

STATE OF THE ROUTE 66 COMMUNITY REPORT JANUARY 2017

*An overview of the Route 66 community based on discussions, social media trends,
and media coverage*

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In response to the Hemmings blog post about H.R. 66

(<https://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2017/01/12/new-bill-aims-to-preserve-route-66-ahead-of-centennial-celebrations-in-2026>) - Sal Pugliese says: January 17, 2017

"Russell, the age old expression "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" holds true here ... I've driven most of the route and I don't regret it, but I certainly wouldn't do it again ... you will spend a lot of time looking for the road, as it often meanders....there are many stretches of barren highway and the "charming" resorts are few and far between, but they are there.

I enjoy two lane blacktop vs. the interstate and found many other roads in Arizona much more interesting than 66... but it's the mystique of the "Mother Road"...

I would recommend you go because if you don't you'll always wonder what you missed ... or didn't !"

To the Route 66 Community

Overview

As with the previous state of the community report, the views expressed in this report are based on interaction and discussions in the Route 66 community, recent travel along the Route 66 corridor, and evaluation of social media trends. These include meetings with economic development and tourism directors, city managers, chamber of commerce presidents, and business owners in communities along the Route 66 corridor as well as attendance of a meeting to establish an international advisory group at the first European Route 66 Festival in Germany, conferences in Los Angeles, and the Miles of Possibilities Conference in Bloomington-Normal.

Issues of immediate importance

There remain two primary issues of immediate importance to the Route 66 community – coordinated preservation programs and development of educational initiatives to foster awareness about the highway. Though these have been addressed in part, resolution is crucial if the Route 66 renaissance is to continue, and if that renewed interest is to serve as a catalyst for further economic development and community revitalization.

Highlighting the need for a comprehensive and multifaceted educational program linked with marketing and promotion are the comments posted in response to a blog posting about H.R. 66. A sample comment and link for the associated Hemmings blog post are found in the left sidebar.

Networking at the grassroots level has improved rather dramatically in recent years, largely the result of social media. However, there is still a major gap in regards to cooperative and supportive networks between organizations and municipalities. Additionally, in numerous communities, there remains a surprising lack of awareness about the economic development opportunities associated with the international interest in Route 66.

Linked to this is the need to develop educational programs about utilization of social media, the importance of a properly developed and maintained website, and how to employ sites such as Yelp to enhance community marketing initiatives.

Road Ahead Initiative (Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership)

As evidenced by H.R. 66 and the 4th Quarter Report, the Route 66: Road Ahead Initiative, now the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership is making tremendous strides in developing an entity that can serve as a modern equivalent of the U.S. Highway 66 Association. In spite of the fact that the composition of working groups and committees constitutes a diverse representation from the Route 66 community, state governments, organizations, and municipalities, there is still a perception of elitism.

To a degree, the dissemination of information through Route 66 News, and distribution of quarterly reports is rectifying the misconception. Utilization of social media would serve to further negate criticism. Likewise, with publicized assistance and support of grassroots preservation initiatives such as with the Gasconade River Bridge, and a more active role in the development of events such as the Miles of Possibilities conference.

There is also an overall perception within the Route 66 community that the partnership is being developed in a compartmentalized manner and without an intimate understanding or awareness of grassroots initiatives. Utilization of social media that serves as a platform for these initiatives to develop coordinated promotion and solicitation for assistance would alleviate some of these perceptions.

Road Ahead Partnership website - <https://sites.google.com/site/66roadahead/>

Miles of Possibilities Conference

The Miles of Possibilities Conferences that originated with the 2014 International Route 66 Festival in Kingman are generally viewed favorably by the Route 66 community. An event that blends the business of Route 66 with components to foster the sense of community that underscores the renaissance movement is crucial. An example of the latter would be the dinner during the weekend of conferences in Los Angeles last November. More than sixty people attended this event including representatives from Route 66 associations in Belgium, Germany, Japan, and Canada.

However, ideally, there would be an annual conference at the east and west ends of the road. An annual convention similar in nature to that previously held by the US Highway 66 Association would also be recommended. Ideally this would be an event organized and hosted by the Road Ahead Partnership at a midpoint on the highway.

As evidenced by the weekend of conferences in Los Angeles this past November, event organizers need a centralized source, and an established network for promotional assistance as well as a template that provides parameters for development. Organizers could also benefit from assistance in the solicitation and acquisition of sponsors.

If the Miles of Possibility conference locations were announced at least eighteen months in advance, members of the international community would be likely to participate. Additionally, inclusion of representatives from international Route 66 associations and owners or representatives from foreign based tour groups on the roster of speakers would provide attendees with a better understanding of the international nature of interest in Route 66.

