

MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL - MARKETING AND OUTREACH

MRT cities play a number of roles. Some provide services, others are centers that enhance and link multi-modal travel, others are where bike routes converge, and still others contain significant tourism attractions. Regardless, each and every town makes an important contribution to a bicyclist's experience, equally important, is *how* MRT cities accommodate their new visitors. Communities that are *friendly* to bicycle travel add to a visitor's fun and lasting memories. To help communities along the river become as bicycle-friendly as possible, and to begin promoting their community as an MRT destination, MnDOT is providing marketing and outreach services, starting with the four Community Engagement meetings.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING SCHEDULE:

Oct. 24 – Winona;
Oct. 25 – Grand Rapids;
Oct. 26 – St. Cloud;
Nov. 1 – Twin Cities

For meeting information and specific locations:
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>

At the Community Engagement meetings MnDOT will:

- **PROVIDE ALL ATTENDEES THESE MARKETING AND OUTREACH SERVICES:**
 - ✓ A presentation on *the importance of marketing the MRT* and the MRT “brand” (by tourism marketing expert, Steve Markuson (former director of Explore MN Tourism));
 - ✓ A copy of, and professional introduction to “unpack” [the Mississippi River Trail Bikeway Marketing Toolbox](#) (by Stantec staff who developed the Toolbox);
 - ✓ *How to evaluate your community's bicycle-friendliness* (by the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota)
 - ✓ Information about *MRT Discovery Bicycle* rides scheduled for Spring 2012.
- Describe the idea behind “Host Cities” and **explain how to apply for certain benefits.**
- Introduce the concept of “Hub Cities”

BENEFITS FOR ALL MRT HOST CITIES

Every city willing to pass a local resolution supporting the MRT and its goals-- regardless of size and services—will be provided some extra benefits as Host Cities.

- An MRT “Discovery” bicycle ride that will start at the Headwaters and finish at the Iowa border. The ride offers opportunities for HOST cities to highlight local attractions. Rides will tentatively occur in June 2012;
- Listing (and web links) to your community or city on the MnDOT MRT website (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html>)

ENHANCED BENEFITS FOR SELECTED MRT HOST CITIES

One Host Community in each of the six MRT Destination Areas that wants to position itself as a significant destination for MRT travelers is eligible to receive expert marketing and bicycle planning assistance, which includes:

- **Developing a marketing action plan.** Two consultation meetings with tourism marketing expert, Steve Markuson (former director of Explore MN Tourism), who will assist each city in developing an MRT Marketing Plan.

- **Evaluating its bicycle-friendliness.** One site visit by the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota to conduct a community assessment and one follow up meeting to review its Bicycle-friendly community assessment and recommendations.
- **Enhanced visibility in the MRT “Discovery Rides” planned (spring, 2012).** The MRT “Discovery” bicycle ride that will pass through and highlight the selected Host Cities.

ENHANCED BENEFITS - APPLICATION

Applying cities must want some professional help and be willing to administratively support the marketing and bicycle improvement initiatives, and be able to demonstrate how this assistance will improve the overall performance of the MRT (*MnDOT will select the cities in November, 2011*).

City Name:

Primary contact name:

▪ Phone:

▪ Email:

Do you believe your community (or local unit of government) is willing to pass a resolution supporting the MRT?

- Our community has already provided a resolution of support
- We have identified a designated person who will pursue passing the resolution

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Community relationship (i.e. mayor, resident):

NOTE: TO BE AN MRT HOST CITY, YOU MUST EVENTUALLY PASS A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE MRT

Existing community bicycling services (please check all that apply)

- We have a bike shop / bike repair in our community
- We have a hardware store in our community
- We have bike racks for public use (estimated number: _____)
- We have bike trails, or designated bike routes in our community
- We have bike trails, or designated bike routes in close proximity to our community
- We have hotel facilities in our community for cyclists / MRT trail users
- We have camping facilities in our community for cyclists / MRT trail users
- We have a restaurant or grocery store in our community for cyclists / MRT trail users
- We have public rest rooms in our community for cyclists / MRT trail users
- We have publicly available wifi access in our community
- We have scheduled air, rail, or bus services in our community available to the public.
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:

Is your city willing/able to convene stakeholders to meet with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota as they develop a bicycle-friendly community assessment and recommendation report?

- Yes
- No

Primary contact name:

- Phone:
- Email:

Is your city willing and able to convene a meeting of stakeholders, then work to develop an MRT marketing plan (completed by April 2012) in time begin promoting the MRT for the 2012 bicycling season?

- Yes
- No

Primary contact name:

- Phone:
- Email:

Is your city willing and able to participate in planning the segment of the MRT Discovery Ride that passes through your community? The ride is anticipated in Spring 2012.

- Yes
- No

Primary contact name:

- Phone:
- Email:

Additional thoughts...why should your community be selected for the enhanced marketing and bicycle planning benefits?



Email this form to: daniel.collins@state.mn.us by November 11th. You will be notified shortly after.