability. Many bicyclists who patronize a business will want to find out more information about bicycling support and amenities within the area.
Display MRT logo or related signage at place of business	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage bicyclists to patronize the business by using the official MRT logo, which is downloadable at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html .
Incorporate the MRT logo on existing business brochures and advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create synergy between local business and the MRT route. Build the value of the MRT logo and capitalize on the wider MRT marketing efforts.
Adopt the MRT as part of your business identity and incorporate the MRT into your product	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Further the reputation of your business among tourists and bicyclists by incorporating the MRT in creative ways. <u>Examples:</u> Create children's menus or name menu items related to the MRT. Use MRT brochures and maps as placemats. Hang MRT photos and maps along the walls. Have a place for MRT users to autograph, carve their initials, or leave messages. Apply for MRT business certification when program is available.



TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
	Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
Make your business welcoming to bicyclists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Consider the needs of bicyclists when determining goods and services. For example:</p> <p>Hardware stores might carry additional bike maintenance and replacement parts, especially if there is no bike repair shop nearby.</p> <p>Convenience stores might offer high protein energy bars and popular bicycling food.</p> <p>Hotels might provide secure, weather protected bike storage and clothes drying racks.</p> <p>Be prepared to answer bicyclists' questions about other bicycling support and amenities in the area.</p> <p>Train staff to watch for bicyclists and proactively accommodate their needs.</p> <p>Offer bicycle parking and/or shuttle services.</p>
Become an official Bicycle Friendly Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Visit the League of American Bicyclists to see steps to qualify and apply (www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/bicyclefriendlybusiness).</p>
Maintain current business information in the Explore Minnesota database	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Send business information to Explore Minnesota to be included in the database and update as needed.</p> <p><u>Target Audience:</u> Enable bicyclists, trip planners, tour organizations and other marketers to find business information using the web search tool.</p>
Maintain current business information with the local Chamber of Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Send business information to Explore Minnesota to be included in the database.</p> <p><u>Target Audience:</u> Enable bicyclists, trip planners, tour organizations and other marketers to find business information using the web search tool. Links are provided to Chambers of Commerce websites from Explore Minnesota.</p>
Maintain business identification and listing on Google Maps and other electronic maps	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Send business information to Google Maps, Bing and other electronic mapping sites.</p> <p><u>Target Audience:</u> Enable bicyclists, trip planners, tour organizations and other marketers to find business information using popular web mapping tools.</p>



TACTIC	GOALS				IMPLEMENTATION / CONSIDERATIONS
	Raise awareness	Attract users	Facilitate trip planning	Enhance trip experience	
Sponsor-area rides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sponsor local, state and national rides. Provide funding, business related products as prizes, or a location to begin, end or break the ride where bicyclists can find support. <u>Target Audience:</u> All bicyclists and other members of the community.
Offer special bicycle packages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consider resort and hotel packages for bicyclists or bicycling tour groups. Allow riders to tailor packages to their needs; offer shuttle services, deals at restaurants, tickets or passes to other entertainment, bike accommodations and team with other businesses for a larger package. Businesses in areas with limited parking may also benefit by encouraging a strong bicycling clientele.



Sample Marketing Plan for a Local or Regional Marketing Group

Year 1 Goals: Promote community awareness and build support. Attract local riders.

KEY MESSAGING	TARGET AUDIENCE	COMMUNICATION MEDIUMS	MARKETING ACTIONS
<p>The MRT is a bikeway, primarily on the shoulders of low volume, paved roads, that provides a safe bicycling experience along the length of the Mississippi River.</p> <p>The MRT offers a safe and scenic river experience with high levels of community access.</p> <p>The MRT offers engaging recreational opportunity and has valuable name recognition for communities and businesses.</p>	<p>All bicyclists that have the skills to ride your local MRT segment</p> <p>Government officials</p> <p>Local community members</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local advocacy/commerce groups</p>	<p>What publications does your target audience read?</p> <p>What types of events does your target audience currently attend?</p> <p>Where can you find large numbers of your target audience (church, community center, athletic clubs, restaurants)?</p> <p>What web and social networking sites does your target audience interact with?</p> <p>Are there existing community bicycle groups?</p> <p>Is there an Active Living Group or cycling club?</p>	<p>Announce MRT opening in the local paper.</p> <p>Conduct a ribbon cutting ceremony.</p> <p>Write an article about the benefits of bicycling in the community newsletter.</p> <p>Add MRT information/maps to the community website.</p> <p>Host an information booth at the community fair. Include fun facts about the MRT, trivia contests and scavenger hunts along the MRT.</p> <p>Host a weekly MRT community bike ride.</p> <p>Use the community's existing Facebook or Twitter account to implement community-focused social media plan.</p> <p>Provide MRT fact sheet to local bicycle groups, active living groups, businesses and healthcare facilities to post and distribute to their members and clients.</p>



Sample Marketing Plan for a Local or Regional Marketing Group

Year 2 Goals: Attract touring and long-distance riders. Build awareness of community amenities amongst tourism groups and travel guides.

