

# Route 66 Economic Impact Study

## SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

A study conducted by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in collaboration with the National Park Service  
Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program  
and World Monuments Fund

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# RUTGERS

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Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
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New Brunswick, New Jersey

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## SECTION ONE

# Introduction, History, and Summary of Benefits

**R**unning about 2,400 miles from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California, Route 66 is an American and international icon, myth, carnival, and pilgrimage. This celebrated road has succeeded in mirroring the mood of the United States over nearly a century.

Gestated in the booming 1920s, Route 66 was promoted by Cyrus Avery (today known as the Father of Route 66) and others as the “shortest and most direct route between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast.” Paved end to end by 1937, the highway was marketed by Avery’s National U.S. Highway Association through a series of publicity events including the 1929 transcontinental footrace that followed Route 66 from Los Angeles to Chicago, and then onto New York City, dubbed the “Bunion Derby.”

During the Great Depression, Route 66 became the “road of flight” for families escaping the Dust Bowl. John Steinbeck’s epic of that era, *The Grapes of Wrath* described the highway as “the mother road,” and that endearing moniker has endured. During World War II, it was one of the major routes for transporting armed forces — both troops and materials. Later came the post-war exodus of ex-GIs and their families to join the booming California job market. In the recovery years times were good, and American families took two-week vacations to drive Route 66 and see the wonders of the West. In the 1960s, the “hippie” counterculture lured thousands of the nation’s disenchanting youth west on Route 66, hitchhiking or packed in minibuses.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Route 66 became less important for highway travel as people flocked to the more efficient ribbons of concrete of the interstate highway system that was begun in 1956. The final section of Route 66 was bypassed by Interstate 40 at Williams, Arizona, in 1984. In all, the Mother Road was “replaced” from a transportation engineering perspective by Interstates 55, 44, 40, 15, and 10.

But transportation engineers do not rule the heart—and the siren call of the Mother Road and its special sense of place, personality, and time continues to lure legions of United States and international tourists. To cite just one example, the Route 66 Museum of Clinton, Oklahoma (a community of about 9,000 located approximately 100 miles west of Oklahoma City), attracted about 35,000 visitors in 2009 (almost four times the local population), including about 10,000 international visitors.





Restored 1932 gas station near Odell, Illinois

The preservation of Route 66 is being abetted by national and state volunteer associations dedicated to that goal, the creation of the federal Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, and support coming from a variety of public, private, and non-profit entities and programs associated with historic preservation, economic development, tourism, and transportation. (See Table 1 for examples of contemporary Route 66 preservation.) Despite these stalwart efforts, many preservation challenges still remain as attested to by such actions as the World Monuments Fund (WMF) listing Route 66 on its 2008 World Monument Watch “to draw attention to the complex challenge of preserving not only an iconic cultural landscape, but a historic American experience.”

This study by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, analyzes Route 66 with a focus on its historic preservation, economic landscape, and heritage tourism. The study included such original research as the completion of the first-ever national survey of travelers along Route 66 (a probe based on 100,000 questionnaires distributed along the highway’s full 2,400 miles with some 4,200 responses), mapping of the Route 66 corridor in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) form and related census (2000) analysis, survey of 25 Main Street (combined historic preservation and economic development) programs and 33 museums along the Mother Road, completion of 25 in-depth case studies of iconic Route 66 sites, and implementation of input-output models to quantify the economic contribution of Route 66.

The current document summarizes major study findings and then reports on the following aspects of Route 66: tourism and travelers, museums, Main Street, the Mother Road’s people and communities, and opportunities for enhanced preservation.

**Table 1: Contemporary Route 66 Preservation Efforts (Examples)**

<b>1985</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route 66 is officially decommissioned, and all highway markers are removed.</li> </ul>
<b>1987</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February–The Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona is formed.</li> </ul>
<b>1989</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route 66 Association of Missouri, Route 66 Association of Illinois, and the Oklahoma Route 66 Association are founded.</li> <li>Kaibab National Forest (USFS) sponsors a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing for Historic U.S. 66 in Arizona, including five segments of Route 66 listed on the National Register.</li> </ul>
<b>1990</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Mexico Route 66 Association, Kansas Historic Route 66 Association, and California Historic Route 66 Association are founded.</li> <li>California passes legislation designating “State Historic Highway 66,” making signage permissible on the decommissioned route.</li> <li>Governor of Missouri signs legislation that designates Old U.S. Highway 66 as a historic highway in Missouri, making signage permissible on the decommissioned route.</li> <li>101st Congress passes Route 66 Study Act to study methods to commemorate Route 66.</li> </ul>
<b>1991</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Texas Old Route 66 Association forms.</li> </ul>
<b>1992</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office undertakes a historic Route 66 property survey and Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) with National Register nominations.</li> </ul>
<b>1994</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arizona Route 66 is designated an Arizona Scenic Historic Byway.</li> <li>New Mexico Route 66 is designated a New Mexico Scenic and Historic Byway.</li> </ul>
<b>1995</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Historic Route 66 Federation forms to preserve Route 66 across the country.</li> <li>New Historic Route 66 signs are put up, documenting the different historic alignments in Illinois.</li> </ul>
<b>1996</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) undertakes a historic Route 66 property survey and MPDF.</li> </ul>
<b>1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illinois State Historic Preservation Office and Department of Transportation complete a historic Route 66 property survey, MPDF and Programmatic Agreement with Illinois DOT.</li> </ul>
<b>Late 1990s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illinois Route 66 is designated a “State Heritage Tourism Project.” Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Inc. develops to manage the initiative.</li> <li>Oklahoma Route 66 designated a State Scenic Byway.</li> <li>Bureau of Land Management designates a 42-mile section of Route 66 through their lands between Kingman and Topock as Historic Route 66 Back Country Byway.</li> </ul>
<b>1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>106th Congress passes the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act to preserve the cultural resources of the Route 66 corridor and to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance.</li> <li>September 11, 1999–The new Route 66 State Park opens on what was once the town site of Times Beach, Missouri.</li> </ul>
<b>2000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route 66 in New Mexico is designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is established as a result of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Act.</li> </ul>
<b>2002</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The California Route 66 Preservation Foundation is formed to develop resources for the preservation and benefit of the Route 66 corridor in California.</li> </ul>
<b>2005</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illinois Historic Route 66 is designated a National Scenic Byway as a result of efforts by the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Inc.</li> <li>Arizona Route 66 is designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> </ul>
<b>2009</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is reauthorized for another 10 years.</li> <li>Oklahoma Route 66 designated a National Scenic Byway.</li> <li>Arizona Route 66 is designated an All-American Road.</li> </ul>



The Catoosa Blue Whale, a popular sight on the Oklahoma stretch of Route 66

## Synthesis of Study Findings

The Mother Road has realized significant economic accomplishments, much of that driven by a dynamo of heritage travel. Many of the 25 case study sites are in small towns (median population 8,000)—yet are drawing thousands of visitors, with some getting almost six-figure visitation/attendees. For the most part, these travelers, as indicated by our nearly 4,200-respondent survey, are attracted by the special historic and related character of the Mother Road (e.g., historic sites/monuments, vintage restaurants and motels, small towns, and National Parks). These mostly middle- and upper-income travelers spend on average \$1,500 to \$2,000 per travel party; a conservative estimate aggregate of annual expenditure by all Route 66 travelers in the United States is \$38 million. This spending in the communities along Route 66 is especially dear from an economic development perspective because a not-insignificant share of the travelers (from 40 percent to 60 percent, depending on different data sources) do not reside locally (i.e., many live in other states or abroad); hence, their spending represents a valued “import” of economic stimulus.

While the economic accomplishments are great, the study also finds numerous economic challenges to the Mother Road. Slightly more than one-seventh (15 percent) of the population in the Route 66 Corridor (census tracts on or within one mile of Route 66) are considered officially impoverished. In the 25 case study communities having some of the most iconic Route 66 resources, the poverty rate was a yet-higher one in five (20 percent). There are almost 200,000 empty housing units in the Route 66 Corridor. Further, the Rutgers museum survey and case studies point to the vulnerable economic situation of at least some of these resources: a bad tourist season, loss of a generous donor, death of a founding principal, or a dampening of enthusiasm by area volunteers could all prove devastating. Related is the challenge of fostering strong and sensitively presented heritage preservation and tourism.



Concrete dinosaurs stand sentinel in front of a rock shop in Holbrook, Arizona

Together, these accomplishments and challenges point to the still untapped opportunities for preservation to benefit communities. In particular, the Rutgers research points to yet greater potential for Route 66 tourism. One beckoning opportunity is to better synthesize the celebration of the Mother Road with the history and culture of Hispanics and American Indians. These two groups are found in noticeable numbers among the Route 66 Corridor population west of the Mississippi (e.g., Hispanics represent one in four residents in this geography), yet they have only a trace presence among Route 66 travelers (e.g., only 3.5 percent of our traveler survey respondents were Hispanic).

Perhaps the greatest future potential of the route is to increase the capture of the \$80 billion in Route 66 Corridor household consumption (driven by the \$112 billion in this Corridor's aggregate household income) by Mother Road business establishments, as opposed to this consumption being drained elsewhere, such as to the shopping centers off the interstates. To place this figure in perspective, \$80 billion in annual Route 66 Corridor household consumption represents an outlay of about \$200 million per day, while the \$38 million in annual Route 66 traveler spending (admittedly a low estimate), averages to about \$100,000 daily—or .05 percent the household spending per diem. This is not to minimize the potency of the traveler spending, as all of the research in this study shows its cardinal importance; the comparison rather highlights the big upside of the Mother Road capturing a larger share of the household consumption by those already living near Route 66.

This research points to other caches of economic activity along Route 66. All the museums along the Mother Road (not just those in Rutgers' 33 institution-survey), have an aggregate annual budget of \$27 million. Just the 25 Main Street communities along Route 66 have witnessed \$67 million per year on average (2006–2008) in various types of investment (building rehabilitation, new construction, and public improvements). To date, the aggregate investment in the 25 Route 66 Main Street communities amounts to \$923 million.

## Economic Findings: Macro and Micro Perspectives

It is instructive to view these economic findings from both a broad or “macro” lens as well as a more narrowly focused “micro” lens. Input-output (I-O) analysis personifies a macro lens because it can translate spending in a given place to a broader economic consequence, including multiplier or ripple effects, at a more encompassing geography (e.g., to the extra-local state and national levels).

This study specifies the total economic effects of Route 66-related spending (quantified shortly) through a state-of-the-art I-O model developed by Rutgers University for the National Park Service. The model is termed the Preservation Economic Impact Model (PEIM), and it quantifies the following from the Route 66-related spending:

1. **Jobs:** employment, both part- and full-time, by place of work, estimated using the typical job characteristics of each industry;
2. **Income:** “earned” or labor income, specifically wages, salaries, and proprietors’ income;
3. **Wealth:** value added—the subnational equivalent of gross domestic product (GDP);
4. **Output:** the value of shipments, which is reported in the Economic Census;
5. **Taxes:** federal, state, and local tax revenues generated by the activity; and
6. **In-State Wealth:** wealth less federal taxes.

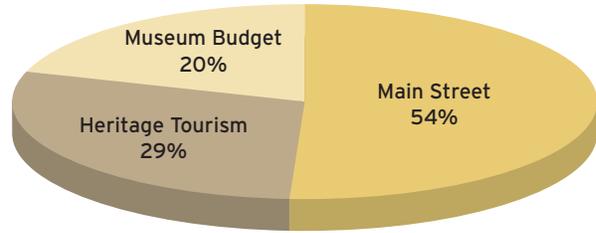
This study applies the PEIM to the different components of Route 66 spending previously identified. *Annual* direct economic effects from Route 66 spending include, at a minimum, \$38 million in tourism spending, \$67 million in Main Street spending, and \$27 million in museum spending—for a total of \$132 million. Further, the one cumulative long-term spending program that was examined in this study, the Main Street-related activity occurring in Route 66-located communities, had produced \$923 million in direct economic effects (adjusted for inflation) over the life of the Main Street initiative.



Deep-fried goodness at the Snow Cap drive-in in Seligman, Arizona

## Summary of Route 66 Activity and Benefits

	Annual	Cumulative
Heritage Tourism	\$38 million	-
Museum Budget	\$27 million	-
Main Street	\$67 million	\$923 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$132 million</b>	<b>\$923 million</b>



The results in the Summary of Economic Activity and Benefits on Route 66 show that the *Mother Road nurtures the economic pocket book of jobs, income, and wealth as well as the heart!* When multiplier effects are taken into account from the \$132 million annual Route 66 investment, the total annual impacts to the *nation* include a net economic gain of 2,401 jobs, \$90 million in income, \$262 million in overall output, \$127 million in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and \$37 million in tax revenues (Table 2, column A, upper portion). The *eight Route 66 states* garner (Table 2, column A, lower portion) roughly 70 to 80 percent of the national impacts from Route 66 just specified. On an annual basis, the in-state effects to the eight Route 66 states from the annual \$132 million investment in annual Route 66 spending include 1,741 jobs, \$62 million in income, \$173 million in output, \$87 million in gross state product (GSP), and \$27 million in taxes (\$16.5 million federal and \$10.2 million state or local). The net in-state wealth added to the economy is roughly \$79 million annually (\$86.9 million GSP added minus \$8.2 million in indirect business federal taxes).

Meanwhile, with regard to the \$923 million in cumulative effects from the aggregate Main Street investment on Route 66 (keeping in mind that impact is distributed over roughly two



"Have you slept in a wigwam lately?" asks the neon sign at the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, Arizona



The Munger Moss Motel, a vintage auto court in Lebanon, Missouri

Table 2: Summary of the Annual Economic Impacts of Route 66 Spending and Example (Main Street) Cumulative Route 66 Spending

	A Annual Route 66 Expenditure <sup>a</sup> \$132 million yearly	B Cumulative (Main Street) Route 66 Expenditure \$923 million cumulatively
<b>DIRECT EFFECTS</b>	<b>National Total (Direct and Multiplier) Impacts</b>	
	Jobs (person-years)	2,401
	Income (\$ million)	90.0
	Output (\$ million)	261.6
	GDP* (\$ million)	126.5
	Taxes (\$ million)	37.2
	Federal (\$ million)	23.1
	Local/State (\$ million)	14.1
	<b>In-State Total (Direct and Multiplier Impacts)</b>	
	Jobs (person-years)	1,741
	Income (\$ million)	62.5
	Output (\$ million)	172.8
	GSP* (\$ million)	86.9
	Taxes (\$ million)	26.7
	Federal (\$ million)	16.5
	Local/State (\$ million)	10.2
	In-State wealth* (\$ million)	79.0

**DIRECT EFFECTS**



**National Total  
Impacts (Direct  
and Multiplier)**



**State Portion<sup>†</sup>  
of National  
Total Impacts**

Source: Rutgers University, Center for Urban Policy Research.

\* GDP=Gross Domestic Product, GSP=Gross State Product; In-state Wealth=GSP less federal taxes.

<sup>a</sup> Includes \$38 million annually in visitor-attributed expenditures; \$67 million of Main Street related investment, and \$27 million annually in museum attributed expenditures.

<sup>†</sup> Eight states on Route 66.

decades of Main Street activity), that investment contributed 15,606 jobs to the *national* economy, as well as \$1.817 billion in industrial output, \$908 million in gross domestic product, \$687 million in earned income, and \$276 million in taxes (Table 2, column B, upper portion). Again, those are the national impacts. The *eight Route 66 states* benefited from the aggregate Main Street investment a total of 10,587 jobs, as well as an additional \$1.121 billion in output by the states' businesses, \$596 million in new gross state product (GSP or gross wealth), \$460 million in added salary for the eight Route 66 states' residents, and a total of \$80 million deposited in the tax coffers of state and local governments across the states (Table 2, column B, lower portion). Overall, net in-state wealth (GSP minus federal indirect business taxes) grew by \$531 million as a result of the Route 66 Main Street program.

Almost all sectors of the nation's and eight state's economy see their payrolls and production increased from the Route 66 economic activity. While the major beneficiaries are the construction, service, retail trade, and manufacturing sectors, as a result of the interconnectedness of the economy and because both direct and multiplier effects are considered, other sectors of the economy not immediately associated with Route 66 investment are affected as well, such as agriculture, mining and transportation and public utilities. (See Summary of Route 66 Economic Activities and Benefits for details.)

