National Historic Trails and Historic Corridors in the United States: The Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program

“Creating Signature Cultural Tourism Experiences along Historic Routes”

2nd International Conference on World Civilizations and Historic Routes
United Nations World Tourism Organization
Sofia, Bulgaria
November 15, 2018
National Trails Intermountain Region
National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Highway Heritage Tourism on Route 66
Route 66

- Established in 1926 as part of first federal highway system
- Shortest, all-weather highway connecting industrial Midwest to burgeoning west coast
- 2,400 miles long (85% still drivable)
- Eight states (approx. 60 counties)
- Decommissioned in 1985
- Over 3,000 historic properties (est.)
What makes Route 66 Special?

For Americans, it captures much of the mythology we identify in ourselves as a frontier, western expanding, freedom-loving, affluent, and mobile society.

Historical continuity of western travel, from Wagons to Railroads to Automobiles

Modern western migration: Dustbowl, Mobilization in WWII, 20th century western urbanization and migration

60 years of rapid social, economic, and technological change that enhanced automobile and leisure culture in the US, and changed our landscape

Wonderful way to explore America!
Route 66 and Tourism
Early, strong promotional efforts: US Highway 66 Association

- Tourism Route: National Parks,
- Southwest, Disneyland, Hollywood

- European/International Fascination, generated through the Arts, capturing imagination of American West and California: literature, film, music, television
What is the Route 66 experience today?

A focus on authentic historic properties:
Bridges

Gasconade River Bridge
Hazelgreen, Missouri

William Murray “Pony” Bridge
Hydro, Oklahoma

Chain of Rocks Bridge, Saint Louis, Missouri over Mississippi River
Signs

Sun and Sand Motel Sign
Santa Rosa, New Mexico

Skylark Motel,
St. Clair, Missouri

Manning Coffee, Los Angeles California
Buildings: Restaurants

Lou Mitchell’s Coffee, Chicago, Illinois

Del Rhea’s Chicken Basket, Willowbrook, Illinois

Delgadillo’s Snow Cap, Seligman, Arizona

Museum Club, Flagstaff, Arizona
Buildings: Motels

Wigwam Motel, Holbrook, Arizona

Boots Court, Carthage, Missouri

Aztec Motel, Monrovia, California
Buildings: Gas Stations

Phillips 66, Baxter Springs, Kansas

McLean, Texas

Commerce, Oklahoma

Kanotex, Calena, Kansas
At Attractions

Orange Stand, Fontana, California

Twin Arrows
Arizona

The Blue Whale, Catoosa, Oklahoma

Lights,
Hollywood,
California
The federal effort:

Congress authorized the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program in 1999. A 10-year program (reauthorized in 2009) of collaboration with partners to provide technical and modest financial assistance, and education towards the long-term preservation of the most representative and significant resources of the historic corridor.
Partners

- Private/business owners
- Route 66 Associations
- Local governments
- Departments of Transportation/FHWA
- State Historic Preservation Offices
- Preservation organizations
- Scenic Byway programs
- Mainstreet programs
- Educational institutions
- Legislators
El Vado Motel Neon Sign Restoration
Partner: City of Albuquerque
Amount: $6,500 (NPS)/$500 (Partner Match)
The Mill Restaurant Rehabilitation (Illinois, 2008, 2016)
Partner: Route 66 Heritage Foundation of Logan County
Amount:: $20,700 (NPS)/ $23,400 (Partner Match)
Partner: Private Owner
Partner Match: $60,000 (NPS)/$69,000 (Partner Match)
Acadia Round Barn Restoration (Oklahoma, 2005, 2010)
Partner: Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society
Amount: $31,500 (NPS)/$31,500 (Partner Match)
Seeking relevance for all people to travel the road, helping to explore the untold or little-told stories that reflect changing social and cultural values in 20th-century America:

The African American experience:

The Latino experience:

Women on Route 66:
Route 66 passes through more than 25 American Indian Nations today.
American Indians and Route 66 Project

Year: 2014
Amount: $24,900 NPS, $29,651 match
Purpose: Develop travel guide to provide first-voice interpretation of the highway; to introduce travelers to tribes living along the route and to genuine cultural experiences
See you on the Road!

For more information, visit https://ncptt.nps.gov/rt66/
Aaron Mahr, Superintendent, National Trails, National Park Service, amahr@nps.gov