

ILLINOIS HISTORIC ROUTE 66 INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN



SPRINGFIELD AREA ADDENDUM

December 2022



Front cover: A view of the Illinois State Capitol building from the brick-lined East Capitol Avenue. The section of road from 6th Street to 2nd Street served as the Route 66 corridor from 1926 to 1930 (2021).

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SUBMITTED TO:

City of Springfield, Illinois
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Springfield, IL 62701

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The restored “sputnik” from the Bel-Aire Manor Motel hangs in the Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum (2021).

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Walking on original brick pavement from a 1930–1933 Route 66 alignment in Springfield (2021).



A vintage sign cutout at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).



Venue 1929, an event venue located along Route 66 in Springfield, was once a Cadillac dealership building (2021).



The Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum preserves Springfield artifacts from along the Mother Road (2021).

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION & VISIONING



SPRINGFIELD
ILLINOIS

A concept for a Route 66 shield and city name that would be installed on both sides of the railroad bridge that spans North 9th Street in Springfield (original developed by Ace Sign Co. in 2017).



The eastern terminus of Route 66 is in Chicago, Illinois (2007).

INTRODUCTION

Route 66 is the most legendary road in America. Generations of travelers have romanticized the highway as a symbol of unlimited mobility and the “freedom of the open road.” Its iconic status is enhanced by the unprecedented volume of music, books, films, and other art forms that depict it as the essence of America’s highway culture. Travelers still flock to Route 66 in search of nostalgic and modern experiences on the Mother Road.

U.S. Route 66 was established in 1926 as part of the new numbered U.S. Highway System. In 2026, Route 66 will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The City of Springfield, Illinois, is interested in sharing the rich stories of Route 66 with visitors.

This plan builds from a comprehensive Illinois Historic Route 66 Interpretive Master Plan published in 2008 (Zimmerman et al. 2008). It focuses specifically on the Springfield region and its resources, providing a framework for creating interpretive media to help Sangamon County travelers enjoy and experience all that Route 66 has to offer.

Route 66 in Illinois

Illinois serves as the beginning of Route 66, often advertised as “The Main Street of America.” Starting in Chicago, Route 66 travels 2,448 miles west through Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California ending in Santa Monica. In Illinois, the road travels about 300 miles from Chicago to East Saint Louis.

Illinois was the first state to completely pave its segment of Route 66. In 1914, an unpaved road that had been used for many years between Chicago and St. Louis was named and marked as the Pontiac Trail (Clark, 2021). In 1918, the Illinois State Highway System was created by issuing bonds to pay for the construction of “hard roads.” From 1921 to 1924, State Bond Issue 4 (SBI 4) funded the paving of the route between Chicago and St. Louis, closely following the Pontiac Trail. Laborers with teams of horses dragged equipment to prepare the roadbed. By 1924, SBI 4 was almost entirely paved.

When Route 66 was designated in 1926, it largely followed the already paved SBI 4 highway (NPS, 2009). It was completely signed through the state by 1927.

Route 66 was significant to the economies of small, rural towns in Illinois, which saw a boost in vehicle traffic. Specialized service stations and garages, overnight accommodations, and drive-in restaurants sprang up to serve early motorists. Truckers used the route to transport goods to and from larger cities. Route 66 was a connection to the world.

Unlike the western sections of Route 66 that wound through vast unpopulated landscapes, the Illinois route traveled through numerous rural towns and densely populated cities. According to the National Park Service (2009), a distinguishing feature of historic 66 in Illinois was the speed of its evolution. From the beginning, engineers worked to repair, upgrade, widen, and bypass as many rural towns as possible to keep the heavy traffic flowing, a precursor of the Interstate highway system. By 1936, Route 66 in Illinois was carrying more traffic than any other long-distance highway in the state.

During World War II, Route 66 in Illinois became important as a transportation route for military convoys and materials. Much of the original pavement of Route 66 was still in use, but it was deteriorating under the weight of heavy trucks and equipment. The Federal

Defense Highway Act of 1941 provided funding to upgrade the roads, creating four-lane, limited access highways that bypassed many towns.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 authorized the construction of the Interstate Highway System advocated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Many sections of Route 66 were incorporated into Interstate-55. Interstate highways replaced Route 66 as the main transportation route west.

Route 66 was deemed obsolete and decommissioned by the state in 1977. Remarkably, all but 13 miles of the final Route 66 alignment are still accessible in Illinois.

Route 66 in Sangamon County

Starting in 1926, the original alignment of Route 66 largely followed the path of Illinois Route 4 through the state.

Route 66 enters the northern boundary of Sangamon County just north of Williamsville on a frontage road that parallels Interstate 55. The 1926–1940 route turns left on Elm Street through the village and right on Main Street near the historic museum. After 1940, a safer route bypassed the town. The byway then hops onto Interstate 55 heading

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



Constructing Illinois Route 4 near Springfield.



Route 66 traveled through numerous rural towns in Illinois, like this section in Chenoa (2008).



A statue of Abraham Lincoln, sculpted by Andrew O'Connor in 1918, stands in front of the Illinois State Capitol building in Springfield (2007).

south to Sherman, as the old 66 route was cut off in 1976 with the completion of the freeway (Whittall, 2021).

In Sherman, there are two alignments of Route 66, although only one is signed. The original 1926–1936 route turned west on Andrew Road and south on Old Tipton School Road, eventually connecting to the original pavement in Carpenter Park (closed to driving since 1936). The Carpenter Park segment is on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1936–1977 route continues following Sherman Boulevard/Peoria Road southwest to Springfield (Whittall, 2021).

Springfield is the state capital of Illinois, located in the heart of the state. Route 66 has always served as an important transportation artery for the city. As the city grew and changed, so did the alignments of Route 66, creating a complex network of roads. The multiple alignment routes are documented on detailed maps in the Appendix.

According to the byway signage, the original 1926–1930 alignment of Route 66 followed the path of Illinois Route 4 through the western part of the city, stair stepping southwest along Taintor Road, 5th Street, N. Grand Avenue, 2nd Street, S. Grand Avenue, S. MacArthur

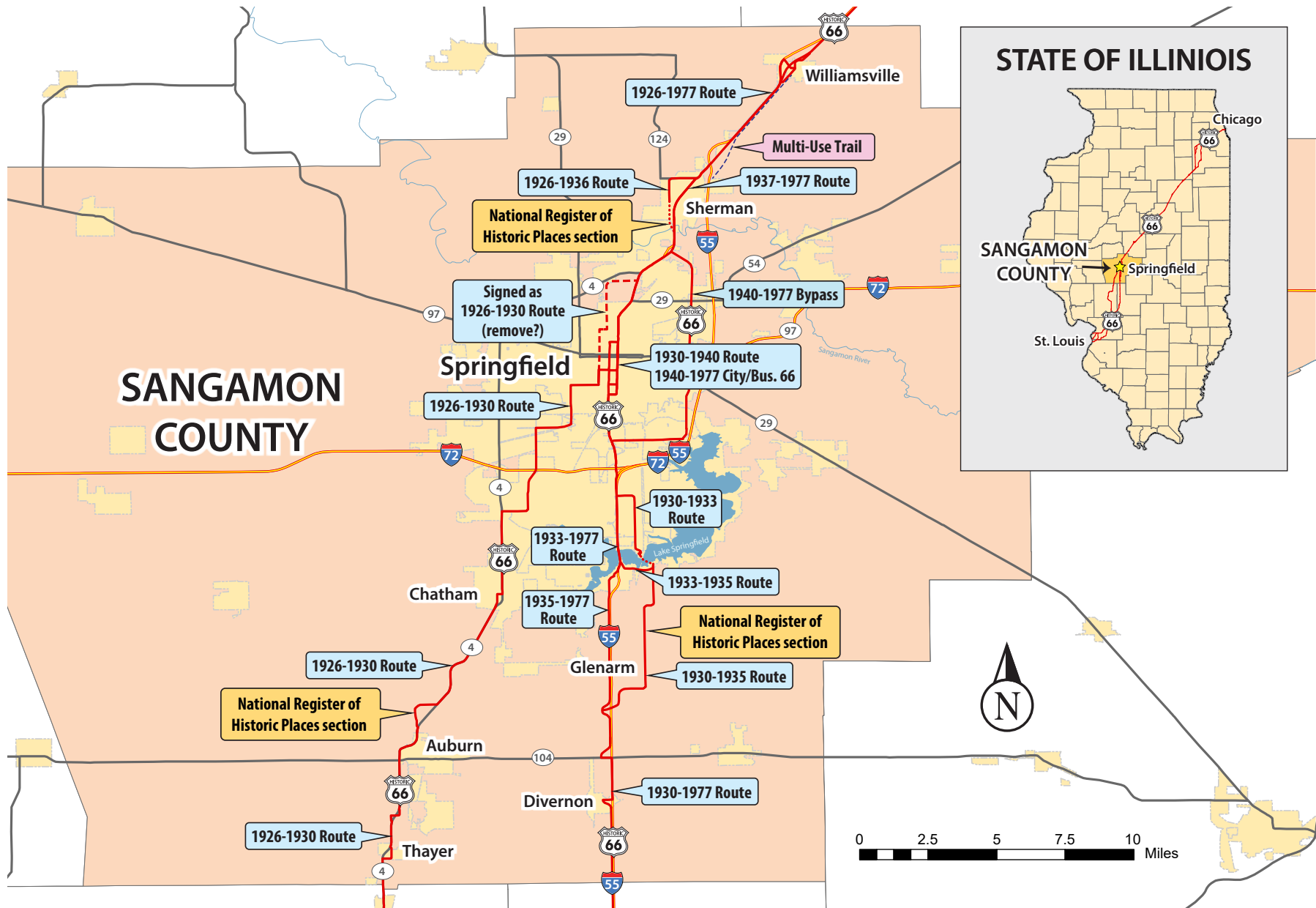
Boulevard, and Wabash Avenue, before heading south on current Highway 4 to Chatham, Auburn, and Thayer. A section of curving brick road just north of Auburn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Whittall, 2021).

Other sources claim that the 1926–1930 alignment did not turn on Taintor Road, but rather kept following Peoria Road/9th Street south until Enos Avenue, where it cut west to 6th Street, down to Capitol Avenue, and then rejoined the marked byway heading south on 2nd Street.

By 1930, the route had definitely shifted east to a secondary highway that ran straighter between the state capital and Litchfield, following Peoria Road/9th Street, cutting west on S. Grand Avenue, and back south on 6th Street to Glenarm and Divernon (Whittall, 2021).

In 1940, another alignment of Route 66 opened to bypass the city on the east using what today is called Dirksen Parkway and Stevenson Drive. This route was called Bypass 66 from 1940–45, Beltline 66 from 1945–55, and US 66 from 1955–77. The 1930–40 route through the city continued to serve travelers as City 66 from 1940–60 and Business 66 from 1960–77 (Joppich, 2006).

SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS, HISTORIC ROUTE 66 MAP





An original brick curve of Route 66 at the north end of Cotton Hill Road in Springfield (2007).

South of the city, the 1930–1977 route again follows Interstate 55. The 1930 alignment originally turned east off its current route using Toronto Road and North Cotton Hill Road, crossing Sugar Creek over a bridge and connecting to Olde Carriage Way. In the mid-1930s, the creek was dammed to create Lake Springfield and the roadway flooded. Old pavement from this alignment still runs below the lake. Route 66 was realigned to run straight south over a new bridge across the lake in 1933. The Olde Carriage Way 1930–1935 alignment is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Whittall, 2021).

The Springfield region has numerous historic and modern resources that directly connect to the story of Route 66.

Illinois is known as the “Land of Lincoln,” and Springfield has always been a major tourist destination for all things related to Abraham Lincoln. Route 66 was and is an important corridor for tourists visiting the Lincoln Home, Lincoln’s Tomb, the Old State Capitol, and other related attractions.

Classic eateries, such as the Cozy Dog Drive-In, the Maid Rite Sandwich Shop, Joe Rogers’ Original Recipe Chili Parlor, the Dew Chilli Parlor, and Motorheads

Bar & Grill provide a delicious sensory connection to the road. Unique museums and gathering spaces tell the lesser known stories of Route 66. Route History shares the Black experience along the highway, revealing that Route 66 didn’t mean freedom to everyone. The Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum shows the history of sign making, immersing visitors in the glow of neon.

Several sections of original Route 66 pavement are located in the region, with three being recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. They reveal the early engineering of roads and provide an one-of-a-kind authentic experience for visitors looking to connect with the historic highway.

Springfield is also the home of the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival since 2001, bringing together thousands of vintage cars, live music, and food.

Reviving Route 66 in Illinois

In 1989, Route 66 fans formed the Route 66 Association of Illinois with the purpose to “preserve, educate, promote and enjoy the past and present of U.S. Highway 66.” The organization operates the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame and

Museum in Pontiac. Signs marking the historic route were installed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in 1995.

In the late 1990s, the State of Illinois designated Illinois Route 66 as a state heritage tourism project. A non-profit organization, the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, was founded to manage the initiative and develop a Corridor Management Plan, completed in 2005.

On September 22, 2005, Historic Route 66 through Illinois was designated a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration. The Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project was made responsible for promoting and enhancing the byway. Three alignments are today identified with byway direction signs throughout the state: 1926–1930, 1930–1940, and 1940–1977.

Interpreting Route 66 in Illinois

In 2006, the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters consulting team, part of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was hired by the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project to develop a comprehensive interpretive master plan for the byway. The 277-page plan was completed in May 2008, which included

resource inventories for 90 communities along the byway and recommendations for interpretive programs and media.

In 2009–2010, the team was hired to create an addendum for the master plan that included five additional resources on the northern part of the route.

Also in 2009–2010, the team was hired to research, write, design, and fabricate 28 wayside exhibits for 16 different communities along the byway (the Springfield exhibit was installed at Knight’s Action Park). The exhibits feature a unique stainless steel, curved design inspired by 1950s car culture. Several also include pushbutton audio units that feature interviews of people who lived along the highway. Others have raised passport stations for making rubbings. This project was followed up in 2011 by three “international” wayside exhibits that welcomed travelers in different languages (one is installed at the Cozy Dog Drive-in).

In 2011–2012, the team was hired to research, write, design, and fabricate 12 experience hub kiosks that were installed in major communities. The design again incorporates a curved, metal appearance and showcases each community’s name lit by LED lights that change color. Each



Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit installed in Atlanta (2010).



Illinois Route 66 experience hub installed in Carlinville (2012).



An Illinois Route 66 metal silhouette statue of a gas station attendant installed across from the Dixie Truck Stop in McLean (2021).

kiosk holds three signs: a large map of the entire historic Route 66 byway through the state, a smaller map sign that provides orientation to regional attractions, and an interpretive sign that highlights stories from the region. Each also features a pushbutton audio unit that plays “Get your Kicks on Route 66” by Bobby Troup and a unique raised passport station. The Springfield experience hub was finalized in 2014 and installed at the Cozy Dog Drive-In. A Bloomington kiosk was also designed and installed in 2018.

In 2013–2014, the team was hired to design and fabricate 9 full-size metal silhouette statues along with associated wayside exhibits for different communities along the byway. A picnic table with two children eating was constructed for the Village of Sherman.

On July 31, 2018, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner signed legislation creating the Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission, which was charged with planning and sponsoring events, programs, and activities to celebrate the highway’s 100th anniversary in 2026. The Commission is made up of 20 members representing the interests, history, and importance of communities along Historic Route 66.

Springfield Addendum

In July 2021, the City of Springfield entered into an agreement with Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters to prepare a “Springfield Area Route 66 Interpretive Master Plan” for the Convention and Visitors Bureau. This will serve as an addendum to the interpretive master plan published in 2008, highlighting new Route 66 resources in the Springfield Area and providing recommendations for interpreting their stories. A major impetus for developing this plan is to create interpretive visitor opportunities for the upcoming Route 66 Centennial in 2026.

The plan is based on the following scope of work:

- Task 1: Site Analysis and Resource Inventory
- Task 2: Research, Analysis, Theme Writing, and Media Conceptual Design
- Task 3: Interpretive Master Plan Development

This document is the result of the one-year planning process.

PURPOSE & GOALS

The primary purpose of this interpretive plan replicates that of the 2008 comprehensive Interpretive Master Plan, which is to “identify the significant stories of the historic corridor in Illinois and to outline specific strategies to tell these stories to visitors and residents in an effective manner.”

Specific goals related to the Springfield Area Addendum include:

- Update target audience information based on more recent research data, especially data that connects to the Springfield area.
- Update the interpretive resources in the Springfield area to include new attractions, revise existing ones, and remove those that are no longer available.
- Supplement themes from the original plan with Springfield area specific stories and messages.
- Recommend specific interpretive strategies, programming, and media for the Springfield area based on the updated audiences, resources, and themes.

- Prioritize interpretive projects that can fulfill traveler opportunities for the Route 66 Centennial celebration in 2026 and beyond.

VISIONING

An online video conference visioning session was held with Springfield Route 66 stakeholders on November 4, 2021. Participants included representatives of the City of Springfield, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, the Illinois Office of Tourism, and several area attractions and businesses. The group was asked, “What outcomes would you like to see from the development of the Interpretive Master Plan?” Follow-up interviews were also conducted. The following are themes that arose during these discussions:

- The plan will serve as a foundation for communicating the vision and applying for grants and other funding.
- The plan needs to create a clear vision for moving forward, providing opportunities to implement parts of the plan as funding becomes available.

Courtesy of Oklahoma Route 66 Association



Route 66 celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2026.



An online video conference visioning session was held with stakeholders on November 4, 2021.



Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum boasts the largest Route 66 shield in the country (2021). Stakeholders identified that marketing of Route 66 attractions was important to keep visitors in the Springfield area for overnight stays.

- Coordination is needed to bring the efforts of diverse organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals together to support a cohesive story of Route 66 in the Springfield area. Working together can bring in more funding to implement the plan.
- Springfield needs to be marketed for its Route 66 attractions to keep visitors in the area overnight, rather than just driving through on their way to St. Louis or Chicago. Every store, restaurant, hotel, and other business along the road should advertise their connection to Route 66.
- Abraham Lincoln and Route 66 attractions should be marketed together. The vast majority of travelers on Route 66 already stop to visit the Lincoln attractions. However, advertising Route 66 at the Lincoln attractions could expose different audiences to the highway.
- The City of Springfield should define a north and south anchor of Route 66 and utilize those locations to market attractions between.
- The Springfield plan should connect to statewide Route 66 tourism initiatives.
- Younger audiences need to be engaged in the Route 66 story. Interactive experiences need to be planned that spark interest.
- A corridor revitalization plan and funding is needed to enhance aesthetics along Route 66 in Springfield, repair the roadway itself, improve visitor wayfinding, and create opportunities for businesses. The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission has funding to develop a 9th Street/Peoria Road Redevelopment Plan and a county-wide Route 66 Economic Enhancement Plan.
- Incorporating the perspective of Black travelers and Black business leaders connected to Route 66 is a significant story to share.
- The new Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center is an opportunity to connect travelers to Route 66 attractions.
- Updated wayfinding signage is needed in the Springfield area to better identify the corridor and its various alignments.
- The Illinois Route 66 Experience at Gate 2 of the state fairgrounds will be a major statewide attraction for byway travelers.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Interpretation is defined as a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes (Buchholz et al., 2015). Interpretive planning is a process of consensus development—of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why interpretation is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions, illustrated by the Planning Triangle:

Who?

Determine who the byway visitors are and the experiences they are seeking. This includes activities and visitor groups that are not currently being targeted.

Chapter 2: Route 66 Travelers

Why?

Confirm and/or further define the purpose, vision, and goals of developing a master plan for the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

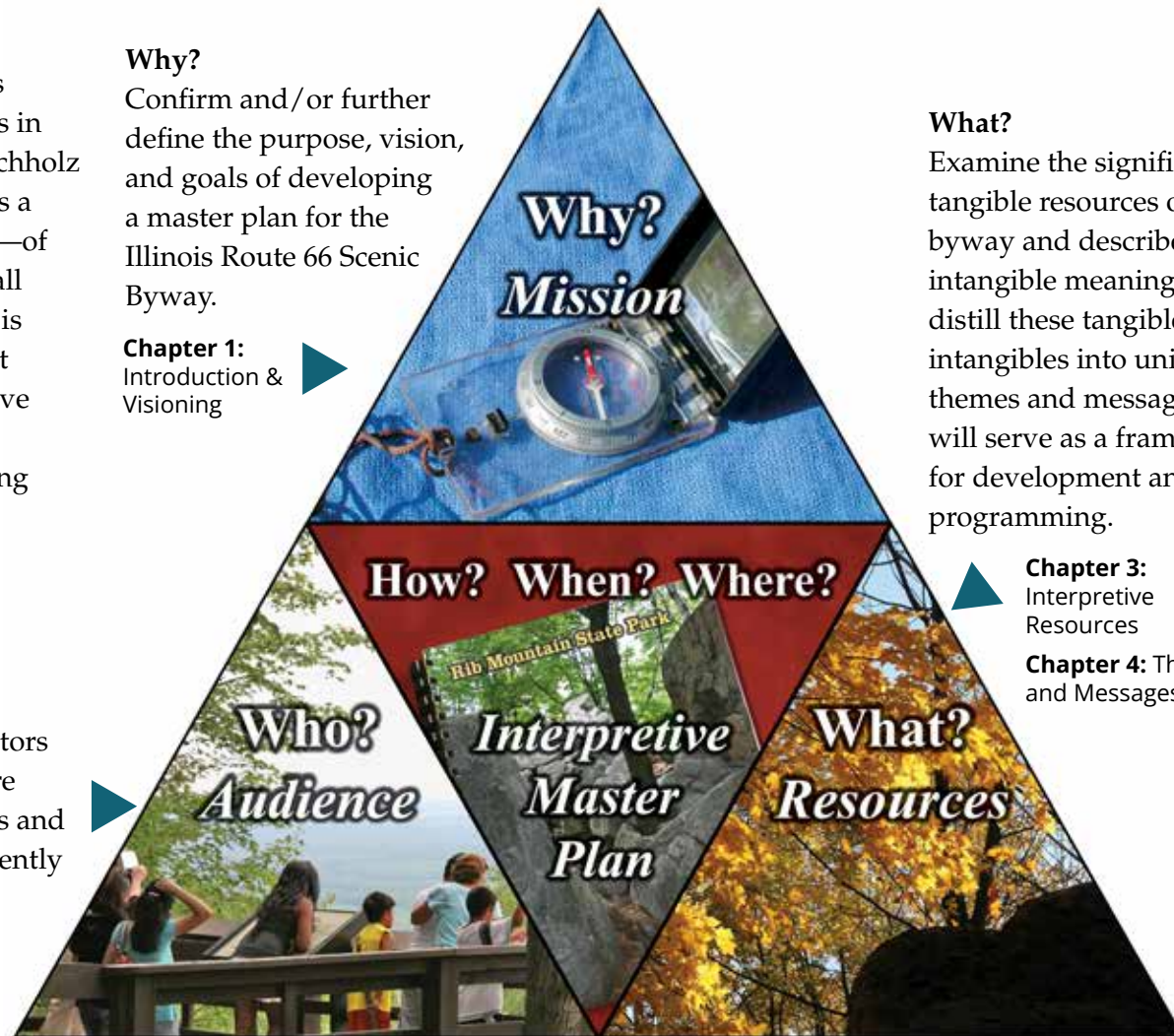
Chapter 1: Introduction & Visioning

What?

Examine the significant tangible resources of the byway and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages that will serve as a framework for development and programming.

Chapter 3: Interpretive Resources

Chapter 4: Themes and Messages



Where? When? How?

Based on the why, who, and what, develop a plan for interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor-resource connections within the parameters of the mission and vision.

Chapter 5: Interpretive Recommendations

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CHAPTER 2

ROUTE 66 TRAVELERS

Ron Metzger gives a tour of his Route 66 memorabilia collection at Motorheads Bar, Grill & Museum (2021).



The Route 66 Economic Impact study, published in 2011, provides significant details about Route 66 travelers.

ROUTE 66 TRAVELERS

Who are the Route 66 travelers and what experiences are they seeking? What would enhance their experience? The answers to these questions guide the planning for the Springfield area Route 66 corridor and interpretive experiences.

The 2008 Illinois Route 66 Interpretive Master Plan describes cultural heritage tourism in Illinois in general and identifies the characteristics of the Route 66 tourist. This comprehensive examination of the Illinois Route 66 tourist remains as valid today as it was in 2008.

The following sections provide additional information to assist in defining and planning for travelers in the Springfield region.

Route 66 Economic Impact Study

A more recent study of Route 66 travelers was published in 2011. Titled the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study*, this research was 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.

Their report was based on the following:

1. A comprehensive (four-page) traveler survey that was distributed at 33 kiosks at key locations along the Mother Road and disseminated as an insert in *The Route 66 Pulse* (a free periodical newspaper).
2. Case studies of 25 iconic Route 66 sites that provide qualitative and quantitative insights about travelers.

A key finding of the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* is that people come from **all 50 states** and more than **40 foreign countries** to experience the Mother Road. While it was once a stretch of pavement to get from one place to another, it has truly become a destination unto itself. The study also found that it is the historic sites and authentic experiences that are the top things people seek on Route 66 today, and that when these travelers come, they spend money.

Traveler Survey Selected Results

Of the 100,000 surveys distributed along the historic Route 66 corridor, 4,176 were returned representing about 10,000 travelers.

- Of the traveler survey respondents, 84.7% were U.S. residents (51.5% from the eight Route 66 states) while 15.3% came from abroad. The international respondents were primarily European or Canadian.
- Survey respondents were typically middle-aged, well educated, relatively affluent, predominantly white, and disproportionately retired or working in professional/managerial occupations.
- The typical travel group was two adult members. Only about one in eight reported traveling with children.
- The median trip length was 5 days and 61% were traveling west towards California rather than east towards Chicago.
- Leisure or vacation was the primary objective of most travelers.
- Except for the “accidental” Route 66 traveler, the majority of respondents were motivated specifically to travel the Mother Road. Nearly 79% knew “some or a lot” about the highway’s historical significance.
- The most important Route 66 characteristics cited by the respondents were:

- Historic sites/monuments
 - Notable places/landmarks
 - Landscape
 - Small towns
 - U.S. history
 - National Parks
 - Vintage restaurants and motels
 - Gateway to the West
 - Car/motorcycle cruising
 - Navigating highways
- The number one challenge that visitors identified while traveling Route 66 was being able to find it (e.g., finding the road through certain states or urban areas, locating intact and original alignments, lack of signage).

- The respondents recommended actions to enhance travel along Route 66 to address the challenges. These included:
 - Develop a Route-specific GPS for automobile and motorcycle use
 - Install more and consistent signs
 - Better markings for highways and landmarks
 - Clean up areas that need attention, road repair where needed
 - Keep what is open, open
 - Keep it real, classic and fun.

Photo by www.route66experience.eu, CC BY 2.0



A motorcycle travel group from Europe poses for a photo along Route 66.



