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Testimony of Sen. Tim Cullen
Assembly Bill 55, designating the Rock River Scenic & Historic Route
Tuesday, March 12, 2013, 11 a.m.
417 North (GAR Room)

Good Morning/Afternoon. I'm Tim Cullen, the lead Senate author of this bill. Thank you, Chairman Ripp for holding this public hearing.

Assembly Bill 55 and its companion bill in the Senate (SB 41) designate a driving route roughly parallel to the Rock River.

The driving route starts at the Rock River's headwaters near the Horicon Marsh in Fond du Lac County and wends southward through southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois, where it flows into the Mississippi River at Rock Island.

The idea for the driving route came from an organization called the Rock River Trail Initiative. This organization was founded in 2010 by River enthusiasts in Wisconsin and Illinois who felt the Rock was under-used and under-appreciated.

The purpose of the Rock River Trail Initiative – and this bill – is to raise the profile of the 320-mile River as a recreation destination. We want to bring more canoeists, kayakers, boaters, anglers, bicyclists, and tourists in general to the River.

That will mean more tourism spending at the restaurants, gas stations, hotels, bike shops, and sporting goods shops along the River.

Among the communities that the River runs through or near are, from north to south, Waupun, Theresa, Mayville, Horicon, Hustisford, Watertown, Jefferson, Fort Atkinson, Edgerton, my hometown of Janesville, and Beloit.

The first phase of the Initiative was to mark a paddling route. The current phase is to designate the driving route, and that is why we drafted this bill.

The signage and maps will show points to access the river, parking, camping, shelter, natural areas, historic sites, and other attractions.

Finally, I would like to note that the Illinois Department of Transportation will pay for all of the signs on that side of the border. No Wisconsin DOT funds will be used for signs. The Rock River Trail Initiative plans to apply for grants and identify other funding sources to pay for the signs. Thank you.



Rock River Trail Initiative
112 S. Lake Street
PO Box 89
Hustisford, WI 53034

March 12, 2013

To: Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Transportation
Public Hearing March 12, 2013; 11:00 AM 417 North (GAR Hall)

Re: Support of Assembly Bill 55

Dear Chairman Ripp and Committee Members:

We appreciate consideration by your committee of Assembly Bill 55 to designate the Rock River Trail Scenic and Historic Route in the counties of Fond du Lac, Dodge, Jefferson, Dane and Rock.

The Rock River Trail Initiative is a coalition of public and private partnerships and friends in Wisconsin and Illinois with a twofold mission. First, to establish and interpret a Rock River Water Trail along the 320 miles of the Rock River from headwaters in Fond du Lac and Dodge Counties to the confluence with the Mississippi River at the Quad Cities of Illinois and Iowa, and second, to create a parallel system of land-based routes that offer residents and visitors the opportunity to also drive, bike and hike the river corridor on marked routes and trails.

The Rock River Trail Scenic and Historic Route will be a motorized route on public highways that will offer to the traveler opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the scenic beauty, natural resources and historic and cultural assets of the river communities of the Rock River Valley.

The Rock River Trail Initiative has the support of the 5 counties, 13 cities and villages and numerous tourism associations, lake management districts, recreation and conservation non-profit organizations along the river.

We believe the route will enhance opportunities for economic development and revitalization of our river communities.

I look forward to offering testimony in support of Assembly Bill 55 and to answer any questions of committee members.