While the I-O model-indicated economic effects are not very large compared to the huge overall United States economy and the significant collective economies of the eight Route 66 states, the Route 66 economic contribution is *relatively and contextually* very important. Compared to new construction and such stimulus favorites as investing in highways, *historic preservation—such as historic rehabilitation of Route 66 properties—is a reasonably comparable, if not superior, economic pump-primer*. Table 3 shows this for one illustrative Route 66 state, Oklahoma. It is clear, for instance, that rehabilitation is a better job creator than almost all of the other options listed.

Another consideration of what comprises a “good investment” is the relative comparison of historic preservation investment versus investment in such sectors of the economy as manufacturing, data processing and finance. On this basis, historic preservation, such as that occurring on Route 66, typically has economic advantages. As is illustrated in Table 3 (again using Oklahoma as an example), *preservation generally has more economic stimulus “bang for the buck”* (in this case, per \$1 million of investment), especially concerning job creation.



Sitgreaves Pass, a memorable stretch of Route 66 near Oatman, Arizona



The lovingly restored Palms Grill Cafe in Atlanta, Illinois

Table 3: Relative Economic Impacts of Historic Rehabilitation versus Other Economic Activities per Million Dollars Spent in Oklahoma

*In-state Effects Per Million Dollars of Initial Expenditure*

Economic Effect	Commercial Historic Rehabilitation	New Construction			Meat Packing	Data Processing	Insurance
		Multifamily	Nonresidential	Highway			
Employment (jobs)	20.6	16.6	17.1	14.8	11.8	13.6	12.4
Income (\$000)	\$547	\$471	\$487	\$461	\$291	\$469	\$272

Source: Rutgers University, Center for Urban Policy Research

Turning from a macro lens view of the economic significance of Route 66 spending as personified by the I-O results described above, to a micro lens perspective, what does Route 66 spending mean in the immediate community in which it takes place? *It is on this contextual local level that Route 66 economic activities have their greatest impact. As documented time and time again in the 25 case studies, in many smaller communities along Route 66, tourism related to the Mother Road is one of the most significant, if not the only “economic game in town.”* The restored Route-66-themed motel, restaurant, and gift shop may not have a high-dollar business volume (especially relative to the much larger regional and state economies), yet they anchor the downtown in many small communities and change the perceived image of a place from a dowager town abandoned by the interstate to a community with a Route-66-linked past and future.

## SECTION TWO: TOURISM AND TRAVELERS

# Who Travels Along the Route?

### *Findings from the First Comprehensive Route 66 Traveler Survey*

In collaboration with the *Route 66 Pulse* (a free periodical newspaper distributed along the 2,400 miles of the Mother Road) and a panel of Route 66 experts in both the public and private sectors, Rutgers University has conducted the most extensive survey to date of travelers on Route 66.

Approximately 100,000 surveys were distributed along the entire road (inserted into two issues of the *Route 66 Pulse* and also made available in “kiosks” at 33 popular Mother-Road-associated travel destinations suggested by an expert panel) between June 2009 and June 2010 (to cover year-round travel behavior). A total of 4,178 surveys were returned, of which the survey point of origin (newspaper insert or kiosk) for 4,176 of these surveys can be identified. While our methodology is not a probability sampling approach—beyond the capacity of this investigation—the completed survey is the largest-ever developed for Route 66 (the two most comprehensive earlier surveys each had about 300 responses)—and provides for the first time a national reconnaissance probe of “who travels the Route.”

The four-page intercept survey contained a total of about 30 questions concerning the travelers’ residence and socioeconomic profile, trip expenditure characteristics, and traveler perspectives on Route 66 (e.g. attractions and challenges). The following reports some key survey findings.

## Route 66 Traveler Origins

Route 66 draws visitors from a broad geography, and the 4,178 interviews included travelers from all 50 U.S. states and about 40 foreign countries. About 84.7 percent of the 4,160 respondents (with respondent residence data) indicated a current U.S. residence, while 15.3 percent came from abroad. Not surprisingly among the U.S. travelers, residents of the eight states through which the Mother Road passes were heavily represented (i.e. 6 of 10) in the survey. Of the international responses, the most were European and Canadian in origin. (Recall: the questionnaire was English-only, so this may have affected the above-cited international origins.) Of the European-based respondents, the largest number came from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. Long-distance honors go to 63 hearty souls who trekked from Australia and New Zealand.



Horn Lodge in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was demolished for condominium development in 2006



A restored gas station turned souvenir shop in the Black Mountains near Oatman, Arizona

## Route 66 Traveler Profile

*From the survey response, the socioeconomic profile of the Route 66 traveler is:*

1. Overwhelmingly (97 percent) white in race.
2. Overwhelmingly (97 percent) *not* Hispanic in ethnicity (recall however, the English-only version of the survey).
3. Generally (71 percent) married, though about one-tenth never married and one-seventh are currently divorced/widowed/separated.
4. Overwhelmingly middle-age (median of about 55 years) with a prominent senior contingent (46 percent were 60 years or older) and a younger cohort as well (about one-ninth were 20 to 39 years of age).
5. Generally (61 percent) in a two-member household, though about one seventh were in one-member households and a small share (3 percent) were in large households of five or more members.
6. Typically well educated (about 30 percent have started or finished undergraduate college and an approximately equal share have started/completed graduate work), with some exceptions (about one-eighth have either just attended or graduated high school).
7. Employed in many occupations (about one-fifth are in service, sales, transportation, and maintenance), though the most popular occupation category by far (36 percent) is management and professional (the latter management/professional finding comports with the typically more advanced educational attainment noted earlier). Of note is that about four-tenths of the Route 66 travelers are retired.
8. Generally of middle-income (median household income of about \$62,500), though there is a considerable range in household earnings (about 8 percent earn \$25,000 or less annually, while almost one-quarter earn \$100,000 or more per year).
9. Compared to the persons living in the Route 66 Corridor (derived from the 2000 Census and described later in this summary), the Route 66 traveler (derived from our survey), is: far more likely to be white in race; has a much lower share of Hispanic ethnicity; has more years of schooling; is far more likely to be either retired, or if employed, is working as a professional or manager; and is more affluent from an income standpoint.
10. Comparing the Route 66 traveler to heritage and cultural travelers more broadly (the latter information derived from the Travel Industry Association of America and Rutgers research on other studies) shows many similarities. For instance, both groups are decidedly middle-aged, are well educated, are relatively affluent and are disproportionately either retired or work in professional/managerial occupations.

## Route 66 Trip Characteristics

- While Route 66 survey respondents indicated a range of travel times along the Mother Road from less than a day (13.6 percent) to over four weeks (4.5 percent), the median length trip was 5 days while the average (arithmetic) length trip was 11.1 days (the higher average reflects the presence of some extended duration travelers).
- The Route 66 trip was often embedded in a longer trip (e.g., median length about 12 days) taken for other purposes (e.g., “driving coast to coast”)
- About 61.1 percent of the Route 66 travel respondents were traveling west on Route 66 toward California, as opposed to east, toward Illinois.
- The bulk of the respondents, 77.5 percent, indicated vacation or leisure to be one of the purposes of their Route 66 trip; 21.0 percent indicated they would be visiting friends or relatives; while others cited “other” or a combination of objectives.
- The respondents included both those for whom travel along Route 66 was the primary objective (38.6 percent) as well as those (47.7 percent) viewing Route 66 as one of several objectives or (13.7 percent) as not a guiding objective at all (the latter, an “accidental” Route 66 traveler).
- Respondents included those making their first Route 66 trip (37.3 percent) as well as more veteran Mother Road travelers, with one-quarter having made four or more trips.
- In two thirds (67.1 percent) of the cases, the most common Route 66 travel party size was two adult members; only about one in eight reported the presence of children. While there were some solo adult travelers (14.4 percent), more common (18.4 percent) were larger traveler groups of three or more adults.



Built in 1926 by Henry Soulsby, this Shell station is one of the oldest still standing on Route 66



Built in 1932, Vickery Station is an intact example of the “Cotswold Cottage” design used by Phillips Petroleum Company

## Traveler Perspectives on Route 66

With the exception of the “accidental” Route 66 traveler, the lion’s share of the respondents were motivated specifically to travel the Mother Road. The following are their perspectives of Route 66.

About 78.9 percent knew “some or a lot” about the highway’s historical significance and a similar share cited that significance in their trip planning.

The most important Route 66 characteristics cited by the respondents was “historic sites/monuments”; “notable places/landmarks”; and “landscape.” Rated just below these three traits, but still important were: “small towns”; “U.S. history”; “National Parks”; “vintage restaurants and motels”; “Gateway to the West”; “car/motorcycle cruising”; and “navigating highways.” The least significant characteristics were “bars/nightclubs” and “entertainment/amusement.” Not surprisingly given the above, about six-tenths of the respondents had also visited other destinations noted for “Americana.”

In parallel with the above cited findings, when asked “What images, attractions, or thoughts come to mind when you hear “Route 66”? (an open-ended question), some sample responses included “historic places, return to the old days”; “historical reference and discovery”; “history: traveled on it...with parents as a boy”; “Americana, great road history, roadside oddities [and] road trip”; “America in the ’50s and ’60s—classic cars, diners, motels with neon signs, wide open spaces”; “big slice of Americana”; “childhood travel on the Mother Road”; “Cars” (many specific automobile references, e.g. “big-fin Cadillac’s” and “T-Birds”); “Cars” (Disney/Pixar movie); “driving in old cars, unhealthy but yummy food, music (’50s and ’60s)”; “specific destinations”—such as Shea’s and Round Barn; “great people, great scenery and characters”; “individuality, mom and pop places”; “music, simpler life style (slower but good)”; “thrill of the journey—not a particular destination”; and “total freedom/happy memories.” While the

wide range of open-ended responses to the question regarding the Route 66 images, attractions, and thoughts is evident from the examples cited above, these many individual responses roughly cluster into the categories of *history/nostalgia*, *pop/culture*, *roadside attractions*, *specific destinations*, and *fun/freedom*.

Respondents generally seemed pleased with their Route 66 experience. To cite just one description: “Traveling with my best friend, we took a 2,500-mile motorcycle trip. This was the best trip of my life.” Yet the respondents noted challenges to travel along the Mother Road, with the number one complaint being “*Finding it*” (e.g., “finding it at all”; “finding intact sections”; “finding original route”; “finding Route in urban areas—disagreement on multiple routes”; “finding it in some states”; “lack of signage”; and lack of consistent signage”). Other challenges were noted as well, and we cite the following as examples: “limited language and other support for international travelers”; “many closed businesses”; “road condition on older byways and alignments”; “hard to find lodging in between towns”; “weather”; “seeing all there is to see”; and “time management.” While these individual responses clearly vary, they cluster into such categories of challenges as *navigation*, *physical condition*, *challenging scale*, and *other* (e.g., international traveler support services).

The respondents recommended actions to enhance travel along Route 66 with these actions typically directed to address the perceived challenges such as “develop a Route-specific GPS for automobile and motorcycle use”; “install more and consistent signs”; “better markings for highways and landmarks”; “get AAA to show it on their state maps”; “clean up areas that need attention, road repair where needed”; “keep the historic facilitates and bridges in good shape”; “more PR”; “more publicity and community cooperation”; “improve motel



La Posada Hotel in Winslow, Arizona, was built in 1929 for the Santa Fe Railway



The Tower Conoco Station in Shamrock, Texas, built in 1936

accommodations so that rooms are cleaner and more modern inside”; “keep what is open, open”; and “keep it real, classic and fun.” Again, while the open-ended responses vary here with respect to Route-66–enhancing recommended actions, they roughly cluster into recommendations related to *navigation, physical condition, revitalization, and publicity*.

## Route 66 Trip Expenditures

About nine-tenths of respondents indicated a least some data in at least one of eleven questionnaire-specified spending categories (lodging/camping, eating and drinking establishments, other food/snack/beverage, airfare, auto and RV rental, auto repair, other transport, gasoline and oil, admission to museums, other admissions and all other).

If spending is averaged across all respondents who indicated any spending in at least one category (i.e. missing values in other categories are assumed to be zeros), then the summed spending per trip (Route 66 portion) for all purposes is in the range of \$1,500 to \$2,000. Of that sum, the largest expenses are for lodging, eating/drinking and direct travel-related trip outlays (for airfare, auto/RV rental, and gasoline and oil).

What is the total spending of all Route 66 travelers, not just the outlays of the respondents to the Rutgers survey? The nature of the survey sampling protocol, as noted previously, precludes a simple pyramiding from the survey responses to the larger universe of all Route 66 tourists. Notwithstanding this limitation, by observing the total visitors to Route 66 “hot spots” (such as the 35,000 coming to the Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma, as documented by that institution), a connection can be made from the Rutgers survey data to the Route 66 “hot spot” visitation information so as to make an educated estimate of spending by all Route 66 travelers (not just those surveyed). *That educated estimate is conservatively (a lower rather than higher estimate) \$38 million per year.*

## Route 66 Case Studies

Among the main attractions of travelers and tourist dollars to Route 66 are the unique sites and people along the Mother Road. To convey this special assemblage of place and personality, Rutgers University conducted 25 case studies. The case studies comprise compelling tales, often involving stalwart Route 66 personalities who met and overcame adversity. The reader can get a taste of these resolute pioneers' attributes from perusing the thumbnail sketches in Table 4, but these short summaries only scratch the surface. So let us add some details and examples.

Born in 1902, Lillian Redman arrived in New Mexico in 1916 in a covered wagon, and worked as a "Harvey Girl" in one of the restaurants of the famous Fred Harvey Company hospitality empire of the early twentieth century. Redman received the Blue Swallow motor court—best known for its iconic blue neon sign—in Tucumcari, New Mexico, as an engagement gift in 1958. She served as proprietress of the establishment with a homespun philosophy for the next 40 years. The following text is copied from a hand-signed note from Redman to a 1992 Blue Swallow guest:

In ancient times, there was a prayer for "The Stranger Within our Gates."  
Because this motel is a human institution to serve people...we hope that God will grant you peace and rest.... We are all travelers...may these days be pleasant for you, profitable for society, helpful for those you meet, and a joy to those you know and love you best.<sup>1</sup>

The Rock Café in Stroud, Oklahoma, was built of rocks excavated from the original construction of Route 66. Roy Stroud, who founded the town in 1892 and ran a saloon selling "whiskey and libations to the rabble-rousing"<sup>2</sup> locals, bought the excavated rock for just \$5. The Rock Café's most recent owner, Dawn Welch, who took over in 1993, reenergized the waning establishment, but then faced a catastrophic fire in 2008. She rebuilt the Rock with much grit and

1 Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road*. St. Martin's Press, 2001. 151

2 Dawn Welch with Raquel Pelzel, *Dollars to Donuts*. Rodale, 2009. viii.



The Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico, known for its neon and "refrigerated air"