Route 66 Experience in the Joliet Historical Museum (2007).



Palms Grill Cafe sign in Atlanta after restoration (2008).

Case Studies Findings

Six Illinois attractions were among 25 chosen by an advisory panel as “iconic Route 66 sites.” One of the main objectives of this case study work was to better understand the impact of the resources on their host communities. This included identifying Route 66 travelers and where they came from. Portions of the case studies are included below.

Joliet Historical Museum: Route 66 Experience

The Route 66 Experience exhibition in the Joliet Historical Museum opened in 2007. It features many interactive and hands-on components that engage people of all ages and interests.

In 2008–2009, about 21,000 people visited the museum, and 11% were Route 66 travelers. International travelers to the museum came from 29 different countries, including Australia, Brazil, China, New Zealand, and Poland. Domestic visitors came from 34 different states (Listokin, 2011c).

The economic benefit of the museum to the community is significant. In one of the nearby gift shops, Route 66 memorabilia accounted for two thirds of all sales (Listokin, 2011c).

Palms Grill Café—Atlanta

The Palms Grill Café opened in 1934 serving home-cooked meals to community members and Route 66 travelers. In the 1940s, it also became a Greyhound bus stop. As the Interstate shifted traffic away from Atlanta, the restaurant fell on hard times and closed in 1968. Due to the vision of local residents, the building was restored to its 1930s appearance and reopened as a restaurant and museum in 2009.

Of the 1,508 total visitors who signed the Atlanta Museum guest book in 2009, 1,366 (91%) came from the United States and 142 (10%) came from abroad. The majority of domestic visitors (72%) lived in Illinois (Listokin, 2011c).

The Palms Grill Café closed in August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this writing, the lease is currently open for interested parties (Warnick, 2020).

Ariston Café—Carlinville

Pete Adam opened his first café in Carlinville on Route 4 in 1924. Two years later Route 4 became Route 66. In 1929, the highway was realigned, and the café moved to Route 66 in Litchfield where Adam descendants operate it to this day.

Unlike many other restaurants along old Route 66, the Ariston has flourished and expanded over the years. Between July 13, 2006 and September 5, 2007, 1,507 visitors signed the café's guest book. Of the total guests, 1,049 (70%) were from the United States and 458 (30%) were from abroad. While the largest number of U.S. visitors were from Illinois (34%), entries were made by those from nearby states, such as Missouri, Indiana, and Michigan, as well as from more distant states like California, Florida, and New York (Listokin, 2011c).

International visitors came from Italy (51), England (46), Finland (45), and 30–35 each from Denmark, France, Germany, and Norway (Listokin, 2011c).

The economic contributions from the café have a major impact on the small community of Litchfield. According to Carol Burke, Litchfield's tourism director, "There has definitely been increased revenue and employments in the town because of Route 66. Many people come specifically for Route 66 and the Ariston Café" (Listokin, 2011c).

Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum/Murals—Pontiac

The Route 66 Museum and Visitor's Center in Pontiac opened in June 2004.

Within the first six months more than 6,000 people from 43 states and 21 countries visited the building. In 2007, the city commissioned a massive mural of the Route 66 shield on the back of the Route 66 Museum by Diaz Sign art. The bricks in front of the mural are original Route 66 bricks and provide an opportunity for a photo op. Over 20 additional murals have been painted since that time.

The murals helped to increase tourism significantly in Pontiac. In 2009, attendance was up 40% at the museum compared to the previous year, with more than 2,000 visitors per month (Listokin, 2011c).

Shea's Gas Station Museum—Springfield

In 1955, Bill Shea opened a Marathon gas station on Route 66, just down the street from a smaller Texaco station where he had worked for many years. Shea closed the station in 1982 due to the oil embargo crisis and decreasing traffic on the road.

Shea had a passion for all things Route 66 and collected a great variety of gas station and Mother Road memorabilia. Visitors would stop by just to see the amazing collection of historic artifacts. In 1995, the station officially opened as



Ariston Cafe in Litchfield (2007).

Photo by Chad Horwedel, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Mural on the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac.



Shea's Gas Station Museum (top) and Bill Shea (bottom left) talking to Schmeeckle consultants in 2007.

Photo courtesy of the Illinois Office of Tourism



Classic cars line the street at the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival in Springfield.

a museum with Bill Shea as the curator and docent. Shea continued to acquire memorabilia, including the purchase of a 1920s-era Phillips 66 station, called Mahan's Filling Station, from Middletown, Illinois.

The attraction became internationally renowned as a "must see" stop on Route 66, and Bill Shea, with his storytelling and sense of humor, was an integral part of the attraction.

Based on the guest books that Shea kept, visitation increased from about 400 a year in the mid-1990s to 700 in 2005-2007. For visitors who signed the guest book in 2005-2007, 80% lived in the U.S. and 20% were international visitors. For domestic travelers, about 37% lived in Illinois, while the other 63% came from 42 other states (Listokin, 2011c).

Bill Shea died at the age of 91 in December 2013 and the museum closed. The north side of Springfield saw a significant decline in Route 66 tourism, which had a negative economic impact on businesses (Warnick, 2015).

Shea's memorabilia was auctioned off in November 2015 after his family unsuccessfully tried to sell the station and its contents. The Mahan's Phillips 66 Station was purchased by Jeff Fulgenzi

and is now located down the road adjacent to Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta. Other collectibles were purchased by Ron Metzger and are on display at Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum. Shea's Marathon service station is still standing. According to Randy Pickett, the current owner, international tour groups (one recently from China) still stop outside the fence to see the remains of this iconic attraction (Pickett, 2022).

International Route 66 Mother Road Festival—Springfield

The Mother Road Festival in Springfield is a three-day event that has been held every third weekend in September since 2001. It was the brainchild of entrepreneur C. Bruce Hubley, founder of a large promotion and events company based in Indianapolis, Indiana. The highlight is an evening Route 66 City Nights Cruise with thousands of classic cars cruising the streets of downtown Springfield.

The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau markets the event both nationally and internationally, with many overseas visitors. The event attracts nearly 80,000 spectators and over 1,000 vintage cars. The annual economic impact on the area is over \$1 million (Listokin, 2011c).

Identifying Springfield Area Route 66 Travelers

Empirical data on Springfield area Route 66 tourists are limited. In an interview with Jeff Fulgenzi, a former planner with the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission and current owner of Mahan's Filling Station, he described the Route 66 travelers as "silent visitors who just pass through" (Fulgenzi, 2022).

Based on the finding of the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study*, the "typical" Route 66 tourist in Springfield is white, middle aged, relatively affluent, well-educated, and traveling with a companion (Listokin, 2011a). More than half are from Illinois and the surrounding states, although tourists from all 50 states are represented (Listokin, 2011c).

About 15% of travelers are international tourists representing more than 40 countries. Most of those (73%) come from Europe, especially the United Kingdom (27%), France (7%), and Germany (7%). The second largest international draw is from Canada (14%) (Listokin, 2011b).

As Jan Kemmerling, Acting Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism, suggested at the Stakeholder meeting,

"The Route 66 experience is sold around the world." Tim Good, superintendent of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, stated that "International visitors come for Route 66, not Lincoln."

According to the *Economic Impact Study*, most international visitors come from Europe and Canada, with a smaller proportion from Asia (Listokin, 2011a).

Many foreign visitors purchase tour packages that provide the opportunity to "cruise" 66 on motorcycles or car caravans or go on a guided tour bus. **A typical commercial tour opportunity from Chicago to Los Angeles is 14 days with a brief stop in Springfield (one tour company stops only at Lincoln's tomb). A few overnight in Springfield, but most go on to St. Louis.**

What Springfield Area Route 66 Travelers are Seeking

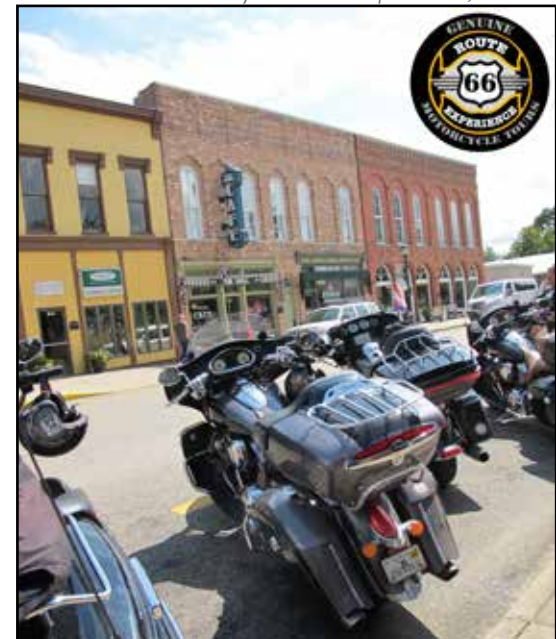
Route 66 is not just an attraction for an aging generation of "roadies" reliving a mythologized past. Rather, it offers all generations, and those to come, a truly unique American experience that celebrates its culture and its geography.

The *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* identified that travelers largely are



Travelers gather for an interpretive talk at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield (2009).

Photo by www.route66experience.eu, CC BY 2.0



A European tour company called *Route 66 Experience* provides guided two-week motorcycle tours from Los Angeles to Chicago.



Enjoying a traditional Cozy Dog at the Cozy Dog Drive-in in Springfield, an iconic Route 66 diner (2008). Travelers are seeking authentic experiences along the Mother Road, such as vintage restaurants and motels.

attracted by “the special historic and related character of the Mother Road.” This includes historic sites/monuments, notable places/landmarks, and vintage restaurants and motels (Listokin, 2011a). Springfield has much to offer in the way of these types of authentic Route 66 experiences that visitors are seeking.

Bill Shea and his eclectic collection of Route 66 memorabilia became a pilgrimage for those seeking authenticity and Americana. Now, with Shea gone and his collection dispersed, other area attractions are rebuilding a new legacy. Ron Metzger and his Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum, for example, continues the tradition of collecting and displaying memorabilia, including many of Shea’s original artifacts. Jeff Fulgenzi purchased the historic Mahan’s Filling Station and moved it from Shea’s former museum to a site adjacent to Fulgenzi’s Pizza and Pasta, where Route 66 travelers can continue to visit the iconic resource.

“Vintage restaurants and motels” were cited in the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* as another important part of the Route 66 experience (Listokin, 2011b). Authentic “Route 66 road food” in Springfield is still offered at the Cozy Dog Drive-in, Maid-Rite, Mel-O-Cream

Donuts, Jungle Jim’s Café, The Chili Parlor, Dew Chili Parlor, and others. These are key attractions that get tourists off I-55 and through the old Route 66 corridor within the city.

The Route 66 corridor through Sangamon County also offers unique opportunities for travelers to walk or drive vintage sections of the old road, three of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic brick road near Auburn is a popular photo opportunity, especially for those touring in classic cars. Just south of Sherman, the 1922–1936 abandoned route in Carpenter Park offers a special chance to walk on original concrete pavement that hasn’t carried traffic for nearly 90 years. Another 1930–1933 section of Route 66 pavement on North Cotton Hill Road disappears beneath the surface of Lake Springfield, created by damming Sugar Creek in the 1930s.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

In November 2013, a strategic roundtable discussion sponsored by the World Monuments Fund took place in Anaheim, California to discuss the implications of the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* (2011). The roundtable was called **The Road Ahead**. Roundtable participants

recommended broad ideas that would enhance the Route 66 experience for travelers throughout the country. Several of these recommendations specific to the Springfield Area are included below:

1. Make (and Remake) Experiences

Participants in The Road Ahead acknowledged that while preserving the historic character of Route 66 was foundational, creating authentic experiences that engage travelers was essential (WMF, 2013).

The reopening of the Palms Grill Café in Atlanta was cited as an example. Another example was the Illinois Office of Tourism’s “Faces of Route 66” marketing campaign in 2012, which featured video interviews with Route 66 icons, including Bill Shea. This campaign increased website inquiries by 22%, showing the strong interest that travelers have in the characters who live and work along Route 66 (WMF, 2013).

In essence, preserving historic buildings or roadways isn’t enough. Experiences must be developed that engage visitors with those resources. The International Route 66 Mother Road Festival, for example, provides numerous engaging experiences using the historic downtown and Route 66 ambiance as an authentic

backdrop. Another example is the Giant Slide at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, which has been recently rebranded with a Route 66 shield encouraging visitors to “Slide Down 66.”

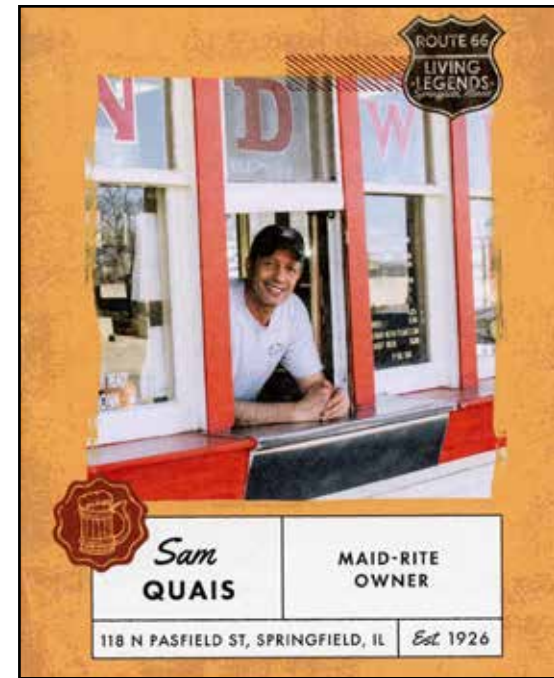
The human stories are also of vital importance. Springfield’s “Route 66 Living Legends Passport” tour is an excellent opportunity for visitors to engage with nine iconic people and places connected to Route 66 history.

2. Celebrate Creativity

According to The Road Ahead participants, “nostalgia alone will not drive the revitalization of Route 66.” The Mother Road has been immortalized in books, songs, television, movies, and other art forms. Celebrating this creativity is essential for a sustainable future (WMF, 2013).

The mural project in Pontiac was referenced as an example of using artistic creativity to boost tourism and revitalize the community.

The Springfield area has countless opportunities to incorporate art and creativity along the route. If funded, the Route 66 Experience at the state fairgrounds will highlight this creativity, bringing together a new fiberglass



The Route 66 Living Legends passport tour in Springfield is an example of making experiences that connect travelers to history and personalities of the road.



The Route 66 Experience at the state fairgrounds in Springfield will showcase the artistic creativity of Route 66 throughout Illinois (2021).



The Springfield area has several sections of original Route 66 roadway, like the 1926–1936 pavement in Carpenter Park (2021). These should be prioritized for preservation.



Enhancing wayfinding for Route 66 travelers is especially important in busy urban areas like Springfield (2021).

muffler man sculpture, restored neon signs, and miniaturized versions of iconic attractions along Illinois Route 66. Murals have already been painted on both sides of the Peoria Road train underpass, and more murals are planned for the new Transportation Hub.

3. Preserve the Road

While much effort goes into preserving historic Route 66 attractions and sites, the road infrastructure itself is often overlooked. The Road Ahead participants stated that, “If the road itself is not preserved, the Route 66 experience is inaccessible” (WMF, 2013).

The Springfield area is fortunate to have several original sections of Route 66 roadway, three of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Some of those sections, such as the 1922–1936 pavement in Carpenter Park, the 1930–1936 pavement that dips below Lake Springfield, and the brick curve on North Cotton Hill Road, are deteriorating from lack of maintenance. The popular historic brick section near Auburn is still in good condition, but will require continued maintenance in the future. It would benefit tourism and interpretation to prioritize the preservation and maintenance of these unique resources.

In addition to preserving original sections, enhancements can be made throughout the Route 66 corridor in Sangamon County that would bring the unique Route 66 character to more modern roadways. Custom Route 66 pole banners, benches, planters, street painting, and other streetscaping identify the importance of the corridor.

4. Facilitate Wayfinding and Access

According to The Road Ahead participants, the decommissioning of Route 66 negatively impacted wayfinding, as the route is no longer identified on maps as a single road. The responsibility for signing the historic route is up to individual states and communities, creating a lack of unity (WMF, 2013).

The Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway has done an excellent job of signing three different alignments through the state. At the time of this writing, the byway is working on a project to identify additional directional signage needs in preparation for the Route 66 Centennial in 2026.

In larger communities like Springfield, wayfinding is especially challenging as busy traffic, complicated roadways, and numerous roadside distractions vie for

the traveler’s attention. The community of Springfield should invest in a high quality wayfinding plan for the major corridors of Route 66, which would include signage and other streetscaping elements to help guide visitors through the city and to major attractions. See page 80 for more recommendations.

5. Reach New Audiences

The *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* (2011) illustrated a lack of diversity in Route 66 travelers. Most tourists are white, middle aged (median age over 50), relatively affluent, well-educated, and travel with one other adult. Reaching new audiences is vital for sustaining the future of Route 66.

Participants of The Road Ahead voiced the need to attract younger audiences to Route 66. Younger travelers want authentic experiences but are less likely to choose “organized” travel. Over 90% look for recommendations on what to do using social media, and 70% comment and share experiences through social media (WME, 2013).

Providing Route 66 opportunities for families and younger independent travelers is important to the future tourism of the Mother Road.

Enhancing the racial and ethnic diversity of Route 66 travelers is also a significant goal. According to the *Route 66 Economic Impact Study* (2011), the overall demographics of people living along the route are diverse. In Illinois, for example, about 20% of the population along Route 66 identify as Hispanic, much greater than the total Illinois state population (12%). However, only 3.5% of Route 66 travelers identified themselves as being Hispanic in the surveys (Listokin, 2011b).

In terms of racial diversity, 8% of people living along the Route 66 corridor identify as Black or African American, 6% as Asian, and 3% as American Indian. In Illinois, the percentages are 10% Black or African American, 4% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian. In terms of Route 66 travelers, only 1% identified themselves as Black or African American, 0.9% as Asian, and 3.2% as American Indian (Listokin, 2011b).

Interpreting the experiences of diverse travelers along Route 66 is something that has been largely overlooked in the past. Route History in Springfield is helping to address this deficiency by interpreting the Black experience on the road. This offers a significantly different perspective of the Mother Road that helps to tell a more holistic story, while



Reaching diverse audiences is a priority for enhancing the Route 66 experience. Route History in Springfield tells the often overlooked story of the Black experience along the Mother Road (2021).



A flower garden at the Route 66 Experience in the state fairgrounds is part of the Route 66 Monarch Flyway (2021).



A Route 66 Trail bicycle rack and sign in Elkhart, Illinois (2021).

opening the door for more inclusive participation. According to The Road Ahead participants, “The history of Route 66 is a tableau of varied racial and ethnic histories, many of which have not been fully told. Exploring those multiple narratives is key to drawing new audiences to the road and enhancing the diversity of travelers” (WMF, 2013).

6. Promote Green Highways

Another idea discussed by the roundtable was the development of Route 66 as a green highway. As vehicles continue to move toward more sustainable designs, there is potential to rebrand the old highway as a green transportation corridor and cater toward alternative fuel vehicles (WMF, 2013).

This idea was taken to heart in Illinois. In 2014–2015, eight fast-charge electric stations were installed along Route 66 in Edwardsville, Carlinville, Springfield, Lincoln, Normal, Pontiac, Dwight, and Plainfield. The \$1 million investment came from federal and state dollars, along with support by auto manufacturers. This allowed motorists with electric vehicles to travel the entire 300-mile Route 66 corridor through Illinois (Cooley, 2014). Many other

charging stations have been installed since that time.

Adding charging stations to Springfield Route 66 attractions would help to expand the “Illinois Route 66 Electric Corridor.” Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum and the Route 66 Experience at the state fairgrounds are two ideal locations for EV charging stations.

Illinois has also been involved in other projects to make Route 66 greener. The Route 66 Monarch Flyway, for example, is a 66-mile-wide corridor from Chicago to St. Louis with the purpose of planting native wildflowers and restoring habitat for monarch butterflies. A monarch garden was established at the state fairgrounds as part of this program. A Route 66 Trail is also being developed as a system of off-road paths and quiet rural roads for bicycle travel (IDNR, 2010). A 4.4-mile section of off-road trail opened in 2021 between Williamsville and Sherman.

Opportunities abound in the Springfield area for enhancing natural habitat and creating green spaces along Route 66 to support sustainability and improve streetscape aesthetics.

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- ▶ Fulgenzi, Annette and Jeff (2022, January 5). Owners of Mahan’s Filling Station; Sangamon County Board Member (Annette)

CHAPTER 3 INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES



Mahan's Filling Station, preserved at Fulgenzi's Pizza & Pasta in Springfield (2021).



Historic Illinois Route 66 photo opportunity at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).

INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

Interpretive resources serve as the foundation for interpretive themes and messages (Chapter 4), which connect the tangible resources with their intangible meanings. Interpretive media options (Chapter 5) are then developed from these themes to engage visitors in meaningful experiences along the byway.

This inventory of Route 66 resources through Sangamon County is updated from the Interpretive Master Plan of 2008. The modifications were made through recent site visits, conversations with Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau staff, a visioning meeting and interviews with Route 66 stakeholders, and updated online research. The following changes have been made:

- Several resources that no longer exist have been eliminated. These include the Route 66 Dream Car Museum (in Williamsville), Ray's Route 66 Diner (in Sherman), the Illinois State Police Heritage Foundation and Museum, Watt Brothers Pharmacy, Coney Island Restaurant, Sunrise Donuts, Bel-Aire Motel, and the Route 66 Kicks Family Entertainment Center.
- The descriptions of existing resources listed in 2008 have been updated with additional information.
- Several new resources established since 2008 have been added.
- Resources are organized and listed from north to south according to the various route designations through the Springfield area.
- Abraham Lincoln attractions are described in a separate listing. While not directly related to Route 66 resources, countless travelers have visited these sites as part of their Mother Road journeys.
- Thematic category designations have been added for specific resources.



Artifacts abound at Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum (2021).

Resource Categories

The following resources have been organized into one or more categories, which can be used to create a package of similar opportunities for marketing purposes and for telling a thematic interpretive story.

Primary Route 66 Resources

These are primary resources that directly relate to Route 66 and offer a strong interpretive experience. These are “must-see” resources for travelers to understand Route 66 in the Springfield area.

Food/Dining

Historic or modern restaurants, diners, cafes, roadhouses, and other food establishments that celebrate their connection to Route 66.

Lodging

Vintage motels and hotels that have maintained their Route 66 era character.

Service Station

Historic gas and service stations that have maintained their Route 66 era character.

Authentic Road Infrastructure

Authentic sections of Historic Route 66 roadway and bridges that illustrate early engineering.

Roadside Attractions

Artwork and other creative attractions built for Route 66 travelers.

Museums

Museums and other facilities with exhibits that relate to Route 66.

Transportation

Resources related to cars, trains, and other transportation related stories.

Recreational Resources

Resources for walking, biking, picnicking, or other activities that have a Route 66 theme.

Natural/Landscape Resources

Resources related to landscapes or natural history with a Route 66 theme.

Abraham Lincoln attractions

Resources that are related to Abraham Lincoln, which Route 66 travelers are likely to visit.

National Historic Places

Resources significant enough to be recognized federally through the National Register of Historic Places.



Route 66 International Traveler Multi-Directional sign, Williamsville.

Courtesy of the TheBestPlaces, www.thebestplaces.net



The Old Station, Williamsville.

NORTH OF SPRINGFIELD

Williamsville

Established as a village along the railroad, the town was originally platted in 1853 as Benton. When the residents petitioned for a post office, they found that the name was already taken and the village was renamed Williamsville in honor of Colonel John Williams, a local landowner. Today, this primarily agricultural town with about 1,500 residents features a number of historic buildings along Route 66.

The 1926–1940 route through Williamsville turns left on Elm Street through the village and right on Main Street near the historic museum. After 1940, a safer route bypassed the town.

Route 66 International Traveler Multi-Directional Sign

This whimsical mileage sign was designed and constructed by members of the Sangamon Valley Woodcarvers club in 2016. It features arrows and miles to cities from the top visiting countries along Illinois Route 66, including Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, and China. Chicago, New York, and New York and Los Angeles are also included.

The goal is to provide a welcoming experience for international travelers. A live streaming webcam at the sign allows visitors to connect with their loved ones around the world. The sign is located next to the Williamsville Public Library and Museum. 217 N. Elm Street

The Old Station

This 1930s service station is on the original 1926 Route 66 alignment through town. Although the station is closed to the public, the current owner has built a “replica” period gas station structure over the old pumps, added a classic service pump bell when driven over, and has retained several petroleum-related signs on the facade. It is a popular photo opportunity for Route 66 tourists. 117 N. Elm Street

Williamsville Historic Depot and Route 66 Exhibit

The Williamsville Depot was built in 1854. The depot and two adjacent box cars served as the public library and historic museum for the village until a new building was constructed on Elm Street in 2016. An Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit here tells the story

of Williamsville businesses that served travelers on the Mother Road such as garages and gas stations. It also illustrates the dangers of curves to speeding cars. The exhibit has a passport station for making a rubbing. 102 S. Elm St.

Williamsville to Sherman Heritage Route 66 Bike Trail

A 4.4-mile-long multi-use path between Sherman and Williamsville opened on November 20, 2021, paralleling the Route 66 byway. The right-of-way occupies part of what was once an electric interurban line operated by the Illinois Terminal Railroad (ITR) from 1906 until 1956. In Williamsville, the trail starts on Conrey Street just across the railroad tracks from South Elm Street (old Route 66). In Sherman, it begins along East Andrew Road about 0.4 mile east of the Route 66 wayside park. The Sherman trailhead features a parking lot, portable toilet, and information kiosk. The 10-foot-wide asphalt trail enables residents and visitors to bike, hike, and run between the two communities. The villages hope that in the future the path will be part of the statewide Route 66 Trail.

Sherman

In 1858, four men bought, surveyed, and platted what is now called Sherman. The town's name was a result of the luck of the draw. The four men placed their names in a hat and David Sherman's name was drawn. Early settlers were predominately Italian coal miners. Because of its proximity to Springfield and I-55, the village has grown rapidly over the last three decades to about 3,500 residents.

In Sherman, there are two alignments of Route 66, although only one is signed. The original 1926–1936 route turned west on Andrew Road and south on Old Tipton School Road, eventually connecting to original pavement in Carpenter Park. The 1936–1977 route continues following Sherman Boulevard southwest to Springfield.

Route 66 Memorial Rest Area

Two sections of original 1926 Route 66 pavement is preserved in Sherman at the intersection of Sherman Boulevard and East Andrew Road. A drainage channel separates the northern segment of 335 feet from the southern segment of 440 feet. According to some sources, this may have served an original rest area wayside

Photo by Randy von Liski, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Williamsville Historic Depot and Route 66 exhibit (2022).

Courtesy of the Village of Sherman



Sherman parking and access to the Williamsville to Sherman Heritage Route 66 Bike Trail (2021).



Route 66 Memorial Rest Area, Sherman (2022).



Fairlane Diner in Sherman (2021).