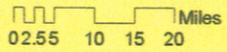
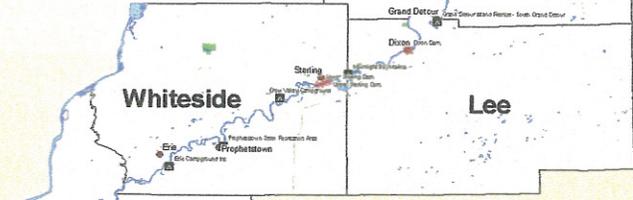
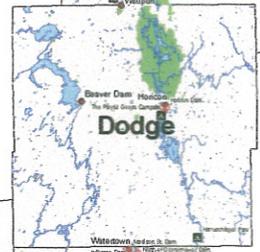
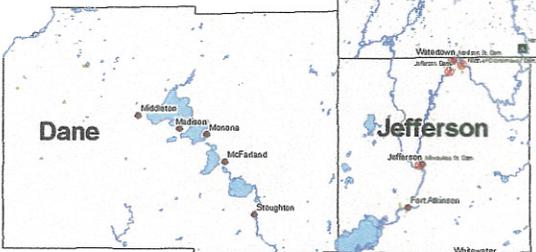
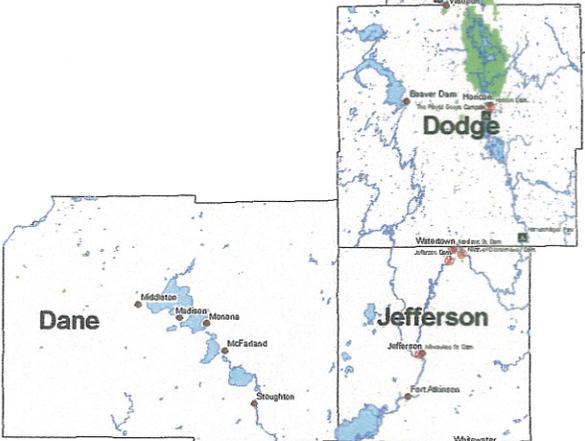
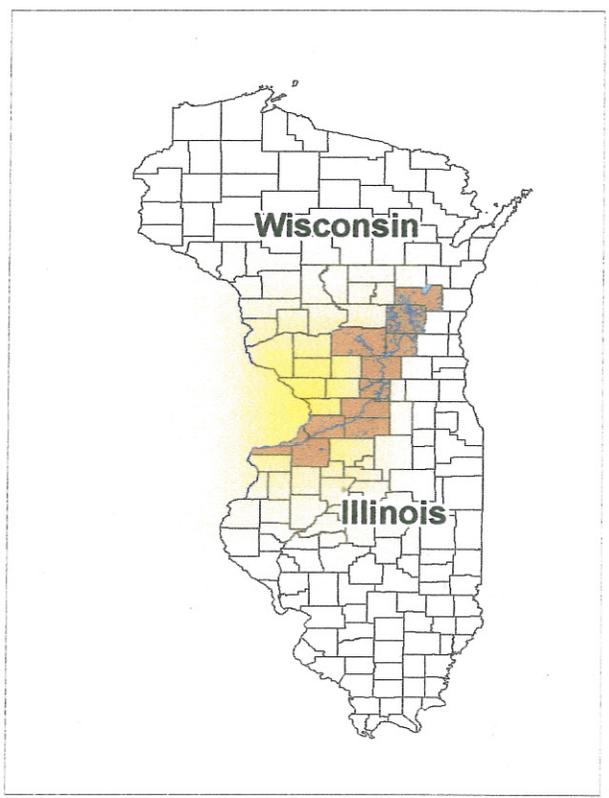
Sincerely,

Gregory M Farnham

Gregory M. Farnham
Coordinator

The Rock River Trail in Wisconsin and Illinois

Rock River Trail



This map was compiled by WIN GIS and partners. WIN GIS makes no warranty, either expressed or implied as to any matter whatsoever, including, without limitation, the accuracy of the product, or its fitness for any particular purpose. The burden for determining fitness for use lies solely with the user.
 NAD 83 State Plane Coordinate System, West Zone
 North American Datum of 1983

WIN GIS
 Winnebago County Geographic Information System



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March 12, 2013

Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Transportation
Public Hearing March 12, 2013; 11:00 am, 417 North (GAR Hall)

Re: Support of Assembly Bill 55

Dear Chairman Ripp and Committee Members,

As a Director of the Rock River Trail Initiative Council, I appreciate your consideration of Assembly Bill 55 which establishes the Rock River Trail Scenic and Historic Route in the counties of Fond du Lac, Dodge, Jefferson, Dane and Rock. I believe this project will add to the diversity of tourism opportunities offered by the counties and municipalities that boarder the Rock River in Wisconsin.

Professionally, I am a landscape architect focused on smaller community planning and redevelopment opportunities. Over my nearly 40 years of private practice I have worked for all the counties listed above and many of the municipal governments adjoining the Rock River, helping them with strategies and plans for improving their competitiveness. To that end, my associates and I have developed parks, trails and revitalized downtowns throughout the corridor in an effort to grow tourism and retain employment in these communities. Historically, the Rock River was an economic engine that provided water power for industry and transportation. Today the economy for these communities comes from river edge factories that are renovated to housing or other creative uses, downtowns featuring local crafts, art, food and river outfitters, special events celebrating community heritage and visitors seeking access to the river for relaxation, nature observation, fishing or boating. In addition some of the old rail corridors that parallel the river now connect communities with bike trails. The economic impact of biking alone now rivals that of hunting in Wisconsin. The Rock River in Wisconsin is once again an economic engine, and this time driving a growing tourism industry.

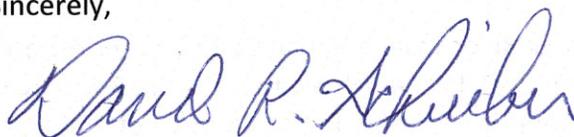
Authorizing Assembly Bill 55 would reinforce the ongoing economic restructuring efforts of the 5 counties and 13 cities and villages along the river. Bill 55 would support the Rock River Trail Initiative goal to create a cohesive system of canoe, kayak, bike, hike and drive opportunities along the Rock River corridor. For counties and cities along the river, the benefit of approving Assembly Bill 55 would be a statewide and regional recognition that the Rock River in Wisconsin is a treasured place with an authentic history, a story to tell and worthy of a visit. The designation

define
enhance
sustain

would also support and unify local, regional and state efforts to market the Rock River Corridor as a destination with a clearly marked travel route that will access the culture, history and recreation opportunity found along the corridor.

I thank you for considering my remarks and I hope you will support Assembly Bill 55. I am available to answer any questions you may have or share the details of some of my experiences with communities along the corridor.

Sincerely,



David R. Schreiber, PLA, ASLA
Principal