Table 4: Overview of Route 66 Case Studies

<b>Palms Grill Atlanta, IL</b>	History of iconic downtown restaurant (name inspired by the founder's fascination with Los Angeles, California), built in 1934 and restored with period details in the late 2000s and once again serves as a local café and anchor for the downtown.
<b>Joliet Historical Museum Joliet, IL</b>	A museum on Joliet's history with a significant collection (15,000 artifacts) and a major focus on Route 66. The latter, a focal point for many visitors, includes such features as a Route 66 interactive drive-in and a model 1950s-era motor court room (complete with Gideon bible and a black-and-white TV).
<b>Ariston Café Litchfield, IL</b>	History and continued operation of Ariston Café (built in 1929), a family-owned and -operated restaurant with period details (original booths, counter, etc.) with a large and widespread (local, national, and international) customer base. Facility includes iconic mounted marlin and neon sign proclaiming "Remember Where Good Food Is Served."
<b>Pontiac Murals Pontiac, IL</b>	Including a famous Route 66 shield mural on the back of the Route 66 Museum in Pontiac, this town has embraced a mural program to spur tourism and enhance its economic fortunes. The total of about 20 murals (on individuals/ subjects ranging from Abraham Lincoln to a famous local candy store, "Palace of Sweets") attracts about 20,000 annually.
<b>Shea's Gas Station Springfield, IL</b>	A time capsule of an early (oldest portion from the 1920s) local neighborhood filling station (encompassing Marathon and Phillips 66 components), with thousands of period-correct oil-company-related memorabilia (signs, pumps, and marketing materials). Facility was operated for decades by proprietor William Shea; he converted it to a family-run museum in 1995.
<b>The Mother Road Festival Springfield, IL</b>	This festival is a three-day event that has been held each September since 2001. With nearly 80,000 visitors and 1,000 classic cars on display, it is one of the biggest car shows in the midwestern United States. The event combines classic car culture, Route 66, and the historic downtown (Springfield) Main Street themes.
<b>Cuba Murals Cuba, MO</b>	Buffeted by economic adversity such as the mid-1980s closing of major factories in the area, Cuba bootstrapped itself in large part due to a local campaign of painting murals related to the town's history—including visits by Harry Truman and Amelia Earhart—as well as that of Route 66. The murals have become a major tourist attraction for the town.
<b>Route 66 State Park Eureka, MO</b>	A museum on Route 66, housed in a former roadhouse—the Bridgehead Inn (ca. 1935)—located in a park reclaimed from an environmental disaster (former dioxin-polluted town of Times Beach). The museum contains extensive Route 66 memorabilia, including road and motel signs, as well as vintage gas pumps, and describes the history of the Mother Road and that of Times Beach.
<b>Kan-O-Tex Station (Four Women on the Route) Galena, KS</b>	History and changing fortunes of a Kan-O-Tex filling station, built in the late 1920s, and closed in the 1980s. In 2006, the station was reopened as a small restaurant and gift shop. The business name reflects the partnership of four local women resolved to reclaim and reuse a long-lost facility and to invigorate the local and downtown economy.
<b>Round Barn Arcadia, OK</b>	Built in 1898, collapsed in 1988, a retired carpenter (Luke Robinson), an intrepid "Over the Hill Gang" (senior 60s group) and other local volunteers help restore (in 1992) the most powerful reminder of Arcadia's frontier roots and one of the most recognizable historic sites (an authentic round barn with a 60-foot diameter) in Oklahoma and along Route 66.
<b>POPS Arcadia, OK</b>	Opened in 2007 on Route 66, POPS is a gas station, restaurant, and convenience store centered on the theme of soda pop (over 500 varieties). The POPS building is an eye-catching structure containing thousands of LEDs, and the business "links" to Route 66 through its location (on the Mother Road) and design (e.g., its signature LED soda bottle is 66 feet tall, and its parking lot originally contained 66 spaces).
<b>Route 66 Museum Clinton, OK</b>	Originally opened in 1968 as the Museum of the Western Trails, this institution reoriented to a focus on Route 66 from 1995 onward. One of the nation's largest (10,000 square feet of exhibit space) museums on the Mother Road, the history of Route 66 is conveyed decade-by-decade (over six decades) starting in the 1920s.
<b>Coleman Theater Miami, OK</b>	An ornate 1929 movie theater in a small town, a treasured community resource that never closed its doors, and refurbished over the past two decades to its former glory (including the return of its famed pipe organ).
<b>Rock Café Stroud, OK</b>	History of the Rock Café (opened in 1939, incorporating stones excavated from original Route 66 construction), with a focus on operation by its current owner, Dawn Welch. Details rebuilding of restaurant after 2008 fire and current significant national/international visitor patronage.
<b>Vickery Station Tulsa, OK</b>	History of the 1930s-era Vickery Phillips 66 gas station (prime example of the Phillips Petroleum Company classic Cotswold Cottage station design) and its recent (2006-2008) preservation and adaptive reuse as a car-rental office.
<b>Meadow Gold Sign Tulsa, OK</b>	History of 1940s-era Meadow Gold (dairy products company) neon sign and its recent (late 2000s) refurbishment and relighting after being neglected and going dark in the 1990s.
<b>Conoco Station Shamrock, TX</b>	History of the 1936 architecturally unique (Art Deco 100-foot tower) Conoco gas station (and U-Drop Inn), and its changing fortunes (prospered for decades, closed 1997, and restored/reopened in early 2000s as a museum).
<b>Kelly's Brew Pub Albuquerque, NM</b>	Originally constructed in 1939 as Jones Motor Company (Ford dealership and Texaco gas station), the building was adaptively reused in 2000 into a popular Nob Hill neighborhood restaurant. Its veranda is one of the popular hospitality gathering places in Albuquerque.
<b>Blue Swallow Motel Tucumcari, NM</b>	History and continued operation of a historic (built 1939) and iconic motor-court-style motel with a world-famous blue-lit neon sign. The motel is perhaps the oldest motor court still in operation on Route 66.
<b>Cool Springs Kingman, AZ</b>	History of the Cool Springs Camp (opened 1926), its prosperous early decades and family-run operation, demise (destroyed by fire in 1966 and blown up in a movie shoot in 1991), and recent (mid-2000s) rebirth as a snack and gift shop.
<b>La Posada Hotel Winslow, AZ</b>	Connected to famous personalities (Fred Harvey—the mastermind behind the "Harvey Houses"—and noted architect Mary Elizabeth Jane Coulter), this historic jewel of a hotel, which opened in 1930, described as the "finest small hotel in the southwest" closed in 1957, but was recently (late 1990s) reopened and brought back to its original splendor.
<b>Rendezvous Festival San Bernardino, CA</b>	This event is touted by its sponsor as a place where "car buffs from all over the country gather...to get their 'kicks on Route 66,'" and the event logo incorporates an iconic California Route 66 sign. It is one of the largest such events in the United States (2009 attendance of about 500,000 viewing nearly 2,000 registered cars).
<b>Folk Art Victorville, CA and other locations</b>	Briefly describes and sets in context many examples of folk art along Route 66 including "Hula Ville" collection in the California Route 66 Museum (Victorville), the "Cadillac Ranch" (Amarillo, TX), and the "Blue Whale" (Catoosa, OK).



The diner counter at Summit Inn, one of few remaining along the southern California stretch of Route 66

community assistance. Welch served as inspiration for the character “Sally” in the Disney/Pixar Film *Cars*. Let Dawn (who also is an authoress of a cookbook with sass and good recipes) describe in her inimitable words how she came to the Rock, and her proprietorship there:

I grew up in the somewhat small town of Yukon, Oklahoma. As far back as I can remember, I had big dreams of working on a cruise ship and seeing the world. Soon after graduating from high school, I packed my bags and headed to Miami (where I didn't know a soul) and miraculously within one day landed a job working for a cruise ship line. I traveled for 4 years, visiting places near and far....

During a trip home to visit my mom, fate intervened in the form of an inheritance from my grandmother, who left me 25 acres of Oklahoma property and a darn good reason to reconsider my nomadic existence. When I was given the opportunity to buy the Rock Cafe, a historic 25-seat restaurant on Route 66 in Stroud...I thought, why not give it a go?....

That took a lot of gumption on my part, as I didn't know the first thing about cooking or running a restaurant, but my hard work and trial-by-error approach paid off.... It wasn't long before the locals and tourists were back. Although throughout the years I've made some changes to the original menu—we no longer smoke our barbecue, and we've added quiche and spaetzle to the menu—I like to think we've never strayed too far from the philosophy of good food, good service, and good prices.<sup>3</sup>

3 Dawn Welch with Raquel Pelzel, *Dollars to Donuts*. Rodale, 2009. vi-vii.

Cool Springs Camp of Kingman, Arizona, a sought-after oasis on a treacherous leg of old Route 66, did not seem to have much of a future after it was literally blown up in a 1991 movie shoot (*Universal Soldier*). That did not dissuade Ned Leuchtner, a real estate agent from Chicago, who discovered the remains of Cool Springs in 1997 while traveling out west. He took it upon himself to bring the place back to life and by 2004 had realized this goal, transforming the camp to its near-original state.

The siren song of restoring a faded special place—La Posada Hotel of Winslow, Arizona—also struck Alan Affeldt, an art connoisseur and business entrepreneur, his wife Tina Mion, a renowned artist, and a third partner, Daniel Lutzick. Built in 1930, La Posada had been a jewel of a hotel made possible by the entrepreneurial acumen of Fred Harvey (of “Harvey Houses” fame), the creative genius of architect Mary Elizabeth Jane Coulter, and the good fortune of Winslow being the Arizona headquarters of the Santa Fe Railroad. But times and travel modes changed (e.g., fewer railroad passengers), which led to La Posada closing in 1957 and its museum-quality furnishings being auctioned off. Forty years later, in 1997, our trio of Affeldt, Mion, and Lutzick became inspired to bring La Posada back to its former glory. They have done just that. They have reclaimed the hotel’s elaborate gardens, restored the special room and lobby detail, and reclaimed some of the original furniture. (Hotel personnel do admit, however, that despite “clearing” over 300 ghosts from the premises, some still remain.)

The town of Arcadia was formed in 1902, not long after the Oklahoma Land Rush (1893) and before the former Oklahoma territory became a state (1907). Arcadia’s founder, Bill Odor, helped build a monumental-scale Round Barn in 1898 that became the town’s landmark and a famous Oklahoma site that stood the test of time until 1988, when it collapsed. Enter Luke Robinson, a retired carpenter who remembered the Round Barn from dances in the 1930s. Working with a group of retirees (dubbed the “Over the Hill Gang”) and sympathetic others, Robinson and others restored the Round Barn using construction techniques that mimicked Odor’s original craftsmanship (e.g., soaking huge slabs of lumber in a creek to make them pli-



A signpost near Truxton, Arizona, features all of the places mentioned in the the song ‘Get your Kicks (on Route 66)’



The Ariston cafe in Litchfield has been an Illinois institution since 1929

able). Luke deadpans that “I thought I was just fixing up an old barn,” but it was much more than that as Robinson and his crew “salvaged the most powerful reminder of Arcadia’s frontier roots and probably the most recognized historic site in the state.”

There are many other compelling tales and outsize personalities in the special places of Route 66 that we captured partially in the case studies. Some examples include:

- John Nunn, drawing an image in the sand with a stray nail of the rest stop he envisioned in Shamrock, Texas, a rendering that ultimately resulted in the iconic Conoco Station, with its landmark 100-foot tower (and inspiration for “The House of Body Art” in the movie *Cars*).
- “Four Women on the Route” (literally) converted an abandoned Kan-O-Tex gas station in Galena, Kansas (a small town of 3,000 with one-tenth its peak mining-boom population), into a snack bar and gift shop, with yet future expansion plans (converting “Steffleback House,” a former bordello, into a bed and breakfast). A rusty truck on the gas station’s premises served as the inspiration for the movie character “Tow-Mater” in *Cars*. (A Galena fourth-grader called the truck “Tow-Tater,” and this parlance is used locally.)
- The Ariston Café in Litchfield, Illinois, has been run by the Adam family since the 1920s (today—husband, wife, and son) and over the past near-century, its good food, proprietor warmth and conversation, and period furnishings (including a mounted marlin and a neon sign beckoning, “Remember Where Good Food Is Served”) have drawn customers from near and far. Challenges have been dealt with head on: When Illinois rerouted Route 66 to behind the Ariston, the Adam family responded by reorienting the restaurant and its exterior sign accordingly to face the new bypass.

## Route 66 Museum Survey

The variety of museums on Route 66, many of which are one-of-a-kind, are a significant attraction for tourists and travelers. These include specific Route 66-themed entities (e.g., California Route 66 Museum in Victorville with its “Hula Ville” art), history museums (e.g., New Mexico’s Tucumcari Historical Museum), and special interest museums (e.g., on Jesse James in Stanton, Missouri). These “Route 66 Museums” underlie, at least partially, the Route 66 traveler spending documented earlier. The budgets of the Route 66 Museums themselves also contribute to the economic activity related to the Mother Road.

Rutgers University researchers, working with a small panel of nationally recognized Route 66 experts, identified approximately 450 museums, cultural institutions, and related organizations/sites that were located on or near Route 66 and that were deemed likely to be of interest to Route 66 travelers. From the group of 450 museums, Rutgers selected a representative sample of 45. A survey instrument was developed and sent by mail to this museum sample group. The survey consisted of 16 questions divided into four sections: (1) Organizational facility profile, (2) Visitation, (3) Expenditures, and (4) Challenges/policies. A total of 33 museums responded to Rutgers’ request for information, with the highlights of their responses noted below.

### Organization/Facility Profile

Of the Route 66 Museums responding to the Rutgers survey, 58 percent were private nonprofit entities, while 30 percent were public government organizations. The remaining 12 percent of respondents categorized their institutions as “other.” This distribution comports with the national profile of museum organizations (e.g., about 70 percent are private nonprofits).

About 94 percent of the responding museums were founded after 1930. This is not surprising for at least the Route 66-themed museums, as Route 66 itself was founded in 1926. Almost one-fifth of the museums were founded after 2000.

The Route 66 Museums had modest-size membership. About 38 percent of the responding



A restored vintage camper on display at the California Route 66 Museum in Victorville



Vintage farm equipment on display at the National Route 66 museum in Elk City, Oklahoma

museums had less than 50 members, and about 59 percent had less than 100 members. Only 10 percent had more than 400 members. This modest level of membership is likely due to the fact that many of the museums cater to travelers who are just passing through and view annual membership as unnecessary.

## Visitation and Expenditures

The median number of annual visitors of the Route 66 Museums was 7,500; therefore, the majority of the respondents cite modest visitation (about a quarter had 3,000 or fewer visitors). These figures comport with a recent survey of small museums in six states, including some Route 66 states (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas) that indicated annual average small museum visitation of fewer than 10,000 annually.

About 67 percent of annual visitors to the Route 66 Museums were adults 19 years and older and, of those, about 29 percent were seniors 65 years and older. About 60 percent of visitors came from out of state and about 22 percent came from abroad.

The budgets of the Route 66 Museums varied considerably, but were mostly modest. The average budget is \$187,602, while the median is \$61,500. These Route 66 Museum figures comport with national research on small museums; most of these entities also had an annual budget of \$100,000 or less.

The Route 66 Museums spend just 29 percent of their budget on labor and a miniscule 9 percent of their budget on capital purposes, with 62 percent of their outlays paying for non-labor operating costs, such as utilities and insurance. (The Route 66 Museum spending on labor is so modest because many personnel are part-time and yet more are unpaid volunteers.)

These budgets are derived from multiple revenue sources. On average, government supports one-third of the budget (recall that most of the Route 66 Museums are private non-profits rather than government entities), visitors, and foundations and businesses fund about one-fifth each, with the remaining one-quarter raised from a variety of other sources. While it is problematic to compare precisely, a recent national survey of history museums in the

United States showed a roughly similar reliance on the revenue sources depended on by the Route 66 Museums.

Of the 20 percent of annual revenues derived by the Route 66 Museums from visitor sources, only 27 percent of that comes from entry/tour fees, with 73 percent coming from other spending. This likely reflects modest entry/tour fees and enthusiastic visitor spending at museum gift shops.

We previously noted that the Route 66 Museums spent a relatively small share of their budget on salaries, and this is reflected in the number and type of staff they employ. The median number of full-time paid staff is 1.0, while the average number of full-time paid staff is 2.3. However measured—median or mean—the Route 66 Museums are lean on staff. This is further reflected in the much higher number of unpaid volunteers per institution—a median of 7.0 and an average of 18.9.

Many of these characteristics echo the situation of museums more generally, especially smaller institutions. For example, half of all Missouri museums reported having no full-time paid staff.

## Challenges and Policies

About half of the Route 66 Museums listed funding as one of the biggest challenges. Other notable challenges were need for effective marketing to increase visitor attendance, inadequate staff and board training, language and other challenges accommodating international visitors, improving/increasing museum exhibition space, and increasing community interest. Some recommended solutions to these challenges were to increase advertising efforts, increase the number of knowledgeable staff members, enhance language skills, introduce technological and media-related advancements to both exhibition and office space, and apply for more grants.

The challenges confronting the Route 66 Museums are not unique to this group alone. According to the American Association of Museums' research in 2009, museums throughout the United States are "under stress."

Rutgers conservatively estimates that the aggregate budget of all 450 Route 66 Museums is about \$27 million annually (450 total institutions multiplied by an approximate \$61,000 median budget each). In conclusion, while the primary purpose of museums is the uplift they give to the mind and soul, they also are economic contributors. Yet this important economic and cultural contribution by the Route 66 Museums is threatened by the stress they face.



Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet, IL

Jake and Elwood chill out at the Joliet Area Historical Museum



Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet, IL

The "drive-in" at the Joliet Area Historical Museum

## Route 66 Museums and their Contributions

### Joliet Area Historical Museum, Illinois

Formerly housed in an old downtown church but now resplendent in a modern \$9.4 million modern complex, the Joliet Area Historical Museum contains 15,000 artifacts and displays related to this city's history, including its proud location on the Mother Road. One of its most popular attractions is "The Route 66 Experience." This extensive and permanent Mother Road display, with many interactive components, opened in June 2007 and was brought to fruition through grants from and work by the state of Illinois, the Joliet City Center Partnership (in cooperation with the Joliet Visitors Bureau and the City of Joliet), and dedicated museum professionals and volunteers

Entering the exhibit, the visitor is welcomed by a large "Joliet Kicks on Route 66" carpet, and many are then drawn to a tall signpost (connecting Joliet, Route 66, and all corners of the globe) as well as life-sized replicas of Jake and Elwood Blues. (Joliet is associated with the 1980 movie *The Blues Brothers*.) Nearby, guests are delighted with a small scale panorama of all eight states of the Mother Road, featuring depictions of many Route 66 icons (e.g., Burma Shave signs) encircling the hall's perimeter. Along this mural, or "road on the ceiling," a model vintage Ford Mustang travels from the Santa Monica Pier to Chicago and back.

Visitors may park their travel-weary bottoms in seats that mimic vintage cars to experience an interactive drive-in movie. Visitors to the drive-in movie feature may choose from an eight-state menu of "Coming Attractions" to view tourist attractions that they can expect to see while traveling Route 66.

Route 66 visitors may also sign the "Green Guestbook," a computer-based, online guest login and interactive experience. Visitors begin by pressing a touch screen to identify where they are from on a world map, and then they may leave comments or view other visitors' entries. Visitors can also chart their course along the Main Street of America on an oversized, eight-state mural painted by Jerry McClanahan, noted Route 66 artist and historian. In another area of the exhibit hall, guests can relive a trip to a Route 66 diner as they sit in a reproduction car and pretend to order food from a carhop mannequin.

Within the exhibit, guests can also visit a motel room vignette, modeled after a room that would have been common along Route 66 in motor court motels during the 1950s. The “room” contains a scaled-down bed, a nightstand complete with a Gideon Bible in its drawer, a telephone, and a vintage, working 1950s black-and-white television set.

Since it opened its new doors in 2002 through 2009, more than 100,000 people have visited the Joliet Area Historical Museum and about 15 to 20 percent of these visitors are Route 66 tourists. In 2009, foreign travelers to the Route 66 exhibition in the Joliet museum came from 29 different countries, including some trekking from Australia, Brazil, and China. Domestic visitors to the Route 66 exhibit came from 34 states across the United States.

Not surprisingly, local Joliet food, hotel, and other establishments benefit financially from the many visitors to the Joliet Area Historical Museum. In one nearby gift shop, “Route 66 merchandise” accounted for nearly two-thirds of annual sales. A restaurant owner spoke of the tourism benefits of the Mother Road and the museum (“Route 66...and the Joliet Area Historical Museum are fun and innovative tourist attractions.”) and also noted that when he visited the museum, “It is a perfect day spent with the family.”

### **Shea’s Gas Station Museum of Springfield, Illinois**

What was once just another gas station and garage along Route 66 now stands as the international landmark known as Shea’s Gas Station Museum. With an impressive history along the legendary Mother Road that spans more than half a century, Shea’s has become one of Springfield’s most acclaimed roadside attractions.

Defying the traditional structure of most museums, Shea’s Gas Station Museum is made from two former filling stations. It is a unique arrangement that complements the eclectic collection of vintage oil and gas memorabilia covering nearly every inch of both stations. With this compilation of gas memorabilia, the museum acts as a tribute to the historic Mother Road and gas stations of the pre-Interstate era.

The history of how the business evolved from a gas station to a museum is strongly connected to its owner and Springfield native, Bill Shea. After returning from service overseas in World War II, Shea started a job in a Springfield service station and with a partner served locals and Route 66 travelers six days a week for five decades.

Shea’s station officially became a museum in 1995 after others had long encouraged him to turn it into one. The museum’s collection is a mixture of things Shea collected over the many years he spent pumping gas along Route 66. On display are such diverse artifacts as a dozen old cash registers, a 50-year-old rubber inner tube on display (which Shea believes is the last of its kind made from real rubber), a vintage Champion air compressor, a “Killroy was here” sign, an 80-year-old peanut dispenser and a vintage 15-cents-a-pack cigarette machine, an old Air-stream trailer, as well as oil company signs, cans of motor oil, and decades of calendars. There is also a glass Pennzoil container from World War II, historic Route 66 highway signs, a section on a wall with vintage and unique license plates (e.g. “1 Free B” and 0000) and even Shea’s original Texaco uniform. In front are vintage gas pumps that light up at night and serve as visual beacons to traveling motorists.

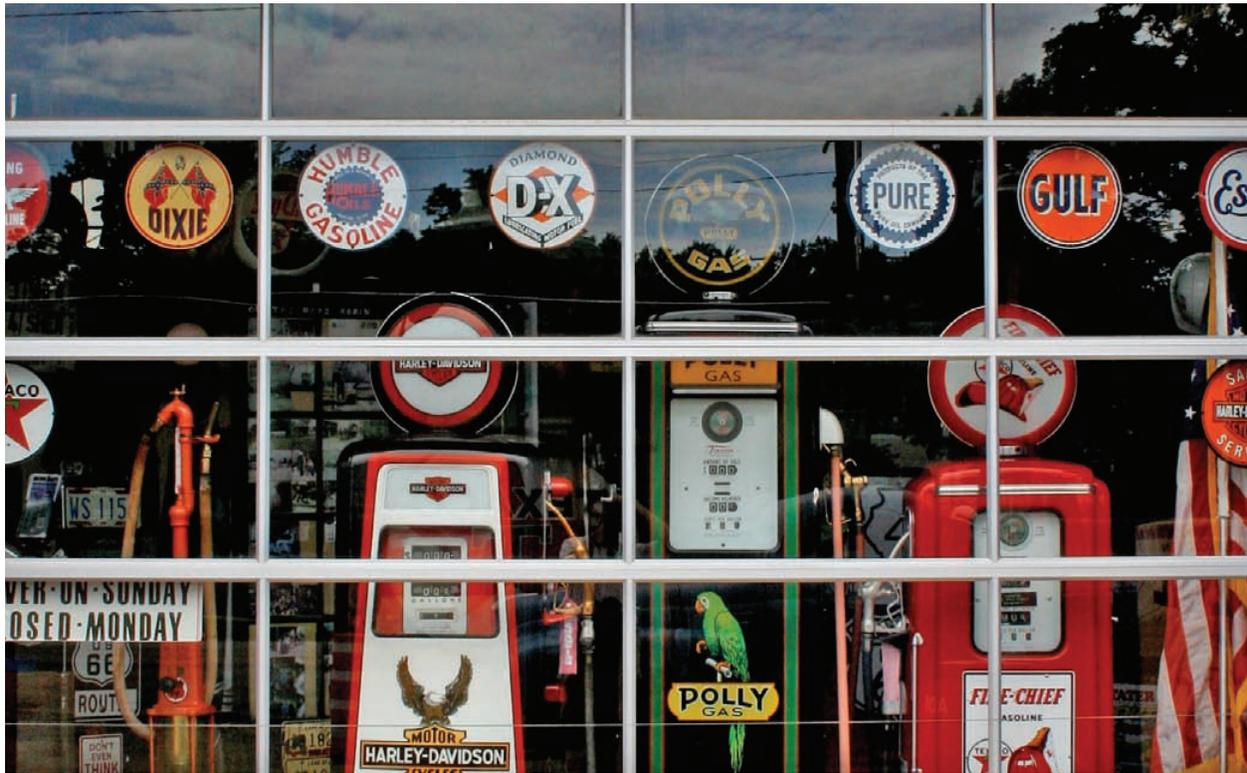
Some display items are significant to Shea (and others) for reasons beyond their connection to gas stations. For instance, there is a jar labeled “Omaha Beach” that contains grains of sand from when Shea stormed the beaches of Normandy during WWII.

This vast-ranging collage of gas-station and period memorabilia often evokes personal recollections and nostalgia by museum visitors. As described in one visitor’s blog: “Every inch inside the buildings are [sic] covered with items about gas stations, about Route 66, and about a lifetime of memories.”

Now in his late 80s, Shea is still very active (with his family) in the day-to-day operations of the museum, and is typically on hand to share his personal stories with visiting tourists. “I’ve no intention of retiring. I’ll keep working until I’m 90, then maybe just work half days,” Shea once said. His son Bill says that he “will believe it when [he] sees it.”

The station has become a notable Route 66 attraction and an important part of the route’s overall history. In similar respects, Shea as a Route 66 “personality” has become a Route 66 “attraction” and might just be the greatest “artifact” at the station. In 1993, Shea was inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame after 47 years in the gas station business.

Given the uniqueness of the place, it is not surprising that Shea’s attracts many a Route 66 pilgrim. From October 2005 through December 2007, there were a total of 1,513 visitors ac-



Restored pumps at Shea's Gas Station Museum

According to Rutgers research of the museum's logbook, representing an annual average of 672 visitors. Of the 1,513 total visitors between 2005 and 2007, there were 445 in-state visitors (30 percent), 761 out-of-state visitors (50 percent—for a total of 1,206 visitors, or 80 percent, from the United States total) and 307 international visitors (20 percent) to the museum. While visitors from United States (445 from Illinois and 761 from out of state) accounted for the majority of museum visitation in the period, an important component of travelers to Shea's came from 30 different foreign countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and Ukraine.

Tourism is one of the Springfield's most profitable industries. According to 2008 records from the Springfield Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau, tourism had a \$346-million-dollar impact on Sangamon County and the city of Springfield was the primary driver of that impact. Outside of revenue, Springfield's job force is also significantly connected to its tourism. In fact, there are more than 3,000 jobs directly attributable to the city's tourism sector. Two driving forces for tourism in Springfield are its historical sites connected to its most famous former resident, Abraham Lincoln, and historic Route 66. Sites based on Abraham Lincoln are Springfield's largest attractions, but Route 66 has become one of its major crowd-pullers as well, especially with international tourists. As one of several Springfield attractions along Route 66, Shea's Gas Station Museum has had a welcome economic impact on the city.

### The Route 66 State Park of Eureka, Missouri

Although Route 66 State Park is a recent creation (officially opened on Sept. 11, 1999), its genesis stretches as far back as 1925. The park's land was originally chartered as Times Beach, a resort community that served as a promotional scheme for the *St. Louis Star-Times* newspaper. The stars, however, did not align propitiously for Times Beach. First buffeted by the economic depression of the 1930s and gasoline rationing during World War II, the town never became a posh enclave, though it did benefit from a Route 66 location. It suffered the ultimate ignominy when its streets were found to be paved with high levels of dioxin, leading to an emergency evacuation of its population, disincorporation, and a massive Superfund cleanup. Yet these travails ultimately produced a popular park and a visitors center (formerly a Route 66 roadhouse) housing a Route 66 museum.

The Mother Road exhibit first describes the development of Route 66 from a national perspective, and then details Route 66 as "Missouri's Main Street." A chronology of Route

66 is then presented. This includes a pre-1920s chronology of precedents to Route 66 before it came into being, followed by presentations of the historical highlights of the Route by decade from the 1920s through the 1980s. Interspersed in this timeline presentation are period artifacts, such as an original postcard (a 1930s proclaiming “Greetings from America’s Main Street US 66 Scenic Missouri) and a rendition of Bobby Troupe’s iconic 1946 song “Get Your Kicks [On Route 66]”.

In presenting the Mother Road’s historical chronology, the museum includes many types of road maps. There are also one-of-a-kind Times Beach maps and historical materials such as the original town’s subdivision plan prepared by the *Saint Louis Times* in 1925.

A plethora of memorabilia from Route 66 are presented, such as the distinctive Route 66 highway label and shields for the eight Mother Road states, a vintage gravity flow gas pump and Burma-Shave sign, pictures of tourist hotspots located on or near Route 66 (e.g. Onondaga Cave and Meramec Caverns), and much else (e.g. “red light” locations on the Route, and a pamphlet describing “Radium Water Baths” from the Hotel Will Rogers).

There have been about 20,000 to 30,000 visitors annually to the visitor’s center over the past decade. Some of these visitors sign a guest logbook and Rutgers University examined this document for the period June 2007 through August 2009. There were a total of 4,269 entries, with 3,426 (80.3 percent) coming from the United States and 843 entries (19.7 percent) coming from abroad. Of the 3,426 domestic entries, the largest number 1,473 (or 34.5 percent of the total 4,269 entries) were from the home state of Missouri, but persons came from every state of the union, both near (Illinois: 289 entries, Indiana: 157 entries, and Ohio: 156 entries) and far (California: 104 entries, Florida: 67 entries, and New York: 44 entries).

There were also a variety of international travelers. Of these 843 international logbook entries (of the total 4,269 entries), the largest contingent came from Europe (e.g., England: 161 entries, Italy: 114 entries, Germany: 86 entries, Norway: 68 entries, and France: 53 entries), but people trekked from literally around the globe (e.g. visitors from Israel, Malaysia, Korea, Panama, and the Philippines).

While Eureka receives tourists for many reasons (e.g., dog shows and a nearby Six Flags amusement park), the town does benefit from Route 66 travelers. A representative from a popular eatery noted that Route 66 travelers had a noticeable impact on their business, “In a lot of our off-season time, most of the customers are Route 66 travelers. Without local business and Route 66 it would be hard for us to survive.”



A drive through the Route 66 State Park in Eureka, Missouri

## Main Street Program in the U.S. and Route 66

**A**t its zenith as the Mother Road, Route 66 was literally a Main Street for countless communities along its 2,400-mile length. The advent of the interstate turned many a Route 66 downtown to a near ghost town, and more generally on the national scene, the downtown was eclipsed by suburban expansion. To counter this trend, and to revitalize the often historic character of the traditional downtown center, the National Trust for Historic Preservation established a Main Street program. This effort has grown nationally and, not surprisingly, communities along Route 66 have participated in the program.

In 1980, the “National Trust Main Street Center” (NMSC) was created to revitalize declining downtown centers through a “preservation-based strategy.” The NMSC is a community-driven, comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization that provides professional training, networking, technical assistance, and national resources and support for participating communities. The program operates through the Main Street Four-Point Approach<sup>®</sup> to implementation: *organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring*. Main Street implementation incorporates numerous principles, such as emphasizing public-private partnerships, self-help, local leadership and building on incremental improvements.

The eight states along Route 66 all participate in the Main Street Program with 316 Main Street communities among them that have realized about \$5.1 billion in reinvestment, 11,000 net business gains, and 41,000 net job gains. Of the total 316 Main Street programs in the eight states, 25 programs, or about 8 percent, were identified as being on or near Route 66. These 25 programs were found in six of the eight states: Illinois, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

There is considerable variation among the 25 Route 66 Main Street programs concerning when they were first initiated and therefore how many years they have been in operation. For example, in Oklahoma, the Main Street initiative in El Reno (begun in 1988) has been in existence almost 25 years while the Claremore program (initiated in 2002) has operated about a decade.

The Route 66 Main Street programs have *fostered preservation of local, often downtown, historic resources* through securing financing, encouraging adaptive reuse, and other strategies. Examples include preserving historic courthouses and downtown squares in Bloomington and Lincoln, Illinois; operating a heritage express trolley in El Reno, Oklahoma; restoring a 1946 Pueblo Deco Paramount Theatre sign in Amarillo, Texas; and aiding the façade renovation of the historic Jackson Building in Williams, Arizona.

The Route 66 Main Street programs have *engaged in many activities to promote and improve local business activity*. They publicize local businesses, such as the Berwyn, Illinois, program publishing a downtown vendor directory, and the Main Street program in Springfield, Illinois, offering business banners. They offer financing, technical and other assistance for façade improvements. They stage festivals and “events” of all stripes to attract tourists and regional shoppers. Examples include: “Cartopia” Annual Parade (Berwyn, Illinois), annual Horseradish Festival and “Largest Catsup Bottle Summerfest” (Collinsville, Illinois), Las Fiestas de San Lorenzo (Bernalillo, New Mexico) and the annual Lemon Festival (Upland, California).