Sherman Village Park (2021).



Carpenter Park Route 66 pavement (2021).

along Route 66 with picnic tables. The roadways are surrounded by grass and trees. In 2007, the mayor of Sherman acquired the property for the village, and in 2010 concept plans were introduced to make it into a Historic Route 66/Veteran's Memorial Park. As of this writing, the plan has not moved forward. In 2014, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters produced a metal silhouette statue of children enjoying lunch on a picnic table, along with a wayside exhibit interpreting rest areas, for installation in the park. These were installed in October 2022. 2815 E. Andrew Dr.

Fairlane Diner

This family-owned diner, named after the Ford Fairlane cars that were sold starting in 1955, is located on historic Route 66 in Sherman. It invites travelers with its 1950s decor and classic American cuisine. They also sponsor an annual classic car show. 300 Crossing Dr.

Sherman Village Park

This 30-acre community park along Route 66 has been recently developed with an amphitheater, shelters, ponds, playground, splash pad, picnic areas, and a one-mile walking/biking path. It is a venue for many events in the

summer. The walking trail that borders the park on the west follows the historic 1926–1936 alignment of Route 66, which connects to the original pavement in Carpenter Park (see below). 1200 Rail Fence Dr.

Carpenter Park

Route 66 pavement

An abandoned stretch of early Route 66 (1926–1936) forms the eastern border of Carpenter Park (owned by the City of Springfield) just south of the Sherman village limits. Constructed in 1922 prior to the establishment of Route 66, the concrete pavement travels beneath a canopy of trees and past scenic bluffs on its way to the Sangamon River. The road has been closed to traffic since 1936, providing a unique unmodified view of the early road. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, it preserves the two-lane highway design, original cross-section with curbing, and original surface (Teague, 2002).

SPRINGFIELD

Springfield was settled by trappers and traders who came to the Sangamon River in 1818. It was originally named “Calhoun” for Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, who became the 7th U.S. vice president from 1825 to 1832. The city became the county seat of Sangamon County in 1821. The fertile soil and trading opportunities attracted settlers from Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina. By 1832, Calhoun had fallen out of favor with the public and the town was renamed Springfield. Largely due to the efforts of Abraham Lincoln and his associates, the capital of Illinois was moved from Vandalia to Springfield in 1839.

Lincoln arrived in the Springfield area in 1831, lived for six years in New Salem where he began his legal studies, joined the state militia, and was elected to the Illinois General Assembly. In 1837, Lincoln moved to Springfield and spent the next 17 years rising in political importance. The city has always been a significant tourist destination with numerous historic sites relating to Abraham Lincoln.

Since Route 66 was the primary artery funneling travelers into the city, a

diversity of diners, motels, and gas stations sprung up to serve their needs. Many of these facilities still exist and serve as important tangible connections to the old road. The city is renowned for its affiliation with food—this is the birth place of the corn dog on a stick (Cozy Dog), the horseshoe sandwich, Mel-O-Cream Donuts, Joe Roger’s chili, and the first drive-thru window (Maid-Rite). Springfield celebrates its Route 66 heritage with its popular International Route 66 Mother Road Festival held in September each year.

1926–1977 north side of Springfield

South of Sherman, all alignments of Route 66 followed Peoria Road as it curved south and southwest toward the city.

Pioneer Motel

Located along Route 66 on the north side of Springfield, the Pioneer Motel was built in 1951 and consists of 12 units arranged in a classic L-shape style. The name was never changed and the vintage neon motel sign tower still greets guests. 4321 N. Peoria Road



State Capitol Building in Springfield (2007).



Pioneer Motel and vintage sign (2007).



Weebles Bar and Grill 66 (2021).



Former Lazy A Motel (now apartments) (2007).



Illinois State Fairgrounds, Gate 1 (2021).

Weebles Bar and Grill 66

This site along Route 66 started as an old Standard Oil Station in the 1930s. The classic bar and grill was established in 2009, and includes a beer garden with live music and entertainment. Owner Don Thompson also owns The Curve Inn and is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet.

4136 N. Peoria Rd.

1930–1940 Route 66, 1940–1977 City/Business 66 through Springfield

This alignment is typically considered the primary Route 66 corridor through Springfield. Its formal designation as U.S. Highway 66 only lasted until 1940, when it was moved to the bypass east of the city. However, this corridor continued to serve travelers as City 66 from 1940–1960 and Business 66 from 1960–1977.

The route follows Peoria Road/9th Street to the south, and originally turned west on S. Grand Avenue to reach 6th Street heading south out of town. When 5th and 6th Streets became one-way in 1960, Business 66 southbound moved to 5th Street (by turning on Spruce Street) and northbound stayed on 6th Street (using Myrtle Street to connect back with 9th). According to most sources, the 1926–1932

alignment also followed this route north of Enos Avenue.

Lazy A Motel

This 1949 motel was built in the Southwest Vernacular style, with stucco walls and flat roofs—unusual for this part of country. It represents the typical 1930s to 1940s “mom and pop” motor court with garages between the units. It is on the National Register of Historic Places. The motel has been converted into apartments, but the original style is well maintained.

Illinois State Fairgrounds

Springfield was chosen as the permanent site of the Illinois State Fair in 1894. The 366 acres of grounds are listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Several buildings were constructed between 1894 and the 1930s. The 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment follows Taintor Road and North 5th Street on the north and west sides of the fairgrounds and the 1930–1940 alignment follows North Peoria Road along the east side. 801 E. Sangamon Ave.

Fairgrounds: Rail Splitter Giant

“The Rail Splitter” is a 30-foot tall Abraham Lincoln fiberglass statue

located at Gate 1 of the fairgrounds. It was constructed and built by Carl W. Rinnus in 1968 to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Illinois statehood. 801 Sangamon Avenue

Fairgrounds: Giant Slide

An Illinois State Fair staple, the giant slide was built and installed in 1968. It is one of 40 originally designed and constructed by Fred Pittroff. Fairgoers ride on burlap mats down the wavy 150-foot long yellow slide. There is an opportunity to keep the slide open seasonally as a Route 66 attraction.

Fairgrounds:

Route 66 Experience

Located at Gate 2, this Route 66 themed outdoor exhibit area will provide a year-round experience for visitors to walk Illinois Route 66 from Chicago to the Chain of Rocks bridge. A preview of the exhibit area was opened for the 2021 Illinois State Fair, and featured oversized postcards, photos, and cutouts of attractions from Illinois Route 66 communities. Future plans call for a paved brick road lined with neon signs, replicas of giants and roadside attractions, retro billboards, a car-themed playground, and interpretive signs that highlight Route 66 communities. The



The Rail Splitter fiberglass giant at the state fairgrounds (2021).



Entrance to the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).



The Giant Slide at the state fairgrounds (2022).



Photos and cutouts of attractions at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).



Monarch flyway garden at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).



Inside Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta (2021).



Mahan's Phillips 66 Station next to Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta (2021).

project is headed by the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

Fairgrounds: Route 66 Monarch Flyway Garden

A monarch butterfly garden was planted as part of the Route 66 Experience at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. This is part of the Route 66 Monarch Flyway, a 66-mile-wide corridor that stretches from Chicago to St. Louis. The goal of the flyway is to plant native wildflowers and restore habitat that supports monarch butterflies.

Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta

John and Sandra Fulgenzi opened a small walk-up ice cream stand called the "Custard Castle" in 1979 on the site of a Route 66 era Fairway Motel. Over the years, the business grew to include

hamburgers, pasta, and pizza. Located across from the Illinois State Fairgrounds Gate 2, it is now a regular stop for Route 66 travelers. Founder John Fulgenzi is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. The Mahan's Phillips 66 Station is located adjacent to the restaurant. 1168 E. Sangamon Ave.

Mahan's Phillips 66 Station

This filling station, dating to the 1920s, is believed to be the oldest surviving station in the state. It originally stood on Route 136 halfway between Easton and Havana at Knuppell's Corner. Harry Mahan purchased the station and moved it to the town of Middletown before World War II. He ran it as a Philips 66 Station until the mid-1950s. Although an interesting early service station, it only started its time on Route 66 in 2000, when Bill Shea purchased it, loaded it up onto a trailer, and moved it the 21 miles to his museum in Springfield. Shea restored the gas station building and added signs and pumps. In 2015, after Shea passed away, his museum collection was sold at auction. In order to save what many considered the centerpiece of the collection, John and Sandra Fulgenzi's son, Jeff, purchased the Mahan's Phillips 66 station and moved it to the Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta property on Route 66. It

continues to be popular photo stop for travelers. 1168 E. Sangamon Ave.

Shea's Marathon Gas Station

For many years, Shea's Gas Station Museum was an iconic Route 66 attraction in Springfield. Bill Shea died at the age of 91 in December 2013. Shea's memorabilia was auctioned off in November 2015 after his family unsuccessfully tried to sell the station and its contents. The Mahan's Phillips 66 Station was purchased by Jeff Fulgenzi and is now located down the road adjacent to Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta. Other collectibles were purchased by Ron Metzger and are on display at Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum. The Marathon service station that Bill Shea opened along Route 66 in 1955 is still standing as an artifact of the old highway, but it is empty and surrounded by a chain link fence. The property is currently owned by Randy Pickett, who is interested in maintaining its Route 66 character. 2075 N Peoria Rd.

Jungle Jim's Cafe

This classic Mother Road diner on the 1930–1940 alignment is decorated with race car and Route 66 memorabilia. They are famous for their all-day breakfast and

homestyle American diner food. 1923 Peoria Rd.

Route 66 Underpass Murals

Colorful murals on the walls of a North 9th Street railroad underpass (1930–1940 Route 66 alignment) include iconic Springfield Route 66 attractions such as the fairgrounds, a horseshoe sandwich, Shea's gas station, and vintage cars. In 2020, high school students painted the murals as part of the Springfield Art Association's Public Art Mural Painting summer camp (Fowler 2020). Just south of 1501 N. 9th St.

Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center (The Hub)

Located between South 9th Street (1930–1940 Route 66 alignment) and 11th Street, this new intermodal transit station will serve as a hub for Amtrak trains, Sangamon Mass Transit District (SMTD) buses, intercity buses, and taxis. Groundbreaking for the site took place in October 2021. Two large murals are slated to be installed at the hub. Artist Danielle Mastrion's mural will feature prominent Sangamon County residents and iconic attractions, which includes a US Route 66 sign front and center.



Shea's Marathon Gas Station (2021).



Jungle Jim's Cafe (2008).



Route 66 underpass murals (2021).



Route History Museum (2021).



The Chili Parlor (2021).



Cozy Dog Drive-In (2021).

Route History Museum

Opened in 2019 by Stacy Grundy, Gina Lathan, and Kenneth Lockhart, this unique museum “shares stories and experiences about the tragedy, resilience, and excellence of Black people in the city of Springfield and along Historic Route 66.” Exhibits focus on the Green Book, Jim Crow laws, the Great Northern Migration, Black-owned businesses in Springfield, and the Springfield race riot of 1908. It is housed in a 1930s-era Texaco Gas Station and located just one block west of the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment. Stacy Grundy is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. 737 E. Cook St.

The Chili Parlor

In 1945, Joe Rogers opened a diner on South Grand Avenue in Springfield called “The Den” Chili Parlor. Joe and his wife Pauline built a loyal following. Joe and Pauline’s daughter, Marianne, purchased the business and moved it to its current location on South 9th Street (1930–1940 Route 66 alignment) in the 1970s. While the business has changed hands over the years, the original Joe Rogers recipe remains a family owned secret. 820 S. 9th St.

Cozy Dog Drive-In

The iconic restaurant is a shrine to Route 66 and to itself, packed with mementos, clippings, and old signs, as well as with Mother Road souvenirs for sale. The original “deep-fried, battered, hot dog on a stick” was invented during World War II by Ed Waldmire when he was in the Air Force stationed in Texas. Cozy Dogs were officially launched at the Lake Springfield Beach House in 1946. The Cozy Dog Drive-In was built in its first location on Route 66 along South 6th Street in 1949. It moved to its current location in 1996, where the former Abe Lincoln Motel stood. The Waldmire family continues to serve these famous eats to Mother Road travelers near and far. Josh Waldmire, Ed’s grandson, is the current owner and is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. An Illinois Route 66 international welcome wayside exhibit was installed next to the entrance in 2011, and the Springfield regional Route 66 Experience Hub was installed in the parking lot in 2018. 2935 S. 6th St.

Mel-O-Cream Donuts

Created during the height of the Great Depression in 1932, founder Kelly Grant Sr. decided to sell donuts at wholesale to restaurants and corner grocery stores.

Mel-O-Cream became a household word in the Springfield area, with distributions expanding in the late 40s and early 50s. 3010 S. 6th St.

Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center

This Route 66 themed hotel was originally built as a Holiday Inn in the 1950s. They claim to be the first Holiday Inn on Route 66. Today, the hotel features a “mini museum” with an array of vehicles (such as a 1931 Ford Convertible), signs, and articles from the Route 66 era. 625 E. St. Joseph St.

Curve Inn

The building first opened as a bar along Route 66 in 1932 called Copps Corner. In 1945, the new owner, Guido Mancini, renamed it Curve Inn, the name that has been kept by three successive owners. Mancini served the public in the main tavern area, while “special” customers could ring a buzzer at the bottom of the back stairs to gain entrance to the gambling parlor and prostitution apartments on the upper floor. It now operates as a roadhouse with good food and a beer garden with live entertainment. Co-owner Don Thompson is included in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport guide. 3219 S. 6th St.

Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum

Motorheads is a quintessential tribute to Route 66. Built in a former 1970 Stuckey’s gas station with its signature high sloped roof, owner Ron Metzger created a “one of a kind” dining experience surrounded by a massive collection of vintage auto racing and Route 66 memorabilia. Its 32-foot-by-32-foot sign off the highway features the world’s largest Route 66 shield, built by the Ace Sign Company. The grounds and museum are filled with memorabilia from former Route 66 landmarks such as Shea’s Gas Station Museum and the Bel-Aire Motel, including the motel’s unique seal fountain sculpture purchased by Mayor Jim Langfelder. Neon signs, Burma Shave signs, old gas pumps, historic racing cars, and many other artifacts decorate the building and museum. The facility also features an indoor entertainment space called the Motordome with a stage, Jumbotron, and beer garden. Ron Metzger is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. Motorheads is located off of I-55 at the Toronto Road exit, which is the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment south of Springfield. 600 Toronto Rd.



Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center (2021).



Curve Inn (2021).



Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum (2021).



Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop (2008).



Inside the Springfield Visitors Center (2021).



Maldaner's Restaurant (2021).

1926–1930 through Springfield

While signs currently mark this route as following the original path of State Route 4 along Taintor Road and 5th Street, most sources claim that Route 66 never turned on Taintor Road. Instead, it likely continued south on Peoria Road and 9th Street (following the current 1930–1940 alignment), turned west on Enos Avenue, south on 6th Street, west on Capitol Avenue, south on 2nd Street, west on S. Grand Avenue, south on MacArthur Boulevard, and west on Wabash Avenue before heading south on Veterans Parkway (current Highway 4) to Chatham, Auburn, and Thayer. This is the alignment that will be used to describe the following resources.

Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop

Opened in 1924, two years before Route 66 was routed several blocks to the east, the Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop in Springfield is touted as the nation's first drive-thru restaurant. The unique building was constructed from a caboose without wheels. It still serves the original specially seasoned loose meat hamburger with mustard, pickle relish, and onion on a steamed bun. Owner Sam Quais is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. The building is listed

on the National Register of Historic Places. 118 N. Pasfield St.

Springfield Visitors Center / Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices

In 2018, the Springfield Visitors Center moved to the historic downtown building where Lincoln and his partner, William Herndon, practiced law from 1843–1852. This is the only surviving building where Abraham Lincoln worked as a lawyer. Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) travel consultants provide information about Route 66 to travelers, and a video exhibit highlights the main attractions. A portion of the historic law offices have been restored as part of a self-guided tour. It is located on 6th Street, part of the 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment. 1 South Old State Capitol Plaza

Maldaner's Restaurant

Touted as the “Oldest Restaurant on Route 66,” this fine dining restaurant had its start when John Maldaner opened a confectionery shop on South 6th Street (1926–1930 Route 66 alignment) in 1884, a few doors down from the current location. Maldaner had previously worked as a pastry cook at the Leland Hotel, where he helped cater events like the dedication of Lincoln's Tomb

in 1874. Maldaner moved his ice cream parlor and confectionery shop to its current location in 1896. In the 1910s, this transitioned to a full restaurant. Michael Higgins, chef-owner of Maldaner's since 1995, is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. It is located between the 1926–1930 and 1930–1940 Route 66 alignments (SCHS 2014). 222 S. 6th St.

Ace Sign Company  
Sign Museum

The Ace Sign Company, established in 1940, constructed many of the classic neon signs that advertised businesses throughout Springfield and on Route 66. The museum displays an impressive collection of over 85 restored vintage signs, including the sputnik from the Bel-Aire Motel and the Sunrise Donut neon sign. The company even produced oversized Roman numerals for Super Bowl XLVIII in 2014. The museum is integrated with their “state-of-the-art modern sign manufacturing facility.” Located several blocks east of the 1926–1930 alignment, the museum is free and open to the public. 2540 S. 1st St.

Lauterbach Giant 

A fiberglass “muffler man” giant stands along Route 66 at the Lauterbach Tire



Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum (2021).

and Auto Service. It was purchased new in 1962 and moved to its current location in 1978. He used to hold a tire, but now holds a U.S. flag. In 2006, the muffler man lost his head during a tornado, but it was skillfully repaired by the station. 1569 Wabash Ave.

Dew Chilli Parlor 

See description under “1940–1977 bypass around Springfield.” Dew Chilli #3 at 2312 Wabash Ave.

Springfield Scheels 

Opened in 2011, the 200,000 square foot Scheels on the south side of Springfield is more than just a sporting goods store. It features a 65-foot Ferris wheel, 16,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, wildlife mountain, historical walk of

Courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Lauterbach Giant.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



Ferris wheel in the Springfield Schools.

Photo courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Route 66 Drive-In at Knight's Action Park.

U.S. presidents including an animatronic Abraham Lincoln, rollerball bowling lanes, shooting gallery, arcade, candy shop, and cafe. Also known for their outdoor statues, this could be an ideal location to introduce shoppers to Route 66. It is located between the 1926–1930 and 1930–1940 Route 66 alignments. 3801 S. MacArthur Blvd.

Knight's Action Park/ Route 66 Drive-In



Knight's Action Park started in 1930 as a golf driving range by George Knight Sr. just off Route 66. It has evolved into a diverse family fun park with a 1930s Ferris wheel, miniature golf, go-karts,

water slides, bumper boats, and batting cages. The Green Meadows Drive-In opened in 1978 and lasted just 4 years. Restored in 2002 as the Route 66 Drive-In, it now shows double features nightly from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day and on weekends through October. Doug Knight, George Knight Sr.'s grandson, owns the park and drive-in and is featured in the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet. An Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit interpreting the history of the park was installed in 2010. It is located just east of the 1926-1930 alignment that follows Chatham Road south of Interstate 72. 1700 Recreation Dr.

Photo courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Knight's Action Park from atop a water slide.

1940–1977 bypass around Springfield

In 1940, another alignment of Route 66 opened to bypass the city on the east. North of the city, the route turns southeast off of Peoria Road onto Dirksen Parkway, which travels south almost to Lake Springfield. The alignment then turns west on Adlai Stevenson Drive before meeting up with the 1930–1940 alignment heading south on 6th Street.

This route was called Bypass 66 from 1940–1945, Beltline 66 from 1945–1955, and US 66 from 1955–1977. As of this writing, the bypass alignment has not been marked, but plans are underway by the City of Springfield to install Historic Route 66 signs.

Motel Shamrock

Originally called the Akers Motel, this building has served Route 66 travelers on the bypass around Springfield since 1953. It is still in business today. 928 N. Dirksen Pkwy.

Dew Chilli Parlor

In 1909, Joe Bocklemann opened The Dew Chilli Parlor in Springfield serving “America’s finest Tavern Style Chili.” Over the years, Dew Chilli Parlor

locations have opened and closed in several locations throughout the city, actually taking a hiatus from 1995 to 2013. Today, there are three locations in Springfield, two of which are on Route 66 alignments. Dew Chilli #2 is at 2690 S. Dirksen Pkwy. on the 1940–1977 bypass. Dew Chilli #3 is at 2312 Wabash Ave. on the 1926–1930 alignment.

Lake Springfield Tavern

This tavern opened on the Route 66 bypass in the 1940s. According to the owners, the name comes from the fact that this was originally the only bar between 11th Street and Lake Springfield. 1221 Adlai Stevenson Dr.

Photo by David Blanchette, Illinois Times



Lake Springfield Tavern (2019).

Photo courtesy of Google Maps, © 2022 Google



Motel Shamrock (2017).

Photo courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Dew Chilli Parlor No. 2 along the 1940–1977 Route 66 bypass alignment.



Looking for Lincoln wayside exhibits in Springfield (2007).



Lincoln Tomb Historic Site (2012).

Lincoln attractions in Springfield

Abraham Lincoln is the number one draw for tourists to Springfield. Numerous sites celebrate the life of the 16th president of the United States, who lived and worked in the city from 1844 to 1861. From the beginnings of the Mother Road, Route 66 was the main artery that funneled travelers to these sites.

Looking for Lincoln

Nearly 50 story trail wayside exhibits have been installed in Springfield by the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, which coordinates the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. The signs interpret the life of Lincoln that are unique to each historic site. Each panel includes a rubbing medallion.

Lincoln Tomb Historic Site

On the day President Lincoln died, April 15, 1865, Springfield citizens began raising funds to build a memorial. On May 3, the body was delivered to Springfield and stored in a receiving vault at Oak Ridge Cemetery. The tomb, built of granite with a 117-foot high obelisk, was completed in 1874. This is the final resting place for Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary Todd, and three of their four sons. It is located about three-

quarters of a mile west of the 1926–1940 Route 66 alignment. 1500 Monument Ave.

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

This 200,000 square foot complex includes an Archive, Library, and Museum. It features interactive exhibits, lifelike statues of Lincoln's life, and innovative theater presentations. It is located on 6th Street, the 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment. 112-212 N. 6th St.

Old State Capitol Historic Site

Constructed in 1837–1840, this building served as the state capitol of Illinois until 1876. It then became the county courthouse of Sangamon County until 1966. The building is considered by many to be Lincoln's capitol, as it was here that he argued cases before the Illinois Supreme Court, served in the state legislature, first confronted Stephen Douglas, and where he delivered his famous "House Divided" speech in 1858. The building was reconstructed in the 1960s to resemble its appearance in 1860, before Lincoln's departure to Washington. It is located between 5th and 6th Streets, the 1926–1930 alignment of Route 66. Open for guided and self-guided tours. 526 E Adams St.



Old State Capitol Historic Site (2008).



Lincoln Home National Historic Site (2009).



Visitors pose with the Lincoln family at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (2007).

Lincoln Home National Historic Site

This site preserves the home and four-block neighborhood where Abraham Lincoln lived from 1844 to 1861 before becoming president. Tourists have been visiting this attraction since the late 19th century. The 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment borders the east side of the site and served as the primary transportation corridor for visitors. Billboards on the highway promoted visits to the home and tomb. 413 S. 8th St.

Photo courtesy of the National Park Service



“Land of Lincoln” information center located on the Lincoln Home historic site (2021).

Photo courtesy of the National Park Service



Lincoln Home Conference Center, built as a model of the Elizabeth Edwards home where Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln were married (2022).



Lincoln Depot (2007).

A “Land of Lincoln” Information Center was constructed in 1972 along South 9th Street (old Route 66) on the grounds of the Lincoln Home site to serve the large influx of visitors. The shed-type of construction, paint, and materials matched the nearby Carriage House. It was staffed by the city Tourism Commission. It is currently used for storage, but has the potential to be restored and opened as an exhibition that explores the relationship between Route 66 and the Lincoln Home attraction.

In true Route 66 style, a three-quarter scale replica of the house in which Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln were married was constructed just “four doors north of Lincoln’s Home” in 1968. It was a museum of Lincoln’s life from birth to death. It still stands and currently serves as a conference center for the historic site.

Lincoln Depot

Three months after his election in November 1860, Abraham Lincoln left Springfield from this Great Western Railroad depot for Washington, D.C. to become the 16th President of the United States. More than a thousand Springfield residents came to see him off. The depot was renovated and opened in 2013. The first floor houses a self-guided museum.

It is located just one block east of the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment. 930 E. Monroe St.

1930–1935 south side of Springfield

From 1930–1933, Route 66 turned east on Southwind Road, which turned into North Cotton Hill Road heading south. It then crossed a bridge over Sugar Creek (now flooded by Lake Springfield) before continuing south on Olde Carriage Way/Old Rte 66. The road finally curved west into Glenarm, tying back into the 1930–1977 route south.

When Sugar Creek was dammed to create Lake Springfield, the road was flooded and the alignment moved west to a new bridge over the lake, where it runs today. From 1933–1935, Route 66 turned east after crossing the new bridge onto E. Lake Shore Drive and connected back to Olde Carriage Way heading south. From 1935–1977, Route 66 was realigned again, heading straight south after the bridge on Palm Road.

Cotton Hill Road Abandoned Brick Road Curve

An abandoned brick-paved curve of the 1930–1933 Route 66 alignment still exists

north of where North Cotton Hill Road currently curves into Southwind Drive. The abandoned roadway is on private property. While grown over, it appears that many of the bricks are still in good shape and a portion of the roadway could be restored.

Abandoned Pavement under Lake Springfield

From 1930–1933, Route 66 followed North Cotton Hill Road. In 1933, Lake Springfield was created by damming Sugar Creek, and the water level rose to cover a large segment of the highway. Route 66 was moved to the current location of I-55 to cross the lake. A 0.25 mile section of original pavement still leads southeast through the woods to where it disappears under the lake. The roadway can be accessed at the intersection of North Cotton Hill Road and North Cotton Hill Lane. The property is owned by the City of Springfield.

Olde Carriage Way/Old Rte 66

From 1930–1935, this was the main alignment of Route 66, connecting Sugar Creek (which was dammed to create Lake Springfield) to the north with Glenarm to the south. The 1.3-mile northern portion of this road is listed



Abandoned Route 66 brick road curve at the north end of North Cotton Hill Road (2021).

on the National Register of Historic Places (2009). According to the NRHP registration form, the Portland cement roadway was constructed between 1921–1922. It consists of two 8-foot lanes with a one-foot shoulder on both sides. Only the southern 0.2 mile has been repaved (McMullen et al., 2009).



Abandoned Route 66 pavement that leads under Lake Springfield (2007).

Photo courtesy of Google Maps, © 2022 Google



Olde Carriage Way/Old Rte 66 pavement heading south from Lake Springfield (2015).



Sugar Creek Covered Bridge (2007).



Divernon Depot (2007).

