

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Staff Report on Projects for the Bimonthly Meeting on 4.14.2021

Agenda Topic or Project Name	Purpose, Benefit, Project deliverables, and Contract Amount	Project Time Period	Project Status	Contact
EDA CARES Act MRRPC Supplemental Funding	MRRPC received a \$400,000 grant to assist the region with recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The award timeframe is July 1 st , 2020 through June 30 th , 2022.	July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2022	<p>The MRRPC received an EDA grant to assist us in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will be using the grant to do the following: Upgrade existing hardware and software to allow staff to maintain communications during this pandemic; Update county Hazard Mitigation Plans particularly the pandemic section; Upgrade our website to include RFL applications; Conduct webinars for small business websites; Contract out for a SMRT Bus Marketing Plan; Contract out for a Location Based Data project; and to update our existing CEDS to include pandemic resiliency; pay for staff time to assist municipalities and businesses recover from the pandemic.</p> <p>As to date we have completed the following: purchased laptops for all employees, purchased mapping software; selected a consultant to begin working on website upgrade/small business webinars and a separate consultant to work on the Location Based Data project. Held initial meetings to discuss website development and reviewed drafts of what the website could look like; held initial talks between the consultant, Small Business Development Center at UWL and ourselves to discuss small business webinars. Began researching how to incorporate pandemic resiliency into CEDS. Began discussions with consultant to develop a report on the impacts on employment due to COVID.</p>	Dave Bonifas Director 608.785.9396 dave@mrrpc.com
EDA CARES Act MRRPC RLF revitalization	MRRPC received an EDA grant in the amount of up to \$1,050,000 to establish a separate Revolving Loan Fund to assist businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The final amount will be based upon the amount of loan applications.	Continuous	EDA granted the MRRPC money based upon the original capitalization of its 3 revolving loan funds (The Business Capital Fund, the CMV Growth Development Fund and the La Crosse Economic Development Fund). In an effort to get the money out to businesses EDA also removed eased 3 of its lending criteria. First, the EDA requirement that the lending rate be at least of 75% of the prime rate is waived so we can offer whatever lending rate we choose, secondly there is no criteria of 2 to 1 private to public leveraging requirement and thirdly no bank turn down letter is required. These 3 criteria will be eased for the first 2 years after which they will go back into place. Loan application decisions will be made by the boards of the 3 existing RLF funds based upon the location of the applicant.	Dave Bonifas Director 608.785.9396 dave@mrrpc.com

			<p>For example, CMV board members will make the decisions on application from Crawford, Monroe and Vernon Counties.</p> <p>To date 3 loans totaling \$125,000 have been approved. One business is located in Durand, one in Taylor and one in the city of La Crosse. Additional inquiries have been made regarding the fund, but businesses seem to be waiting to see if additional grants will come out before applying for a loan.</p>	
EDA CARES Act Supplemental Funding – Website and Consultations	A portion of the CARES Supplemental funding will be used to redesign the MRRPC website and add modern features and functionality. This project will also include training opportunities for local businesses to enhance their web and social media presence.	Anticipated start date: November 2020	<p>RFP released Firm will be selected by November 2020.</p> <p>Staff reviewed 3 proposals and selected the top 2 for interviews based on a scoring matrix. Staff will recommend one firm to the Executive Committee.</p> <p>Staff is contracted DigiSage and held a kickoff and strategy meeting in early January 2020. Staff will continue to work with DigiSage to develop the website and consultation materials.</p>	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com
EDA CARES Act Supplemental Funding – SMRT Bus Marketing Plan	A portion of the CARES Supplemental funding will be used to develop a marketing plan to increase ridership, enhance signage, and identify growth opportunities.	Anticipated start date: late March 2021	RFP in February 2021 after being reviewed by Running, Inc and La Crosse County staff	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com
EDA CARES Act Supplemental Funding – Location-based Data Project	A portion of the CARES Supplemental funding will be used to purchase data and travel pattern analysis to support community businesses, capture tourist opportunities, and support local planning and economic development efforts.	Anticipated start date: January 2021	<p>RFP drafted and will be released in October 2020.</p> <p>Received 3 proposals and staff will select 1-2 firms for interview based on a scoring matrix. The proposals and matrix were also distributed to the LAPC and La Crosse County for input.</p> <p>Staff contracted with Cambridge Systematics and held a kickoff and planning meeting in late January 2021. Gollnik and Nicewander are currently working to identify geofenced zones throughout the region for analysis</p>	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com
MRRPC Build Grant	MRRPC submitted a planning grant proposal to USDOT in May 2020 to develop a “Freight Strategy” for its Counties. Notification of award was in September 2020. The study includes developing background information on freight transportation in the region, generating freight growth projects and system performance for major commodities in the region, and creating content to incorporate into County and local comprehensive plans	Anticipated start date: TBD	<p>Staff is working with Federal Highway Administration and WisDOT through the procurement process and developing and releasing an RFP and will play a large role in project tasks.</p> <p>Gollnik held multiple meetings with both agencies to further clarify agreements and roles for WisDOT and MRRPC.</p> <p>Awaiting further Federal guidance for contracting and award.</p>	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com