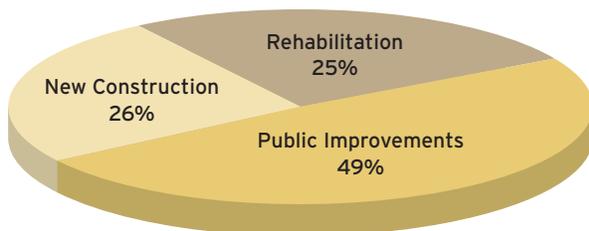
The Paramount Theatre in Amarillo, Texas (left) and Bloomington, Illinois' downtown square

Table 5: **Route 66 Main Street Program Investment Statistics**

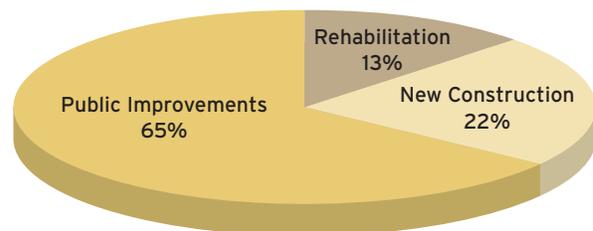
Three Rutgers Study Years (2006-2008)

Activities	Cumulative Program Total (Inception to 2008)	2006-2008	
		Total	Annual Average
Number of Façade Rehabilitations	1,193	471	157
Number of New Construction Projects	772	179	60
Number of Buildings Sold	326	101	34
Value Buildings Sold (\$millions, nominal year)	\$53.8	\$33.6	\$11.2
Net Gain in Business	1,183	351	110
Number of Public Improvement Projects	319	158	153
<b>Investment</b> (\$ millions 2008 adjusted for inflation)			
Rehabilitation	\$121.8	\$50.0	\$16.8
New Construction	\$202.8	\$51.9	\$17.3
Public Improvements	\$598.8	\$98.7	\$32.9
Total Rehabilitation, New Construction and Public Improvements	\$923.4	\$200.6	\$66.8
Number of Jobs	5,643	2,417	806

**Main Street Investments (\$) in  
Route 66 Communities, 2006-2008**



**Main Street Investments (\$) in Route 66  
Communities, Inception to 2008**



The Route 66 Main Street programs, not surprisingly, frequently help *preserve and publicize Route 66 historic resources*. The Miami, Oklahoma, program helps spread the word about the Mother Road-sited Coleman Theater; in a similar vein, so has the Albuquerque, New Mexico, program regarding the Route 66 Diner and the Kimo Theater. The Upland, California, Main Street program helped preserve the iconic neon sign at Taco King. The Main Street programs frequently stage or participate in Mother Road-themed events, many of these automobile-related. Examples include the Route 66 Annual Car Show (Berwyn, Illinois), International Route 66 Mother Road Car Show (Springfield, Illinois), Annual Texas Route 66 Festival and Route 66 Annual Fall Festival (Amarillo, Texas), Annual Neon Car Cruise (Albuquerque, New Mexico) and “Cruise the Loop” (Williams, Arizona).

*The Route 66 Main Street programs have realized substantial activity and investment* as is summarized in Table 5 from data obtained from each state’s Main Street office. From the inception of Main Street in the 25 communities (recall this inception varies among this group) to date (2008, the last year for which program data are available), there have been cumulatively 1,193 rehabilitation projects, 772 new construction projects, 319 public improvement projects, \$923 million in investment (\$122 million rehabilitation, \$203 million new construction, and \$599 million public improvements), and the creation of more than 5,600 permanent jobs. On an annual average over the three years of this study (2006 through 2008), the 25 Route 66 Main Street programs have realized in total 157, 60, and 153 rehabilitation, new construction, and public improvement projects respectively, \$67 million in investment (\$17 million rehabilitation, \$17 million new construction, and \$33 million public improvements), and the creation of 806 permanent jobs.

## Main Street Programs on Route 66

### Pontiac, Illinois

Pontiac (2008 pop. 11,258) is a suburban area located 100 miles south of Chicago off I-55. Pontiac has long been recognized as an exemplary Main Street community and was one of the first towns registered under the state program. Since 1988, a dedicated group of volunteers known as P.R.O.U.D. (Pontiac Redeveloping Our United Downtown) has pursued its mission to revitalize the central business district and promote its historic assets. Pontiac has many characteristics of the traditional American town, and it has been recognized by *Time* magazine (1997) as one of the best small towns in America.

P.R.O.U.D. has focused its efforts on historic preservation, and several of the buildings in the downtown area are on the National Register of Historic Places, providing visitors with a full day of architectural sightseeing. The downtown embodies much of the nostalgic charm of a historic downtown, right down to its core where the city courthouse from 1900 is still in use today.

P.R.O.U.D. has had a major role in attracting business to the downtown area. As one strolls through downtown Pontiac, they can browse over 40 shops offering a diverse array of products, from locally made crafts and novelties to more practical shoppers' goods like furniture and housewares. Shoppers also benefit from a relatively modest sales tax (6.25 percent versus 9.75 percent in Chicago).

Pontiac has made use of its local artistic talent; more than 20 hand-painted murals adorn walls and building façades throughout the town. (See also the later description of murals in Cuba, Missouri.) The murals in Pontiac depict scenes from both Pontiac's past, such as a visit from Abraham Lincoln, and an advertisement for a popular Pontiac malt shop, *Palace of Sweets*. The oldest and largest mural in Pontiac is the Route 66 shield mural that sits behind the Route 66 Association of Illinois' Hall of Fame and Museum, which also has the distinction as the largest Route 66 shield in the world.

Pontiac is particularly proud of its association with Route 66 and celebrates it with several annual events. During '50s/'60s weekend, a hot rod cruise culminates at a stop at a classic local gas station, while the Father's Day weekend Antique and Classic Car show is a favorite local family event.



One of the many hand-painted murals in Pontiac, Illinois



The Cadillac Ranch near Amarillo, Texas

## Amarillo, Texas

Amarillo is the fifteenth-largest city in the state of Texas, the largest in the Texas Panhandle and the seat of Potter County. In 1991, concerned citizens from the City of Amarillo established a non-profit organization called “Center City” to oversee the revitalization of Amarillo’s historic downtown area. The organization is governed by a volunteer board of directors and receives financial support from the city government, private donors, and through fundraising events.

Amarillo holds numerous Main Street events that capitalize on its location along Route 66, like the Annual Texas Route 66 Festival, the Route 66 Annual Fall Festival and Car Show, and the Polk Street Block Party. The city has six different home-owned eateries, multiple bars and clubs, the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, and the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame and Museum. Area historic attractions include the Cadillac Ranch and The Big Texan Steak Ranch, both located along I-40 (Historic Route 66). The Cadillac Ranch is a public art installation along I-40 (Route 66) and consists of a number of Cadillacs from different periods half buried in the ground. The Big Texan Steak Ranch is a restaurant and motel famous for the “Texas King Challenge,” which challenges diners to eat a 72-ounce steak named “The Texas King” in one hour for the distinction of having their names recorded and posted at the restaurant and receiving their meal for free.

Amarillo has engaged in numerous projects that showcase an ability to promote both historic and modern development. Projects ranging from the restored 1936 pueblo-deco Paramount Theater sign to the 108-room Courtyard Marriott hotel bring diversity and economic activity to the central business district.

## Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Nob Hill neighborhood in downtown Albuquerque (near the University of New Mexico) has a Main Street program to promote its downtown business district and its ties to the Route 66 era. Nob Hill has remnants of two different alignments of Route 66, one along Fourth Street, and a later version when the road was realigned to Center Avenue. The intersection of Fourth and Central is not only an intersection in the literal sense but represents the intersection between past and present, and is the meeting point of a variety of different cultures and lifestyles.

The Nob Hill Main Street program is coordinated through a joint initiative between Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation, the Nob Hill Business Association, and the Route 66 De Anza Corporation. Their mission is to “provide for the continued revitalization of the Nob Hill business district and surrounding neighborhoods by increasing awareness of the district and providing for its continued vitality, sustainability, preservation of its historic resources, and economic and social diversity.”



The Kimo Theatre in downtown Albuquerque

architecture, which blends the Main Street design with ornate southwestern Native American art. The theatre was saved from demolition in 1977 and has since undergone renovations to showcase this unique architectural style. Kelly's Brew Pub, a restaurant converted from a former Ford car dealership, is also found in Nob Hill.

Nob Hill Main Street also organizes a variety of events to bring together its diverse community and share its cultural assets with others. Starting in July 2010, Nob Hill is paying homage to its Route 66 heritage with its annual Route 66 Days and Nights festival. Nob Hill Main Street has worked with the City of Albuquerque to wrap several events into the three-day festival, which will include the Albuquerque Summerfest (part of the New Mexico Jazz Festival), and the tenth annual Neon Car Cruise.

Central Avenue is the street along which the downtown retail sector runs. The area has a number of privately owned businesses, many of which have redesigned building façades, giving Central Avenue a colorful, artistic character. It is a functional Main Street that provides goods and services for residents, but also offers unique one-of-a-kind items showcasing the cultural diversity of Albuquerque to visitors.

Nob Hill Main Street has preserved and encouraged many structures relating to Route 66, such as the Route 66 Diner that reproduces the iconic cultural ambience of the 1950s. From an architectural standpoint, there are many Nob Hill and nearby buildings to appreciate. The Kimo Theatre in downtown Albuquerque is a rare example of pueblo deco



The Grand Canyon Railway departs from Williams, Arizona

## Williams, Arizona

Williams, also known as the "Gateway to the Grand Canyon," is located in Northern Arizona, 30 miles west of Flagstaff and just off I-40 on Route 66. Williams was the last town located on Route 66 to be bypassed by I-40 in 1984, which was the same year that the downtown business district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Williams is also the terminus of the Grand Canyon Railway, a significant tourist attraction and year-round source of revenue.

Tourism, tourist-oriented retail, and service firms are the economic backbone of the Williams economy, and the Williams Main Street Association has been an integral part of cultivating these industries. The Williams Main Street Association is a very active organization, engaging in both public outreach and informational sessions throughout the year, and publishing monthly

newsletters to keep businesses and the local residents informed about the Main Street program's activities. The program has worked to encourage façade renovations of the historic Jackson and other buildings. The Main Street Association has acquired a trademark on the phrase "Cruise the Loop," and is utilizing the town's proximity to historic Route 66 to attract Route 66 enthusiasts as part of their economic development marketing campaign. There is a designated "Cruise the Loop Lane" that guides visitors around the Main Street district in order to get the full "Main Street Experience." In 2006, Williams was designated as a "National Preserve America Community," and in 1997 Williams Main Street received two Arizona Main Street Awards for Best Façade Renovation (the Jackson Building) and New Main Street Business of the Year.

# Who Lives Along the Route?

## A Reconnaissance GIS-Census Analysis

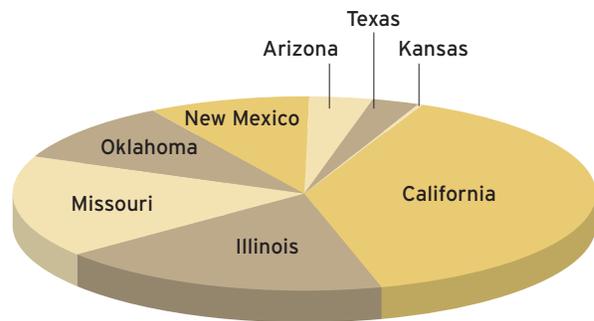
**W**hile there is much interest in who travels Route 66 (the subject of the earlier described visitor survey), perhaps equally as important, and heretofore unexplored, is the profile of those living along the Route. To quantify this profile, Rutgers University mapped the full 2,400-mile Mother Road in Geographic Information System (GIS) form (the first time this has been done in a GIS form), and following this, identified the census tracts (1,206 in total) located on or within one mile of Route 66 (termed the “Route 66 Corridor”). Using the most current census data available (2000), the following are some of the study’s major finding concerning who lives along the Route.

### Population and Demographic Profile (as of 2000)

About 5.5 million people live within 1 mile of Route 66 (the Route 66 Corridor), about the same number of people who live in Arizona or Minnesota.

Table 6: Eight Route 66 State Population Totals (as of 2000)

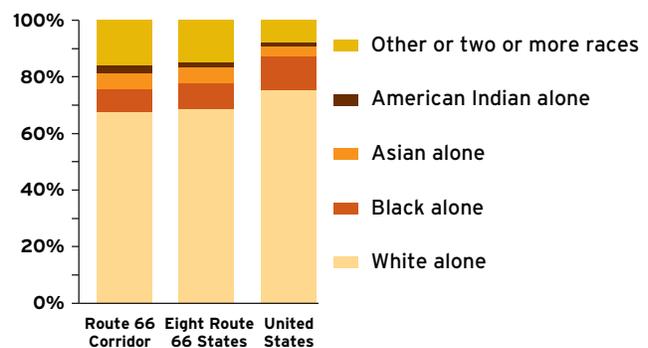
State	Persons Living in the Route 66 Corridor
California	2,143,000
Illinois	1,013,000
Missouri	932,000
Oklahoma	552,000
New Mexico	492,000
Arizona	192,000
Texas	144,000
Kansas	13,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,479,000</b>



Of the eight Route 66 states, California has the greatest number of people living in the Route 66 Corridor within its boundaries, followed by Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and Kansas. (See Table 6 on the ranking of Route 66 states by population.) Sixty-eight percent of the Route 66 Corridor population is white, 8 percent is black, 6 percent is Asian, 3 percent is American Indian (AI), and 16 percent is “other”/“two races or more” (See Table 7). Compared to the United States as a whole, the Route 66 Corridor has fewer whites (Corridor–68 percent; U.S.–75 percent) and blacks (Corridor–8 percent; U.S.–12 percent) but

Table 7: Racial and Ethnic Make-up of Population (as of 2000)

Race	Route 66 Corridor	Eight Route 66 States	United States
White alone	67.5%	68.6%	75.1%
Black alone	8.1%	9.1%	12.3%
Asian alone	5.6%	5.8%	3.6%
American Indian alone	2.8%	1.4%	1.0%
Other or two or more races	15.9%	15.0%	7.9%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	25.4%	25.3%	12.6%



more American Indians (3 percent versus 1 percent) and “other” and “two races or more” (16 percent versus 8 percent).

About a quarter of the people living in the Route 66 Corridor population are Hispanic, identical to the Hispanic representation (25 percent) among the total population of the eight Route 66 states, but is approximately double the Hispanic share (13 percent) of the total United States population as of 2000.