SOUTH OF SPRINGFIELD: 1930–1977 ALIGNMENT

Glenarm

This small unincorporated community is located on the 1930–1935 and 1935–1977 Route 66 alignments south of Springfield.

Sugar Creek Covered Bridge

Located about a mile west of the 1935–1977 Route 66 alignment north of Glenarm, this scenic covered bridge spans Sugar Creek. Built around 1880, it is the last covered bridge in Sangamon County, and one of only five historic covered bridges in Illinois. Most of the county's other covered bridges disappeared when Lake Springfield was created in the 1930s. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 (SCHS, 2013c). 769 Covered Bridge Rd.

Divernon

The village of Divernon is located on the 1930–1977 Route 66 alignment. It was platted in 1886 as Springer, but another community in Illinois already had that name. The assistant postmaster suggested the name of a heroine from *Rob Roy*, “Di Vernon.” It began as one of

four depots on a Litchfield-to-Springfield railroad known as the St. Louis & Chicago Railway Co., which opened in 1887. In 1898, construction began on Madison Coal Mine No. 6, which boosted the population of Divernon to 3,600 residents, making it the second largest town in Sangamon County from 1900–1925. Following a strike in 1925, the mine closed and 800 men lost their jobs. The population dwindled (SCHS, 2013b).

Divernon Depot

The small 1902 depot building was restored in 1991 and serves as a railroad and community history museum. Route 66 largely followed railroad corridors through Illinois.

SOUTH OF SPRINGFIELD: 1926–1930 ALIGNMENT

Chatham

Chatham is located on the 1926–1930 alignment of Route 66. The first farm settlers arrived in the area in 1816. The village received its name in 1836. Chatham is located in what was once open prairie between Lick Creek and Panther Creek, which at that time was about the center of the new state of

Illinois, approximately ten miles south of Springfield. Splendid fields of corn, almost without exception from ten to fifteen feet high, sprang up over the area. The high degree of fruitfulness attracted many to settle here.

Old Chatham Road Bridge/Lick Creek Wildlife Preserve

Built in 1919, this concrete deck girder bridge spans Lick Creek between Springfield and Chatham. Route 66, following State Highway 4, traveled over this bridge from 1926–1930. In 1976, State Highway 4 was rerouted over a new bridge to the west, and the bridge was abandoned. Under the bridge lives the harmless Kirtland’s snake, an endangered and protected species that lives close to water. This is also the parking area for the 340-acre Lick Creek Wildlife Preserve, which protects wooded hills and marshy lowlands on the west end of Lake Springfield. Several hiking and biking trails meander through the Preserve. Old Chatham Road

Sangamo Brewing Company

This brewpub and museum located just off the 1926–1930 alignment of Route 66 celebrates the history of breweries in southern Illinois. Tom Noonan, owner, opened the brewpub in 2020 as a place

to display his lifelong collection of breweriana, including vintage metal signs, neon signs, bottles, and other advertisements. 109 E. Mulberry St.

Chatham Railroad Museum

The first train from Alton to Springfield, known as the Chicago & Mississippi Railroad, went through Chatham in 1852.

This railroad museum is housed in the 1902 Chatham Depot, which replaced the original station that had burned. The station closed in 1972. In 1999, the Chicago & Illinois Midland Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society restored the depot and opened a museum to interpret the area railroad history. Route 66 largely followed the railroad through Illinois. 100 N. State St.

Auburn

Auburn is located on the 1926–1930 alignment of Route 66. Old Auburn was founded in 1835 by Asa and George Eastman and named by their sister, Hannah Easton. It was located about one mile north of the current village. A rival developer, Phillip Wineman, platted a new village to the south in 1853 and successfully petitioned the Alton and Sangamon Railroad Company to build tracks there. The old village faded away

Photo by Steve Conro, Bridgehunter.com



Old Chatham Road Bridge (2010).

Photo courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Inside the Sangamo Brewing Company.



Chatham Railroad Museum (2021).

and the name of Auburn was transferred to this new site in 1865. From the 1880s until 1924, coal mining supported Auburn's economy employing up to 800 miners (SCHS, 2013a).

Historic Brick Road

This beautiful 1.5-mile section of curved road just north of Auburn was originally paved in concrete as State Route 4 in 1920. Two concrete girder bridges were also constructed. Route 66 followed this

roadway from 1926-1930 before it was realigned to the east. When Route 4 was straightened in 1932, the Snell Road and Curran Road sections were bypassed and resurfaced with hand-lain bricks. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1998) as an example of brick road building, with concrete foundations, curbing, bridges, and culverts. Today, the curving brick road through corn fields is a popular photo stop for Route 66 travelers (Seratt et al., 1998). Snell Rd. and Curran Rd.

Historic Brick Road near Auburn (2007).



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CHAPTER 4 THEMES AND MESSAGES



The Illinois Route 66 Experience is an attraction being developed at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield (2021).



A sign points Route 66 travelers to a historic Standard Oil Gas Station in Odell (2007).



Traveling historic Route 66 in Illinois (2007).

THEMES AND MESSAGES

Interpretive themes create a framework for planning meaningful interactions between visitors and resources. Themes represent the major concepts, ideas, and messages that visitors will experience as they travel the byway. Once these important concepts are identified, the most appropriate sites, resources, and stories are selected to illustrate them.

A theme statement, which is ideally stated in one succinct sentence, should contain universal concepts. **Universal concepts** are intangible meanings that are significant to everyone, such as life, death, family, parenthood, jealousy, loyalty, forgiveness—all of the emotions, challenges, and values that make us human.

Effective interpretive themes should connect tangible resources (objects or facts) to the interests of visitors.

Interpretation is most successful when visitors can relate the themes and messages on a byway to something relevant in their own lives. A successful theme will stir emotions and thoughts in a visitor, helping to create memorable experiences. Provocation is more significant than factual information. Inspiring people to relate the information to their own lives is a measure of success.

Comprehensive themes and messages for the entire Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway were developed as part of the original interpretive master plan in 2008. Only those sub-themes and messages that directly relate to the Springfield area are included in this chapter. Additional messages specific to Springfield and Sangamon County have also been added to their respective sub-themes.

PRIMARY THEMES

A **primary theme** is the broad, overarching idea that summarizes the essence of Route 66 for travelers. This plan includes two primary themes replicated from the 2008 master plan—one for the entire national Route 66 corridor, and one that is specific to the Illinois segment of the highway. All interpretation along the corridor should relate to these overall themes to create unified and cohesive messaging for travelers.



Bicentennial Plaza lit up at night in downtown Springfield (2021).

National Route 66 Primary Theme

Route 66, the great “Mother Road” from Chicago to Los Angeles, is an American icon, symbolizing romance, freedom of the road, individuality, and opportunities for small businesses and tourist stops.



State of Illinois Route 66 Primary Theme

The beginning of the “Mother Road,” Illinois Route 66 was a vital economic artery between Chicago and St. Louis that still connects travelers to prairie farms and small Midwest towns.





A collection of Route 66 themed signs on the side of Fulgenzi's Pizza & Pasta (2021).

SUB-THEMES & MESSAGES

Sub-themes split the primary themes into several more specific and workable ideas. Sub-themes from the 2008 master plan that are relevant to the Springfield region are included below. In addition, an 8th sub-theme specific to Springfield was added.

Messages break down the sub-themes further into specific stories that can be told through interpretive media and programming. The messages in this chapter have been updated to include stories specific to Springfield and Sangamon County.

Sub-Theme 1

Route 66 symbolizes the spirit and freedom of America and the pursuit of the American dream.

Messages:

- 1.1 Route 66 has always been more, in the collective mind of America, than a utilitarian highway. It has been an inspirational portal to adventure, the promise of a second chance to many, and a glitzy corridor that welcomes everyone's dreams without judgment.
- 1.2 Route 66 is the Mother Road, the Road of Flight (*Grapes of Wrath*). It was the principal migration route for people searching for better lives during the Depression and following World War II. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright referred to the highway as the chute of a tilting continent, on which everything loose seemed to be sliding into Southern California. "Flower Children" of the 1960s flowed along Route 66 into the promised land of California (Witzel, 2003).
- 1.3 Route 66 is a highway of the recent past which enjoyed significance from 1926 to 1956. It is popularly known as the "Main Street of America."

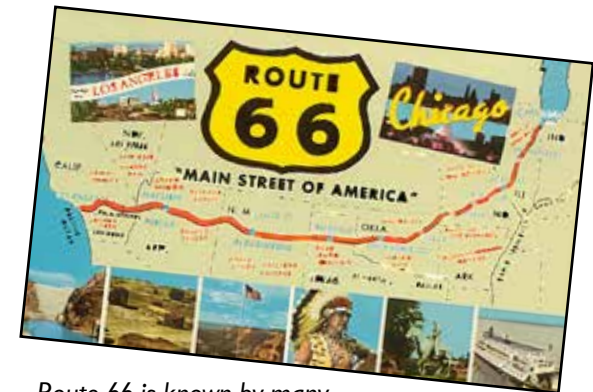
- 1.4 Route 66 celebrates the heyday of car culture and automobile tourism. It epitomizes the enormous impact of the automobile on the development, history, and culture of America. The post-World War II years of 1946-1956 have been described as the “Golden Years” of Route 66 when Americans “hit the road” in their new cars.
- 1.5 Route 66 transects diverse American cultures and landscapes, intensifying a traveler’s sense of discovery and adventure. The highway was a popular all-weather route linking the industrial Midwest to the California coast.
- 1.6 Illinois small towns represent the “real America” to many Route 66 travelers and offer an opportunity for visitors to meet people who live along the Road.
- Bill Shea and his Marathon gas station and museum became an internationally renowned landmark that attracted many Route 66 travelers to Springfield. They stopped here because Bill Shea made the experience of Route 66 authentic and quintessentially American. With the collection of items and Shea’s

personal tales of days long-gone, it was a nostalgic journey for all who stopped by. With his passing and the dispersal of the museum artifacts, only the Marathon station remains as an authentic part of the Mother Road.

- Many artifacts from Shea’s Gas Station Museum are now on display at Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum in Springfield. Owner Ron Metzger keeps the tradition of Route 66 alive for travelers.

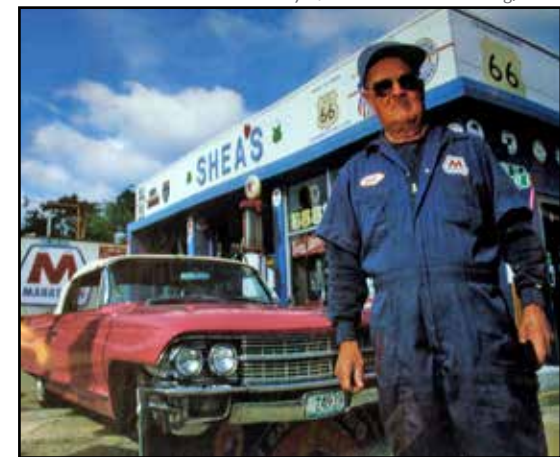
1.7 Generations of people have pursued their dreams and their livelihood on 66 as pilgrims, migrants, vacationers, truckers, police, waitresses, and filling station attendants.

- The Mother Road has been a conduit for people seeking jobs in California during the Great Depression and in the post WWII boom economy.
- Families took two-week vacations to see the wonders of the American West in the 1950s and 60s.
- With the improvement of federal and state roads in the 1920s,



Route 66 is known by many names, including “Main Street of America.”

Courtesy of Eccentric Roadside Blog, 2010



Bill Shea stands in front of his iconic gas station museum.

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com, Lincoln Library



Illinois State Police in Springfield.

Photo by Addison N. Scurlock, Smithsonian Institution



Mr. Lifsey presenting an Oldsmobile to raffle winners, April 1955.

commercial trucking became profitable and competitive with rail roads. The infrastructure of truck stops, service garages, brotherhood of teamsters, and the growth of trucking companies created a national road culture.

- The police who patrolled the “hard road” witnessed tremendous changes in procedures, technology, and engineering during their careers. Speed traps sprang up in small towns; radio communication became standard; fatal accidents were common.
 - Entrepreneurial families converted farms and homes into diners, filling stations, motels, roadside zoos and curio shops in order to profit from the escalating numbers of travelers on 66.
 - Sub-cultures of hitchhikers, vagabonds, and salesmen were born from the travel corridor.
 - Tow truck drivers, ambulance operators, and road maintenance crews all have their unique perspectives of the Road.
 - Children growing up in the towns and countryside of Route 66 often developed a curiosity and wanderlust for discovering what exotic places lay down the road.
- 1.9 The Black experience on Route 66 illustrates that “the freedom of the open road” myth did not apply equally to everyone.
- During the Jim Crow era, which ended with the civil rights laws of the 1960s, “sundown towns,” places that banned Black people from entering city limits after dark, and segregated businesses were prevalent along Route 66. There were nearly 150 sundown towns throughout Illinois. Entering these towns constituted great risk (Route History, 2022).
 - Black Americans also couldn’t eat, sleep, or even get gas at most white-owned businesses on Route 66. To avoid the humiliation of being turned away, they often traveled with portable toilets, bedding, gas cans, and ice coolers (Taylor, 2016).
 - Despite all the dangers, millions of black vacationers did explore the country—mainly relying on a unique travel guide called

The Negro Motorist Green Book. Victor H. Green, a black postal worker from Harlem, New York, published his guide from 1936 until 1966. His Green Book featured barbershops, beauty salons, tailors, department stores, taverns, gas stations, garages, and even real-estate offices that were willing to serve Black people. (Taylor, 2016).

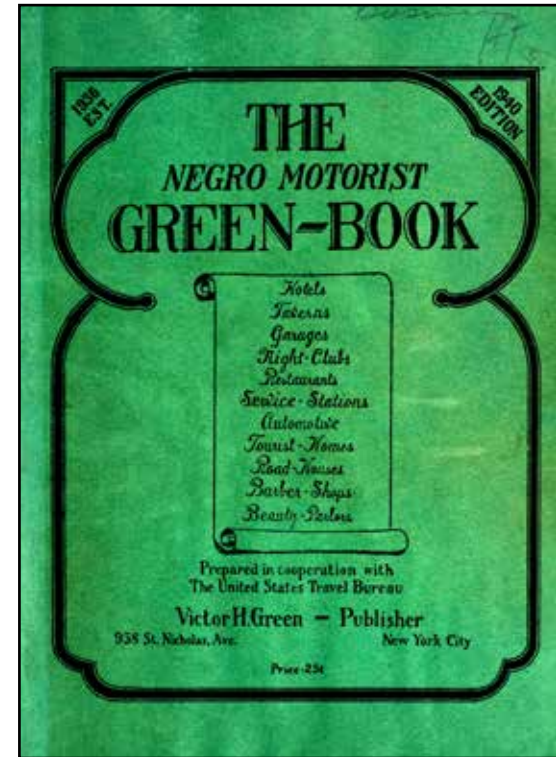
- After World War II, the *Green Book* had no businesses listed on Route 66 in Chicago, although there were listings in other parts of the city. After leaving Chicago, the next *Green Book* sites on Route 66 were more than 180 miles away in Springfield. Springfield had 26 listings: 13 tourist homes, four taverns, three beauty parlors, two service stations, and one restaurant, barber shop, drugstore, and hotel (Taylor, 2016).
- Route History, a museum located between two alignments of Route 66 in Springfield, shares the stories of Black experiences and the significant contributions of Black businesses in and near Route 66.



Eva Carroll Monroe is one of the Black leaders recognized at the Route History Museum. She founded the Lincoln Colored Home in 1898, one of the first orphanages for Black children in the U.S.



Kenneth Lockhart interprets the 1908 Springfield Race Riot in the Route History Museum (2021).



A 1940 edition of The Negro Motorist Green Book, which listed businesses that would serve Black people.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



“Cars on the Road” by Dorothea Lange, August 1936.

Courtesy of Destination Logan County



The Tropics neon sign in Lincoln was restored by the Ace Sign Co.

Sub-Theme 2

Route 66 has an idiosyncratic personality that is expressed in commercial and folk art and is celebrated in other art forms.

Messages:

- 2.1 John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* and Dorothea Lang’s photographs in “An American Exodus” chronicle the “Mother Road, the Road of Flight.”
- 2.2 Books, such as the reprinted Rittenhouse *A Guidebook to Highway 66*, Least Heat-Moon’s *Blue Highways*, and a host of recent books and travel guides are evidence that Route 66, once a highway to vacation destinations, is today’s vacation destination.
- 2.3 Movies such as “Easy Rider” and “Cars” and the television series “Route 66” romanticized the road to worldwide audiences.
- 2.4 Bobby Troupe’s “Get Your Kicks on Route 66” is a lyrical travelogue of the road that was sung by a host of famous artists ranging from Nat King Cole to The Rolling Stones.
- 2.5 The evolution of commercial design of service stations, cafes and motels can be seen in many historic structures lining Historic Route 66 in Illinois and add to the nostalgic attraction of the road.
- 2.6 Whimsical, and sometimes bizarre, roadside attractions sprang up as an economic response to the increasing traffic on 66. Oversized pink and green elephants, muffler men, giant coffee pots, Dutch Mills with rotating propellers, and the world’s largest covered wagon are a few examples that add to the myth and fantasy of the Mother Road.
 - The Lauterbach Tire and Auto Service in Jerome has a fiberglass “Muffler Man” called the Lauterbach Giant. This flag-carrying giant has been standing at this business since 1978. His head was blown off by a March

2006 tornado, but they found his head intact and the giant was quickly re-capitated.

- The saga of the Muffler Man evolved from a business begun in California by Bob Pruitt that made and sold fiberglass farm animals. They got an order for a giant Paul Bunyan for a restaurant in Sacramento. The molds were cast, and Paul was ready for delivery when the restaurant canceled the order. Bob took Paul Bunyan onto Route 66 and found a customer in Arizona for the big Paul (Barthel, 2019).
- The giants made with the Paul Bunyan molds became popular along Route 66 and were made to advertise a variety of shops and products. The outstretched arm on one side and the raised upturned hand on the other were a great way to hold a large muffler in front of a muffler shop and, thus, the term Muffler Men stuck. Many of the giants can be seen along Route 66 in space outfits, holding food items, and the Lauterbach Giant holding a flag.

- “The Rail Splitter” is a 30-foot-tall Abraham Lincoln fiberglass statue located at Gate 1 of the fairgrounds. It was constructed and built by Carl W. Rinnus in 1968 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Illinois statehood.

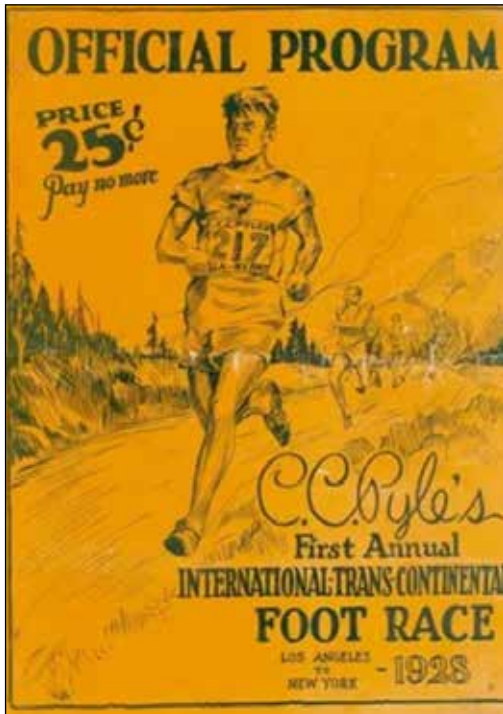
- 2.7 The small towns and farms of Historic Route 66 in Illinois with their characteristic 19th and 20th century architecture add nostalgic attraction to the road.
- 2.8 In its heyday, Route 66 was described as “a corridor of neon signs from Chicago to Los Angeles.” The design of neon signs soared to the status of an art form in the 1930s and into the 1960s.
- Ace Sign Company, established in 1940, Constructed many neon signs in and around Springfield. They have reclaimed, refurbished, and displayed many of these classic signs in their shop.
 - Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum has acquired and displayed many old signs and Route 66 memorabilia in their popular roadhouse, including from Shea’s Gas Station Museum.



The Lauterbach Giant “muffler man” as it appeared in 1960 at the Midtown Tire Service center.



Example of Burma Shave sign rhyme.

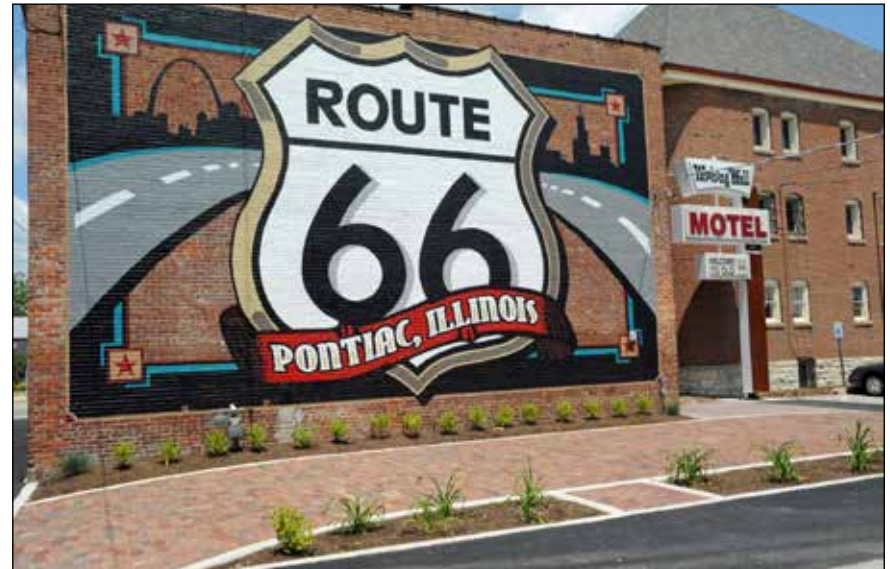


Official Program for the first International Transcontinental Foot Race in 1928.

- 2.9 Free standing billboards, Burma Shave signs, and painted messages on barns and silos were popular media for advertising commercial attractions along the highway.
- 2.10 Communities along Historic Route 66 are creating murals that celebrate their history on the Mother Road. Pontiac has increased tourism by creating more than 20 murals in the community. Springfield currently has two on a railroad underpass and two are planned for the new transportation center.
- 2.11 Located at Gate 2 of the fairgrounds, Route 66 Experience is a year-round walking experience that currently features oversized postcards, photos, and

cutouts from Illinois Route 66 communities. Under development are a paved brick road lined with neon signs, replicas of giants and roadside attractions, retro billboards, a car-themed playground, and interpretive signs that highlight Route 66 communities.

- 2.12 The International Transcontinental Foot Marathon (also known as the Bunion Derby) in 1928 and 1929 ran from Los Angeles to New York as a gimmick to promote the fact that a network of roads linked the nation coast to coast.



Pontiac, Illinois, celebrates Route 66 with more than 20 murals in its community.

Sub-Theme 3

Route 66 evolved dramatically in its fifty years of fame, serving as a prototype for advancements in road engineering and safety, which lead to its replacement by the interstate highway system.

Messages:

3.1 Route 66 illustrates the evolution of the national highway system.

- By 1924 SBI (State Bond Issue) 4 was completely paved between Chicago and St. Louis.
- In 1925, a committee of federal and state highway officials developed a numbering system for federal roads based on twenty base longitudinal roads and ten base latitudinal roads.
- Principal east-west roads were to end in "0" and a fight ensued over the designation of the arching Chicago-Los Angeles route, which was eventually resolved by numbering it "66" in 1926.
- Because it was already completed, the Chicago to St. Louis Route 4 segment became the first paved road on Route 66.

- The Defense Highway Act of 1941 authorized a limited-access four-lane freeway from Chicago to St. Louis, and from 1943-1946 several segments were completed.
- By 1950, the 18-foot, two lane road was replaced with a four-lane 24-foot limited access highway.
- The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 authorized a system of freeways that would eventually replace Route 66.
- In 1956, several sections of Route 66 became Interstate 55.

3.2 "Bloody 66" gave rise to Illinois State Police patrols and improved engineering for safety.

- The Illinois State Police were organized in 1922, mainly to enforce weight limits because

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



Laying brick road south of Springfield.



The Illinois State Police Memorial Park in Springfield honors the men and women who served (2021).



Towanda's "Dead Man's Curve" illustrates the hazards of early travel on Route 66 (2007).

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



A state police officer pulls over a speeding car on Route 4, 1924.

trucks were breaking up the new hard roads.

- Initially, "reasonable and proper" was the speed advisory prior to the inauguration of speed limits.
- "New Deal" 1930s road funding focused on safety, including eliminating railroad grade crossings and straightening curves. In 1936, a 4 ½ mile four-lane bypass of Springfield replaced corners with gentle curves.
- Numerous intersections and access roads resulted in fatal accidents.
- Speed traps sprang up in many small towns on 66 with local motorcycle police behind billboards and judges extracting inflated fines from out-of-state vacationers. The American Automobile Association began its National Road Reporting service in 1922. At one time more than half the offending speed traps were located on Route 66.

3.3 Route 66 was a military corridor in WWII, delivering war materials to the front lines and bringing soldiers home.

- A second mass migration on Route 66 rivaled the migration of the Depression, as workers surged to war industry jobs in California.
- Route 66 suffered major deterioration from trucks hauling war materials and from four years with little maintenance.
- Ex-GIs used the route for a third mass migration to plentiful post-war jobs in California.

3.4 Brick roads, old pavement, bridges, and abandoned routes are evidence of early engineering practices on the road.

- The National Register of Historic Places includes three original segments of Route 66 in Sangamon County.
- The Carpenter Park Route 66 pavement on the north edge of Springfield descends to the Sangamon River, preserving an original 1922 two-lane highway

design with the original curbing and surface. This segment was part of Route 66 from 1926 to 1936. It received NRHP listing in 2002 (Teague 2002).

- The Olde Carriage Way /Old Rte. 66 was the main alignment of Route 66 from 1930–1935 when Lake Springfield was created and the road re-routed. The 1.3-mile northern portion received NRHP listing in 2009. The Portland cement roadway was constructed between 1921–1922. It consists of two 8-foot lanes with a five-foot shoulder on both sides (McMullen et al., 2009).
- The brick road just north of Auburn is a 1.5-mile section of curved road originally paved in concrete in 1920. Route 66 followed this roadway from 1926–1930 before it was realigned to the east. When Route 4 was straightened in 1932, the Snell Road and Curran Road sections were bypassed and resurfaced with hand-lain bricks. It received NRHP listing in 1998 (Seratt et al., 1998).

- Other sections of brick road, now covered with asphalt, still exist near the State Fair Grounds. Another exposed section can be seen on the curve at the north end of North Cotton Hill Road.
- The Route 66 Memorial Rest Area in Sherman is a section of the two-lane highway that shows

the spartan nature of early rest areas. An interpretive panel and metal silhouette statue of children eating at a picnic table interpret rest areas on Route 66.



Original Route 66 pavement is still intact in Carpenter Park after it was bypassed in 1936 (2007).