KEY MESSAGING	TARGET AUDIENCE	COMMUNICATION MEDIUMS	MARKETING ACTIONS
<p>The MRT in Minnesota is an international quality bicycling experience that safety connects riders to natural and cultural resources throughout the state.</p> <p>The MRT is primarily an on-road bikeway, with some off-road, trail segments.</p> <p>The MRT is a unique long distance route with opportunities for short rides.</p> <p>The MRT provides a healthful and historic connection to the river.</p> <p>The MRT offers a safe and scenic river experience with high levels of community access.</p>	<p>Bicyclists from outside of the local area</p> <p>Tourism guides and trip planners</p> <p>Type A and B bicyclists</p>	<p>What publications does your target audience read?</p> <p>What types of events does your target audience currently attend?</p> <p>Where can you find large numbers of your target audience (travel websites, guides and agents, state tourism departments, state and national bicycle advocacy groups)?</p> <p>What web and social networking sites does your target audience interact with?</p>	<p>Conduct a destination area ribbon cutting.</p> <p>Send a press release to local and state newspapers and travel publications, as well as travel guides and trip planners.</p> <p>Partner with communities in the destination area to host a longer ride; announce and promote the ride online and via bicycle advocacy groups.</p> <p>Create local and regional ride recommendations - send to travel guides and trip planners.</p> <p>Provide Explore Minnesota with a listing of community amenities.</p> <p>List your community on bicycle websites.</p>



SECTION 7

Marketing Partners

- Use this section to understand inherent partnerships and agencies interested in Minnesota’s bicycling needs. This section outlines the responsibilities assigned to key organizations (MnDOT, Explore MN, and other state agencies) and the support they offer. This section also defines how partners at the state, regional and local level might work together for a collaborative marketing effort, and reviews how the Great River Road Scenic Byway and the MRT are related.

How will marketing partners collaborate?



It is essential that simultaneous marketing efforts have a consistent, organized message although the character of the MRT varies considerably



A framework for communication between state, regional, local and business marketers is essential for mutual support and cohesive understanding. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

It is critical that simultaneous marketing efforts across the many partners promoting the MRT have a consistent, organized message. A proactive and collaborative marketing plan between the local, regional, state, and business stakeholders is essential to creating a recognized brand for the route.

Setting up an understandable structure with defined methods of communication will allow each partner to fulfill the marketing role best suited to them.

STATE AND NATIONAL MARKETING PARTNERS

Potential collaborative partners in state and national marketing include:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Explore Minnesota
- Future Minnesota MRT Governance Board
- MRT, Inc.
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Department of Health
- National Park Service / Minnesota National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)
- Mississippi River Parkway Commission
- Statewide MRT and Bicycle Advocacy Groups
- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- Park and Trails Council of Minnesota
- National Scenic Byways
- Adventure Cycling Association/USBRS
- League of American Bicyclists
- Great River Road National Scenic Byway

What is MnDOT's Role?



MnDOT will lead the process of creating and maintaining complete route and transportation maps. These maps and the MRT logo will be available for other stakeholders to incorporate into their own maps and publications.

MnDOT MRT website:
www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

MnDOT will support marketing partners by providing information on bicycle rights and responsibilities, the Share the Road program and Complete Streets.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MNDOT)

ROUTE MAPS AND LOGISTICS

MnDOT is responsible for compiling key route related information such as:

- Maintaining current maps in a universal mapping format
- Providing information about the MRT history, establishment, and timeline
- Supplying fact sheets about the route, such as key distances, elevation changes, latitude, and longitude. (See the MRT Product section for fact sheets)

ROUTE CHANGES

The MRT route is dynamic and will constantly evolve with new routes, road improvements, and other changes. As the state transportation organization, MnDOT will lead the collaborative process and update route maps. MnDOT will be responsible for:

- Working with local communities and stakeholders to address route issues and changes and develop standards and guidance
- Sending notifications of route changes to other local, regional, state, and national level stakeholders

MARKETING ROLE

MnDOT and Explore Minnesota Tourism, the state tourism promotion office, will share roles in making route maps available. MnDOT's responsibilities in providing access to data involve:

- Maintaining digital and printable route maps on a user-friendly website. Bicyclists should be able to view and print maps for specific areas as needed, and download maps to personal digital devices.
- Delivering current route maps in a universal mapping format to other marketing stakeholders for inclusion in publications, etc.

PROMOTIONAL ROLE

Although MnDOT may not be the primary advertising organization, there are many opportunities to elevate and publicize the MRT, and to direct and support other marketing partners. MnDOT can promote the MRT by:



What is MnDOT's Role?

- Using the MRT when demonstrating and promoting Share the Road principles
- Considering the MRT and communicating the needs and benefits of accommodating and maintaining the MRT bikeway, when reviewing transportation plans
- Providing information on bicycle rights and responsibilities, Share the Road, and Complete Streets
- Coordinating nationwide marketing with other states
- Using the MRT in research projects when possible
- Communicating route changes and detours
- Applying for USBRS Status

What is Explore Minnesota Tourism's Role?



Explore Minnesota Tourism can promote the MRT by:

- Making MRT information accessible
- Leading marketing efforts across different organizations
- Providing support to marketing partners

Explore Minnesota Tourism can create a comprehensive MRT marketing plan reaching out to a broad target audience around the world and using a wide variety of tactics.

Explore Minnesota website:

www.exploreminnesota.com

EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM

Explore Minnesota Tourism is best suited to fulfill the role of the primary marketing organization. Explore Minnesota Tourism is capable of:

- Making MRT information widely accessible to bikeway users and tourists
- Serving as a proactive MRT marketer, leading marketing efforts across different organizations
- Providing marketing support to marketing partners

With a broad information and communication system already in place, and well established connections to other tourism organizations, Explore Minnesota Tourism is uniquely positioned to release MRT information to a number of markets from the local to the international level. Explore Minnesota Tourism also has the professional marketing experience to create and reinforce a positive brand.