<p>Report on US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant for economic recovery planning, engineering, real estate appraisal, engineering, and environmental assessment activity for the Villages of Ontario, La Farge, Viola and Readstown.</p>	<p>Economic Recovery Planning is needed by the flood impacted communities of Ontario, La Farge, Viola and Readstown. The following Planning Activities are proposed to assist these communities with economic recovery and long term sustainability: (1) site relocation decision research, (2) site design for community economic development and resettlement, (3) community facility assessment engineering and design, (4) public infrastructure engineering assessment and design, (5) project cost estimating, (6) real estate appraisal, (7) environmental assessment and (8) public participation.</p>	<p>June 2020-December 2021</p>	<p>Grant application was submitted in June 2019. The total project will be \$925,000 with \$185,000 in local match. The MRRPC received a letter dated January 10, 2020 that EDA has approved the grant. RFP's were sent out in February. Each Village received 9 proposals. Each Village met separately and selected who they wanted to have as a consultant.</p> <p>Individual Consultants have been working with the Villages. Readstown selected SHC, Ontario selected MSA and both Viola and La Farge selected Vierbicher.</p> <p>Relocation plans have been completed and adopted by the Village Boards in La Farge, Ontario and Viola. These Villages are now beginning to implement the recommendation within the plan using money from the grant that was not used to develop the plan. The Villages are allowed to use money from the grant to implement the plan as long as it is not used for construction.</p> <p>Readstown is a little behind the other villages due to the Villages offices closing down for the month of December and the Village wanting to get as much public input as possible. Infrastructure assessments and business interviews have been completed.</p>	<p>Dave Bonifas Director 608.785.9396 dave@mrrpc.com</p>
<p>Report on City of Westby Industrial Park EDA Grant.</p>	<p>The Cities of Mondovi and Westby are both pursuing Federal EDA grants to develop new industrial parks. Mondovi's New Industrial Park will be located on the City's West side it will be 210 acres in size and serve an expanding industry that will locate there and create 25 jobs. Included within the boundary of the industrial park will be the City's new wastewater treatment facility that will use an anerobic digester that will also generate electricity for the City. The total project cost is expected to be \$7.5 million with 50% the costs hopefully covered by a Federal EDA grant. The City of Westby is planning a 74-acre industrial park on the north side with costs totaling \$4.3 million, hoping that an EDA grant will cover 80% the costs due to disaster declaration.</p>	<p>Westby's grant application was submitted on Grants.Gov on October 3, 2019. Requested additional information was submitted on November 30, 2019.</p>	<p>Westby's Grant application was submitted on October 3, 2019.</p> <p>EDA announced the financial award for Westby April 21, 2020.</p> <p>MRRPC is in communication with EDA on the progress of funding. Quarterly reports have been submitted and all checklist material for contracts with engineering and administration is complete. EDA reviewed and asked for edits on bid documentation. EDA approved all bid documentation on March 16th. Bid opening date was April 8th, 2021.</p>	<p>Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com</p>