The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie encompasses over 15,000 acres on the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant along Route 66 (2007).

Sub-Theme 4

Geography shaped development along the Illinois corridor from Lake Michigan to the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers.

Messages:

- 4.1 Historic trails used for centuries underlie the pavement of Route 66 in many places. In Illinois, the Pontiac Trail was an unpaved road that connected Chicago to St. Louis.
- 4.2 Levelled by glaciers, the landscape of Illinois served as a natural transportation route.
 - The Illinoian glaciation (191,000 to 130,000 years ago) and the Wisconsin glaciation (75,000 to 11,000 years ago) deposited a thick, fertile layer of topsoil in Illinois and left few obstacles for roads and railroads.
 - The Chicago and Alton Railroad, built during the early 1850s along the corridor, created a loose line of settlements about every 5 miles.
 - Development of the first hard road, Route 4 (State Bond Issue 4), paralleled the Chicago and Alton Railroad's easy grades and curves.
- 4.3 Most of Route 66 in Illinois passes through the Grand Prairie Natural Division, one of 14 Natural Divisions in the state.
- 4.4 Prior to European settlement, Illinois had approximately 22 million acres of prairie habitat (60% of the state).
 - Drainage of prairie soils was poor resulting in numerous marshes and potholes.
 - Many wildlife species depended on the Illinois tallgrass prairie and wetland habitat for survival.
 - Bison, Blanding's turtles, and Franklin's ground squirrels were common residents of the prairie ecosystem. Today, bison

are extirpated, and many other species are endangered.

4.5 Most of the fertile prairie land has been converted into agriculture. Less than 1,000 acres of prairie habitat remains (0.01% of the state).

- By 1833, the invention of the steel plow opened the tough prairie sod to agriculture cultivation.
- The construction of railroads after the Civil War accelerated cultivation by providing easier transportation to markets.
- By 1900, most of the Illinois prairie had been converted into agricultural fields.

4.6 Prairie remnants and restorations are significant to rare wildlife and plant communities, while serving as tangible links to the past landscape.

- The Right-of-Way between Route 66 and the railroad harbors tallgrass prairie remnants with diverse forbs and grasses representative of the Illinois prairie landscape. Periodic fires sparked by train wheels have preserved these remnants.

- The Route 66 Monarch Flyway is a 66-mile-wide corridor that stretches from Chicago to St Louis. The Flyway brings together the iconic Route 66 highway with Illinois' efforts to help the monarch butterfly by planting native wildflowers and restoring habitat projects within the corridor (Route 66 Monarch Flyway, 2022).
- A monarch garden has been established at the Route 66 Experience at Gate 2 of the Illinois State Fairgrounds. This is an opportunity to introduce and

promote the Route 66 Monarch Flyway.

- The Springfield City Water, Light and Power's (CWLP) Land & Water Resources department has established several monarch waystations around Lake Springfield, providing shelter, milkweed, and other pollinator plants.
- Michael Higgins, the owner of Maldaner's Restaurant on Route 66 in Springfield, maintains a rooftop garden with wildflowers, vegetables, and two beehives.



A monarch garden established at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience is part of the Route 66 Monarch Flyway (2021).



Grain elevators, like these near Elkhart, still dominate the landscape of rural Illinois communities along Route 66 (2007).

Sub-Theme 5

Illinois Route 66 is uniquely defined by its vast prairie/farm landscape, which is dotted with small towns and marked by grain elevators and historic, public squares.

Messages:

- 5.1 The level Illinois farm country creates an environmental context for Route 66 and dominates the travel experience from the Chicago suburbs to St. Louis. Highway travelers race through countless corn fields but slow to a leisurely tempo when they enter the intimate environment of rural Illinois towns.
 - center of a rich agricultural region and its links to the railroad and Route 66.
- 5.2 Many of the small towns on Illinois Route 66 exhibit a strong sense of place because they were self-sufficient and socially autonomous communities complete with restaurants, hardware stores, and civic amenities.
 - By 1953, the Village of Williamsville was one of the busiest and most prosperous towns of its size in the state. This was due to its location in the
- 5.3 Visitors on Illinois Route 66 can glimpse the sense of community found in many of the small towns along the road. It can be seen as people interact in restaurants, gas stations, and at parks, monuments, and other public places where social values are expressed.
- 5.4 The rich Illinois farm economy is evident in the built environment of the Route 66 corridor. Busy railroad spurs, massive grain elevators, and affluent looking farms rise out of the surrounding croplands.
- 5.5 Many historic Route 66 rights of ways, particularly those adjacent to railroad tracks harbor tall grass prairie remnants. These prairies

built the rich soils that gave birth to Illinois farming.

- 5.6 Many travelers are seeking to interact with people as they explore the Route 66 corridor. Small towns in Illinois offer excellent opportunities for travelers to meet residents.
- 5.7 Most American and European travelers are unfamiliar with agricultural practices of the past and present. There are numerous opportunities to help these people connect to farming and rural living in the Illinois Route 66 corridor.
- 5.8 Route 66 transects the heart of farm country in Illinois. Nearly 75% of Illinois' land is devoted to farming, with 89% of that farmland ranked as prime farmland. The state ranks third nationally for prime farmland (Illinois Department of Agriculture, 2022).
- 5.9 Illinois holds a competitive edge in agriculture over many other states due to its central location and superior transportation system of which Route 66 was a "hard road" prototype (Illinois Department of Agriculture, 2022).

5.10 Family run operations still dominate the 75,000 farms in Illinois (Illinois Department of Agriculture, 2022).



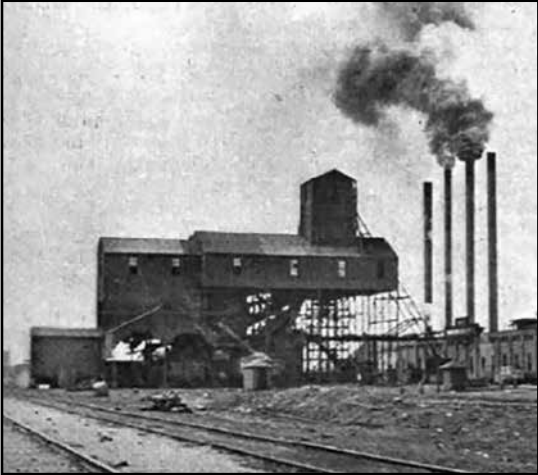
The historic brick road north of Auburn curves through fields of corn, showcasing the rural landscape of much of the byway (2007).

Courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection



Miners at the coal face in Buckley Coal Co. Mine B, Springfield (1926).

Courtesy of Wayne's World of History and Genealogy



The Madison Coal Mine No. 6 operated in Divernon between 1899 and 1925.

Sub-Theme 6

Coal underlying Illinois influenced the development of many communities along Route 66, fueled the nation's industry, and shaped national policy toward the Labor Movement.

Messages:

- 6.1 Coal was deposited under much of the southern two thirds of Illinois during the Pennsylvanian (Carboniferous period), about 300 million years ago.
- 6.2 Coal has been mined in 73 counties of Illinois. More than 4,500 coal mines have operated since commercial mining began in Illinois about 1810. There were two mining regions along Illinois Route 66: South of Wilmington and south of Springfield.
- 6.3 Miners of many ethnic backgrounds immigrated to Illinois towns for work in the mines. Working conditions were miserable, dangerous, and low-paying leading to strikes and conflict with Illinois troops and Pinkerton guards. Labor unions grew out of these conflicts to develop mine safety, improve mine workers' independence from the mine owners and the company store, and provide miners with collective bargaining power.
 - The United Mine Workers of America, headquartered in Springfield, worked to improve wages and working conditions. The Great Depression led to union contracts that cut wages. Conflict erupted in what became known as the 1932–37 coal miner union war (SCHS, 2013b).
 - A bitter battle between rival coal mine unions led to strikes, bombings, street riots, and at least six killings in Sangamon County in the 1930s (SCHS, 2013b).
- 6.4 Dozens of coal mines were located in Sangamon County in the early part of the 20th century (SCHS, 2020).

- By 1902, hopper cars heading out of Springfield were carrying more than 3 million tons of coal per year, and Sangamon County ranked as the most important coal county in the nation's most important coal state (SCHS, 2013b).
 - In 1902, 4,300 men working in 30 separate mines dug about 3.5 million tons of coal (SCHS, 2013b).
- 6.5 Coal mining was a dangerous job. During the 10 years in which the county led the state in coal production, 61 miners died in mine accidents and another 143 were injured (SCHS, 2013b).
- 6.6 Between 1900 and 1925, Divernon was the second largest town in Sangamon County at 3,600 residents. Its economy was based on Madison Coal Mine No. 6, which opened in 1898. Following a strike in 1925, the mine closed, and 800 men lost their jobs. The population of the village dwindled (SCHS, 2013c).
- 6.7 In Auburn, four mines employing as many as 800 miners, was the underpinning of the community's economy from the 1880s until 1924,

when the last mine, called the Panther Creek/Union Fuel Co., was shuttered (SCHS, 2013a).

- "There were few families in Auburn that did not have someone connected with the mines in some capacity or other . . . When all of the mines finally closed, it was a blow to the economy of the whole community (SCHS, 2013a)."

6.8 In the 1920s, the increasing use of mechanized mining and the rise of petroleum as a fuel source led to a decline in coal mining.

- From May to September, many mines closed due to decreased demand.
- Sangamon County's drop from coal mining dominance was reflected in employment figures. In 1932, 4,099 men worked as miners, while 10 years later, only 2,746 men were so employed. Local deposits were nearly exhausted after 80 years of intensive digging (SCHS, 2013b).
- Little physical evidence exists today of the importance of coal mining in Sangamon County

6.9 In Sangamon County, 53 coal mines undercut a total of 94.4 square miles of land. In Springfield specifically, all but the central core of the capital city was undercut by a maze of coal tunnels (SCHS, 2013b).



The Buckley Coal Co. Mine B operated in Springfield at Chatham and Old Jacksonville Roads (1926).

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



After World War II, Bill Shea operated a Texaco station on Route 66 in Springfield until 1955.

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



Grand opening of the Cozy Dog Drive In in 1950.

Sub-Theme 7

Small towns and businesses on Route 66 relied and continue to rely on automobile traffic for their social and economic wellbeing.

Messages:

7.1 Route 66 in Illinois was an important farm to market road that took livestock to Chicago slaughterhouses and grain to Mississippi River and Chicago ports.

7.2 Commercial development included billboards, campgrounds, tourist courts, motels, diners, service stations, roadside attractions, amusement parks and raceways.

- In the late 1920s, specialized service stations and garages sprang up to serve motorists.
- Mahan's Service Station dates to the 1920s and was originally located in Middletown, Illinois. It is believed to be the oldest surviving gas station in the state. It was purchased by Bill Shea in 2000 and moved to Shea's Gas Station Museum along Route 66 in Springfield. In 2016, it was purchased by Jeff Fulgenzi and

again moved to Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta across from Gate 2 of the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

- Drive-in restaurants evolved in the early 1930s. The Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop, on the National Register of Historic Places, dates to 1924. It claims the first drive-up window in the country.
- The Cozy Dog, the original deep-fried, battered, hot dog on a stick, was introduced by Bob Waldmire in 1946 at the Lake Springfield Beach House. The original Cozy Dog Drive In was built on Route 66 along South 6th Street in 1949. It moved to its current location in 1996, where the former Abe Lincoln Motel stood. The Waldmire family continues to serve these famous eats to Mother Road travelers near and far.

- As more and more people drove Route 66 during the “Golden Years,” 1946-1956, small entrepreneurs were drawn to the roadside. The range of roadside services that would define the tourist experience along Route 66 appeared during this time. Billboards touting these services became a fixture of the landscape.
- At diners, check-out counters evolved into souvenir shops, offering mementos of Route 66. Emblazoned match books, ash trays, coffee cups, and especially, picture postcards were available at motels, diners, and filling stations.

7.3 Truckers plied their trade on the route and truck stops served their needs.

7.4 The road aided the economies and development of all the communities along the route and the decline of those it bypassed.

- Between 1932 and 1941, and again from 1946–1949, many communities were bypassed by new highway construction, which included many divided four lane segments.

- Franchise food, lodging, and service establishments and limited access along I-55 led to the closing of most businesses on Route 66 that were not near an access ramp. Many neglected old buildings still stand as evidence of how the interstate system altered the economic life of rural roadside America.

7.5 The mythology of Illinois Route 66 includes stories of bootlegging, gambling, gangsters, and prostitution.

- Routes 4, and later Route 66, were an economic artery between Chicago and St. Louis. In addition to farm and industrial products, illegal goods like moonshine could be transported undetected past law enforcement.
- Gangsters, like Al Capone, welcomed, and even promoted, the hard surfaced roads because they facilitated fast getaways and anonymous movement. Route 66 became the road of choice for big

time gangsters who set up vast networks of gambling, rum running, and prostitution along the corridor.

- Nearly every old cafe and roadhouse has its tales of red-light districts, gambling, and gangsters.
- The Curve Inn opened on Route 66 south of Springfield in 1945. The original owner, Guido Mancini, served the public in the main tavern area, while “special” customers could ring a buzzer at the bottom of the back stairs to gain entrance to the gambling parlor and prostitution apartments on the upper floor.



The Curve Inn on Route 66 in the 1940s.

Courtesy of the The State Journal-Register



Springfield, Illinois, 1954. Looking down Capitol Street at the corner of 6th.

Courtesy of the Illinois State Archives



Dome building at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, circa 1900.

Sub-Theme 8

Springfield, the state capital at the historic heart of Illinois, has long stood as a milestone for Route 66 travelers, and continues to be a destination for those seeking amenities like motels, restaurants, conference centers, and museums.

Messages:

- 8.1 The Illinois State Fair is a long standing tradition that has attracted generations of fairgoers to Springfield for well over 100 years. As early as 1854, Senator Stephen Douglas delivered a speech at the fair and Abraham Lincoln delivered a rebuttal the next day. The Fairgrounds are located on the historic Route 66 alignment.
- 8.2 Springfield, as a center for politics and commerce, has always welcomed travelers. Inns provided overnight accommodations before the automobile. Early Route 66 motorists often camped in parks and rudimentary campgrounds. By the 1930s, clusters of cabins became common. Eventually “mom and pop” motels became the popular overnight accommodation. Ultimately, beginning in the 1950s, national chains like Holiday Inn dominated the lodging market.
- The Lazy A Motel is typical for its era. Built in 1949, it is constructed in Southwest Vernacular, with stucco walls and a flat roof, unusual for the Midwest. It is typical of the “Mom and Pop” era with garages between the sleeping units. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The motel is well maintained, but has been converted into apartments.
 - The Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center was originally built as a Holiday Inn in the 1950s. The management claims that it was the first Holiday Inn on Route 66. Today it features a “mini museum” of vintage vehicles, signs, and collectibles from the Route 66 era.

8.3 Route 66 alignments were continuously changing in Springfield because of the transitory nature of traffic patterns in the growing urban area. As a result, Springfield has a wealth of old roadbeds, surfaces, and engineering designs that document the evolution of travel, engineering, and safety practices on Route 66.

8.4 With its historic connection to Abraham Lincoln's life, Springfield has long been a tourist destination for Lincoln attractions. This includes the Lincoln Home, the Lincoln Tomb, and the Lincoln Depot.

- Billboards along Route 66 advertised Lincoln's Home and Tomb as must-see attractions in Springfield.
- A more recent attraction is the renowned Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library, one of the most visited presidential museums in the country, located on the 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment.

8.5 The 1930–1940 Route 66 and 1940–1977 Business 66 alignments border the Lincoln Home National Historic

Site on the east side of the property. As such, it is one of the most important attractions on Historic Illinois Route 66 with 419,552 visitors reported for 2005.

- Tourists have been coming to Lincoln Home since the late 19th Century, and Route 66 was a primary way to get there.
- Lincoln's son, Robert, donated the home to the State of Illinois in 1887 "to be protected and preserved for future generations" with the condition that it be available to the public for free.
- The home was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960. The state transferred it to the National Park Service in 1972, when it received National Historic Site status.
- Initially, the Illinois Conservation Department had jurisdiction over the Lincoln home and staffed an information trailer at the site. In 1970, Governor Ogilvie approved funds from the Conservation Department to build a new information center. It was staffed by the city Tourism Commission. The shed-type of construction,

paint and materials matched the Carriage House. It still stands today and is used for storage.

- In 1968, a museum was opened "four doors north of Lincoln's Home." It was built as a three-quarters scale replica of the home in which Lincoln and Mary Todd were married. The marriage parlor was faithfully reproduced, and other exhibits traced the life of Lincoln. It is currently a conference center.

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



A billboard along Route 66 advertises significant attractions in Springfield, including Lincoln's Home.

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CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS



Kenneth Lockhart leads a tour of Route History in Springfield, a museum that highlights the black experience on Route 66 (2021).



An Illinois Route 66 Experience Hub kiosk installed at the Cozy Dog Drive-in (2021). The Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team designed and fabricated 12 experience hubs that are installed in major communities along Illinois Route 66.

INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Route 66 is an iconic road that means something different to every traveler. For some, it is a nostalgic journey back to a simpler time of full-service gas stations, vibrant diners, and classic cars. For others, it is an adventure across the country to find the true heart and soul of America. To still others, it is a unique social opportunity to connect with family and friends.

Heritage interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes, whatever those meanings might be. Interpretive programming, media, and site design provide opportunities for travelers to make connections to the diverse stories of Route 66.

When interpretation is well planned, it can open windows of understanding and revelation in visitors who are seeking connections and meanings of their own as they explore the highway. It is a rewarding experience for visitors to discover for themselves new and exciting places and to feel like they have connected emotionally and intellectually in the process. Those positive experiences

translate into visitors spending more time in the area, encouraging others to visit, and ultimately bolstering the reputation of tourism in the region. This results in overall economic growth and sustainability.

The Springfield region has a rich diversity of resources and stories that serve as a foundation for travelers seeking meaning. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual framework for best interpreting the Route 66 story in Sangamon County. This includes:

- **Personal interpretation:** A real person interacting with travelers is the most effective form of interpretation. However, it isn't always cost effective or feasible.
- **Interpretive media:** These non-personal forms of interpretation often supplement the human interaction. These include signs, exhibits, publications, audiovisual tours, artwork, and others.
- **Site design:** While not as direct for messaging, the design of a site has a tremendous impact on the meanings that travelers are searching for.

This plan is meant to be a working document. The recommendations provided in this chapter were developed

based on the current conditions as of the writing of this plan (December 2022). As conditions change in the future, the

interpretive options presented should also be modified to take advantage of new opportunities.

PRIORITIES FOR THE ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL

The following priorities are recommended for implementation prior to the Route 66 Centennial in 2026. These are projects that the consulting team believes will be most beneficial in the short-term to enhance the interpretive experience for centennial byway travelers.

1. **Create a working group of stakeholders to lead interpretive efforts.** Involving all groups in the visioning and planning of interpretive experiences is vital to their success.
2. **Define the Route 66 driving alignments in Springfield and enhance wayfinding** (pages 80–85). Travelers need to feel comfortable navigating the byway in order to have a positive interpretive experience.
3. **Invest in streetscaping along the Peoria Road/9th Street alignment**

(pages 86–92). Thematic, well-planned streetscaping along the main Route 66 corridor not only improves wayfinding, but also creates an authentic driving experience for travelers.

4. **Enhance existing core interpretive sites** (pages 132–136). The Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum, Route History Museum, and Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum are primary existing sites for travelers to discover Route 66 stories. A minimal investment in these core attractions can greatly enhance the interpretive experience.
5. **Continue developing the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience** (see pages 138–141). This outdoor exhibit will become a statewide focal point for Route 66 interpretation. Consider making access easier to this site from Peoria Road and developing photo

opportunities with Mahan’s Filling Station as described in the plan.

6. **Develop new core interpretive sites.** Priorities would include the Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail (page 152), the Route 66 Memorial Rest Area in Sherman (page 148), and potentially Shea’s Gas Station (page 142). Work with Lincoln Home NHS interpreters to develop a Route 66 exhibit in the historic Information Center (page 144).
7. **Create a scavenger hunt style Route 66 passport program** (pages 130–131). This will attract a more diverse audience and encourage exploration of Route 66 sites.
8. **Update the Springfield Visitors Center Route 66 exhibit** (pages 120–121). An update will enhance awareness and provide better planning tools for visitors.



The unified brown IDOT Historic Illinois Route 66 signs direct travelers along different alignments in Springfield (2013).

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding is a holistic process to guide travelers through a physical environment. For interpretation to be successful, it is essential that travelers are able to negotiate the byway route and find the significant attractions. Without effective wayfinding, visitors can't access interpretive messages and may become frustrated with their experience.

Historic Route 66 is generally well marked through the state of Illinois, making it easy overall for first-time travelers to follow. The city of Springfield, however, presents some unique challenges. While the 1926–1930 and 1930–1940 routes are marked with signs through the city, the urban nature of the road with heavy traffic, multiple lanes, and numerous distractions often make navigating the route difficult. The alignments make several stair-stepping turns, which makes it easy to miss a sign and end up on the wrong road.

Apart from navigating the correct route, finding significant byway attractions and resources off of the route creates additional challenges, especially for serendipitous travelers who are watching

for interesting attractions along the road rather than planning prior to their trip.

Improved wayfinding requires more than just installing extra signs. Travelers navigate by using many visual cues along the corridor. Analyzing the entire corridor landscape is necessary for developing successful wayfinding.

The following recommendations can help improve the wayfinding experience both on and off the byway.

Recommendations

- **Replace all weathered Route 66 marker signs.** The standardized brown “Historic Illinois Route 66” IDOT signs are effective for marking the route—the prominent Route 66 shield is instantly identifiable. Some of the signs in the Springfield area are weathering, fading, or missing. Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway staff are currently in the process of identifying which signs need to be replaced prior to the 2026 centennial.
- **Install additional Route 66 markers:** A wayfinding plan should be developed that identifies where additional Route 66 marker signs

should be installed in Springfield to supplement the existing ones. Urban landscapes require a greater number of signs than less populated rural areas. Travelers need reassurance that they are on the correct road, especially before and after busy intersections. Route 66 “turn ahead” signs should be installed to prepare travelers for changes in the driving pattern.

- **Create Route 66 attraction signs:** Numerous attractions in Springfield are just a few blocks off of the main Route 66 alignments. Attraction signs provide directions to primary Route 66 resources from the main byway. An attraction sign could be designed in a style similar to the IDOT brown signs for unity. Or, landmarks and points of interest could be added to existing Springfield city directional signs coupled with an obvious Route 66 logo.
- **Create a streetscaping plan:** Beyond signs, wayfinding also incorporates the physical space along roads to help guide travelers. Incorporating obvious Route 66 elements in the streetscape helps to reassure drivers

and makes it easier to follow the road in congested conditions. Route 66 banners on street poles, benches, planters, murals, and painting on street surfaces are visual ways to define the corridor. See page 86 for more information.

Photo courtesy of Google Maps, © 2021 Google



Route 66 sites should be added to existing Springfield directional signs to emphasize their significance.



A separate Route 66 attractions sign, like the concept above, would direct travelers to primary resources along the byway in Springfield.

Courtesy of Adam Jones, CC BY-SA 2.0



The 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment in Springfield travels past the beautiful state capitol building (2017).

DEFINE DRIVING ALIGNMENTS

As part of the overall wayfinding plan, it is recommended that an **obvious driving route be identified** for the three different alignments recognized by the state byway: 1926–1930, 1930–1940, and 1940–1977.

From 1926 to 1977, the alignment of Route 66 through the city of Springfield shifted frequently as roads were improved and straightened. This has resulted in a mishmash of streets being designated as part of the Route 66 corridor, especially in the downtown area. To add to the confusion, there is debate about the actual alignment of the 1926–1930 route. And while the official U.S. 66 highway route moved to the bypass in 1940, the 1930–1940 route continued to be identified as City 66 until 1960 and Business 66 until 1977. Detailed maps with the different alignments marked are included in the Appendix.

Interestingly, nearly all of the alignment options in Springfield are currently signed to a greater or lesser degree, even those that may be conflicting based on the dates of significance. This complex intertwining of roads makes it very challenging for most travelers to follow.

City of Springfield officials should work with Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway staff to define clear routes for travelers to follow, blending historical accuracy with the reality of current traffic flow. Using wayfinding techniques from the previous section, these alignments should be obviously marked so they are easy for byway travelers to follow.

Recommendations

- **Eliminate 1926–1930 Alignment that turns onto Taintor Road:** Currently, Illinois Historic Route 66 signs marks the Taintor Road to 5th Street corridor as the 1926–1930 alignment. Based on our research, while this was the original path of State Route 4, Route 66 likely did not follow this section, but rather continued south on Peoria Road (Joppich, 2006, Johnson, 2012, Whittall, 2021). Interestingly, the scenic byway’s online interactive map, along with a printed map sign at the Route 66 Experience, have already eliminated this section of the byway. As such, it is recommended that the 1926–1930 signs are removed from Peoria Road (north) to Capitol Avenue (south). This keeps all byway

travelers on Peoria Road/9th Street through the northern part of the city.