EXPLORE MINNESOTA RESPONSIBILITIES

Explore Minnesota Tourism's responsibilities may be categorized as follows:

- Serve as the primary Minnesota MRT information repository with comprehensive route information, links, and references for bicyclists and other groups
- Provide a link to the Minnesota MRT route maps (posted by MnDOT)
- Actively market the Minnesota MRT to bicyclists around the world
- Help develop a MRT business certification program
- Provide support to other marketing partners

INCORPORATE MRT INFORMATION ON EXPLOREMINNESOTA.COM

ExploreMinnesota.com hosts a database of businesses, attractions, and events throughout the state. Users can search to find services and amenities within a specified radius. By incorporating MRT information into this database, tour planners, bicyclists, and other trip organizers will be able to access this information in order to facilitate planning.

What is Explore Minnesota Tourism's Role?



Find downloadable marketing support at Explore Minnesota, including :

- Fact sheets and route information
- Logos
- Press release templates
- Photos



Explore Minnesota Tourism may be the primary Minnesota MRT information repository where trip planning will begin.

MRT data to be made available on this MRT website includes:

- Links to the MnDOT website with digital and printable route maps
- MRT logo
- MRT history, timeline, and route designation process
- MRT logos, fact sheets with route distances, connecting bikeways, miscellaneous facts, and other information
- MRT updates, detours, and other route adjustments

As the primary information source, Explore Minnesota Tourism should also link to information posted on other websites. Important links include:

- Local and regional partner websites where bicyclists can find detailed information about amenities and attractions, such as regional tourism offices
- Other state and national MRT websites
- Bike safety information, rights, and responsibilities (posted by MnDOT)

Businesses along the route should be encouraged to routinely communicate updated information to Explore Minnesota. Everyone from local governments, to tour groups, to bicyclists will benefit from a reliable place to find current and correct data.

EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM MRT MARKETING PLAN

As markets, communication systems, and tourism constantly evolve, the marketing efforts must also be ongoing and responsive. The role of Explore Minnesota in promoting the MRT through a multitude of channels is an extensive responsibility that requires reoccurring communications, promotional events, and data maintenance. Promotional efforts may include:

- Partnering with other government departments to list, promote, and collaborate on events
- Collaborating with private organizations
- Providing and distributing brochures
- Listing MRT in existing internal publications
- Working with outside printed publications to advertise the MRT
- Organizing events, conferences, and workshops
- Promoting a variety of sample trips
- Maintaining connections with tour groups

What is Explore Minnesota Tourism's Role?



Explore Minnesota has a searchable database of accommodations, events and local links to make information accessible to trip planners

Explore Minnesota Tourism needs a lead time of six to eight months prior to releasing a major marketing campaign. This campaign preparation should occur while signs are being installed so that opening events will take place when the route is fully signed.

EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM MARKETING SUPPORT

Ideally countless organizations and individuals will advertise the MRT. Keeping the MRT brand uniform and accurate will be challenging with this multi-layered advocacy approach. In addition, stakeholders promoting the MRT may not be professional marketers with an in-depth understanding of the target audiences or effective communication strategies. To help support their efforts, Explore Minnesota Tourism can provide an online marketing toolkit that includes:

- Official MRT bicycle route maps
- Trip itineraries
- Digital logos
- Press release templates
- Power point presentation templates
- Organized photo library-sorted by destination area
- Videos
- Twitter/Facebook updates
- Transportation opportunities (shuttle, Amtrak, Jefferson Bus Lines)
- Mail flyers

MERCHANDISING

As the primary marketing organization, Explore Minnesota Tourism can provide official MRT merchandise. Some suggestions include:

- Water bottles
- Caps
- Flashing safety lights
- Reflectors
- Shirts/Jerseys
- Reflective leg straps
- Window clings
- Journals
- Post cards
- Coffee table books
- Unique, individual gifts offered by local businesses
- MRT Passport
- License plate/name tags

Consider that merchandise should reinforce a message. Enhance a message about safety with MRT flashing lights and reflectors.

How do state and national marketers fit in?



State and national organizations can reach bicyclists and tour planners around the world

State and national organizations will have the most ability to get the MRT noticed at national and international levels, reaching travelers, and bicyclists from around the world. State level marketing should be a broad effort and reach all types of bicyclists and non-bicyclists, businesses and residents in communities near the MRT, tourists, and government officials. The role of state level marketers will be to:

- Market Minnesota as a premier destination for bicyclists
- Increase tourism statewide
- Support marketing efforts for local, regional, and business marketing partners

The target range for state marketers can be classified as the following:

- In-state
- Multi-state (including Canada)
- National
- International

COLLABORATORS

Many groups with state and national status will market the MRT. With the bikeway linking ten states and a multitude of state and national attractions, its success can boost an array of tourism, biking, and river organizations everywhere.

The organizations listed are not comprehensive, but are intended to show the primary roles and responsibilities that state and national partners may play in marketing the trail.

STATE AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO BICYCLING, RECREATION AND TOURISM

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
- National Park Service
- Minnesota Department of Health
- National Scenic Byways
- Adventure Cycling

Marketing the MRT is compatible with the existing roles of organizations related to bicycling, recreation and tourism

How do state and national marketers fit in?



A successful MRT will bring heightened awareness and appreciation of a beautiful and healthy Mississippi River. River oriented organizations are natural partners to help market the MRT.
Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.

The primary roles of these organizations will be to encourage use and awareness of the MRT in a number of ways compatible with their existing roles:

- Provide links to the MnDOT and Explore Minnesota MRT information
- Include the MRT on maps and services provided as they relate to the MRT such as camping, bicycle camping, restrooms, showers, water, picnic areas and river access.
- Include the MRT in catalog listings
- Use the MRT in guided events
- Provide resource assistance to MnDOT and Explore Minnesota

MISSISSIPPI RIVER ORGANIZATIONS

The MRT has great potential for creating market synergy with other river organizations, especially those oriented toward tourism, like:

- Mississippi River Parkway Commission
- Great River Road National Scenic Byway
- Minnesota MRT Governance Board (future)

Some ways these groups can help to market include:

- Provide links to the Minnesota MRT information
- Include the MRT in maps relating to the river, other transportation routes and river related tourism and education
- Create tour itineraries involving multiple modes of transportation
- Share marketing information about the destination areas and the river
- Use the MRT in campaigns to improve education and awareness of the river's importance

How do state and national marketers fit in?