There is tremendous demographic diversity within the Route 66 Corridor. About 15 percent of the population in the Route 66 Corridor in Arizona and New Mexico is American Indian (for the entire corridor it is 3 percent), as compared with less than 1 percent in California, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, and Texas (see Figure 1). The New Mexico Route 66 Corridor has the highest percentage of Hispanics (42 percent), followed by California and Texas (both 32 percent), Arizona (25 percent), Illinois (12 percent), and finally Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma each with less than 10 percent (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native Map

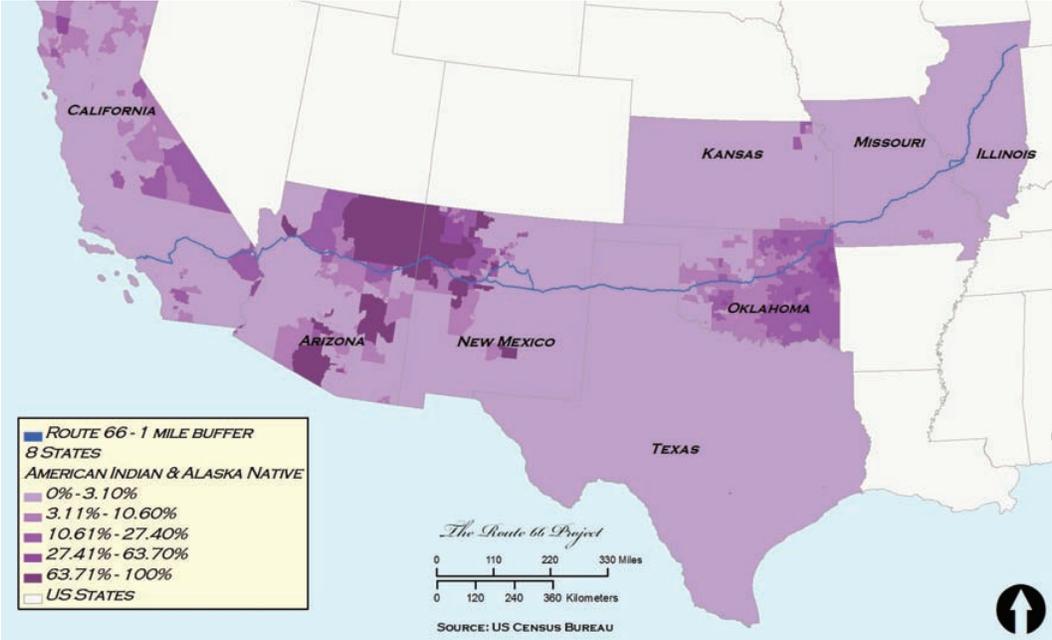
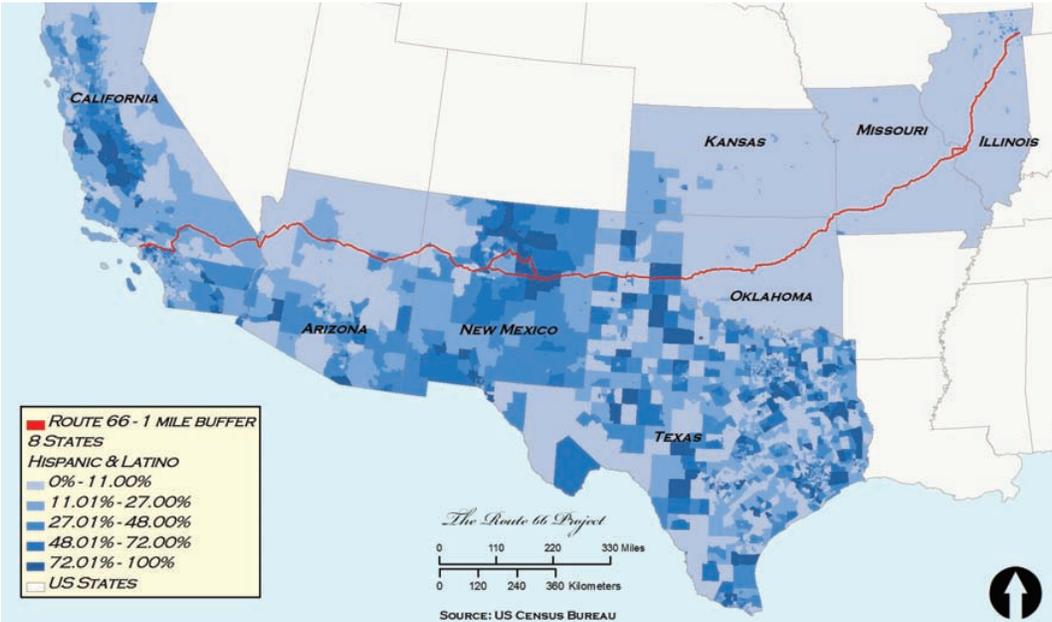


Figure 2: Percentage of Hispanic and Latino Map



## Economic and Housing Profile (as of 2000)

There are about 2.039 million households in the Route 66 Corridor. Their median income is \$40,760 (close to the national median household income of \$41,994 and similar to the eight Route 66 state household median income of \$40,082), with a range along the Route 66 Corridor from a median household income of about \$44,000 in both Illinois and California to about \$32,000 in both Kansas and Arizona.

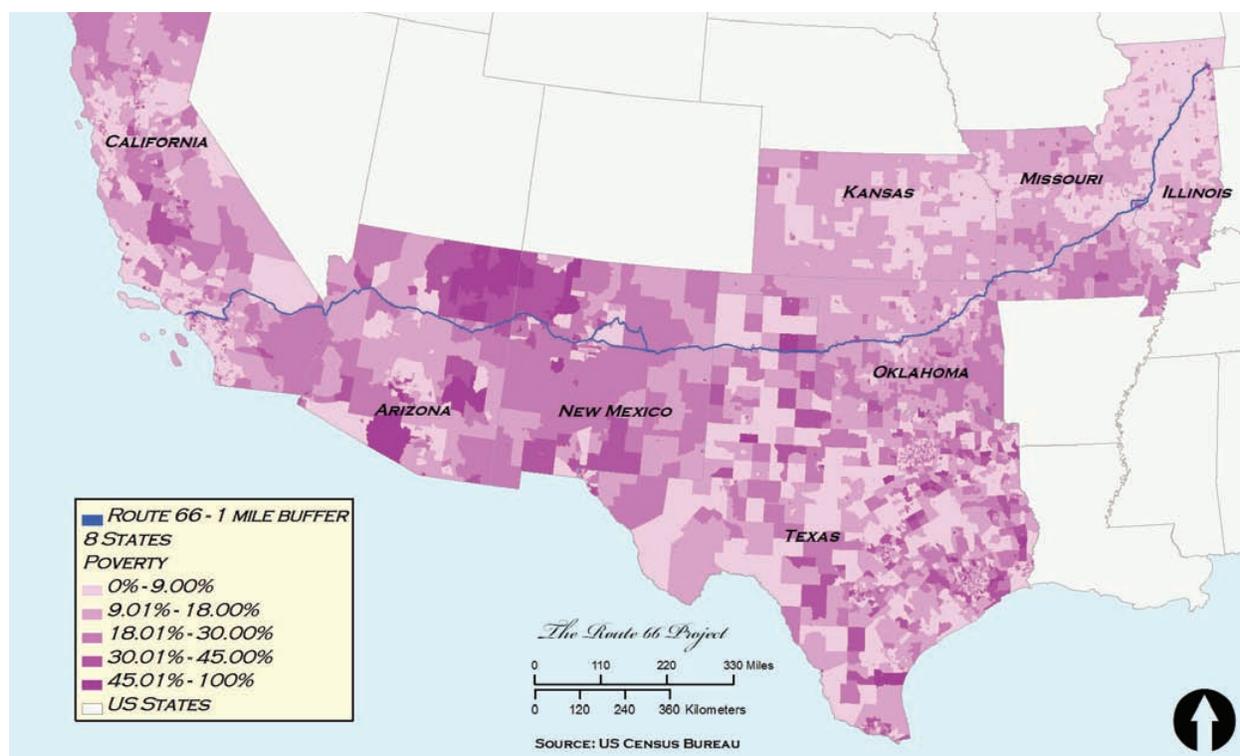
The aggregate income of all the households in the Route 66 Corridor amounts to a significant \$112 billion.

There are definite economic challenges confronting the Route 66 Corridor population. About 820,000 persons, slightly more than one-seventh (15 percent) of the population, earned an income under the officially designated poverty level (Figure 3), and almost 200,000 persons, or about 7 percent of the civilian labor force, was unemployed. These poverty and unemployment figures as of 2000 (as is all the data in this section) exceeded the nation's incidence of poverty (12 percent) and unemployment rate (6 percent) at that time.

There are approximately 2.220 million housing units in the Route 66 Corridor. Almost 0.182 million of these (8 percent) are vacant, similar to the vacancy share in both the eight Route 66 states and the entire nation. The age of the Corridor housing stock (1964 median year structure built) is older than the national average (1971 median year structure built), and a lower share of the Corridor's homes (58 percent) are owner-occupied compared with the national homeownership level (about two-thirds as of 2000). While few of the Route 66 Corridor's housing units are physically inadequate (e.g., "lack complete plumbing"), some owner households (17 percent) and yet more renter households (32 percent) are experiencing difficulty in meeting housing costs—a situation paralleled in the nation as well.

The above data points to challenges and opportunities for the Mother Road. Challenges include a not-insignificant share of poverty, unemployment, housing cost burden, and the difficult task of what to do with almost 200,000 empty housing units. Yet there is much opportunity. The \$112 billion in aggregate household income translates into about \$80 billion of household consumption (e.g., for food, housing, clothing, transportation, and healthcare), and capturing more of those billions on or near the Mother Road would be of great economic benefit (a subject mentioned earlier in this summary). The census analysis also points to the need to better synthesize celebration of the Mother Road with the history and culture of

Figure 3: Poverty along Route 66



Hispanics and American Indians, as these two groups comprise not-insignificant shares of the Route 66 Corridor population west of the Mississippi (Figures 1 and 2).

The census data analysis (which will be updated to 2010 when that information is released) was enabled by Rutgers GIS mapping of Route 66. That accomplishment opens many future productive avenues of analysis of Route 66, such as quantifying automobile trips along the road (from GIS-linked traffic data), identifying the presence of brownfields (from existing GIS mapping of such polluted sites) and identifying nearby historic resources and tourism “hot spots” (both often already GIS-specified).

## Route 66 and Community Revitalization

### Case Study Findings

The 25 case studies conducted by Rutgers University (Table 4) provide numerous examples of communities that have utilized their association with Route 66 as a catalyst for revitalization and civic engagement/improvement, etc. We provide some overall findings from the case study research below and then present some summaries of a few illustrative cases.

The direct investment incurred by the case sites, typically for building rehabilitation but including other purposes (e.g. equipment and fixtures), ranged considerably from the multi-million-dollar level to the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range, with the latter range being most typical. The paid site employment in the case studies also varied from around 100 to the 10 to 20 range, with the latter range being most typical.

While some of the figures cited above appear modest, they are quite important contextually—in the place they are occurring. The case study sites are overwhelmingly in relatively small (in population) towns, and many have been buffeted by economic challenges of different stripes. All shared the shock of Route 66 no longer being the main street through their downtowns and, as case studies depict, many were buffeted by other economic calamities (e.g. Cuba, Missouri, lost its shoe factories and Galena, Kansas, had to deal with the closure of its mines). As such, the building investment by the case study sites and their employment rolls and tax payments, while seemingly modest at times on their face, are contextually quite significant. For instance, the Stroud, Oklahoma (2,800 population), city manager, Steve Gilbert, valued the contribution made by the jobs at the Rock Café: “They are all local and valuable jobs, and as with any restaurant, young people have an opportunity to work.” The \$60,000 in sales tax revenue from the POPS restaurant in its first year of operation may not be a big item in a large city; however, in Arcadia, Oklahoma (278 population), it is a windfall—the \$60,000 doubled Arcadia’s sales tax revenue and helped fund an Arcadia summer youth program as well as other valuable services.

While we have far from complete data on visitation to the sites, and there are issues with some of the sources tapped (e.g., locals often don’t sign visitor logbooks), the information secured points to often consequential tourism—and the basis for the site rehabilitation, employment, and tax investment noted above. For 4 of the 25 case study sites, annual site visitation/patronage are near or above six figures, five other sites had five-figure visitors/patrons, and the remaining sites had about 1,000 to 3,000 visitors/patrons each. Site visitation/patronage figures are quite large contextually for the median population of the case study sites was only about 8,000 residents.

From where are people coming to the case study sites? While we have only a partial answer from such sources as the visitor logbooks (and these, as noted, have drawbacks as a fully accurate gauge of traveler residence), the short answer to the posed query is that people are generally traveling “from afar”—often from states other than those hosting the case study site and from international locations as well. The median figures are: 33 percent of the visitors to the case study sites residing in the state where the resource is located, 47 percent coming from other states (for a median combined total of 80 percent coming from the United States), and a median 20 percent coming from abroad.

From an economic development perspective, visitors coming “from afar” have the biggest economic stimulus because new spending is being imported (rather than just affecting the distribution of in-state spending that would be captured anyway). Since the Route 66 case study sites seem inclined to be attracting visitors “from afar,” the Route 66-based tourism is especially important for economic development.

In numerous case studies, the tourism draw and attendant investment positively enhanced community self-image and thus had a positive “place-making” effect as well. The specific ways in which communities have utilized their association with Route 66 as a catalyst for economic revitalization and civic improvement are described in the following illustrative case study summaries.

### Murals of Cuba, Missouri

Around 1984, tourism revenue in Cuba, Missouri, plummeted, as it did in many small towns along the Mother Road. The Missouri branch of Route 66 had been decommissioned and replaced by the interstate highway system, diverting thousands of travelers from the more isolated towns that had been surviving as Route 66 tourist stops. Adding to the blow, the loss of tourism revenue in Cuba coincided with the sudden shutdown of two shoe factories, while another factory laid off half its employees. Taken together, it was an economic “perfect storm.” By the end of 1984, unemployment had soared to 21 percent in this town of 2,100 and nearly every other retail store had closed.

By 1989, however, Cuba was hailed as an “economic miracle”—due largely to local pluck, hard work (e.g., establishing new industrial parks), and reinvention of the community that capitalized on Cuba’s history, including its proud transportation and Route 66 heritage. Cuba has become world famous for its murals that showcase that history and heritage.

The murals were brought forth by Viva Cuba, a beautification organization founded in 1984. After starting with some common practices such as planting trees in an industrial park—an initial local effort to bootstrap the economy—Viva Cuba set its sights higher: namely, to literally reinvent the space and persona of the community through murals. Viva Cuba was inspired in this vision through the work of Michelle Loughery, a British Columbian mural artist.

As a child, Loughery witnessed firsthand how mural art rescued her hometown, a small coal-mining town in British Columbia. Inspired by that early experience, she has become a compelling spokesperson and practitioner of mural art in the service of community revitalization. Not only did Loughery design and paint the first mural in Cuba (depicting a Model T Ford long ago owned by a local bank president) with a local Cuba artist, she also inspired Viva Cuba that a program of murals was just the thing to put Cuba back on the map. As Jill Barnett of Viva Cuba put it: “[Loughery] gave us the vision that we could do a mural project that would not only transform ugly walls into public art but also increase tourism and economic growth.”

Viva Cuba embarked on a campaign to paint 12 murals embracing the theme of local and national history and transportation motifs by 2007, Cuba’s 150th anniversary. The succeeded at a modest cost of about \$130,000, and all funds came from local fundraising events and do-



One Cuba, Missouri, mural depicts the “Gold star boys” going off to World War II

nations. The 12 murals celebrate such events as Amelia Earhart making an emergency landing in Cuba in 1928, Cuba's "Gold Star Boys" (servicemen killed in action) as they had initially embarked to wartime service from the local train station in the 1940s, and a Cuba stopover by actress Bette Davis in 1948.

In Cuba, "they drew it and they came" as the murals attracted tourists from near and far. Noted Mark Hoffman, a travel tour operator, "Cuba is one of the first small towns to align itself with Route 66 and get tourist attention as a result." About 10,000 visitors come annually, a significant economic boost to a town of about 3,000. Businesses are thriving in the "old" Cuba along Route 66 and in a corridor known as "Six Miles on 66."

Cuba has clearly made a remarkable recovery from the dog days of the early 1980s. The murals-related tourism and other local initiatives (e.g. a very successful economic enterprise zone with thriving industrial parks) have brought in considerable new tax dollars to the town's coffers (\$60,000 annually in just taxes raised for tourism marketing) and have substantially lowered the local unemployment rate (4.1 percent in 2000). Yet more than economic metrics, the town's persona has changed. As tour operator Mark Hoffman observes, "Murals on the walls signal that the people inside give a damn. Towns with murals tend to be cleaner, quality of life is higher, and there's a real sense of history and community. It just says it would be a great place to live."

### **The Round Barn and POPS of Arcadia, Oklahoma**

Arcadia, Oklahoma is home to two iconic Route 66 resources—an older gem, the Round Barn, and a new must-see place on the Mother Road, a unique restaurant called POPS. Both complement each other, give the community a unique identity, and draw visitors from near and far.

The Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society describe the Round Barn's origins, decline, and rebirth in their booklet *The Round Barn of Arcadia* (2006) as follows:

In the heart of Arcadia, Oklahoma, on historical Route 66, stands the Round Barn. It was built in 1898 by a very innovative educator and farmer, William Harrison Odor....

The last remaining wooden round barn in Oklahoma perched shabbily off Oklahoma Route 66 in Arcadia for years. People would photograph it



Arcadia, Oklahoma's unique Round Barn



POPS, a relatively new addition to Oklahoma's historic Route 66 landscape

from every angle, knowing it would not be standing much longer...[In 1988, the barn's immense 60'-diameter roof finally collapsed. The cost of repair: a staggering \$165,000.]...