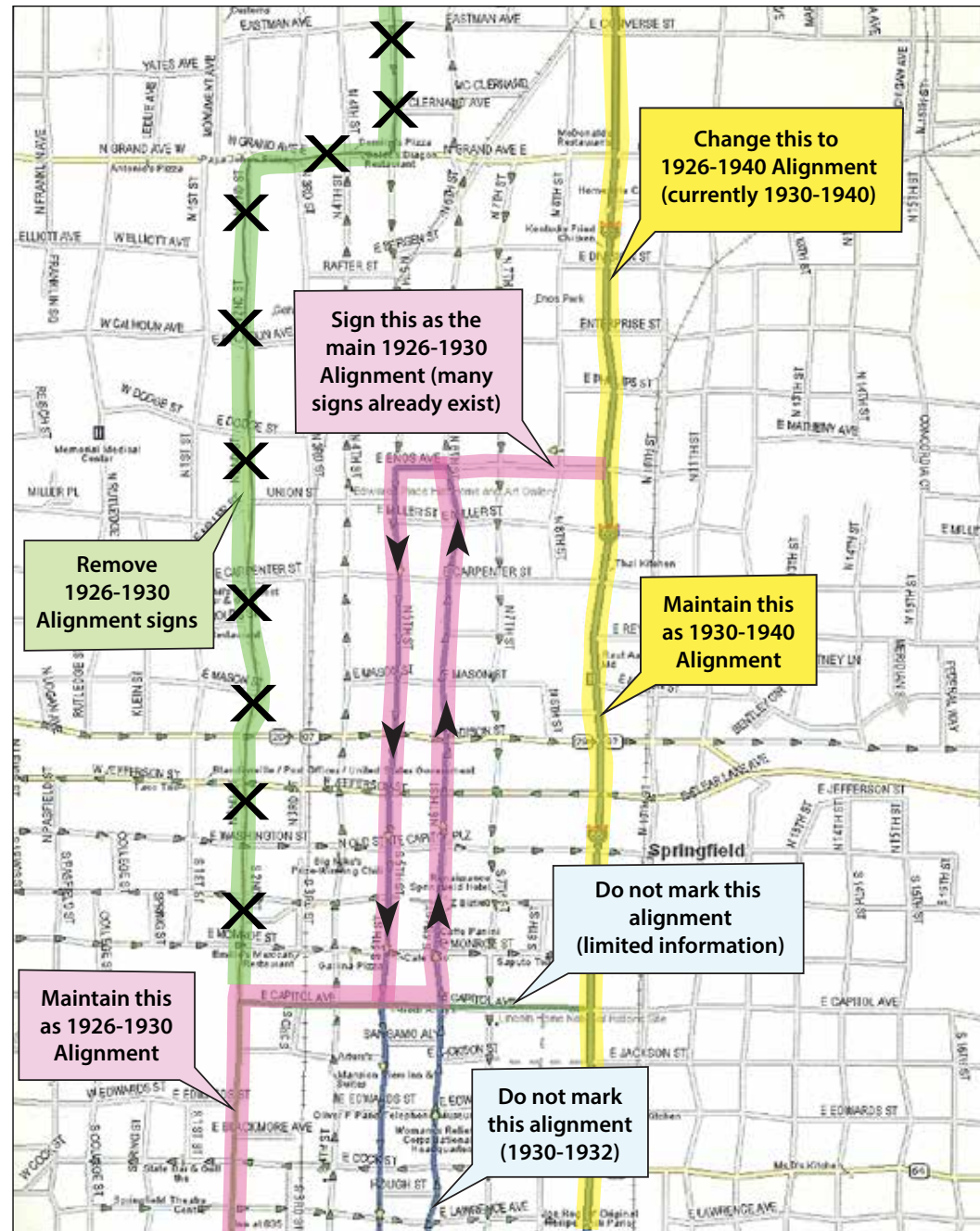
- **Clearly define the 1926–1930 driving route in downtown Springfield:**

According to Joppich (2006) and Johnson (2012), from 1926–1932, Route 66 turned west on Enos Avenue and then south on 6th Street. It is recommended that a 1926–1930 Alignment direction sign be installed on 9th street to direct drivers west onto Enos Avenue (no sign currently). Since 6th Street is now a one-way road going north, travelers are directed to turn on 5th Street going south instead (there is already a sign here marking the turn).

The route then turns west on Capitol Avenue (a beautiful brick road that leads straight to the capitol building), and then south on 2nd Street, which connects back to the already signed 1926–1930 byway alignment.

The same route should be signed for northbound travelers: from 2nd Street, east on Capitol Avenue (there is a sign here), north on 6th Street (missing a sign), east on Enos Avenue (sign is here), and north on 9th Street (sign is here as well).

Since many of the direction signs are already installed, it would just take a few more to make this into the primary 1926–1930 driving alignment. To avoid



Map of recommended Route 66 byway driving alignments through downtown Springfield.

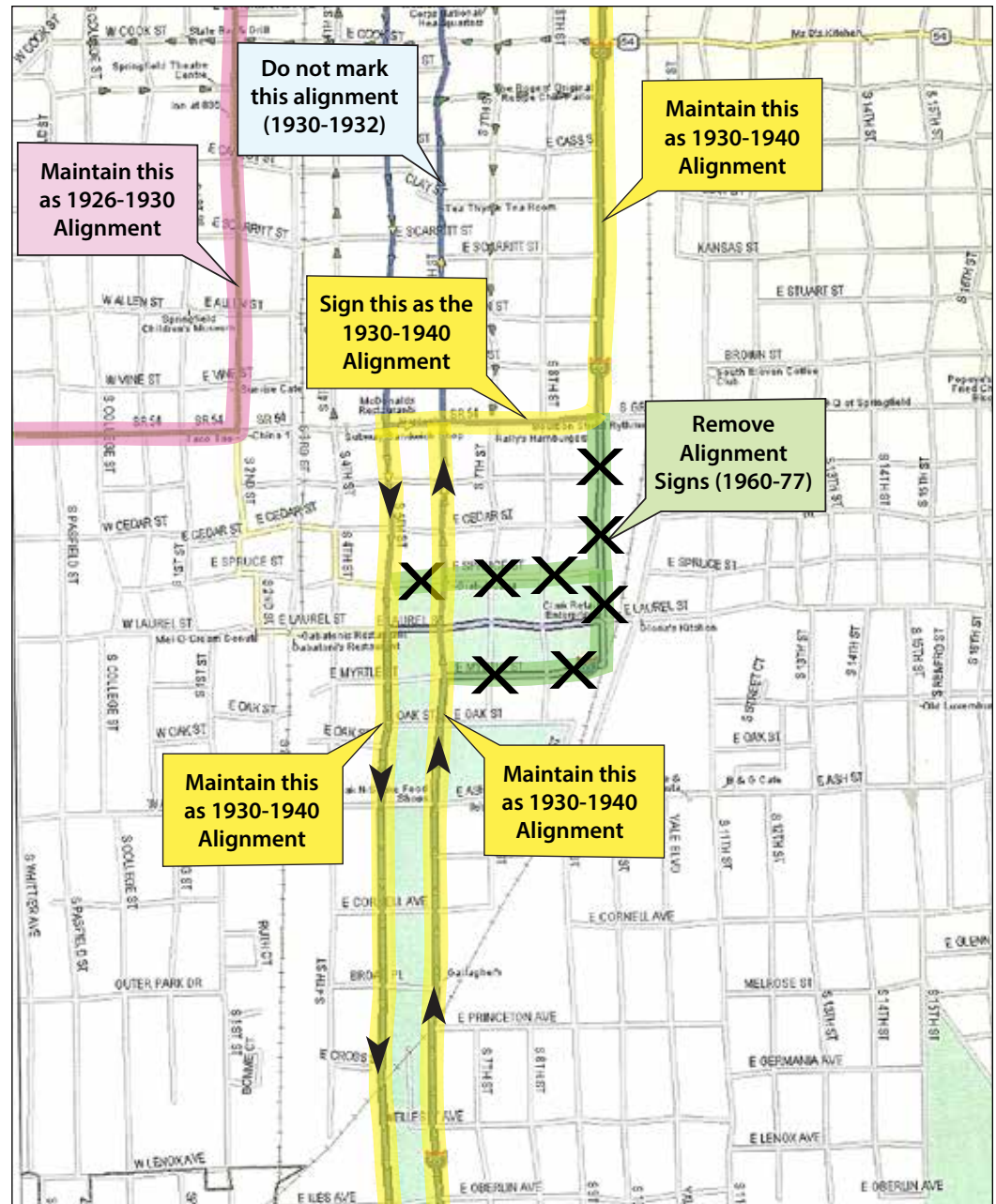
confusion, other 1926–1930 signs should be removed.

There is also a 1930–1932 alignment of Route 66 that follows 5th and 6th Streets south of Capitol Avenue. Since the period of significance was only two years, it is suggested that this section not be marked to avoid confusion.

- **Simplify the 1930–1940 Alignment south of downtown Springfield:** Between 1932 and 1960, all Route 66 traffic on 9th Street turned west on South Grand Avenue and south on 6th Street.

The current 1930–1940 alignment for southbound travelers follows 9th Street until turning west on Spruce Street, then south on 5th Street. Northbound travelers turn east off of 6th Street onto Myrtle Street, and then back north on 9th Street. These alignments were created in 1960 when City 66 was split into one-way traffic on 5th Street (southbound) and 6th Street (northbound).

To simplify this section of byway and stick closer to the original alignment, a direction sign should be installed on 9th Street that turns southbound travelers west onto South Grand Avenue, and then south on 5th Street. For northbound travelers on 6th Street, a sign would direct them east on South Grand Avenue, and then north on 9th Street.

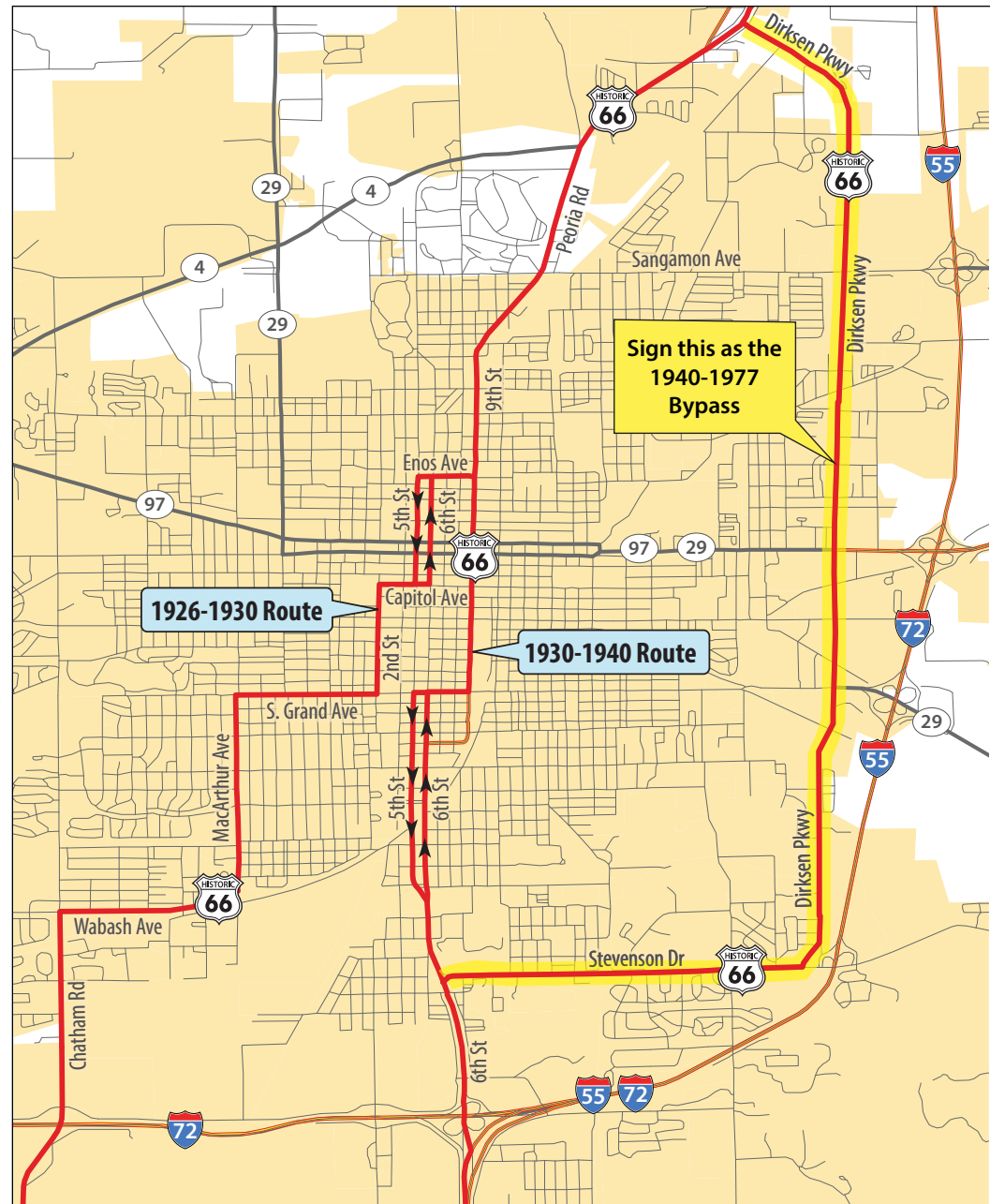


Map of recommended Route 66 byway driving alignments south of downtown Springfield.

- **Mark the 1940–1977 Bypass Alignment:**

As of this writing, only the 1926–1930 and 1930–1940 alignments are signed in Springfield. The Springfield CVB is interested in signing the 1940–1977 alignment that follows Dirksen Parkway and Adlai Stevenson Drive, so that businesses can identify with their Route 66 heritage. The IDOT signs have already been produced and are currently in storage with the city of Springfield.

The 1940–1977 signage presents a challenge to travelers in Springfield. Since the turnoff is located north of town, if travelers see the sign and take the alignment, they will miss the majority of primary Route 66 attractions. One option is to sign the route itself, but not put a direction sign at the northern or southern intersections. Another option is to clearly differentiate the two routes on adjacent direction signs. For example, “1930-1940 Main Route” would have a straight arrow and “1940-1977 Bypass” would have a left arrow at the northern intersection. This would give the traveler more information to choose their experience.



Map of Springfield 1940-1977 Route 66 Bypass Alignment to sign.

Courtesy of Pom! / flickr.com, CC BY-SA 2.0



Atlanta, Illinois, has invested considerable effort into its downtown streetscaping along Route 66. This includes murals, a hot dog muffler man, painted emblems on the roadway, antique street lights, street pole banners, flower planters, interpretive signage, and a thematic pocket park.

STREETSCAPING/CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT

A “streetscape” consists of all of the elements that make up the overall appearance of the byway corridor. Those portions of the road that visually tie to the themes of the old road make indelible impressions, leading to better visitor experiences and memories. Historic buildings, billboards, brick or concrete pavement, Route 66 shield signs, neon signs, old bridges, and rural landscapes all contribute to an authentic experience for travelers.

While not every corridor can be historically authentic, streetscaping can be planned to enhance the roadway appearance and tie into thematic elements. Planning for green spaces, pedestrian/bicycle pathways, benches, planters, unique street lighting, banners, and other elements visually ties the streetscape to the byway experience.

Planned byway streetscaping has many benefits for Route 66 communities, including:

- Enhancing the appearance of a corridor for travelers and residents.
- Showing community pride in a byway; it was worth putting money into this corridor.

- Improving wayfinding for Route 66 travelers (reinforces they are on the correct road).
- Enhancing access for all modes of travel, including pedestrians and bicycles.
- Preserving the character of the old road.

While streetscaping doesn’t usually communicate a direct interpretive message (like a wayside exhibit), it plays a major role in the holistic interpretive experience, providing a thematic ambiance that encourages visitors to explore and find meaning.

Existing Streetscaping

Communities in the Springfield region have accomplished some streetscaping elements that tie into the historic character of the Illinois Route 66 byway. These include:

- Installation of standardized, brown Historic Illinois Route 66 IDOT signs that mark the various alignments.
- Restoration of a couple of vintage gas stations along the route, including The Old Station in Williamsville

and the Mahan's Filling Station in Springfield.

- Some kitsch roadside attractions, like the Lauterbach and Rail Splitter fiberglass giants.
- Preservation of classic Route 66 hotels (at least the physical character, if not the actual lodging services), like the Lazy A Motel, Pioneer Motel, and Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center (former Holiday Inn).
- A set of Route 66 murals under the railroad tracks on North 9th Street in Springfield.

Streetscape Recommendations

As Springfield prepares for the upcoming Route 66 centennial, developing streetscaping plans for primary Route 66 corridors through the city is vital. The visual aesthetics of the byway corridor greatly impact how Route 66 travelers perceive the community. Currently, little has been done to develop streetscaping through the city, which results in the feel of an ordinary urban corridor rather than a unique and thematic Route 66 experience.

The primary Route 66 corridor through Springfield is the 1930–1940 alignment that follows Peoria Road/9th Street,

South Grand Avenue, and 5th/6th Street. It is recommended that a corridor plan be developed for this alignment which includes thematic Route 66 streetscaping elements.

Peoria Road/Historic Route 66 INVEST Corridor Project

In 2013, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSRPC) developed a corridor development project for Peoria Road/Historic Route 66 using a tool called INVEST (Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool). The tool, developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is used as a way to integrate sustainability into transportation programs and projects. While the plan was never implemented, the Peoria Road project is included as a case study on the FHWA INVEST website (FHWA, 2022).

The planners created several visuals that highlighted sustainable improvements along the corridor, which included streetscape design, crosswalks, lighting, accessible bus stops, improved pedestrian access, vegetation plantings, and public art at the Gate 2 entrance to the state fairgrounds.



Concept design for redeveloping Peoria Road/Historic Route 66 through Springfield, as envisioned by the INVEST Corridor Project (2013).

1. Enhance features:

Protect, preserve, and/or enhance historic, archaeological, or cultural resources. This could be done through the installation of informational or interpretive facilities (e.g. Viewpoint, kiosk, sign for visitors detailing historical, archaeological or cultural significance.)



A streetscape design for Peoria Road was completed by the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission in 2013 as part of the INVEST Corridor Project. This includes Historic Route 66 signs, a pedestrian/bicycle pathway with permeable pavers, interpretive wayside exhibits, benches, and native plantings.

One of the sustainability goals of INVEST is to “preserve, protect or enhance cultural and historic assets, and/or feature National Byways Program (NSBP) historic, archaeological, or cultural intrinsic in a roadway.” This was particularly well suited for the historic Route 66 byway. Features that the commission recommended included historic Route 66 signs and street pole banners, a permeable paver pedestrian/ bicycle path separated from the road with native trees and vegetation, benches, bicycle racks, and interpretive wayside exhibits (FHWA, 2022).

These streetscaping designs celebrate the spirit of Route 66 in the modern age, while still connecting to its historic character. The goal is not to recreate an authentic historic scene, but rather meet the current needs of residents and visitors to improve safety, connectivity, and aesthetics. This puts Route 66 on stage, showcasing the community’s support of the historic road and piquing the interest of travelers to discover more.

This plan is an excellent foundation to build on for implementing Route 66 corridor enhancements along select segments through the city. It would be ideal for welcoming travelers and enhancing the roadway for residents.

While major road projects like these are challenging since they require such a large investment and a shared vision among state, county, and city transportation representatives, the effort will pay off with increased tourism and economic development.

Street Pole Banners and Painted Emblems

Without doing an entire corridor redevelopment, the simplest and most cost effective way to enhance the streetscape would be to highlight the road with Route 66 shield emblems. Installing creative “Get Your Kicks in Springfield” street pole banners with the Route 66 shield is an ideal way to celebrate the Mother Road and reassure travelers that they are on the correct alignment. Roadside utility boxes could also be wrapped with a similar design for additional visual support.

Painting the Route 66 emblem on streets is another cost effective option that many communities have embraced. Maintenance of these paintings, however, is a concern, especially in high traffic areas like Springfield. An annual or biannual maintenance schedule would ensure that the street painting continues to look fresh.



Street pole banner concept design that could visually identify the Route 66 corridor through Springfield.



Painting the Route 66 emblem on roadways is a distinct way to mark the byway (Chenoa, 2008).

In 2017, a large Route 66 emblem was proposed for installation on both sides of a railroad bridge that spans North 9th Street (where the Route 66 murals are now painted). This is a dramatic way of showcasing the Route 66 corridor in Springfield and provides a unique photo opportunity. While working with the railroad can be challenging, it is recommended that the city continue to

pursue this project as a way to promote Route 66 and enhance streetscaping.

Interpretive Murals

Murals are “through the windshield” interpretive art pieces that can make stories from the past come alive or introduce the personality of the community to passing motorists. They

have the ability to convey the quirky character of Route 66 on a large scale, providing colorful photo opportunities.

Pontiac, Illinois, for example, is renowned for its large Route 66 Shield Mural painted on the back of the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum. This has become a “must stop” photo opp for byway travelers, complete with a brick driveway in front of the mural for cars or motorcycles.

Springfield already has a pair of Route 66 themed murals on the walls of the North 9th Street railroad underpass. These were painted by high school students in 2020 as part of the Springfield Art Association’s Public Art Mural Painting summer camp. The murals feature iconic north-side Route 66 attractions, such as the state fairgrounds, Shea’s gas station, and a horseshoe sandwich.

A large spray-painted mural by Danielle Mastrion will be added to the Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center. The 61 feet wide by 74 feet high mural will feature prominent Sangamon County residents and attractions. While not exclusive to the Mother Road, the mural will have a large Route 66 shield front and center based on the initial designs.



A concept for a Route 66 shield and city name that would be installed on both sides of the railroad bridge that spans North 9th Street in Springfield (original developed by Ace Sign Co. in 2017).

The Route 66 alignments through Springfield pass numerous buildings that have blank walls, which could be used as canvases for themed murals that tell the story of the Mother Road in Springfield. For example, the Firestone Auto Care building on 6th Street in downtown Springfield (1926–1930 alignment) has been a Firestone Tire dealership since the early 1930s. A mural could show what the service station looked like during the 1930s, when the front of the ornate building was festooned with gas pumps. A painting on a building near the site of the demolished Bel-Aire Manor Motel could show the classic motel in its heyday, complete with a running seal fountain.

Other murals could serve as invitations to explore interpretive sites in the community. For example, a painting of 1930s automobiles speeding down to the old iron bridge over the Sangamon River would encourage travelers to visit the original pavement and interpretive trail in Carpenter Park.

The Springfield CVB is currently creating a mural map for the city in conjunction with the Springfield Art Association, Downtown Springfield, Inc., and the Office of Public Works. Route 66 murals can be incorporated into this planning.



Mural design for Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center by Danielle Mastrion (2022).



A Route 66 mural in Joliet helps to creatively reveal the story of this historic car dealership (2007).



Concept design for a mural on the Firestone building on 6th Street in downtown Springfield, based on an actual 1932 photo of the building found on www.66postcards.com.



The iconic 1949 Sonrise Donuts sign along Route 66 in Springfield (photo above from 2007) was put up for auction and purchased by the City in 2018 to preserve it for future generations. It was restored by the Ace Sign Co. in 2019. One side of the sign is now displayed at the Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum, and the other is at the Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum.



The restored Sonrise Donuts neon sign in the Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum (2021).

Restoration of Roadside Business Signs

An incentive program can be created to support businesses interested in restoring or constructing signs that convey the aura of classic Route 66 (1940s and 50s era neon and design), or those that prominently display their connection to the historic road (Route 66 shield). Diners, hotels, gas stations, auto dealerships, gift shops, theaters, and other businesses could benefit by having updated signage, while the city would benefit by having a thematic Route 66 corridor streetscape, creating a destination for travelers.

Many businesses along Historic Route 66 advertise their connection to the old road, creating a unique opportunity to develop streetscaping. Some resources have vintage signs from the heyday of Route 66, such as the Pioneer Motel located on the north side of Springfield. Other businesses have installed modern Route 66 signs, like Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum, which boasts the largest Route 66 shield in the world.

While several museums and attractions in Springfield display vintage signs as a collection (Ace Sign Co., Motorheads, planned neon park at the Route 66 Experience), dispersing classic signs

throughout the Route 66 corridor creates a memorable and authentic feeling to the streetscape for travelers.

Springfield has a strategic advantage when it comes to restoring classic signs or constructing new signs that convey the character of Route 66. The Ace Sign Co., located in the city, has been constructing signs since 1940 and specializes in restoration work.



Classic neon signs, like this one along Route 66 in Fairmont City, create a thematic streetscape for byway travelers (2008).

Coordinate Interpretive Planning with Other Planning Efforts

At the time of this writing, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) is coordinating two additional planning projects that will greatly enhance the Route 66 corridor in the Springfield region:

1. Peoria Road/Ninth Street Redevelopment Plan

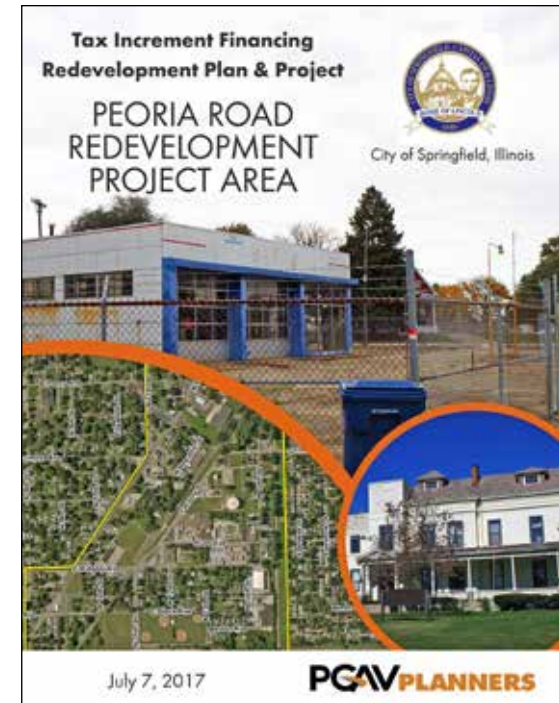
This plan will focus on land use redevelopment projects in the Peoria Road/Ninth Street corridor between Veterans Parkway (north) and Cook Street (south), which is the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment. Currently, many of the buildings, sidewalks, and other site improvements along the road are deteriorating or being vacated. The plan will study how tools like opportunity zones and tax increment financing (“TIF”) districts can be used to renovate and improve infrastructure in the corridor. This includes neighborhood rehabilitation, streetscape improvements, infrastructure, brick-and-mortar recommendations, and affordable housing (Berns and Peterson, 2021).

2. Route 66 Economic Enhancement Plan

This plan will focus on identifying additional tourism attractions along Route 66 in Sangamon County, and how to better market them. According to Molly Berns, SSCRPC executive director, there is an opportunity to create additional attractions that would keep tourists in the county for longer periods of time (Berns and Peterson, 2021).

Both of these planning efforts have major implications for interpretation along the Historic Route 66 byway. For example, as plans are being made to redevelop the Peoria Road/Ninth Street corridor, special emphasis should be placed on protecting and revitalizing the Historic Route 66 character of the road, as recommended earlier in this chapter. In addition, identifying additional Route 66 attractions in the county directly impacts what, where, and how interpretive stories should be told.

As final plans become available, they should be coordinated with the efforts of this Interpretive Master Plan to ensure that a unified Route 66 story is being told throughout the Springfield region.



A study conducted by PGAV Planners in 2017 identified an area along Peoria Road that met the requirements for being part of a Redevelopment Project. The creation of a Redevelopment Plan for this area is currently being coordinated by the SSCRPC.



Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibits from Pontiac (top), Carlinville (middle) and Litchfield (bottom) illustrate how interpretive media has been visually unified throughout the state.

CREATE VISUALLY UNIFIED MEDIA

The colors and design elements of the media graphics, the materials and construction of the supports, and even the typeface selected for interpretive inscriptions should reflect the personality of the byway and create a pleasing uniformity that reassures travelers.

Using recommendations from the original Interpretive Master Plan (2008) along with the Illinois Historic Route 66 logo design, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters developed a set of unified design standards that have been incorporated in byway media such as wayside exhibits and experience hubs.

These designs unify interpretive media resources across the state.

The city of Springfield has its own creative design department that develops enticing marketing for Route 66 attractions in the region. The purpose of the statewide media standards are not to replace the Springfield designs, but rather to ensure that the designs complement each other (for example, the use of similar font styles and the inclusion of the Route 66 shield).

Visual Identity Through Design

- Colors in the Illinois Route 66 byway logo serve as the primary palette for other media.
- The Illinois Route 66 byway logo should be replicated on all signs, publications, and online media for optimal exposure and recognition.
- Employ unified design standards for all signs, wayside exhibits, and interpretive hub supports and frames.
- Utilize consistent design elements for all media, such as font size and style, uniform color palettes, and other artistic details.