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Non-profit and/or grassroots organizations, like the following, can combine marketing with advocacy for the MRT:

- Mississippi River Trail, Inc. (MRT Inc.)
- Nice Ride MN
- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- State Nonmotorized Transportation Committee
- Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota
- Adventure Cycling/United States Bike Route System
- League of American Bicyclists
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- American Cycling Association

These organizations can help market the MRT by:

- Providing links to the Minnesota MRT information
- Leading MRT bike tours
- Supporting and educating communities along the MRT that are interested in biking

How do local and regional marketers fit in?

LOCAL AND REGIONAL MARKETING PARTNERS

Local and regional marketers have particular ability to build regular MRT use among residents and to foster a personal connection with the bikeway.

Collaborative partners in local/regional marketing may include public agencies or private corporations. We have provided a section specifically for business marketing. However, many businesses may find the roles and strategies outlined for local/regional public and community groups useful as well.

A list of potential government and community local marketers includes:

- Cities and townships
- Counties
- Parks and recreation departments
- Regional tourism organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Convention and visitors bureaus
- Native American tribal councils
- Active living/wellness groups
- Bicycle advocacy groups
- Environmental organizations
- Colleges and universities
- Schools
- Libraries
- Churches



Local marketers may easily reach bicyclists and trip planners around the world

LOCAL AND REGIONAL MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Local and regional marketers have particular capacity to build support and regular MRT use among residents and visitors from nearby areas. Marketing efforts within the community can have a personal touch that helps foster individual connection with the bikeway.

Local marketers may reach a target audience well beyond their boundaries and are encouraged to think big. Bicyclists and tourism organizations from all over world can easily access community websites and information. The role of local and regional marketers will be to:

- Reinforce the state MRT bikeway and the regional destination areas and consistent brand
- Develop and market a unique local identity
- Build local awareness of the MRT

How do local and regional marketers fit in?

- Demonstrate support for the MRT by fostering community pride and excitement
- Demonstrate support for bicyclists by taking steps to become a bicycle-friendly community
- Increase tourism to the community and region

COORDINATION WITH STATE PARTNERS

Local and regional partners will be responsible for initial and ongoing communication to the central organization, such as:

- Maintaining a link to the Minnesota MRT information
- Updating Explore Minnesota's database with current business and community attraction information
- Communicating current websites and contact information for Explore Minnesota listings. Explore Minnesota provides links to city and chamber of commerce websites for trip planners.
- Using the marketing tools and templates provided to keep a consistent brand
- Future MRT governance organization will check-in annually with the Mississippi River Commission
- Collaborating with MnDOT on MRT route revisions, detours and informational updates

Local marketers can aid state marketing efforts by:

Reinforcing the state and destination area identity while marketing

Maintaining links to Minnesota's MRT page

Updating the Explore Minnesota database with current information

Utilizing the marketing tools and support provided in order to keep a consistent brand

How does the business community fit in?



A well used bikeway will be an asset to many types of businesses. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

BUSINESS MARKETING PARTNERS

Any business along the route may benefit from promoting the bikeway. Businesses who may especially benefit include:

- Outfitters
- Transportation businesses, such as Amtrak or Jefferson
- Hardware stores
- Bicycle supply and repair shops
- Restaurants and bars
- Accommodations
- Convenience stores
- Specialty destinations, such as wineries, orchards, parks or museums

BUSINESS MARKETING OBJECTIVES

With the right tools, businesses can play a significant role in marketing the MRT. Marketing their business and the route will encounter synergistic opportunities. The role of businesses will be to:

- Seek ways to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the MRT
- Increase the bike support and services along the route
- Make business information available to bicyclists, tour groups, and trip planning organizations
- Train staff to serve bicyclists and answer questions about bicycling support and amenities in the area



Businesses may find many benefits in building a strong and loyal bicyclist clientele.

COORDINATION WITH STATE PARTNERS

Businesses can contribute to the overall marketing efforts by:

- If relevant, updating Explore Minnesota's database with current business information
- Using the marketing tools and templates provided to keep a consistent brand
- Participate in any future certification programs
- Demonstrating support for the MRT and its benefits to the community

What is the MRT relationship to the Great River Road?

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GREAT RIVER ROAD NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY



The Great River Road (GRR) is a unique partner route to the Mississippi River Trail bikeway. Although both courses are guided by the river and are sometimes combined on the same road, they are ultimately two different routes with planning, promotion, and management partially independent of each other. The factors that make a memorable road trip and a high quality bicycling journey have led to separate alignments. Alternate routes may be advantageous, as they expand opportunities and travel modes to explore the Mississippi River.

There are many ways in which the MRT and the GRR are already interconnected. The MRT bikeway and the GRR:

- **Share much of the same alignment.** However, the GRR consists of roads where bicycles are not allowed, and the MRT consists of existing off-road trails, where users are not allowed.
- **Celebrate the river.** In the *GRR Development Study*, the authors state that it is the river, and not the road, that is the attraction. However, in the community meetings soliciting input on the MRT, most participants ranked safety, river experiences, beauty, and community access as their respective highest priorities. These findings imply that for the MRT, the overall bicycling experience may be the primary attraction—an essential difference between the two travelways.
- **Share many of the same community assets.**
- **Many tourists already combine a road trip on the GRR with bicycling,** hiking, kayaking, and boating. The GRR is a way to access, not just the river, but other modes of travel along the river.
- **Share same destination areas.** Both the GRR and the MRT define and reinforce the same destination areas as regional identities and attractions.