Luke Robison, a retired builder and carpenter, read a newspaper account of the barns' terrible condition that five decades of deterioration had exacted on it. Robison himself first chanced upon the Round Barn while exploring Route 66 on a date with Anna [his wife] in the 1930s....By the time Robison read a newspaper account of the barn's condition five decades later, the years had exacted a precious toll. Arcadia never rebounded from a fire that consumed half of the town in 1924. Interstate highways robbed Route 66 of its vitality. The Round Barn, once the materialization of robust spirit, degenerated into a conspicuous symbol of decline....

Robison's hands-on orchestration of a restoration [in collaboration with the Arcadia Historical and Preservation Society and others] that would have challenged experienced professionals demanded dedication from an unlikely assemblage of preservation novices. An "Over the Hill" senior 60s group—not allergic to hard work or fund raisers—came together to save the barn.

The group quickly acknowledges that without countless hours of volunteer work and generous donations, which ranged from a few pennies up to seven thousand dollars, their project would never have been completed. Business men with heavy equipment and operators seemed to know just when their help was needed most. The Arcadia Round Barn was completely restored and opened to the public in 1992.

The hands-on local restoration of the Round Barn of Arcadia has won the admiration of professional preservationists. In 1993, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the saving of the 1898 Arcadia Round barn its national honors award for "outstanding crafts and preservation." The "Over the Hill" Gang restored the barn over four years for a total cost of only \$65,000—about one third the original estimate.

Today, the Round Barn continues to host local Arcadia functions and is a popular tourist site and gift shop along Historic Route 66. In 2007, it hosted approximately 5,850 visitors from all 50 states and 44 foreign countries. This was a higher number of visitors compared to previous years because POPS (a nearby Route 66-themed business described shortly) opened its doors in 2007. Rutgers University has obtained from the Round Barn detailed data from the log book of visitors as of spring-summer 2007. Of the 2,589 visitors to this historic site as of spring-summer 2007 (for which visitor log book data were available), 2,158 (83 percent) were from the United States and 431 (17 percent) were from abroad. Of the 2,158 domestic visitors, the greatest proportion of visitors (1,305 or 60 percent) lived in Oklahoma; however, 853 visitors (or 40 percent) came from the rest of the United States, including travelers from distant states, such as 81 from California and 30 from Florida. International Round Barn visitors came from around the globe, including 79 from Germany, 57 from England, 55 from Norway, and 39 from Italy. Long distance honors go to three hardy souls from Australia, seven from New Zealand, and one from China. Kudos are also in order to those coming from such distant countries as Iceland, Saudi Arabia, and Poland, to name just a few examples.

Not surprisingly, local Arcadia businesses ranging from the Biker Shak (a motorcycle apparel store) to 2 Brothers Pizza secure sales from the visitors to the Round Barn and others trekking on the Mother Road.

A relatively new addition (as of 2007) to Oklahoma's historic Route 66 landscape and just down the road from the Round Barn, POPS is one of the most distinctive features of the small town of Arcadia—as it might be anywhere for that matter. Fronting POPS is a 66-foot-tall, four-ton steel structure, decked out with enough LEDs to make Rockefeller Center blush. It is shaped like a bottle.

A soda pop bottle to be exact.

The effervescent monument, visible from miles away, beckons drivers to stop in for a bite to eat and a bottle of soda pop. POPS is a gas station, restaurant, and convenience store. Along with an All-American burger, fries, and milkshake menu, POPS offers more than 500 varieties of soda pop from around the world. Carbonated standards like Coca-Cola and Pepsi are available, but so are bottles of Leninade Soviet Style Soda, Jackson Hole Huckleberry Soda, and Rejuvenizer from the Scary People.

“The landmark architecture behind the creation of POPS reflects the hope and enthusiasm for Route 66's future role in our country, and represents the spirit and individuality that made Route 66 the adventure highway many enthusiasts enjoy today,” explained POPS architect Rand Elliott. The essence of POPS is the spirit of Route 66. Visitors experience the past and leave with the sense they have discovered a new destination and adventure along the way.



International soda pop is artfully displayed at POPS



The Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma

Its design incorporates many Route 66 themes. The signature LED soda bottle is 66 feet total, the building is constructed at a 66 degree angle from the road, and the parking lot originally contained 66 spaces for cars (since expanded because of customer demand).

As of August 2009, POPS had served more than 900,000 people since opening in 2007, averaging 1,000 customers per day. The bulk of POPS' customers come from the Greater Oklahoma region, though POPS has successfully attracted visitors from countries like Spain, Germany, China, and Japan. Not surprisingly, it has generated considerable tax revenue to Arcadia, as was earlier described in our case study summary.

Because of POPS, other local business owners have said they have seen boosts in their clientele, including Misty Reznicek, owner of Timeless Accents, an antique and gift shop, Melody Wilson, owner of a local Subway, and Danny and Vi Davis, owner of The Windmill Shops, a shopping center located next to the historic Round Barn. Further, POPS has benefited the Round Barn as some of POPS' many customers visit that iconic structure, which has also brought a new wave of younger visitors to the Round Barn. Thus, the Round Barn and POPS have a mutually beneficial relationship and further demonstrate how old and new on the Mother Road can be complementary.

### **The Route 66 Museum of Clinton, Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma Route 66 Museum (formerly the Museum of the Western Trails) opened in 1995 and is operated by the Oklahoma Historical Society, a state agency.

Exhibits begin with "The World's Largest Curio Cabinet," home of special treasures collected from along the route. Following the Introduction gallery, the museum tells the story of Route 66 by decades (over six decades), with 10,000 square feet of exhibit space. There are seven galleries beginning with the 1920s. Along the way, visitors see vehicles and listen to music while they experience the history and culture of each decade concerning road construction, transportation, lodging, restaurants, garages, curio shops, attractions, and other artifacts, graphics, and videos. At the end of their trip down the "Main Street of America," visitors catch their breath in the drive-in theater, before stopping in the "Curio" gift shop with its wide selection of signs, books, videos, clothing, toys, games, and numerous other mementos.

tos of Route 66 and the Museum. The Museum also has a park with exterior exhibits, such as the 1950s Valentine Diner and Route 66 Picnic Benches.

The Oklahoma Route 66 Museum is the largest Mother-Road-themed museum along the highway. Not surprisingly, it attracts significant visitation, many from abroad.

Of the museum's 31,664 total visitors in 2007, about two-thirds (21,324 visitors) came from the United States and about one third (10,340 visitors) came from abroad. Outside of Oklahoma, the top three states from which U.S. visitors came were Texas, California, and Missouri (with 1,901; 1,548; and 989 visitors respectively). The top four countries abroad from which visitors came to the Clinton Route 66 Museum were Germany, Norway, Canada, and Italy (with 1,256; 807; 682; and 639 respectively). But, let us applaud those coming from yet more distant lands such as Australia (389 visitors), and Egypt, Taiwan, and Turkey (about 5 visitors apiece) to name a few examples.

Further, the museum's director, Pat Smith, estimates that an additional 3,000 visitors just come to its gift shop and/or just tour the museum's exterior. Therefore, total annual visitation to the Route 66 museum in Clinton is about 35,000 (32,000 gallery entrants and 3,000 gift shop/exterior display visitors).

The visitation figures noted in the above tables and text are quite significant. To set the broader context, the total visitors to the Clinton Route 66 Museum (about 35,000) is almost four times the number of people who live in Clinton (about 9,000). The foreign visitors alone (10,340 in 2009) exceed the Clinton total resident population. Clinton, in west-central Oklahoma, is not an easy place to come to from abroad, yet thousands have made that trek—a tribute to Route 66's appeal and Oklahoma's museum on the Mother Road.

Local Clinton businesses obviously benefit from this tourist trade. For example, the local Hampton Inn noted that many of its guests visit the Route 66 Museum. A local restaurant, the Café Downtown Clinton, concluded that the "whole town receives a lot of support from Route 66 and the museum."

### Route 66 Rendezvous in San Bernardino, California

Route 66 and the automobile are a natural and powerful synthesis, and not surprisingly communities have sponsored Route 66-themed car shows as a means to showcase themselves and attract tourists and visitor spending. We report on two prominent examples in California and Illinois.

The Rendezvous Car Show began in 1990 as a project of the San Bernardino Convention and Visitors Bureau (SBCVB). The intention was to create an event that reflected the ideal-



Fun for the whole family at the Route 66 Rendezvous in San Bernardino, California



1940 Chevrolet Coupe Master Deluxe Street Rod at the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair

ized Southern California lifestyle of the 1950s and 1960s, while showcasing the modern-day downtown of San Bernardino. It has become one of San Bernardino's signature events, a major local pump-primer, and a pilgrimage for many classic car owners.

The Rendezvous Car Show is the intersection between Route 66 and automobile culture. The show is touted by its main sponsor (Stater Bros. Markets) as a place where "car buffs from all over the country gather in San Bernardino to get their 'Kicks on Route 66.'" The Rendezvous logo prominently incorporates an iconic California Route 66 road sign.

The Rendezvous Car Show is a significant event with large economic benefits. The first Rendezvous took place in 1990 with 300 vehicles and 4,000 spectators. Since then these figures have grown geometrically. At the 2009 Rendezvous, over 500,000 visitors came to view 1,700 registered cars. Because admissions to spectators is free, there is no sure way of determining where the visitors came from, although SBCVB estimates around 60 percent of the crowd are locals (within a 20 mile radius of San Bernardino) and 40 percent are "non-locals" (those who reside beyond the 20 mile radius).

Although the event is free to spectators, it generates significant revenue from its automobile registrants, about \$150,000 in 2009. More important to the local economy is that the four-day, three-night event, spanning 35 blocks of downtown San Bernardino, produces a weekend's worth of local spending. According to a 2004 economic impact survey conducted by the SBCVB, the Rendezvous Car Show puts \$43 million into San Bernardino's local economy through spending on restaurants, hotels, gasoline purchases, and retail spending. San Bernardino businesses are well aware of the economic implications of the event; as written in the *San Bernardino County Sun*, "local merchants lucky to be situated downtown [say] they wait all year for Rendezvous."

The money that goes back into the local economy is the return product of significant local investment. For instance, an impressive community volunteer base is responsible in carrying out the four-day, three-night event. Over the years, as many as 2,700 volunteers have been reported to have assisted, underscoring the importance of this event to the city of San Bernardino.

While the California Rendezvous Car Show was one of the first major Route 66-themed such events, others have taken up the same theme, with a prominent example being the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair in Springfield, Illinois.

### **The Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair in Springfield, Illinois**

Held annually since 2001, the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair is a three-day event held every third weekend in September. The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) markets the event as the biggest car show in the Midwestern United States, and rightfully so: visitors can expect to see nearly 1,000 classic cars from the 1930s, 40s, 50s, and 60s.

Far more than a display of classic cars, event organizers continuously add activities to entertain their growing visitor base. A vibrant street bazaar emerges in downtown Springfield, and visitors may peruse a wide variety of vendors for food and merchandise. The festival has attracted an increasing number of national commercial vendors. The highlight of the weekend is the Route 66 City Nights parade, when the show registrants may take part in a massive downtown cruise. Thousands of visitors line the city street to wave and cheer for their favorite classic cars, a roaring procession of souped-up engines, vivid paint jobs, and enough chrome to illuminate the nighttime event with a sleek metallic sheen.

The SCVB heralds the Mother Road Festival as one of the city's signature events. There is a palpable excitement that builds every year around the time of the Festival as the town prepares for a swell of visitors and an abundance of local and national media attention. About 80,000 attendees come to Springfield to see the nearly 1,000 classic cars, and tourism bureaus throughout the state of Illinois recommend the festival as a must-see event. These attendees pump an estimated \$1 million into the local economy.

The fact that the festival is held in the historic downtown quarters of Springfield is a major drawing point. Some people have reported coming to the event specifically because it was held in downtown Springfield, which combines an active, modern business corridor with preserved nineteenth and twentieth century structures. Visitors may simultaneously view the car show and tour the local architecture, some of which are national historic sites. Several streets are closed off so that car show participants may park their vehicles and allow spectators to view them enjoying the downtown atmosphere. According to Springfield's former mayor Tim Davlin, "Street festivals such as this allow us to showcase our historic sites alongside hundreds of historic automobiles."



1957 Pontiac Star Chief Sedan at the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival and Car Fair

**SECTION SIX: OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ROAD**

# Support for Route 66 Preservation

The National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program has assembled a lengthy Directory of Financial and Technical Assistance that can be used to support the Mother Road through many ways such as identifying historic resources and subsidizing their rehabilitation. We recommend the reader peruse that NPS resource. We will not consider the full roster of potential aids, but rather will focus on a few critical ones for future consideration, organized as follows.

- Programs exclusively focused on Route 66
- Programs in use along the Route (yet not exclusive to it) which can be enhanced
- Programs barely utilized along the Route—with considerable future potential

A prime example of the first type of aid is the cost-share grants made available by the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. These can be used to support the preservation of the most significant and representative historic Route 66 resources.

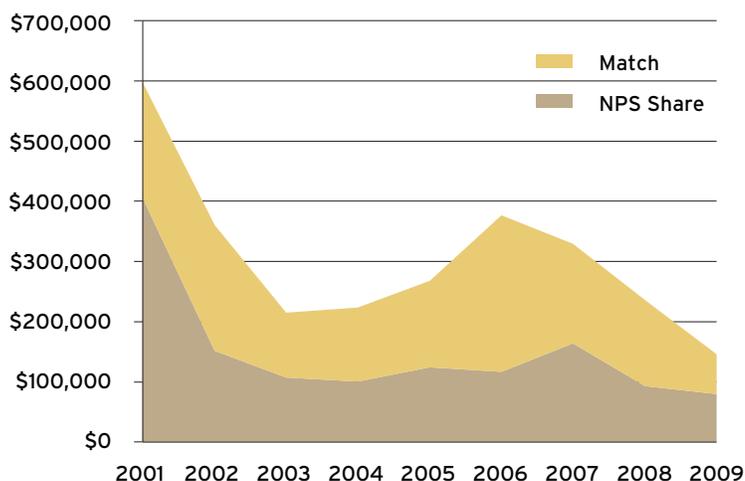
The total amount given out by the NPS since the cost-share program began in 2001 is about \$1.34 million, matched by about \$1.41 million supplied by recipients of the grants. (The 50 percent cost-share requirement is a minimum, and applicants often exceed it.) Overall, therefore, the amount of money mobilized by the grant program (Table 8) is about \$2.75 million over nine years (\$3.61 million adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2009 dollars), or an average of about \$306,000 annually (\$401,000 annually adjusted for inflation). There have been approximately 85 cost-share grants to date (including multiple components of a single project), so the average grant is about \$32,000 (\$2.75 million ÷ 85) or \$42,000 adjusted for inflation (\$3.61 million ÷ 85).

The cost-share grants were used in eight of the Rutgers case studies (Table 4), and the program has also aided the refurbishment of many other iconic Route 66 resources (e.g., Wigwam Motel, Soulsby Service Station, and neon signs in Albuquerque). It has also supported surveys/other activities that further the identification and preservation of the Route 66 historic fabric (e.g., New Mexico oral history project, Missouri Route 66 inventory survey, and Nob Hill, Albuquerque, preservation brochure).

The cost-share program focuses in laser fashion on its mission of supporting the preservation of the most significant and representative historic Route 66 resources. It has aided important resources and has leveraged federal dollars by more than 2:1 (Table 8). Yet, its overall level of funding activity for a 2,400-mile Route is modest, as noted above, and with its priority focus on historic preservation, other activities such as marketing, economic development and other needs remain. Some of these latter activities can be supported by the programs described below, and complement the financial and technical resources offered by the NPS.

Table 8: Funding from NPS Route 66 Cost-Share Program by Year, 2001-2009

Year	NPS Share	Match	Total
2001	\$406,200	\$191,471	\$597,671
2002	\$151,226	\$209,167	\$360,393
2003	\$107,275	\$107,420	\$214,695
2004	\$100,394	\$123,569	\$223,963
2005	\$124,124	\$143,958	\$268,082
2006	\$117,102	\$259,747	\$376,849
2007	\$163,516	\$166,116	\$329,632
2008	\$92,875	\$142,925	\$235,800
2009	\$79,704	\$66,737	\$146,440
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,342,416</b>	<b>\$1,411,110</b>	<b>\$2,753,525</b>





Allen's Fillin' Station, built in the late 1920s in Commerce, Oklahoma

## Successful Programs with More Potential

### Main Street Program

A prime example of a program to help market Route 66 is Main Street. There are 25 Main Street communities along Route 66 and they have achieved much success. Surely, however, there is application beyond the current roster of 25 towns along a 2,400-mile Mother Road that would benefit from a strategy combining preservation and economic development.

