

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission Staff Report on Projects for the Bimonthly Meeting on 2.8.2023

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. Contract was extended to June 30 th , 2023	July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023	<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; completed the website upgrade; completed small business webinars; received EMSI Covid-19 Impact report; and completed dashboard for the Location Based Data project. Incorporated pandemic resiliency into CEDS.</p> <p>Staff continues to respond to requests from municipalities regarding pandemic questions and requests for help.</p>	Jon Bingol Exec. Director 608.785.9396 jon@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	<p>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 or 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. For example, CMV board members will make the decisions on application from Crawford, Monroe and Vernon Counties.</p> <p>As of 4/4/22 all of the allotted funds have been lent out. One business is located in Durand, one in Taylor, one in Nelson, one in Hagar City, one in Crawford County, one in Vernon County, one in Prairie Du Chien, two in the city of La Crosse, one in the City of Onalaska and one in Bangor.</p>	Jon Bingol Exec. Director 608.785.9396 jon@mrrpc.com

			From now on any new loan from this RLF will not have the 3 eased loan criteria.	
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.	Start date: March 2021	<p>RFPs reviewed in February 2021 after by Running, Inc, La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and La Crosse County staff.</p> <p>Selected firm, Vendi, is in the discovery phase and has met with the project committee multiple times. MRRPC staff worked with Vendi to provide background information and the project aligned with work being done for the LAPC Transit Development Plan.</p> <p>Vendi assisted staff to strategize and develop materials to pursue funding from public and private agencies in the region. Package of graphics, deliverables, and PowerPoint was distributed in late September.</p> <p>Moving forward, remaining budget will be used to incentivize new riders, install signage and lighting at roughly 25 stop locations, and increase web presence.</p> <p>Staff is coordinating with Vendi and Gundersen Lutheran for a “All of Us” campaign, and also fielding inquiries for wraps and sponsorships from other entities. No new updates for this quarter</p>	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.	Start date: January 2021	<p>RFP drafted and released in October 2020.</p> <p>Received 3 proposals and staff selected Cambridge Systematics and held a kickoff and planning meeting in late January 2021. Gollnik and Nicewander have worked with CS staff to devise a dashboard displaying 2019 Q4 LBS Data. 2020 data was received in late June, and MRRPC staff has met with agencies to identify applications opportunities for applying the data throughout the region. Staff continues to look for opportunities to apply the data.</p> <p>Preliminary analyses were presented at the Bi-State MPO/RPC conference in September 2021. Staff demonstrated the product at the La Crosse County Economic Committee in March. Q4 2021 dataset was delivered to MRRPC in August. No new updates for this quarter.</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	Anticipated start date: January 15, 2022	<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>Bob Gollnik held multiple meetings with both agencies to further clarify agreements and roles for WisDOT and MRRPC.</p>	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com

	creating content to incorporate into County and local comprehensive plans		Contractual documents drafted in collaboration with WisDOT were reviewed for clearance by FHWA and USDOT staff. FHWA/USDOT approved administrative agreements in late September and gave a NTP to MRRPC. RFP was released October 8. The selection panel – WEDC, WisDOT, LAPC, MRRPC – interviewed all 3 firms and selected SRF. Contract was executed. Project kickoff was on April 13, and will include a small steering committee. The first phases of the project are complete, outreach has begun, and a workshop was held on October 18. Staff is currently reviewing tech memo 1 and moving forward with outreach. The technical committee met and reviewed project scoring criteria and performance measures in January. Project is on schedule.	
Report on City of Westby Industrial Park EDA Grant.	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.	Westby's grant application was submitted on Grants.Gov on October 3, 2019. Requested additional information was submitted on November 30, 2019.	EDA approved all bid documentation on March 16 th . The bid opening date was April 8 th , 2021. Westby is recommending Badger Environmental and Earthworks, Inc. to selected. They were the lowest bid approximately 6.5% below the estimated construction budget. The top two recommendations were sent to EDA with bid documentation. Construction started construction in July. The first disbursement of the grant was given by EDA in the first week of August. Construction is completed. MRRPC sent in final documents for this grant. The City has received the final payout. This grant is officially closed out.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
T. Farmington Comprehensive Plan Update	In March 2021, the Town of Farmington signed a contract with MRRPC to update its Comprehensive Plan.	March 2021 – December 2021	MRRPC staff has met with the planning committee and charted out the schedule and anticipated outreach. Surveys were mailed to each resident and also distributed at town hall and online. Outreach follow-up is currently being discussed and other elements of the plan are being updated. The committee recently discussed goals and strategies for the Town. The plan update is on schedule, and the committee reviewed final goals and objectives in September, along with available existing condition data. Planning committee staff and the town clerk are reviewing final materials.	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com