The Great River Road National Scenic Byway and the MRT bikeway share significant alignments, but are two separate routes guided by the same river. The two routes can offer a wider range of river access, recreation and opportunity than either one individually. *Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

What is the MRT relationship to the Great River Road?

CAPITALIZING ON THE GRR AND THE MRT ASSOCIATION

The following list outlines potential ways in which the synergy between the GRR and the MRT may be expanded:



Information or wayfinding facilities at GRR and MRT junctions capitalize on the places where the routes align

- Combine marketing efforts to promote recreation along the river to an international audience. The GRR and the MRT may be two alternative ways to travel attracting different ages and interests, or combined to broaden the experiences along the trip.
- Recommend combined itineraries using both modes of travel.
- Support tourist facilities at shared junctions: kiosks, tourism offices, visitor services, and amenities.
- Join forces to protect the river qualities that draw visitors. Raise awareness of the importance of scenic value, clean water, wildlife, and healthy ecosystems along the banks.
- Seek ways to improve river access where both routes will benefit.
- Future MRT governance organization can meet with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission annually.
- Use the wayfinding system of one route to support the other. When feasible, MRT wayfinding signs should be co-located with existing GRR signs.

SECTION 8

Supporting Information

- Use this section for support while working out your individual marketing plan. We've provided a compilation of samples, templates, and checklists to help you get started, including a press release, a ride itinerary, ride ideas, a ride event planning guide, a social media plan, and lists of bicycling and tourism related websites, contacts and organizations.

Tips for Creating a Successful Brochure

HOW TO WRITE CONTENT THAT GETS READ

1. Write in plain English. Don't try to impress with long words.
2. Avoid jargon and superlatives.
3. Keep your message concise. Avoid lengthy sentences and break up your paragraphs.
4. Spend time on your headline – it's the most important part of your brochure.
5. Use sub-headlines liberally—this helps distinguish content and makes the brochure easy to scan.
6. Use bullet points to highlight key benefits.
7. Do not use more than three font types.
8. Include captions on all your photos
9. Proofread. Proofread. Proofread.



The stock brochures identify key themes, trail distances, longitude/latitude, elevation, connecting state trails, and a brief description of the trail experience.

By adhering to a few basic rules, you will be able to create an effective brochure. Use the checklist below to help focus your brochure message and create appealing content.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN INFORMATIVE BROCHURE

GENERAL CHARACTER

- Accurately communicate overall trail experience.
- Compel the audience to visit the MRT.
- Consistently represent the MRT brand; adapt information and graphics from the MRT stock brochures as applicable.

HEADLINE

- Use the headline to communicate your main point/theme. (It's the only brochure component guaranteed to get read!)
- Incorporate a benefit statement, emotional appeal, or provocative question. Consider the most exciting element of the trail segment you are promoting.
- Avoid one-word headlines; long headlines (up to 15 words) can be effective.

CONTENT

- Incorporates themes based on the Mississippi River's characteristics, history, or influence.
- **Accurately** and positively describe the trail experience. If the trail is more suited for families, tell people. If it's a challenging route, encourage experienced riders. *Don't misrepresent your trail segment.*
- List trail amenities like connecting trails, food, lodging, and entertainment that will attract or benefit MRT users.
- Identify whether the trail is on-road or off-road; paved or unpaved.
- Include trail distance, latitude/longitude, and elevations.

GRAPHICS

- Use the MRT Logo (www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html).
- Use images that tell a story or illustrate trail amenities.
- Evoke emotion—family togetherness, relaxation, adventure, or accomplishment, etc.
- Represent existing trail qualities (e.g. if your trail is flat and appealing to families, avoid images of long-distance cyclists, exerting themselves on a steep hill).

CALL TO ACTION

- Good brochures let their readers know exactly what the author wants them to do next – visit a website for more information; bring their friends and family on a day trip or long distance ride; patronize businesses along the route, etc. Tell your audience to explore the MRT!

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Help your audience find additional information. Link them to MnDOT or Explore Minnesota Tourism's websites: www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html, www.exploreminnesota.com.

Sample MRT Press Release



Use the official MRT logo on all press releases

Check

www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html
for the latest MRT route fact sheets
and updates.

See the press release on the following pages for an example of how the MRT opening might be released. Use the checklist below to help tailor your press release to your particular message.

GUIDELINES FOR A GOOD PRESS RELEASE

GENERAL CHARACTER

- Be fact based
- Report in the third person

HEADLINE

- Use a creative, attention getting single sentence

PARAGRAPH 1: INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

- Identify the physical location, month, day and year.
- Summarize the most relevant information, such as Who, What, When, Where and Why (imagine that this is the only paragraph being read).
- Include a hook to interest your audience in reading more

PARAGRAPHS 2-4: PRESS RELEASE BODY

- Offer more detailed important information
- A good press release often:
 - Uses quotes
 - Connects the release to current events and issues
 - Puts the most important information first
- Use the final paragraph to summarize the key points

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Provide opportunities for the audience to find additional information
- Include contact information for someone who can answer questions about the release

BOILER PLATE

- Communicate additional background facts to the editor that do not get published

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Avoid "hard sell" promotional or advertising language
- A press release should be concise; generally 500 words total, or less
- A press release must be fact based. Verify that any facts and quotes are accurate and approved for use.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEADLINE: Mississippi River Scenic Bikeway Ready for Bicyclists

CONTACT: Contact Name
 Contact Title
 Organization Name
 Phone
 email



City, State (Date) – [Begin introduction here: answering who, what, when, where, and why] The City of XYZ will be celebrating the grand opening of the Mississippi River Trail Bikeway, an 817-mile on-road bicycle route, on Saturday, April 10, 2011. The ribbon cutting ceremony will begin at 10:45 am with a speech from Mayor Johnson.