T. Campbell Comprehensive Plan Update	March 2020, the Town of Campbell signed a contract to update their Comprehensive Plan with MRRPC. This plan was a cost share agreement of \$12,000, half from MRRPC, half from the Town of Campbell.	March 1, 2020-December, 31, 2020	MRRPC staff has met with the Town to go over an outline for the plan update. Meeting times were postponed due to COVID-19. First and second 'open house' occurred in February and March to solicit public input. A public hearing took place on April 7 th for public review of the draft of the plan. A resolution was placed on the agenda to pass the plan on to the Town Board for approval.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
T. Holland Comprehensive Plan Update	September 2020, the Town of Holland signed a contract to update their Comprehensive Plan with MRRPC. This plan was a cost share agreement of \$12,000, half from MRRPC, half from the Town of Campbell.	September 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021	MRRPC staff has met with the Town to go over an outline for the plan update. MRRPC staff is developing a draft of the plan to be presented to the Town Planning Commission. A public survey was sent out with follow up to increase respondents. First and second 'open house' occurred in February and March to solicit public input. A public hearing will take place in May.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
T. Hamilton Comprehensive Plan Update	In October 2020, the Town of Holland signed a contract to update its Comprehensive Plan with MRRPC.	November 2020 – June 2021	MRRPC staff has met with the planning committee and charted out the schedule and anticipated outreach. A flyer was distributed with the utility bills in December 2020 and will include links for information and surveys. Surveys will also be distributed to patrons of the town dump. The plan update is on schedule.	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com
T. Farmington Comprehensive Plan Update				Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com
Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan Update	As part of receiving annual county contributions, the MRRPC updates and maintains county outdoor recreation plans. The MRRPC is currently working with Vernon County on updating the county's outdoor recreation plan.	July 2020-February 2021	MRRPC has created a draft plan and compiled survey results. MRRPC has met with Vernon County staff to develop an action plan. Vernon County staff is doing a final review and will be presenting it to the County Board.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Buffalo County Outdoor Recreation Plan Update	As part of receiving annual county contributions, the MRRPC updates and maintains county outdoor recreation plans. The MRRPC is currently working with Vernon County on updating the county's outdoor recreation plan.	October 2020-March 2021	MRRPC staff met with Buffalo County staff to go over an outline for the plan. Outdoor Recreation Committee and MRRPC reached out to recreation organizations for input. MRRPC staff compiled data from the survey to add to the plan update. Planning committee to meet with Land and Water Conservation committee to discuss elements to add to plan in March 2021. A first draft of the plan will go to the committee in April.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Jackson County Hazard Mitigation Plan	Update the Jackson County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. \$30,000 federal grant approved requiring a	August 2018 through March 2021	Public hearings and committee meetings were postponed due to COVID-19. The plan was reviewed by the Law Enforcement	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396