In response to suggestions that there be a Miles of Possibilities styled conference and event at the western end of Route 66, organizers in Kingman, Arizona are evaluating the feasibility of serving as the host community in January 2018. What are your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions?

Updates of note, events, resources

- Organizers in Shamrock, Texas are making tremendous progress in the development of a major event that will take place in the summer of 2018. Details are found on the event website – <http://www.shamrock2018.com/>
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- Kaisa Barthuli, director of the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program recently sent this note, “Dear Friends of Route 66,
- The National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is pleased to announce that the program's 2017 Cost-Share Grant Season is now open. Applications will be accepted until Wednesday, April 3, 2017. More information is available at www.nps.gov/rt66/cost-share-grants/.
- The Funding Opportunity Announcement has also been posted on Grants.gov. You can view it by going to:
 - 1. Grants.gov home page, click Browse Agencies
 - 2. Click Department of the Interior
 - 3. At the search screen, go to Funding Opportunity No. NPSNOFONTIR170001.
 - 4. When you find it, click on the Funding Opportunity No. to see the announcement.
 - 5. If you go to related documents, you will also see the NOFO and Application Package.
- We encourage you to spread the word. Please also feel free to contact our office with questions or to discuss your project proposal.
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- The third annual Miles of Possibilities Conference is scheduled to take place in Joliet, Illinois from October 19 to the 23rd.
<http://www.illinoisroute66.org/Events/Details/ArticleID/4901/3rd-Annual-Route-66-Miles-of-Possibility-Conference>
- A tourism and travel expo is being included in the Best of the West on 66 Festival in Kingman, Arizona this September. For information about promoting your community, organization, or business at this event, contact Jamie Taylor at (928)530-2056
- Details are pending but the Czech Route 66 Association has announced plans to host the second European Route 66 Festival in the Czech Republic in the summer of 2018
- The Route 66 Association of Australia was established in January of 2017 – <http://www.ozroute66association.com/>
- On behalf of the Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative, an international advisory group was established at the first European Route 66 Festival. At this time, I do not have a status on the utilization of this advisory group for the coordinated development and dissemination of marketing or promotional materials.

- MyMarketing Designs in Kingman, Arizona has created an innovative initiative that in essence is a chamber of commerce for the 21st century. They have a twofold plan for expanding this initiative to serve the greater Route 66 community. Utilizing the Promote Kingman website and Facebook page as a template, stage one would be a Promote Route 66 initiative. Stage two would be a “Promote” initiative for each interested community that is then linked through the Promote Route 66 initiative. What are your thoughts, ideas, or suggestions? <https://promotekingman.com/>
- On a personal note, I have established a podcast and am launching a Route 66 promotional video series entitled *Jim Hinckley’s America: A trek Along Route 66*. Each video will focus on a segment of Route 66 and the largest community at the center of that segment. At no charge, the completed video will be provided under limited license to communities, chambers of commerce, tourism offices, etc. to use as they see fit for marketing or promotion. To bring the project to fruition sponsors, either municipal or corporate are needed. A sample clip of the first video is available for viewing on the Promote Kingman website or Facebook page. For more information contact Promote Kingman or me through www.jimhinckleysamerica.com or the Jim Hinckley’s America Facebook page.
- The French Canadian edition of the History Channel is currently airing a nine part series about Route 66
- The documentary about bicycling Route 66 created by Zdenek Jurasek of the Czech Route 66 Association is due for release in the Czech Republic this spring –
- To transform the Route 66 Electric Vehicle Museum currently housed in the Powerhouse Visitor Center in Kingman, Arizona, into a dedicated facility that includes a museum and educational center with apprenticeship programs, the Historic Electric Vehicle Association will be launching a fund-raising initiative this spring. This initiative will include the raffle of a reproduction electric vehicle from 1905. Donations currently may be made through the Historic Electric Vehicle Foundation website - <http://www.hevf.org/>
- Gilligan’s Tours, a New Zealand based company, is hosting a rather unique tour this year. Enthusiasts will be shipping their pre 1950 vehicles from New Zealand to drive Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica. To enhance the trip for their clients, they are opening the tour to Americans at a discounted rate as airfare and vehicle shipping would not be required. <http://www.gilligansroute66.com/>

I will be composing a second quarter update that will be released about May. Please feel free to share information about your community or events, updates, Route 66 news, etc. and I will include this information.

Thank you for your hard work, and dedication. Together we will ensure that Route 66 remains vital and vibrant into the centennial and beyond.

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