This analysis recognizes the challenge of small communities mounting a full-fledged Main Street initiative. Yet creative applications can meet this problem head on, such as starting with a pilot level of Main Street and then ramping upward as resources permit. This might entail "Aspiring," "Affiliate," and "Associate"-tier memberships in Main Street such as that adopted by Missouri. Much can be gained from thoughtful discussion by the Route 66 community, National Trust Main Street Center, NPS, and others on ways to enhance the Main Street presence on the Mother Road.

Further, vigilance is needed to keep Main Street flourishing as cash-starved states and local governments may rethink their support for the program. This is no idle fear. For instance, the preservation advocacy group Landmarks Illinois recently (April 2010) put the Illinois Main Street program tops on their "Ten Most Endangered List" due to state and other cutbacks that have left the Illinois Main Street office "all but closed." This is particularly unfortunate given Illinois' long and proud participation in Main Street generally and its outstanding Main Street Route 66 efforts in particular.

### National Scenic Byways Program

Another example of a program that has been used to some extent along Route 66 but could see much wider application is the National Scenic Byways Program, part of the Federal Highway Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. This program has two main components: designation of National Scenic Byways (and All-American Roads, a higher des-

ignation with more stringent criteria), and a grant program providing assistance for programs related to highways that have been designated Scenic Byways under the national program or a state equivalent.

To date, four of the eight Route 66 states (Arizona, Illinois, New Mexico, and Oklahoma) have had their portions of the Mother Road designated as National Scenic Byways, and Arizona has had its portion upgraded to an All-American Road. Missouri's portion has been designated at the state level, and preparations are currently under way to meet the criteria for it to be federally designated. Of the remaining Route 66 states, California and Kansas are actively working to designate their portions of Route 66, while Texas does not have a National Scenic Byways program at all.

All of the Route 66 states that have had portions of Route 66 designated as National Scenic Byways (or the state-level equivalent) have applied for and received assistance under the National Scenic Byways grant program for projects related to Route 66 (See Table 9). The types of projects receiving this funding have varied from state to state, but in general very little assistance has gone to projects focused on historic preservation specifically, due largely to the restrictions the grant program puts on projects of this sort. Funding from this grant program has instead gone mainly to physical improvements to the roads, development of interpretive materials, and marketing efforts aimed at encouraging Byways-related tourism—all critically important activities.

There is considerable potential for further use of the National Scenic Byways program for the benefit of Route 66 and the communities along it. Designation of the portions of the road that have not yet been awarded National Scenic Byways status is an obvious first step. Since some of the Route 66 states have already been very successful in achieving National Scenic Byways designation for their portions, there is considerable reason to believe that designation of the remaining portions would be achievable. Missouri has already begun the process of fulfilling the prerequisites to apply for federal designation. California and Kansas, which have already designated other highways as National Scenic Byways, could benefit greatly by applying for Byways designation for their portions of Route 66. Texas has so far shown little interest in the National Scenic Byways program, but if that should change, the Texas portion of Route 66 is one of the best candidates among highways in that state for federal designation. There is also considerable potential for further use of the Byways grant program for projects related to Route 66, especially in the states that have already designated it as a National Scenic Byway and in the other states, if and when they secure designation for their portions. This program would be especially useful in providing assistance for tourism-related projects that are not specifically related to historic preservation, such as marketing, development of interpretive materials, and physical improvements to the road to facilitate tourist access (such as roadside rest areas and interpretive centers).

The remaining programs discussed in this study, associated with transportation and tax credits, are huge in financial scale—offering hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars. Preservationists should go “where the money is.”

Table 9: America's Byways Funding of Route 66 and Total Projects by State, 1995 to 2009

State	Total Route 66	Total Byways	Percent Route 66
Arizona	\$576,030	\$11,855,147	4.9%
California	-	\$11,168,273	0.0%
Illinois	\$1,228,600	\$14,302,194	8.6%
Kansas	-	\$3,828,335	0.0%
Missouri	\$458,400	\$2,986,012	15.4%
New Mexico	\$2,175,700	\$13,571,791	16.0%
Oklahoma	\$1,021,235	\$3,593,132	28.4%
Texas	-	\$160,000	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,459,965</b>	<b>\$61,464,884</b>	<b>8.9%</b>

Data Source: National Scenic Byways Program



The Leaning Water Tower along Route 66 near Groom, Texas

**TABLE 10 Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities:  
Eligible Activities and Funding (FY 1992-2009)**

*FY 1992-2009 funding by TE Activities category*

<b>Transportation Enhancement Activity<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>All United States</b>	<b>All Eight Route 66 States</b>	<b>On Route 66 in All Eight Route 66 States</b>
1 Pedestrian and bicycle facilities	48.40%	43.20%	34.90%
2 Safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists	0.40%	0.40%	0.00%
3 Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, including historic battlefields	2.40%	4.40%	0.00%
4 Scenic or historic highway program including tourist and welcome center facilities	5.80%	9.50%	11.00%
5 Landscaping and other scenic beautification	18.80%	20.60%	16.70%
6 Historic Preservation	3.60%	3.80%	6.70%
7 Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities	9.90%	8.20%	25.90%
8 Preservation of abandoned railway corridors and the conversion and use of the corridors for pedestrian or bicycle trails	7.50%	6.40%	0.00%
9 Inventory, control, and removal of outdoor advertising	0.30%	0.50%	0.00%
10 Archaeological planning and research	0.50%	0.50%	0.00%
11 Environmental mitigation	1.00%	0.60%	0.00%
12 Establishment of transportation museums	1.40%	1.80%	4.80%
<b>Total Percentage</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total \$ Millions</b>	<b>\$9,279</b>	<b>\$2,559</b>	<b>\$133</b>
<b>Annual \$ Millions</b>	<b>\$515</b>	<b>\$142</b>	<b>\$7</b>

Source: National Transportation Enhancement Clearinghouse, 2009.  
<sup>a</sup> The term Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities means any of the 12 categories listed in this table as they relate to surface transportation.

## Funding for Transportation Enhancement Activities

The first program discussed here, Funding for Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities, is of major scale, has been utilized on Route 66, and may yet be applied more aggressively on the Mother Road in the future.

By way of background, TE Activities are a component of three major transportation acts: Intermodal Surface Transportation Act (ISTEA) of 1991; its successor (1998), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21); and the latest (2005), Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). All of the above were transportation funding behemoths (ISTEA, about \$155 billion; TEA-21, about \$220 billion; and SAFETEA-LU, about \$280 billion), and the TE Activities components within these programs were also quite large (ISTEA, \$2.6 billion; TEA-21, \$3.8 billion; and SAFETEA-LU, \$4.2 billion).

To receive TE Activities funding, a project must (1) be related to surface transportation *and* (2) include an eligible enhancement activity. There are currently 12 eligible activities that are listed and described in Table 10. The percentage of spending by TE Activities category is shown for the cumulative program to date (FY 1992–FY 2009) for: (1) the entire United States (\$9.279 billion), (2) the entire eight Route 66 states (\$2.559 billion), and (3) the Route 66 portion of these eight states (\$133 million).

We present this heretofore undisclosed information for the purposes of spurring discussion of TE Activities and the Mother Road. Has Route 66 received its “fair share” of TE Activities funding in the eight Route 66 states (\$133 million of \$2.559 billion, or 5 percent)? Equally as important is the emphasis of TE Activities. It is understandable that TE Activities spending on the Mother Road has emphasized improving pedestrian facilities, preserving historic transportation infrastructure, and establishing transportation museums, for example. (See Table 10 for details.) Yet have other TE Activities suffered as a consequence? For instance, TE Activities investment for environmental mitigation (TE Activities category 11) surely has a place on Route 66 and would further quality of life and economic development there. Route 66 would also benefit much from greater TE Activities spending on historic preservation (TE Activities category 6). This spending can be used for many purposes, including preservation of buildings in historic districts and access improvements to historic sites and buildings. So a good discussion is needed by the Route 66 community and state officials involved in TE Activities investments concerning what TE Activities monies can be made available to the Mother Road, and for what TE Activities purposes on the Mother Road.

The potential dollars to be claimed are quite substantial. For example, increasing the TE Activities investment on Route 66 from \$133 million to \$200 million (the latter still a small share of the entire eight Route 66 state total \$2.559 billion TE Activities investment) and allocating, say, 10 percent of the approximate \$70 million (\$200 million minus \$133 million) added TE Activities investment for historic preservation (up from the current 6.7 percent apportionment for this TE Activities category) would realize \$7 million for historic preservation on Route 66—or double the cumulative cost-share funding for this purpose to date.



The Pryor Creek bridge, just east of Chelsea, Oklahoma

# Underutilized Programs with Future Potential

## Tax Credits

Some of the most potent aids for historic preservation, economic development, and affordable housing in the United States are the federal historic tax credit (federal HTC), the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), and the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC).

From the late 1970s when it was first effected, through 2008 (FY 1979–2008), about 45,000 projects nationally with a total rehabilitation value<sup>4</sup> of \$40 billion (\$77 billion if adjusted for inflation) have utilized the 20 percent<sup>5</sup> federal HTC (i.e., qualified investment of \$1 million in historic fabric-sensitive rehabilitation secures an immediate \$200,000 credit against federal taxes). Thirty states total, including four of the eight Route 66 states (Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, and Oklahoma) allow a state historic tax credit (state HTC) that “piggybacks” on the federal HTC. The LIHTC (up to a 100 percent credit over ten years) and NMTC (a 39 percent credit over seven years) are also major programs both nationally and in the eight Route 66 states.

Many entities (developers and community development groups) in the eight Route 66 states have availed themselves of the above-described programs. Just between FY2005 and FY2009, 960 federal HTC projects with a value of \$4.033 billion were effected in the eight states, a consequential share of the total national federal HTC activity in the same period (4,409 projects with a value of \$15.796 billion). From its inception in 1987 through 2008, the eight Route 66 states have witnessed cumulative production of 528,000 LIHTC units with a total credit allocation of \$2.844 billion—again, a consequential share of national aggregate

4 Value Certified for tax purposes or, more technically, “Part 3” of the federal HTC process.

5 Until 1986, the credit was 25 percent.



Though lined with gas pumps, Arizona's Hackberry General store sells Route 66 memorabilia, not gas



Billboards line a stretch of Route 66 outside Querino, Arizona

LIHTC activity over the same years (1.76 million units with a credit allocation of \$10.013 billion). The eight Route 66 states have also been the home of many NMTC projects.

While the federal HTC, LIHTC, and NMTC are financial behemoths in scale (both nationally and in the eight Route 66 states), *we find only trace or infrequent utilization of these aids along Route 66*. For example, in the last 30 years, only 5 HTC projects were effected along Route 66 in Oklahoma—a state proud of its Mother Road history and savvy in the application of the federal HTC.

It is imperative to understand *why* there is light utilization of major tax credit programs along Route 66, for many millions of dollars are at stake. Rutgers research has found the following impediments to use of the federal HTC on Route 66:

1. *Potential users are unaware of the program or are misinformed* (e.g., erroneously believe that listing on the National Register of Historic Places precludes adaptive reuse).
2. *Potential users don't want to deal with government forms and regulations*, especially if the IRS is involved.
3. *The HTC doesn't apply* (e.g., the modest-scale Route 66 business does not need a tax shelter) *or can't be readily used* (e.g., the modest Mother Road rehabilitation projects cannot afford the tax credit-required professional service expenses).

Our research on this subject is just a start. We need to better understand more comprehensively the constraints to federal HTC, LIHTC, and NMTC along the Mother Road and to address these constraints. Some relief may be in the offing by passage of HR-1375 and S-1743 (considered yet not adopted by the House and Senate in 2010) which, among other changes, would have increased the federal HTC to 30 percent in “small deals” (projects \$5 million and under).<sup>6</sup> States can also help by adopting a state HTC which can be combined with the federal HTC, a “twinning” that has often worked to spur interest and investment in the federal HTC. (Recall that only four of the eight Route 66 states have a state HTC.) Yet these possible changes are just a start. Route 66 will never realize its full potential if it remains largely outside the federal HTC, LIHTC, and NMTC programs as these are some of the main sources of aid in the United States to encourage preservation, affordable housing, and economic development, respectively. Therefore, good collective discussion on the subject of tax credits and the Mother Road is needed to craft appropriate solutions.

6 Other changes in the proposed legislation would: increase the value of state HTCs; eliminate restrictions in non-profit and government agency tenancy in HTC projects; lower the “substantial rehabilitation” requirement of the current HTC to include moderate rehabilitation; and increase the credit percentage from 20 percent for HTC projects enhancing energy efficiency and renewable energy. These amendments are discussed in detail in the Technical Report, and all would aid application of the federal HTC on Route 66.

TABLE 11: Illustrative TIF Application in the Entire Eight-State Route 66 Corridor

Year	Total Available Property Value	Estimated Annual Increment to Property Value	TIF Resource	
			Annual	Cumulative
2000	\$21,878,602,781	\$437,572,056	\$3,613,785	\$3,613,785
2001	\$22,316,174,836	\$446,323,497	\$3,686,061	\$7,299,845
2002	\$22,762,498,333	\$455,249,967	\$3,759,782	\$11,059,627
2003	\$23,217,748,299	\$464,354,966	\$3,834,977	\$14,894,604
2004	\$23,682,103,265	\$473,642,065	\$3,911,677	\$18,806,281
2005	\$24,155,745,331	\$483,114,907	\$3,989,910	\$22,796,192
2006	\$24,638,860,237	\$492,777,205	\$4,069,709	\$26,865,901
2007	\$25,131,637,442	\$502,632,749	\$4,151,103	\$31,017,003
2008	\$25,634,270,191	\$512,685,404	\$4,234,125	\$35,251,128
2009	\$26,146,955,595	\$522,939,112	\$4,318,807	\$39,569,936

Source: Rutgers University.

### Tax Increment Financing

There are yet other tax-related programs that can aid Route 66 that bear discussion, such as creating a tax increment financing (TIF) district for the Mother Road. For example, just the residential properties in the Route 66 Corridor (a potential component of the TIF) have a market value (as of 2000) of \$219 billion. Even a small capture of taxes (10 percent or, say, the taxes on one-tenth of the total Route 66 Corridor market value, or \$21.9 billion) derived from a modest increment to the value of the Route 66 TIF could raise substantive resources, as is evident from Table 11, which shows that about \$40 million cumulatively could be generated over a decade from a Route 66 TIF. So much can be gained from considering a TIF program for the Mother Road as well as related strategies (e.g., special improvement districts).

### Conclusions

The total annual, direct economic activity related to Route 66 from various sources amounts conservatively to about \$132 million annually. Rutgers applies an input-output (I-O) model to this direct spending and finds millions of additional dollars in multiplier benefits. These include \$262 million in overall (direct and multiplier) economic output, \$126 million in wealth creation (or gross domestic product), and \$37 million in public tax revenues. While these sums are clearly important in their own right, the yet more significant contribution of Route 66 is at a local level. As documented in the case studies, in many smaller communities along Route 66, tourism related to the Mother Road is one of the most significant, if not the only, “economic game in town.” The restored Route 66-themed motel, restaurant and gift shop may not have a high-dollar business volume relative to the much larger regional and state economies, but they anchor the downtown in many small communities and capitalize on a Route 66-linked past and future.

Much is being done already to enhance investment in Route 66 and to further the economic contribution and place-remaking afforded by the Mother Road. The NPS Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program is applauded for its efforts to date through its cost-share grants. Yet some of the most significant federal incentive programs in the United States today, such as funding for Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities, the National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program, and the historic tax credit (HTC), are not fully utilized along Route 66. These present exciting opportunities for advancing historic preservation and economic development on the Mother Road, but will require enhanced cooperation amongst the various states and entities involved with Route 66. It is hoped that this study serves as a catalyst for a new era of cooperation and revitalization in the preservation of this iconic American landscape.

In sum, the Mother Road provides both spiritual and economic nurturing. As many a beleaguered mom, however, it too needs understanding and attention at times and hopefully the Rutgers research on Route 66 can provide an information forum for sustainable and successful preservation and economic development of this fabled highway.

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