[Insert supporting facts and information here] The Mississippi River Trail, a bikeway that follows the Mississippi River from the Headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana, offers 817 miles of scenic riding right through the state.

"The vision is to transcend our state borders and show what our country's about," said Dan Collins, MnDOT MRT Coordinator. "The river's scenery, its history as an early transportation corridor, the physical challenge of its length and the link it provides for river states all make establishing a bicycling route along the Mississippi a national goal."

About The Mississippi River Trail (Boiler plate)

Designated by President Clinton in 2000 as one of 16 National Millennium Trails, the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is largely an on-road bicycle route that spans the length of the Mississippi River from Minnesota's Headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. The Mississippi River Trail is supported in Minnesota by local, regional, and state governments through a collaborative effort facilitated by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Traveling through or adjacent to nearly 70 cities and 21 counties, the Minnesota portion of the MRT is divided into six distinctly different and geographic destination areas: Mississippi Headwaters, Mississippi Northwoods, Mississippi Crossings, Scenic Mississippi, Metro Mississippi, and Mississippi Bluff location, and includes one alternative route segment on the Paul Bunyan and Heartland State Trails.

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>

For more information about the Mississippi River Trail, please contact [Insert name, address, phone number here]

About Organization Releasing News (Boiler plate)

[Insert organization's boilerplate here]

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Sample Ride Itinerary Checklist

Bicyclists are consistently seeking basic route information before undertaking a trip. Although not every itinerary will need to provide detailed answers for all of the questions listed below, use these guidelines to help remember helpful itinerary information.

DOES YOUR ITINERARY INCLUDE:

ROUTE INFORMATION

- What is the total trip distance?
- What is the topographic character?
- What is the latitude/longitude/elevation?
- What are the distances between destinations?
- What are the main attractions? Include a photo if room.
- What kind of support (restrooms, showers, accommodations, internet) is available?

ROUTE CONDITIONS

- Is the route on or off road?
- Is the route fully paved?
- Is the route fully signed?
- Are there speed limits?

TRIP PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- How can I get there (train, bus, car?)
- Is parking available? Is overnight parking an issue? Is parking free?
- Where can I find maps? On-line tools like mapmyride.com and bikley.com can help you create simple maps for inclusion in your itinerary.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES

- Websites for the area and/or specific attractions

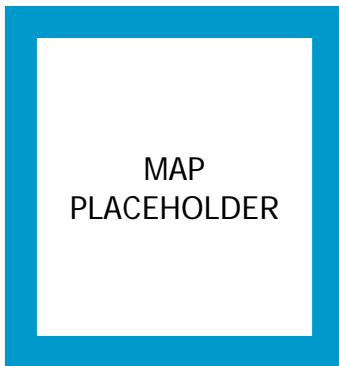
Sample Ride Itinerary: Discover the MRT in Minneapolis and St. Paul



See how the Twin Cities has celebrated the Mississippi River in their midst



Both urban and natural areas along the riverfront offer wonderful variety and interest



Related Links

- <http://www.metrotransit.org/>
- <https://www.niceridemn.org/>
- <http://www.minneapolisparks.org>



Length: Approximately 20 miles round trip. The MRT runs along both sides of the river through much of the metro area, so a loop is a perfect full day trip.

Estimated trip time: 5-6 hours, including half an hour for lunch and other brief stops. Allows time for sightseeing.

Destination: Mill Ruins Park and the Stone Arch Bridge, bicycling on the Mississippi west bank to Fort Snelling State Park and then mostly along the east bank back to St. Anthony Main/Riverplace.

Route description: The route is fully paved and partially signed. Many paths in the metro area have a ten mile per hour speed limit, and you should expect to share the path with pedestrians and rollerbladers. This route is mostly flat and appropriate for Type A, B, and C bicyclists.

Lunch: There are a number of restaurants near Ford Parkway. Sea Salt Eatery is known for its food and view of Minnehaha Falls.

Attractions: Mill Ruins Park, Minnehaha Falls, Fort Snelling, University of Minnesota campus, Stone Arch Bridge

Trip synopsis: Start your trip exploring Mill Ruins Park in Minneapolis, MN. Located along the west bank of the Mississippi River in downtown Minneapolis, it is adjacent to St. Anthony Falls and the Stone Arch Bridge and offers plenty to see and learn. Grab breakfast at a number of nearby restaurants. During the weekend, Mill City Farmers Market offers music, food and more. Go south along the MRT trails, which will keep you close to the river and shielded from traffic. Get ready to step back in time at Fort Snelling and prepare yourself for the magic of Minnehaha Falls.

Double back on the MRT route and cross the river at Ford Parkway. As you head north in St. Paul enjoy river views and residential neighborhoods with plenty of historic homes and stately homes.

This is one trip you don't want to miss! *Sample Ride Itinerary photos provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism.*

Ride Event Planning Guide

Involve people who can help make the event a success:

- Mayor and City Council Representatives
- School superintendent, principals and school board
- Police and Fire chiefs

Make it a community effort:

- Enlist the help of other organizations such as the PTA, Lions Club or neighborhood groups
- Involve local businesses
- Coordinate efforts with local law enforcement and emergency response teams
- Invite the media to support and participate in the event

GETTING STARTED

Pick a theme. Is it a fundraising ride, a ride to raise awareness about a particular issue, or a ride to enjoy peak fall colors? Is the event exclusively for bicyclists?