Jackson County Comprehensive Plan Update	In August 2022, Jackson County signed a contract with the MRRPC to update its Comprehensive Plan.	August 2022 – December 2023	MRRPC staff are working on data updates to the existing Plan. MRRPC staff have created a survey for Jackson County and the County is currently reviewing the survey. Jackson County dispersed current land use map to municipalities to determine land use updates. MRRPC Staff presented County with Existing conditions report. MRRPC staff is working with County to update survey and distribute survey.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Outdoor Recreation Plan Update Requests	Pierce County, V. West Salem	Ongoing	MRRPC Staff has assisted Pierce County with the update to their plan. Staff has provided demographic data along with guidance on updating the plan. The plan is approximately 95 completed. A draft of the plan has been completed but the county is waiting to hear from the Towns if they would like to include any projects. Village of West Salem requested an update to their Outdoor Recreation Plan. Staff is still in the planning stages of this plan.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant Applications	Submit planning grants for the Monroe, Pierce, and Trempealeau County. Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans are prepared to reduce costs and losses from natural disasters for counties and municipalities	2022-2023	MRRPC staff is working on a grant application for Pierce and Trempealeau County to receive a planning grant for \$60,000. MRRPC is working in collaboration with Monroe County staff to submit a planning grant application to WEM. The work on these plans would begin late 2023 through 2025. The grant applications have all been submitted to WEM and FEMA as of Jan. 23 rd . FEMA will send out approvals this summer for these grants.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates – Crawford and Vernon County	Update the Crawford and Vernon County Hazard Mitigation Plans. A grant application was submitted to WEM in the amount of \$59,987.60 and \$59,749.20 respectively. Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans are prepared to reduce costs and losses from natural disasters for counties and municipalities	2022-2024	Grant award announcements were given in September 2022. MRRPC and Counties created a contract for work to be done on the planning project. MRRPC has begun work on the Vernon County Plan to update demographic data and storm event data. MRRPC interns are helping with mapping updates. A risk assessment survey was sent to local municipalities and stakeholders and is due at the end of December. Follow up was made to get more input from municipalities on projects. MRRPC staff and interns are working on updating demographic information and tables in the Crawford County plan. Surveys have been created and are waiting distribution by County staff.	Abbey Nicewander Planner 608.785.9396 abbey@mrrpc.com
Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) bus serving Crawford, Vernon, Monroe, and La Crosse counties	Develop a fixed route public transportation service for Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon Counties. Bus transportation will service commuters, elderly, disabled, medical appointments, and personal travel.	Service Began on December 3, 2012 - present	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 and increased by 9% over 2017 ridership. Ridership in 2019 decreased approximately 10% over 2018 ridership numbers.	Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com

	<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>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 was awarded \$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>SMRT is further discussing electric bus purchase and sustainable revenue streams beyond 2021. RPC staff has met with local municipalities to discuss sustainable funding for the next 5-7 years and strategic planning. No new updates for this period.</p>	
DOT Contract Work	<p>WisDOT is beginning to update two long-range plans: Connect 2050 (the Long-Range State Transportation Plan), and the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050. In addition, the LAPC is in the process of updating the MPO Plan, Beyond Coulee Vision 2040.</p>	Ongoing through 2021	<p>Staff will serve as a regional representative for MRRPC communities and will assist with Public Input and technical activities, as necessary.</p>	<p>Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com</p>
Mainstreet Bounce Back Grant	<p>WEDC contracted with the MRRPC to administer a Mainstreet Bounceback Grant. These are \$10,000 grants to businesses which opened up or expanded into vacant commercial properties in 2021 and 2022.</p>	August 2021 – December 2022	<p>Staff has been serving as the administrator for this grant. The program ended on December 31, 2022. There have been 560 grants awarded in our nine-county region during the grant period.</p>	<p>Jon Bingol Exec. Director 608.785.9396 jon@mrrpc.com</p>
West Salem TAP Grant Application	<p>Traffic analysis and Safe Routes to School Program</p>	2022	<p>MRRPC submitted a Transit Alternatives Program grant on behalf of the school district in January. The proposal ranked second in the LAPC ranking process. The grant was awarded, and we are awaiting WisDOT direction on next steps and contractor procurement. No new updates for this period.</p>	<p>Bob Gollnik Senior Planner 608.785.9396 bob@mrrpc.com</p>