	<p>\$10,000 match from MRRPC and Jackson County. The original plan was prepared to reduce costs and losses from natural disasters and some manmade disasters. This is an update to the existing plan.</p> <p>Inventories county's vulnerabilities to various types of disasters. The Plan Inventories and maps critical facilities and all structures in floodplains. The Plan develops projects and strategies to reduce losses from future disasters. Plans must be approved by DHS-FEMA and Wisconsin Emergency Management. Once the updated plan is approved, the county and other participating local governments are eligible for Federal and State Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.</p>		<p>Committee and approved. The plan went to public forum and was reviewed by WEM. The Jackson County Board adopted the HMP and is now going to other municipalities for approval.</p>	<p>abbey@mrrpc.com</p>
<p>La Crosse County Hazard Mitigation Plan</p>	<p>Update the La Crosse County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. \$31,331 federal grant approved requiring a \$10,444 match from MRRPC and La Crosse County. The original plan was prepared to reduce costs and losses from natural disasters and some manmade disasters. This is an update to the existing plan.</p> <p>Inventories county's vulnerabilities to various types of disasters. The Plan inventories and maps critical facilities and all structures in floodplains. The Plan develops projects and strategies to reduce losses from future disasters. Plans must be approved by DHS-FEMA and Wisconsin Emergency Management. Once the updated plan is approved, the county and other participating local governments are eligible for Federal and State Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.</p>	<p>August 2018 through March 2021</p>	<p>La Crosse County received notification from FEMA in August that their grant application to update their existing plan has been approved. The final plan is due in March 2021. MRRPC staff has a draft of the plan finished. Public hearings and committee meetings were postponed due to COVID-19. The plan has been reviewed by the Emergency Management Committee and approved. The plan went to public forum and was reviewed by WEM. WEM approved the plan. The HMP was approved by the La Crosse County Board. It is now awaiting adoption from other municipalities.</p>	<p>Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com</p>
<p>Buffalo County Hazard Mitigation Grant</p>	<p>Update the Buffalo County Hazard Mitigation Plan. A grant application was submitted to WEM in the amount of \$40,000. Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans are prepared to reduce costs and losses from natural disasters for counties and municipalities</p>	<p>2020-2022</p>	<p>The grant application was submitted to WEM in November 2019. The grant has been awarded. A contract with Buffalo County was signed by Buffalo County in January 2021. Work on the plan began in February. Surveys were sent out to municipalities in April. MRRPC staff is updating demographic data, storm events, and maps in the plan.</p>	<p>Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com</p>
<p>Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) bus serving Crawford, Vernon, Monroe,</p>	<p>Develop a fixed route public transportation service for Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon Counties. Bus transportation will service commuters, elderly, disabled,</p>	<p>Service Began on December 3, 2012 - present</p>	<p>The SMRT Bus has been operating for over six years serving La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, and Monroe Counties. In 2017 ridership decreased by about 6%. In 2018 ridership rebounded on the SMRT system</p>	<p>Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com</p>

<p>and La Crosse counties</p>	<p>medical appointments, and personal travel.</p> <p>Projected operating costs for 2020 are approximately \$460,000. Funding comes from a federal DOT grant, local governments, corporate donations, Bremer Foundation Grants, and the fare box.</p>		<p>and increased by 9% over 2017 ridership. Ridership in 2019 decreased approximately 10% over 2018 ridership numbers. In 2020, ridership numbers have been dramatically impacted by COVID restrictions, but are slowly increasing. Ridership for the three medical facilities have been a large percentage of riders in recent months. SMRT has not reduced service due to CoVID. Our core ridership is health care employees, who obviously continue to need transportation. Having the Transit service available to them to reduce stress on their commute seems to be a significant factor in their quality of life. We have seen reduced ridership, but not significant reductions in demand.</p> <p>On July 19, 2019, The SMRT Bus system through La Crosse County as the applicant, was awarded a \$492,570 in federal funds to acquire 2 battery electric cutaway buses and associated infrastructure equipment to serve the SMRT system. SMRT routes continue to be analyzed by the WISDOT electric bus contractor to determine if electric buses are capable of serving its route distances and terrain. MRRPC staff assisted La Crosse County with the electric bus application and the successful Bremer Foundation grant to help cover operating costs. MRRPC has also assisted in electrification.</p> <p>On May 13, 2019, the SMRT Bus system added a mid-day route between La Crosse-Tomah. The additional route will provide more flexibility for riders to use the bus for medical appointments, school, and daily activities. Providing three runs a day from La Crosse to Tomah and points in between.</p> <p>SMRT is further discussing electric bus purchase and sustainable revenue streams beyond 2021.</p>	
<p>DOT Contract Work</p>	<p>WisDOT is beginning to update two long-range plans: Connect 2050 (the Long-Range State Transportation Plan), and the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050.</p> <p>In addition, the LAPC is in the process of updating the MPO Plan, Beyond Coulee Vision 2040.</p>	<p>Ongoing through 2021</p>	<p>Staff will serve as a regional representative for MRRPC communities and will assist with Public Input and technical activities, as necessary. Staff is reviewing and providing comments on the MPO plan.</p>	<p>Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com</p>