Select a route of appropriate length and difficulty for the expected bicyclist. This may be based on the theme. Try to begin and end at a location that offers some advantage to riders and local groups. A restaurant might be happy to offer a registration table and restrooms if it's the official place to eat a biker friendly breakfast. If it's a fundraising ride, consider ending at a place special to the cause: a hospital, park, or library. Or end at an event where bicyclists can join the crowd, like a harvest festival or concert.

Find out what kinds of permission and support you'll need. Some of these might be:

- Permits
- Road closings
- Road markings
- Additional signage
- Police, security, or medical back up

Calculate the cost. You may need money for:

- Registration
- Permits
- Refreshments
- Space
- Promotion
- Miscellaneous supplies: nametags, pens,
- Signage
- Bike maintenance tools
- Shuttles
- Toilets
- Website

Set up a method of communication. How do volunteers communicate? How will you notify people of a change of plans, especially if it's short notice?

Publicize and Promote:

- Get the word out through flyers, emails, social media, website postings and announcements
 - Send a press release to the media
 - Call media outlets with information
 - Take photographs and publicize the event afterwards
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Keep it safe:

- Require helmets, appropriate dress, and other applicable basic safety gear
 - Review safety practices, signals, and traffic laws before beginning
 - Clearly mark the route with signage and verify that the route is ready to ride beforehand
-

GET PEOPLE INVOLVED

Build a broad base of community support and volunteers from different groups within the community. Try to connect with:

- Public officials
- Community groups such as non-profits, schools or churches
- Public service workers
- Local business owners
- Potential participants (bicyclists)

FINALIZE PLANS

- Set a date. And a plan for bad weather.
- Create a to do list and break up assignments among organizers and volunteers.
- Create a schedule for the event.
- Devise a way to attract participants. This may be rewards, association with a cause, contests, or a tandem social event.

COMPILE A LIST OF SUPPLIES

Once the list is made, purchase, request donations, or borrow what you need.

- Registration supplies: Sign-in sheets, pens, clipboards, a table, nametags, informational brochures.
- First aid kits, sunscreen, bug spray
- Drinks: water, sports drinks, ice, coolers. Possibly soda, juice and cups.
- Food: fresh fruit, trail mix, protein bars. Possibly non-perishable sandwiches or meals.
- Garbage/recycle bags
- Van and trailers; ways to transport people, bicycles and supplies
- Toilets
- Waiver
- Consider how bicyclists can get gear at the last minute, such as helmets, sunglasses or gloves. Either bring a few back ups, or know the nearest place to purchase equipment.

PROMOTE THE EVENT

- Hang posters or hand out brochures
- Make announcements through various media: webpages, radio, newspapers, eblasts, bike shops
- Use social media. Create an event blog or a Facebook page
- Send information to local community calendars to be posted
 - If it will be a regular event, send information to tourism organizations to be listed

- Send reminders to attend, and a list of what participants may want to bring

AT THE EVENT

BEFORE THE START:

- Make sure the route is clearly marked and ready to ride
- Set up support stations with water, etc. along the way

AT THE START:

- Set up a registration station
- Provide refreshments
- Provide maps
- Provide facilities and places to wash and change
- Provide handouts with safety tips and reminders

DURING THE RIDE:

- Provide water, tables, refreshments, and restroom facilities along the route
- Provide bike repair/support vehicle (sag wagon)

AT THE FINISH:

- Provide refreshments
- Provide restroom facilities and places to wash and change
- Provide places to rest, interact, and ways to celebrate and be entertained while waiting for all participants to finish
- Hand out event souvenirs

REWARD PARTICIPATION IDEAS:

- Coupons to local businesses
- Bike related merchandise
- Donations to various causes of their choice
- Prizes donated by local businesses

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Include volunteers when calculating refreshment amounts.
- If the ride ends with a social event, do the bicyclists have a place to secure their bikes?

Ride Ideas

The number of possible themes for Minnesota rides is unlimited. Use the MRT to get near destination points, or find attractions along the way. The following offer a sampling of to select from, combine, and improve. This list can also be used by communities looking for ways to improve amenities along their route.



Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism

NATURE THEMED RIDES

- Birdwatching - bring binoculars and a reference book
- Wildlife - bring a camera
- Fall color - head from north to south on a multi-day tour and travel with the tide of cooler weather. Or travel north to see the full spectrum of early sumacs and maples in the south to the last golden tamaracks in the north
- Wildflower - woodlands, prairies, wetlands and shorelands each have their times to shine
- Spring leaf out - familiar trees have chartreuse, white, and purple tinged flowers and new leaves. Even trees not known for their flowers offer a welcome blaze of green and gold after the winter.
- State parks - see how each is unique when visiting several over one tour
- Mushroom hunting - each season and plant community has it's own offerings

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT RIDES

- Historical sites - connect the dots between marked sites
- Native American culture - ride on tribal lands, stop at the reservation towns, find museums and other sources of information about Minnesota's earliest inhabitants
- Museum tour - balance quiet learning activities with the rush of fresh air and exercise
- Public art - collect photos
- Lock and Dam Tour - many are located in charming river towns and come with plenty of history and photo opportunities
- Mining sites - see how what lies beneath the surface has influenced Minnesota's communities
- Town to Town - make exploring communities along the way the main attraction. Shop, eat, and visit.
- Photographic tour - seek out dams, architecture, bridges, industry on the river



Reads Landing, circa 1940s.

MULTI-MODAL RIDES

Plan for points to switch modes. Look for outfitters with services that can make these rides easy.

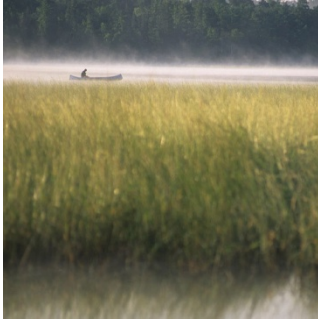


Photo provided by Explore Minnesota Tourism

- Kayaking
- Canoeing
- Running
- Hiking
- Walking
- Rollerblading
- Boating
- Light rail/commuter trains
- Road trips/driving - the Great River Road National Scenic Byway is a natural partner for this combination

RIDES WITH OTHER RECREATION

Pack light and carry some equipment, or plan on renting at stopping points

- Fishing
- Golfing
- Swimming
- Camping - most campgrounds welcome bicycles, some are bicycle only.

FOOD ORIENTED RIDES

- Pick your own berries, fruit, vegetables - see www.pickyourown.org or <http://www3.mda.state.mn.us/mngrown/> to find available locations
- Farmers Market Rides
- Harvest rides - apple, rhubarb, pumpkin, sweet corn, etc. Many communities have existing harvest festivals. Some farms have developed into entertainment centers with food, restrooms and fresh produce available.
- Wineries, cider shops, local brewers
- Wild harvest rides - search for edible plants in the wild during brief, seasonal opportunities



FUNDRAISING RIDES

All fundraising rides can be to raise money and awareness. Consider combining another activity to support the cause. Or collect pledges per mile ridden.

- Environmental - pick up trash, collect water samples, or ride to an invasive brush clearing event and combine riding with work.
- Combat illness - join forces with a business, hospital or support group

- Support people - raise money for retirement homes, schools, or individuals. Turn a ride into a race or entertainment event.
- Community projects - raise funds for public improvements, libraries, schools, community gardens, or MRT improvements



MISCELLANEOUS RIDES

- Haunted Minnesota tour - plenty of books and websites available for ideas of buildings and sites with a history
- Challenge rides - find the places where the topography is most demanding and see how many fit into one ride.
- Geocaching - look for buried treasure with a GPS
- Training rides - set up an Ironman or triathlon course
- Rides for kids - Easter egg hunts, leaf collections for pressing, seed collections from native plants
- Festivals and celebrations - travel through different communities from party to party

12-Week Social Media Broadcast



The below 12-week social plan can be customized for Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other social media outlets. It is intended to give you a jumpstart on ideas and methods to promote the MRT via social media. Please have some fun and supplement with your own ideas!

WEEK 1

Announce ribbon-cutting or trail opening celebration; include event photos and links to MRT maps and info

WEEK 2

Post bicycle safety rules and regulations, include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 3

Mississippi River Trivia – Topic: MRT was designated a Millennium Trail by President Clinton in the year 2000.

Potential questions: In what year was the MRT designated a Millennium Trail? Which President designated the MRT a Millennium Trail?

Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 4

Photo Contest! Solicit photos of people riding their bikes along the MRT. Use polling to allow viewers to rate their favorites. Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 5

Encourage local/regional/state leaders to ride the MRT – and make an announcement via social media letting the public know when and where they'll be biking. Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 6

Give a shout-out to a bicycle-friendly business along the bikeway, encouraging your audience to patronize them. Arrange for a bicycle-friendly business to offer rewards for trivia for a limited time. Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 7

Mississippi River Trivia – Topic: Mississippi River Explorers. Include link to MRT maps and information.

Potential questions: Which famous Spanish explorer discovered the Mississippi River? Hernando de Soto

Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 8

Ask people to share their MRT story – What did they learn? Where did they go? How long did they ride for? What was their favorite attraction?

Include link to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 9

Reminder to Share the Road! Include tips on sharing the road and a bicycle safety refresher. Include links to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 10

Tune-up time: Remind riders to check their tires and gears. Provide a list of area bicycle repair shops. Include links to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 11

History lesson – explain how the Mississippi River influenced the industry and culture of your community or region. Include links to MRT maps and information.

WEEK 12

Solicit local businesses to provide discounts to bicyclists for the final week and announce the discount and participating businesses, encouraging people to patronize. Include links to MRT maps and information.

Bicycle and Tourism Organization Information

The Great Allegheny Passage website is an example of a user friendly source of trail and bicycling data that also provides information to local communities and businesses:

www.atatrail.org

You can access excerpts from the Explore Minnesota Tourism Resource Guide at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>. Compiled for the 2010 Bicycle Tourism Summit held in Brainerd, the Resource Guide identifies helpful websites, bicycling, and tourism related groups and agencies. Explore Minnesota's resources are categorized as follows:

- Minnesota Tourism Partners
- Bicycle Tour Operators and Tour Planners
- Bicycle Tour Resources
- Minnesota Biking Clubs
- Parks and Trails Organizations
- Bicycle Organizations

A full PDF copy of the Resource Guide and additional information about the summit can be found at the following link:

<http://industry.exploreminnesota.com/side1/events-conferences/2010-bicycle-tourism-summit-follow-up/>

Below we have listed some additional bicycling related websites. These lists are not comprehensive.

TRAIL AND ROUTE WEBSITES:

- www.trails.com
- www.bluffcountry.com
- www.letsgorideabike.org
- www.cyclopath.org
- www.bikely.org
- www.mapmyride.com

ADVOCACY:

- www.bikemn.org
- www.bikewalktwincities.org
- www.bikewalkweek.org
- www.ibike.org
- www.bikesafe.com
- www.bikeleague.org
- www.bikesbelong.org

SOCIAL NETWORKING:

- www.crazyguyonabike.com
- www.mpls bikelove.com
- www.doitgreen.org
- www.mnbikeblog.com
- www.bikecavecollective.blogspot.com