Coordinated Design Standards

To provide a well-organized and cohesive travel experience, all media should be graphically unified. The repeated use of elements like colors, typeface, and symbols will group media into recognizable visual families along Route 66. Consider the following recommendations when designing media:

Color Palette



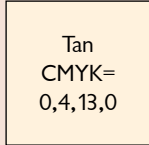
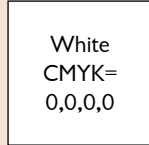

A consistent family of colors helps organize media and makes words easier to read and understand. Color can also evoke feelings and set moods and attitudes.

The color palette developed for use on Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway includes some colors that are bright and bold to celebrate the idiosyncratic nature of the road—the excitement of vacationing, neon signs, and hopping drive-ins. Other colors are more subtle and toned down to interpret topics that may not fit the brighter color scheme—the challenges faced by Black travelers or the frequent accidents along the road.

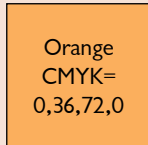
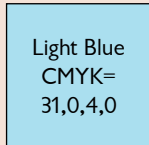
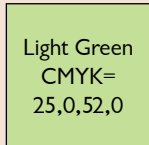
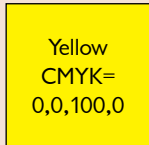
Different combinations of red, white, and blue colors have traditionally been used

Illinois Route 66 Byway Media Color Palette

Main Colors

 <p>Dark Red CMYK= 0,90,100,66</p>	 <p>Dark Blue CMYK= 100,57,16,27</p>	 <p>Tan CMYK= 0,4,13,0</p>	 <p>White CMYK= 0,0,0,0</p>	 <p>Black CMYK= 0,0,0,100</p>
Curved headers and footers, main headings, borders	Main message emphasis, arrows, graphic elements	Background fill	Header text, footer text	Main text, subheadings, captions, image credits

Secondary Colors (used for emphasis)

 <p>Orange CMYK= 0,36,72,0</p>	 <p>Light Blue CMYK= 31,0,4,0</p>	 <p>Light Green CMYK= 25,0,52,0</p>	 <p>Yellow CMYK= 0,0,100,0</p>
Side bar boomerang shapes	Tint boxes, variations used for background of kiosk maps	Secondary tint boxes	You are here symbols, secondary tint boxes

to represent Route 66. Since the highway is also known as “The Main Street of America” and “The Mother Road,” variations of this color scheme fit the theme.

Typography

The selection of typefaces and sizes creates a personality and determines the readability of the text on interpretive media. Each typeface expresses personality and sets a tone that reflects the organization or the message that is being interpreted.

Illinois Route 66 Byway Typography

Magneto

Main titles and headings

Futura Md BT

Main message and subheading

Futura Lt BT

Main text, subtext

Futura Lt BT Italic

Photo captions and credits

Garrison Sans Italic

Photo credits

Expo

Alternative for headings and subheadings

Typefaces during the heyday of Route 66 were unique and identifiable, especially in the 1950s when the beat and jazz culture influenced design. Most fonts were bold, flowing, irregular, and showy. Typefaces like **Magneto Bold** and **Expo** add a fun retro character to media when used for titles and headings.

Simple, familiar fonts work best for longer text that requires more reading. Derivations of the **Futura** typeface are recommended for the main text on byway media. Designed in 1927, it is a clean font

based on geometric shapes that has been used to convey progress. Futura is a sans-serif font (no decorations on the end of strokes) that is easy to read. It also works well for photo captions and credits

A **hierarchy of type sizes** is also important to emphasize the relative significance of various messages. Typically, a main title is the largest size, followed by headings, subheadings, main text, subtext, captions, and credits. These varying sizes help to create a logical visual sequence for readers to follow.



This Experience Hub panel, installed in Lincoln, shows different typefaces that impact the personality and readability of a sign. The different sizes create a message hierarchy.

Repeating Graphic Elements

Another important factor that contributes to a unified design style is the use of repeating graphic elements. These artistic details, in combination with the color and typography schemes, develop a unique identity for the byway.

The Historic Route 66 shield emblem is an essential graphic element that should be included on all interpretive media. For media connected to the byway, this would typically take the stylized form of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway logo.

Other repeated graphic elements convey the vintage design style of the 1950s, such as bold, curving geometric shapes, clean lines, and pastel colors. Specific elements include:

- A curved dark red header and footer with white text
- Large cutout focal point images to draw attention.
- Photos with dark red borders that are rounded and organically shaped
- Tilted postcards, maps, or snapshot photos that overlap other elements
- An orange boomerang shape that serves as a sidebar for additional interpretation and passport stations

- Uniquely shaped light blue and light green tint boxes that overlap other elements
- Light tan backgrounds with faded background graphics
- Byway website address for more information



This wayside exhibit installed in Dwight shows several repeating graphic elements, including the Illinois Route 66 byway logo (on the frame), the curved dark red header and footer, a cutout focal point image (gas pump), an organically shaped photo box, uniquely shaped tint boxes (orange sidebar and blue box), and a tan background with faded background image.



Route 66 wayside exhibit installed at the Williamsville Depot (2021).



Raised metal rubbing Passport Station on the Williamsville Route 66 wayside exhibit.

INTERPRETIVE WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Wayside exhibits are outdoor interpretive panels found along trails and roads. Photos, illustrations, and concise messages attract and hold a visitor’s attention as they discover the significance of a site.

Wayside exhibits are an effective way to communicate with visitors because they are always on the job regardless of weather or season. When properly placed near resources, they can quickly answer questions that visitors have about the resources. They are a direct and non-

intrusive method to connect people with significant stories along the byway.

Wayside exhibits should tell site-specific stories that bring a resource to “life” and place it into context, connecting it to universal concepts that are relevant to everyone. The best wayside exhibits present messages that are visual, concise, active, and multisensory. See the “Creating an Effective Message” tint box below for best practices when designing signs.

Creating an Effective Message

1. Communicate visually with photos and graphics.
2. Most visitors will look at an interpretive panel for only a few seconds. Apply the 3-30-3 Rule, a hierarchy that provides 3-second, 30-second, and 3-minute message levels.
3. Use simple words, concise sentences, and short paragraphs.
4. Describe with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adverbs and adjectives.
5. Relate to the reader with familiar terms, personal pronouns, metaphors, and quotes.
6. Provide multisensory involvement with tactile and audio devices.

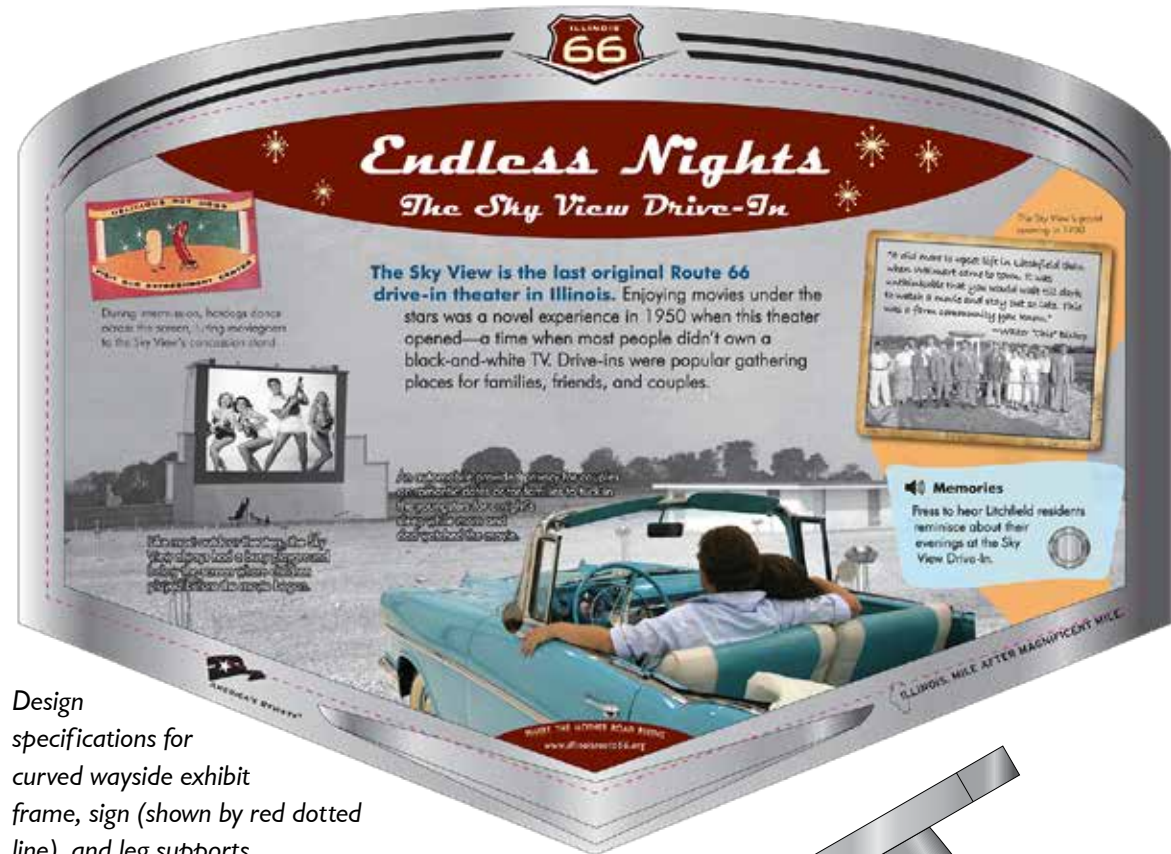
Wayside Exhibit Design

A unique Route 66 wayside exhibit design was recommended in the 2008 Interpretive Master Plan, which reflected the 1940s and 50s car culture of the highway. This included streamlined, curved shapes, a chrome-appearance, prominent Route 66 emblems, and sign elements such as vintage fonts and shapes.

Design specifications were finalized in 2009, when the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team was hired to develop 31 wayside exhibits along the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. These specifications included:

Supports and Frame

- Curved legs fabricated out of 10 gauge stainless steel, electropolished for a chrome look. Illinois Route 66 byway logo screen printed to each leg.
- Frame and back plate curved on top and pointed on the bottom, fabricated out of 10-gauge stainless steel, electropolished for a chrome look. Racing stripes and Illinois Route 66 byway logo screen printed on top. America's Byways and Illinois tourism logos screen printed on



Design specifications for curved wayside exhibit frame, sign (shown by red dotted line), and leg supports.

bottom. Double plated chevron hood emblem attached to bottom.

Sign Panels and Faces

- Sized at 30" wide by 19.7" high, rounded top and pointed bottom to match frame.
- Sign layout follows unified design standards for colors, fonts, and shapes (see "Create Visually Unified Media" section in this chapter)





Passport station plaque installed on a wayside exhibit at the Ariston in Litchfield.



Pushbutton audio unit installed on a wayside exhibit about patrolling Route 66 in Pontiac.

- Constructed of 1/8"-thick high-pressure laminate (HPL) material, a durable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-quality images and text. They are resistant to graffiti and scratches, and come with a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating.

Multisensory Components

Adding multisensory components to a wayside exhibit increases its attractiveness, makes it accessible to a wider audience, and provides another way for visitors to experience the message.

- **Tactile passport stations:** 3"-diameter circles fabricated with 0.153" zinc feature unique line art that is raised above the surface. These are used to make rubbings for passport booklets.
- **Pushbutton audio units:** FlashAudio SI players protected in 6"x6" NEMA enclosures provide opportunities to add authentic narration supported by sounds and music to wayside exhibits. Durable outdoor buttons, marine speakers, and amplifiers that read digital files from SD cards can be powered by standard electric lines or solar panel/battery setups.

Installation

Wayside exhibit frames should be installed at a 45-degree angle to the vertical, which offers the best view to a standing or sitting person. They are designed so the distance between the lowest edge of the frame and the ground is 32 inches, allowing a person in a wheelchair to get close.

A concrete base is suggested where appropriate to facilitate the installation of the exhibit (can be installed directly to the base surface), maximize accessibility (for people with mobility disabilities), and provide easier maintenance over time (snow removal, vegetation management).

Existing Wayside Exhibits in Sangamon County

In 2009–2011, the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team was hired to research, write, design, and fabricate 31 wayside exhibits along the Illinois Route 66 byway. They were installed by each community. Twelve included unique metal rubbing passport stations that travelers could collect as souvenirs. Seven incorporated pushbutton audio units that featured interviews of people who worked and lived along the road.



Route 66 wayside exhibit installed at the Williamsville Depot (2021).



Route 66 "international" wayside exhibit installed at the Cozy Dog (2021).

Three wayside exhibits were installed in Sangamon County as part of this project :

1. Williamsville: The Golden Years

This sign interprets Route 66 as "America's Main Street," serving as the lifeblood for family businesses in small towns like Williamsville. Historic photos identify early service stations and the hazards of road curves. It includes a passport rubbing station with the Williamsville arch. It is installed at the Williamsville Depot.



Route 66 wayside exhibit installed at Knight's Action Park (2021).



Wayside exhibit installed at Knight's Action Park (2021).

2. Cozy Dog Drive-In: International Panel

In 2011, three general “international” Route 66 wayside exhibit were installed in Illinois. One was installed at the entrance to the Cozy Dog Drive-In. The sign welcomes visitors in seven different languages and includes photos of 13 major attractions along the byway.

3. Knight's Action Park: Fun Along the Road

Installed just behind the main entrance building at Knight's Action Park, this sign interprets roadside attractions that sprung up along the highway to offer entertainment. The history of Knight's Action Park, which started as a golf driving range in 1930, is told through images.

Recommendations for Existing Wayside Exhibits:

All three wayside exhibits are still standing, but their overall condition varies. As part of a holistic wayside exhibit plan for the region, suggestions include:

- Include the location of wayside exhibits in Springfield marketing for Route 66. Current marketing does not

include these exhibits. The Knight's Action Park sign, in particular, is hidden from view of casual visitors.

- While the frame is still in good condition, the “international” wayside exhibit sign panel at the Cozy Dog has not weathered well. The image face is faded and splotchy. It is recommended that the panel be replaced with a new sign that interprets the significance of the Cozy Dog, rather than the current general message (this is duplicated on the nearby Experience Hub). If the panel is not replaced, the entire wayside exhibit should be removed, as it does not reflect well on the Illinois Route 66 image.
- The Williamsville and Knight's Action Park frames and sign panels are still in good condition. An effort should be made to clean the exhibits several times per year. The sign face on the Williamsville panel, in particular, would benefit from a good cleaning.
- The screen printed logos on the top of the frames are fading, especially the maroon coloration. The frames should be sent in for reprinting so they look fresh.

Additional Wayside Exhibit Sites

The best wayside exhibits are site-specific, installed at places where tangible resources associated with Route 66 can be experienced. See Chapter 3: Interpretive Resources for more detailed descriptions of the following:

1. Carpenter Park Route 66 Pavement

Carpenter Park preserves a 1926–1936 stretch of Route 66, which meanders through a woodland on its way to the Sangamon River. It is a truly unique and authentic way to experience Route 66. It is recommended to develop this area as an interpretive walking trail (see page 152). If this isn't feasible, a wayside exhibit at the entrance can interpret the significance of the early highway design. A passport station featuring the old road would encourage travelers to stop.

2. Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience

As part of the proposed interpretive complex, several wayside exhibits can tell the story of Route 66 over the decades. Using the stylized design connects travelers to the wayside exhibits that they will see all along the byway in Illinois (see page 138).

3. Mahan's Phillips 66 Station

This historic 1920s filling station is a popular photo stop along Route 66 in Springfield. The wayside exhibit can interpret the history of the station and its relocation over time, first to Middletown, then to Shea's Gas Station Museum, and finally to Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta. A metal passport of the old station would serve as a souvenir for travelers.

4. Shea's Marathon Gas Station

For many years, Shea's was an iconic Route 66 attraction. Many groups still stop here hoping to catch a glimpse of its former connection to the Mother Road. As part of a redevelopment of this site, a wayside exhibit can offer a glimpse into the significance of Bill Shea and his eclectic collection, along with a connection to artifacts on display at Motorheads and Fulgenzi's (see page 142). If a video exhibit isn't feasible, a pushbutton audio unit on the wayside exhibit could feature Bill Shea sharing some of his stories.



If the Carpenter Park pavement isn't developed as an interpretive trail, a wayside exhibit could be installed at the entrance (2007).



A wayside exhibit and statue would tell the story of the Mahan's Phillips 66 Station.



A renovated Shea's gas station site opened to visitors would include a wayside exhibit.



A wayside exhibit installed near the front door of the Route History Museum would introduce the theme of the Black experience on Route 66 (2021).



The existing wayside exhibit at the entrance to the Cozy Dog Drive-In can be repurposed with an updated sign directly interpreting the history of the establishment (2021).

5. Springfield Visitors Center

While not directly on a Route 66 alignment, the Springfield Visitors Center, located in the historic Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices, is an important stop for travelers to learn more about Route 66 attractions in Springfield. A wayside exhibit is an opportunity to introduce the Mother Road, even when the visitors center is closed. The sign can interpret the significance of Route 66 in Springfield and its different alignments over time. A metal passport featuring the Route 66 emblem would be a great place for travelers to start their passport collecting experience.

6. Route History Museum

The Route History site is an ideal location for a wayside exhibit, which would interpret the essence of the Black experience on Route 66 and *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. While not as dynamic as a guided tour of the museum, it would nevertheless provide significant interpretation to travelers when the building is closed. It could also encourage serendipitous travelers to enter the museum when open for a more detailed story. A metal passport of the Route History logo should be included for the Route 66 passport program (see page 134).

7. Cozy Dog Drive-In

As described earlier, the Cozy Dog Drive-In currently has a general international wayside exhibit at its entrance door. Since the sign is fading, this an excellent opportunity to update it with interpretation specific to the interesting history of the Cozy Dog and its significance to Route 66. A Cozy Dog passport station with two “hugging dogs” is already included on the nearby experience hub, but this could be moved to the updated wayside exhibit. A more general Springfield passport station can be developed as a replacement for the experience hub, such as the fun “Visit Springfield” logo.

8. Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center

This hotel was originally built in the 1950s as a Holiday Inn, possibly the first ever located on a Route 66 alignment. The creation of the Holiday Inn by Kemmon Wilson in 1952 revolutionized the lodging industry with affordable rooms and amenities. A wayside exhibit here can interpret the history of lodging along Route 66 and include vintage postcards that show the Springfield Holiday Inn in its heyday.

9. Ace Sign Company Sign Museum

While not directly on a Route 66 alignment, the Ace Sign Company has been an important part of the Route 66 legacy in Springfield since 1940. A wayside exhibit can interpret the history of the sign company and the importance of signs to automobile culture. By including a passport station with a classic Route 66 sign (like Sunrise Donuts), it encourages travelers to take a detour off of the route and discover this unique perspective of the Route 66 story. A pushbutton audio unit could feature former owner, Joe Bringuet, and/or his son and current owner, Dennis Bringuet, speaking about their family's connection to the sign making business (see page 132).

10. Lauterbach Giant

This fiberglass “muffler man” giant is a classic roadside attraction that has stood at its currently location since 1978. While located on a busy stretch of the road, it is a popular photo stop for travelers. A wayside exhibit here can interpret the evolution of fiberglass giants and tell the specific story of the Lauterbach Giant. A passport station

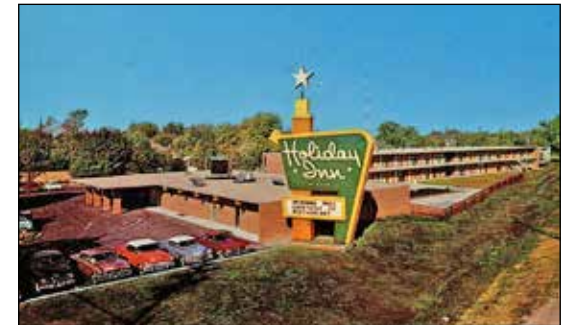
featuring the giant's image would provide an incentive for travelers to stop.

11. Abandoned Brick Road Curve

A small brick section of the original 1930–1933 Route 66 alignment is still accessible at the northern end of North Cotton Hill Road. It offers an authentic discovery experience for travelers. A wayside exhibit here could encourage visitors to explore the short stretch of road and interpret the many changes that Route 66 went through over time, including bypassing sharp curves like this one for safety.

12. Historic Brick Road

The beautiful 1.5 miles of historic curving brick road just north of Auburn is a favorite of Route 66 travelers. It retains its historic character surrounded by rural landscapes. It is suggested that a safe pull-off area be identified and developed along the brick road where travelers can get out of their cars and take photos. A wayside exhibit can share the history of this unique roadway. A passport station featuring the curving brick road will provide a memento to supplement the photos (see page 150).



A wayside exhibit at the Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center can illustrate its original life as one of the first Holiday Inns on Route 66.

Courtesy of www.66postcards.com



A wayside exhibit at the Historic Brick Road can tell the story of building brick roadways.



Illinois Route 66 Experience Hubs feature community names curving up the sides that illuminate with changing colors every evening (Joliet region experience hub, 2016).

EXPERIENCE HUB KIOSKS

Experience hubs are prominent thematic kiosks that orient byway travelers to significant regional attractions and stories. They are typically designed with enough size and mass to attract attention, even in cluttered urban areas. Unlike staffed welcome centers, they are available at any hour of the day throughout all seasons and weather.

When placed at entry sites to a byway or at locations where visitors already gather, experience hubs can introduce impromptu travelers and even local residents to the attractions on the route. A well-designed experience hub attracts attention and makes readers aware of the potential adventures that can be experienced.

The 2008 Interpretive Master Plan provided a conceptual design and recommended the installation of experience hubs in major communities along Illinois Route 66. The purpose of each hub was to serve as a gateway to individual communities and resources along the road.

Experience Hub Design

Sign and kiosk structures present an opportunity to visually organize interpretive media into an artistic repetition that can be easily identified by travelers. A consistent, recognizable design reinforces the byway identity.

The 2008 Interpretive Master Plan included a conceptual design that was in a style similar to the wayside exhibits, with curved lines, chrome-style edges and frames, and a bold Route 66 emblem at top.

Design specifications were finalized in 2011, when the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team was hired to develop 12 experience hubs along the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. These specifications included:

Supports and Frames

- The structure has a total height of over 8 feet to command attention even in busy urban areas.
- Curved side channel pieces are fabricated out of 14 gauge stainless steel, electropolished for a chrome look.

- Front, back, and top panels are powder coated .080"-thick aluminum, colored to match the dark red of the Illinois Route 66 byway logo.
- A prominent 1/2"-thick high-pressure laminate Illinois Route 66 byway logo is attached to the top of the structure on both sides.
- Three attached frames are curved and fabricated out of 11 gauge stainless steel, electropolished for a chrome look.
- Community names are spelled out on both sides of the structure with cut out and back lit letters made from 3/16" acrylic sheets. Programmable changing colored LED lighting is installed behind the letters, which turns on automatically at night.

Sign Panels and Faces

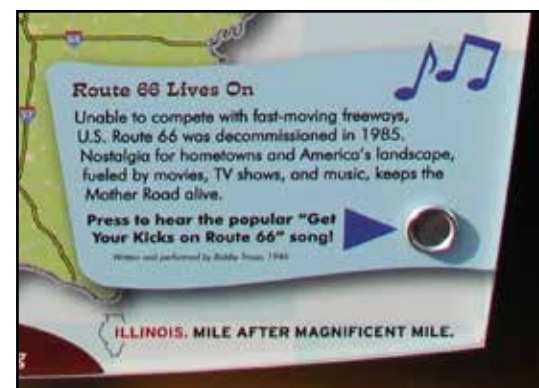
- One side of the kiosk features a large map of the entire Route 66 corridor through Illinois with general information about the byway. It is sized at 29" wide by 43.6" high.
- The other side of the kiosk features two smaller panels, sized at 28.75" wide by 20.75" high. The "Regional Attractions" panel shows a map of the region and the primary resources

associated with Route 66. The "Community Interpretation" panel tells the story of Route 66 in that region.

- Sign layouts follow unified design standards for colors, fonts, and shapes (see "Create Visually Unified Media" section in this chapter).
- Panels are fabricated out of 1/8"-thick high-pressure laminate (HPL) material. They are resistant to graffiti and scratches, and come with a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating.

Multisensory Components

- A **pushbutton audio unit** on the main map plays "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" by Bobby Troup (1946).
- The "Community Interpretation" panel has a 3"-diameter circle **passport station** made out of 0.153" zinc. It features a unique raised line art design for each community. Travelers can use a pencil or crayon to make a rubbing of the design onto a piece of paper as a souvenir.



Each experience hub features a touch-button audio unit that plays "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" by Bobby Troup (2021).



Each experience hub also features a unique metal passport station that represents the community in which it is installed (Carlinville region).



Springfield region experience hub kiosk installed at the Cozy Dog Drive-In (2021).

Existing Experience Hub

In 2011–2012, the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team was hired to research, write, design, and fabricate 12 experience hub kiosks along Illinois Route 66. The Springfield region kiosk was included in the original project scope, but city officials didn't decide on a location for its installation until two years later. The experience hub was installed in the northeast corner of the Cozy Dog Drive-In parking lot in 2014.

The regional map on the hub identifies Route 66 attractions from Williamsville to Divernon, although the historic brick road north of Auburn was not included. The interpretive panel showcases Springfield as the heart of the Land of Lincoln, focusing on the legacy of motels and roadside dining. A rubbing passport station includes the iconic cartoon Cozy Dogs hugging.

Recommendations for Existing Experience Hub

The experience hub structure and signs at the Cozy Dog Drive-In are still in good condition. They appear to be well cared for. The audio unit is operational, and, according to staff, the changing colored

LED lights continue to illuminate in the evening. A few recommendations:

- Like wayside exhibits, include the location of this experience hub (and others if they are installed in the future) in marketing for Springfield Route 66. It is a good photo opportunities for travelers and provides an overview of other Route 66 attractions to visit.
- Some of the information on the interpretive signage and maps is now outdated. For example, the Bel-Aire is shown as an example of a classic motel that travelers can watch for along the road (now demolished). The Illinois State Police Museum is listed as an attraction (now closed).
- The Regional Attractions sign should be updated with new significant attractions that have been added or updated since 2014, including Motorheads, Route History Museum, Ace Sign Company Sign Museum, Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience, the new location of Mahan's Phillips 66 Station, and more.
- The Regional Attractions sign should incorporate all Sangamon County



An experience hub at the Route 66 Experience should be placed near the parking lot and entrance to the outdoor exhibit area. This will encourage travelers to visit other nearby Route 66 attractions (2021).

Additional Experience Hub Sites

To be successful, experience hubs should be centrally located in areas where travelers already gather—where they are searching for amenities and where there are significant stories to experience. The hubs are prominent enough to draw the attention of first-time visitors and to capture the attention of new audiences passing by.

1. Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum

Since the publishing of the first Interpretive Master Plan in 2008, the Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum has taken on a prominent role as a “must see” Route 66 attraction in Springfield. It serves as a southern anchor to Historic Route 66 in the city. Its eclectic collection of automobile, Route 66, and racing memorabilia rivals that of Shea’s Gas Station Museum before it closed, and even includes many of Shea’s original artifacts.

Since this is already a popular gathering site for Route 66 enthusiasts and others, it is an ideal location for an Illinois Route 66 Experience Hub.

The “regional attractions” panel should feature the Route 66 resources in Sangamon County and Springfield, with a special emphasis on resources to the south such as the historic brick road in Auburn. The interpretive panel, entitled “Saving the Neon Corridor,” can reveal the evolution of Motorheads and Ron Metzger’s efforts to acquire and protect Route 66 artifacts from the Springfield area.

The hub should be located in a prominent location at the complex where it will be easy for travelers to notice. If not sited correctly, there is a chance that it could get lost among all of the other artifacts that currently decorate the exterior of the building.

2. Illinois State Fairground Route 66 Experience

The Route 66 Experience, under construction at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Gate 2, will be a statewide showpiece of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. It will feature iconic attractions from all of the different Illinois communities along the byway, and provide an opportunity for visitors

to walk the Mother Road in miniature. The outdoor complex will serve as a northern anchor to Route 66 in the city of Springfield.

As a Route 66 attraction with statewide significance, this is another logical site to install an Illinois Route 66 Experience Hub.

Like the hub recommended for Motorheads, the “regional attractions” panel should highlight all of the Route 66 resources in Sangamon County and Springfield, but special emphasis can be placed on resources to the north, such as Sherman and Williamsville. The interpretive panel could tell the story of the Illinois state fair and other special events, like the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival, that occur along the byway in the Springfield area.

The experience hub should be located near the parking lot and entrance to the Route 66 Experience, so that it can be viewed as either an introductory panel for travelers entering the attraction, or as an orientation tool for those exiting and looking for other resources to visit.

3. Route 66 Introductory Sites

Several sites not directly associated with Route 66 have been identified as possible locations to introduce other audiences to the Mother Road. Depending on the space and location, an experience hub kiosk could be a good tool for sharing this information. See page 158 for more details.



An experience hub should be located in a prominent location near the flow of traffic to be successful. Installing the hub near the entrance door of Motorheads would be ideal (2021).



Upright wayside exhibits, like this one at Chesapeake Bay Gateways, attract attention and provide orientation to visitors.

UPRIGHT ORIENTATION WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Upright orientation waysides are exhibits that hold vertical interpretive signs between two legs. They are recommended for locations that require a focal point exhibit, but where a full-fledged experience hub would be inappropriate (lights and chrome don't fit the setting) or cost prohibitive. The exhibits are often used to provide orientation and information on opportunities.

This style of exhibit was not included in the original 2008 Interpretive Master Plan, but after reviewing sites for development in the Springfield region, it is recommended as an ideal cost effective solution for specific areas.

What sets uprights apart from low-profile wayside exhibits is that they do not direct a visitor's attention to a specific feature within view. Typically, they are two panels mounted back-to-back and supported by two metal posts either on a concrete pad or in-ground. On one panel, maps and general information may, for example, introduce visitors to Illinois Historic Route 66 and the entire route from Chicago to Los Angeles. The other panel provides interpretation and

information about a trail or collection of features in their immediate vicinity. Uprights provide similar information but are a lower-cost alternative to the attention-grabbing Route 66 Experience Hubs that were sited at each of the twelve Illinois Route 66 regions.

Upright Wayside Design

The standard rectangular design is a departure from the curved and chromed frame and supports of the low-profile waysides and experience hubs, which reduces the overall cost. However, panel colors and fonts follow the design standards for those media. A curved metal plate on top features prominent Illinois Route 66 identification logos.

Supports and Frames

- The structure is double-sided, allowing for two different signs to be displayed.
- The structure has a total height of just over 7.5 feet to draw attention.
- The legs, frames, and rounded top plate are constructed out of aluminum and powder-coated black.



Concept design for an Illinois Route 66 upright wayside exhibit. One side will include an introduction to Route 66, along with an orientation map and snapshots of area Route 66 attractions.



The opposite side of the exhibit will interpret the specific resource where the structure is located, in this case, the Carpenter Park interpretive trail.

- A prominent 1/2"-thick high-pressure laminate Illinois Route 66 byway logo is attached to the top rounded plate of the structure on both sides.

Sign Panels and Faces

- The two sign panels are sized at 36" wide by 48" high. They will be fabricated out of 1/8"-thick high-pressure laminate (HPL) material. This is resistant to graffiti and scratches and comes with a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating.
- The sign on one side of the wayside exhibit will introduce the significance of Route 66 and feature regional attractions with a map and colorful snapshots.
- The sign on the other side will specifically interpret the resource where the exhibit is installed.
- Sign layouts follow unified design standards for colors, fonts, and shapes (see "Create Visually Unified Media" section in this chapter)

Upright Wayside Sites

Upright wayside exhibits work best when they are located where people will be looking for orientation information. This usually means installing them adjacent to parking areas, staging spaces, or other places that people naturally congregate. They command more attention than low-profile wayside exhibits.

1. Route 66 Memorial Rest Area, Sherman

As one of the first stops for southbound travelers in the Springfield area, the rest area is an ideal location for a vertical orientation exhibit. See page 148 for more information

2. Sherman Village Park

A portion of a walking/biking trail in this park follows a historic Route 66 corridor. A vertical wayside at the parking area for the park can point out the significance of the site and encourage exploration. See page 156 for more information.

3. Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail

If the Carpenter Park pavement is developed into an interpretive walking trail, an upright exhibit at the parking


area would serve as an ideal trailhead. See page 152 for more information.

4. Lincoln Home National Historic Site Information Center

If developed into an interpretive site, the old Information Center near the Lincoln Home has the potential of connecting different audiences to the story of Route 66. An upright wayside here can introduce travelers to other nearby attractions. See page 144 for more information.


5. Route 66 Introductory Sites

Several sites not directly associated with Route 66 have been identified as possible locations to introduce other audiences to the Mother Road. Depending on the space and location, an upright orientation wayside exhibit may be a good tool for sharing this information. See page 158 for more details.

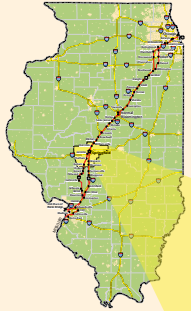



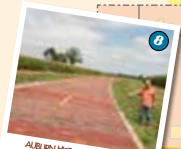
ILLINOIS Route 66

Springfield Region




Route 66, the Mother Road, is an American icon that symbolizes romance and freedom of the open road. Born in 1926, Route 66 was one of the first numbered U.S. highways, journeying 2,500 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles. Today, you can still "get your kicks on Route 66" by exploring the Illinois Historic Route 66 National Scenic Byway.








AUBURN HISTORIC BRICK ROAD
Drive the historic section of Route 66 constructed with hand-laid bricks in 1932.




ILLINOIS STATE FABRICATIONS ROUTE 66 EXPERIENCE
Walk the entire Route 66 highway through bricks in miniature and discover its many attractions.




MAHANS PHILLIPS 66 GAS STATION
Visit one of the oldest working filling stations in Illinois, dating to the 1920s.




MICROHEADS BAR, GRILL & MUSEUM
Explore Springfield's Route 66 artifacts and enjoy good food surrounded by racing memorabilia.




ROUTE HISTORY MUSEUM
Here the often-cited stories of Black people who had and worked along Route 66.





COZY DOG DRIVE-IN
Order up the original "one dog one nickel" of the iconic Route 66 drive-ins.



ACE SIGN CO. SIGN MUSEUM
View dozens of restored classic signs in a place that has been making them since 1943.



LAUTERBACH GRANT
Take a photo with a 20-foot tall fiberglass Muffler Man looking in his eyes along Route 66.

To discover more, visit: illinoisroute66.org



Walk

one of the oldest hard roads in Illinois



Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail

A hundred years ago, this quiet abandoned stretch of road was a busy modern highway. It carried the nation's traffic from 1926 when U.S. Route 66 was created until 1936 when it was bypassed by a four-lane alignment to the east (now Peoria Road).

The trail gently curves and slopes to the Sangamon River. Along the way, interpretive panels tell the story of this historic road and Carpenter Park that borders it. Established in 1921, the park is a designated State Natural Area and Important Bird Area of Illinois. An overlook and panel on the Sangamon River tell the story of the 19th century Carpenter's Mill and the Old Iron Bridge.



Length: 1/4 mile Surface: Mostly level



To discover more, visit: illinoisroute66.org

Concept designs for upright wayside exhibit orientation sign panel (left) and site specific sign panel (right). The panels will be sized at 36" wide by 48" high and fabricated out of 1/8"-thick high-pressure laminate.



Waitress and Shirley Temple silhouette statue and wayside exhibit installed in Elkhart in 2014.

INTERPRETIVE SCULPTURES

People interact differently with sculptures than they do with flat works of art. Sculptures have a three-dimensional form that occupies space and invites tactile exploration. Viewing a sculpture is a dynamic discovery since the work changes as the viewer moves around it.

Thematic life-size weathering steel cut-outs of people and artifacts were recommended for installation along Illinois Route 66 in the 2008 Interpretive Master Plan. Accompanied by wayside exhibits, the artwork would attract

attention, highlight resources that could otherwise be overlooked, and create a personal connection to travelers.

Existing Silhouette Statues

In 2013–2014, the Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters team was hired to plan, design, and fabricate 9 of these statues along with associated wayside exhibits. A diversity of characters were installed along Route 66 as part of this project, including a motorcycle cop in Pontiac, a service station attendant in McLean, Shirley Temple eating at a cafe in Elkhart, and a miner with his mule in Godley.

One statue and associated wayside exhibit was designated for installation in the Springfield region at the Route 66 Memorial Rest Area in the Village of Sherman. The statue represents two children eating lunch on a picnic table, along with a curious chipmunk. The wayside exhibit, entitled “An Oasis on Route 66,” interprets wayside parks as resting and picnicking stops for travelers on the highway.



Motorcycle cop silhouette statue and wayside exhibit installed in Pontiac in 2014.

The statue and wayside exhibit were installed in the park in October 2022, along with real picnic tables that provide a true “rest stop” experience for travelers. This is an ideal foundation for incorporating other planned park improvements that would make this a “must see” stop for Route 66 travelers (see pages 148–149). In the meantime, adding a direction sign on the scenic byway route will help guide travelers to the interpretive site.



The interpretive elements in Sherman’s Route 66 Memorial Rest Area are installed on an old section of Route 66 pavement; the associated picnic tables and trash bin encourage picnicking (2022).



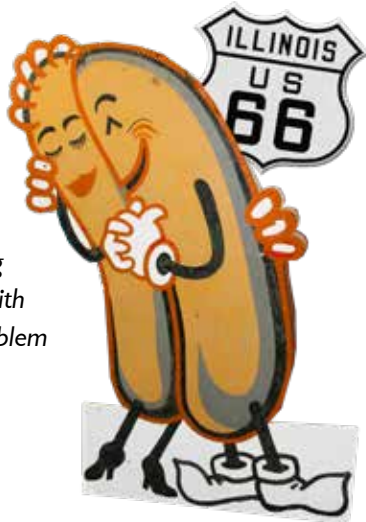
Sherman rest area silhouette statue (2022).



Sherman rest area wayside exhibit (2022).



A silhouette filling station attendant statue at Mahan's Phillips 66 Station adds a human element to the historic scene.



A large Cozy Dog cartoon cutout with the Route 66 emblem behind would be a popular photo opportunity for travelers.

Additional Interpretive Statue Sites

1. Shea's Gas Station Museum

As part of the redevelopment of the Shea's Gas Station site, a full-size cutout photograph of Bill Shea standing in front of the gas station would be a dynamic focal point and a photo opportunity for travelers. It could be printed on durable exterior 3/4"-thick high pressure laminate. An associated wayside exhibit would share the legacy of Bill Shea and his unique collection. See page 142 for more details.

2. Mahan's Phillips 66 Station

A weathering steel silhouette cutout of a service station attendant could greet visitors stopping at the historic Mahan's Phillips 66 Station. An associated wayside exhibit would interpret the history of the station and how it has moved several times over its existence.

3. Cozy Dog Drive-In

Located at the front of the building, a large colored cutout of the cartoon Cozy Dogs hugging with a Route 66 emblem above would be a popular photo stop for travelers and draw attention to the drive-in's iconic

history. An associated wayside exhibit would reveal the story of Ed Waldmire Jr. and his invention of the world's first corn dog on a stick.

4. Springfield Scheels

Scheels is known for their realistic outdoor bronze sculptures created by renowned artists George and Mark Lundeen. In Springfield, sculptures include a larger-than-life fisherman, hunter, snow boarder, and mountain biker. There are also life-size presidents sitting on benches. Some of the sculptures include metal signs that provide additional information.

Adding a Route 66 themed sculpture to the collection would be an ideal way to introduce the Mother Road to diverse audiences. For example, a family traveling down the dusty road during the Great Depression, loaded down with their few possessions, could interpret Route 66 as the "road of flight" as people followed the highway in search of a better life. An associated upright orientation wayside exhibit could introduce the story of Route 66 and encourage shoppers to visit Route 66 attractions in Springfield.



A dramatic Route 66 sculpture entitled "East Meets West" in Tulsa, Oklahoma, depicts the Avery family in a 1926 Ford startling horses. Cyrus Avery, who lived in Tulsa, is considered the "Father of Route 66."



A Route 66 sculpture in Joliet, Illinois, depicts a man holding a child over the words "The Mother Road." The pedestal features a mosaic with two Route 66 highway signs (2007).



The existing Route 66 wall exhibit in the Springfield Visitors Center. Flat Lincoln was standing in front of it on a visit in August 2021.

VISITORS CENTER EXHIBIT

Visitor information centers are important sites to display and share byway information. In addition to brochures and booklets, a touch-screen computer and associated exhibit can catch the attention of travelers and help them plan trips to byway attractions.

Springfield has a staffed visitors center located in the middle of downtown in the historic Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices building. It currently has a flat panel exhibit that introduces Route 66 as “America’s Main Street.” Large photos of iconic Springfield attractions decorate the panel, although they are not identified.

If space can be identified, the visitors center is an ideal location for a more interactive Route 66 exhibit that can facilitate impromptu planning. It also can introduce the Illinois Route 66 byway “brand” through its logo and characteristic fonts and colors.

Design Recommendations

The exhibit should be designed small enough to fit inside the visitors center where space is limited, yet large enough to attract attention.

- A large statewide map of Illinois Route 66 introduces the byway and its main attractions. The sign provides a short summary of Route 66 and includes a prominent “you are here” symbol. Iconic photos of landscapes and attractions encourage further discovery.
- The map sign is held in a rounded frame constructed out of stainless steel and electropolished for a chrome appearance. The frame style and colors replicate the unified design standards of the byway.
- A rack installed next to the map sign holds byway booklets, brochures, and Springfield Route 66 discovery passports.
- A durable touchscreen computer housing provides digital information about the byway. This would include an interactive corridor map that shows the different Route 66 alignments over time and attractions. For a unique perspective, the byway route can be placed over an air photo, and users can press arrows to fly over the landscape and discover more about each attraction as it appears.

The kiosk will also have a chrome look.

A touch-screen computer is an ideal tool for an interior byway exhibit because:

- They take up little space in already crowded information centers.
- They are a durable, widely used technology.
- Information is presented with icons and symbols that are more universally understood than words.
- They are easy to use—reaching out and touching symbols on a screen comes naturally to many people.
- Visitors are empowered to seek their own information rather than asking staff who may be busy or simply are not informed about the entire byway.
- Information can be updated easily.

The byway information accessible via the touchscreen computer should be managed online in a central location. This allows multiple kiosks to be distributed in welcome and visitors centers throughout the state.



Concept design for an Illinois Route 66 exhibit that could be installed in the Springfield Visitors Center. The design introduces the unifying elements that are found on all interpretive media throughout the byway.



Concept idea for an Illinois Route 66 Welcome and Discovery Center entrance sign.

ROUTE 66 WELCOME AND DISCOVERY CENTER

A “flagship” Illinois Route 66 interpretive experience is needed to tie together the diverse stories of the Mother Road and serve as a destination for travelers. A Route 66 Welcome and Discovery Center in Springfield would be a beacon for byway travelers.

The original Interpretive Master Plan (2008) recommended that the classic Bel-Aire Manor Motel along Route 66 be redeveloped into a state-of-the-art Illinois Route 66 Discovery Center. While this idea initially garnered support from the City of Springfield, the funding for such a large-scale project was unavailable, and the Bel-Aire was demolished in June 2015. The need for this type of facility, however, still exists.

Purpose of the Discovery Center

The purpose of this discovery center would be very different than the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac, an already popular destination for Route 66 travelers. The Pontiac museum does an incredible job collecting, preserving, and displaying significant artifacts from the highway. While the Springfield center may incorporate some

artifacts, its role is not that of a collection museum.

The primary role of the discovery center is to serve as a portal, encouraging tourists to visit the diverse attractions up and down Route 66. Innovative exhibits would encourage discovery and interaction. Knowledgeable staff would share stories and suggest attractions that fit a traveler’s distinct interests, directing them to other locations along the byway.

The center could also function as the headquarters for the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway—a centralized facility for all communities along the byway. The building would feature meeting rooms and office space, while serving as a clearinghouse and research center that coordinates with the Illinois State Library’s Route 66 collection downtown.

Rationale for Building the Discovery Center in Springfield

Springfield, the current headquarters of Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, is an ideal community for the development of this “flagship” center:

- Springfield is centrally located on Illinois Historic Route 66, which allows people traveling from either direction to visit additional state attractions.
- Springfield is a thriving and growing community with a population estimated at about 115,000. The critical mass of visitor amenities and infrastructure in Springfield supports extended stays by travelers.
- Springfield has been a major tourist destination since the late 1800s due to its association with Abraham Lincoln. Tourists already visiting the city for these attractions would serve as a base audience for the center.
- Springfield is already known for its high-class interpretive facilities, such as the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, which averages 250,000 visitors per year. A facility with a Route 66 theme would be a natural addition.

Personal Interaction

A Welcome and Discovery Center would require staffing, either by volunteers or by multitasking employees of the scenic byway or tourism office. While this is

a considerable investment, the benefits of personal interaction with Route 66 tourists are significant.

Visitors value meeting others who share personal stories and insights about Route 66. For instance, Bill Shea was a person who visitors enjoyed meeting, not only because of his lifetime of stories acquired from working at a gas station on Route 66, but also because he enjoyed hearing their stories and responding to their questions. His experiences as an owner and operator of a service station were shared by thousands of attendants along the road, but it was his enthusiasm, sense of humor, and warmth that made a visit to his station so memorable.

Bill Shea and others with “front-line” experience may be rare today, but there is still considerable knowledge and authenticity in locals who grew up on Route 66 and have firsthand knowledge and anecdotes about the road. Visitors value having interactions with these “hosts,” as evidenced by the Living Legends passport program. Initiating a volunteer group of enthusiasts to help plan exhibits and operate the new welcome center could reinvigorate Route 66 in Springfield.



Another Springfield—Springfield, Missouri—has a dedicated, staffed Route 66 visitor center that provides information, maps, guides, and souvenirs for travelers.



With his endless supply of stories and his interest in the lives of people who stopped by, Bill Shea was a true “host,” enriching the experience of thousands of Route 66 travelers (2007). This type of personal interaction is vital to the success of a welcome center.



An exhibit at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa allows visitors to spin a wheel and fly above the Mississippi River up or downstream.

Courtesy of Google Maps, Image capture: June 2019 © 2022 Google



Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building at the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

Interior Exhibit Space

Today's technology allows us to tell stories in multisensory and dynamic ways that can bring the Mother Road to life. As these sophisticated techniques require protection from the elements and vandals, they are best used in staffed and climate-controlled facilities. Immersive exhibits developed for the Discovery Center will supplement and complement the exterior exhibits being developed as part of the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience.

Discovery Center Location Options

A dynamic Route 66 Discovery Center should be located in close proximity to the primary Route 66 alignment through Springfield. It should provide easy access from the byway, and have plenty of space for parking, gathering areas, outdoor interpretive sites, and indoor information and exhibit space. As of this writing, a site has not yet been identified. Some options include:

Illinois State Fairgrounds: Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building

Built in 1918, the Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building at the Illinois State

Fairgrounds would have been prominent along Route 66 in its heyday. The beautiful, brick structure is located adjacent to the Route 66 Experience, an outdoor exhibit area currently under development at Gate 2. If acceptable to the Illinois Department of Agriculture (which manages the fairgrounds), the building could serve as an ideal location for a Route 66 Discovery Center.

The building's proximity to the Route 66 Experience outdoor exhibit area has numerous advantages:

- Statewide interpretation about Route 66 would be congregated into a single location.
- A mix of indoor and outdoor exhibit areas, along with in-person and self-guided experiences, creates the best opportunity for travelers to be successful in obtaining the information they need. For example, when the building is closed, there are still interpretive opportunities available outside. When the weather is bad, there are opportunities inside.
- Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway staff will be responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Route 66 Experience when completed. Having offices on-

site would greatly simplify the coordination of these efforts.

- When open to the public, staff or volunteers would be available to answer questions and provide travel information.
- In association with the interpretive space, a Route 66 themed gift shop or cafe could be operated by a concessionaire inside the building and generate a source of revenue for operations.

Former gas station property (601 South 9th Street)

Another possible location for a Discovery Center would be a 100-foot by 150-foot vacated property located along South 9th Street, just south of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. The property was a former gas station and barbeque restaurant. A small building is still on the site. Advantages of this site include:

- Close proximity to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, which draws visitors nationally and internationally.
- Located directly off of 9th Street, the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment.
- Connection to a former gas station property—more research would need to be conducted to determine if this

site was significant during the Route 66 era.

The site has a relatively small footprint that may not be sufficient for a full-scale Discovery Center experience. The existing small building likely could not be repurposed for the center.

Former Shea’s Gas Station Museum (2075 North Peoria Road)

The former site of Shea’s Gas Station Museum could be another Discovery Center location. This plan recommends a redevelopment of the site to honor the legacy of Bill Shea (see page 142), but a more holistic Discovery Center development could be an alternative to this vision. Advantages of the site include:

- Direct and renowned connection to Route 66 and its history.
- Existing Marathon gas station could be repurposed into a small center.
- Located directly off of Peoria Road, the 1930–1940 Route 66 alignment.

Like the previous gas station site, however, the property is quite small, which could limit development of a full-scale Discovery Center.



Vacant former gas station property at 601 South 9th Street.



Site of former Shea’s Gas Station Museum at 2075 North Peoria Road.



An exhibit on Route 66 lodging would feature a young boy and his family on their road trip to Disneyland.

A “Bloody 66” exhibit would tell the stories of hazards and patrolmen on Route 66.



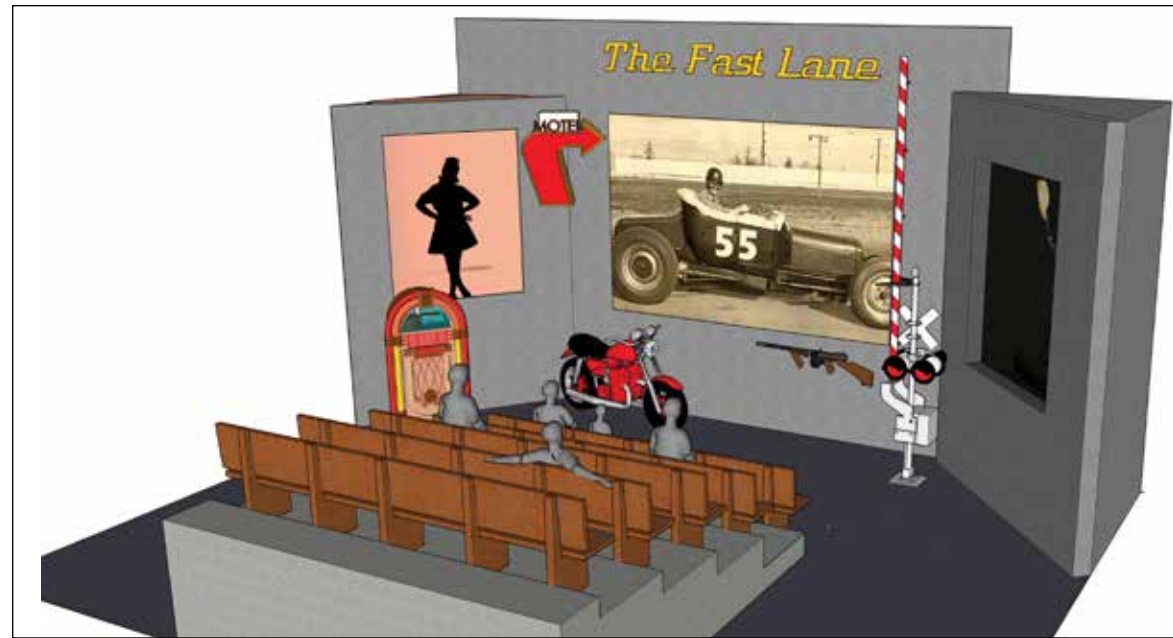
A “Fill ‘er up” exhibit interprets the evolution of service stations along the Mother Road.

Exhibit Recommendations

The indoor exhibits in the Route 66 Discovery Center should be developed in a way that promotes active discovery of different Route 66 resources in Illinois. Visitors will be immersed in an interactive experience quite different from more traditional museums. Here are recommendations for creating engaging exhibits:

- **Overall atmosphere:** The atmosphere will be electric with the heightened sense of adventure that you feel on a Route 66 road trip. Exhibits will be buzzing with the upbeat sounds of 50s highway songs. The glow and flash of neon signs will draw viewers into exhibit areas. Images from television, film, and home movies will enliven visitors and motivate them to watch short programs that connect them to the human stories of the highway.
- **Touchscreen map:** An interactive touchscreen map showing a bird’s-eye view of the state could be used to dramatically drive up and down the byway in Illinois, with popup icons that provide more information about each attraction.

- **Traveling Route 66:** When visitors peer through the door of a faux motel room, their gaze is met by a ten year old boy, his family sleeping behind him. This animated image explains that he is too excited to sleep because they're driving to Disneyland tomorrow. He describes the adventure so far and his heightened expectation of what lies ahead.
- **Bloody 66:** A twisted 1950s car is the focal point for this exhibit. When visitors approach, they are greeted by an old siren wailing and a police "gumball" light flashing. Historic photos of safety hazards and speed traps decorate the wall. Visitors can watch video interviews with Highway Patrolmen, tow truck drivers, and highway engineers. A slab of 66 pavement and a road marker add authentic and sensory elements to the exhibit.
- **Fill er' up:** A service bell rings when visitors enter this exhibit, which interprets how service stations evolved. Vintage pumps from various eras are interspersed with life-size cut outs of uniformed gas station attendants "ready to service your car." Touchscreens invite guests to sample scenarios about garages,

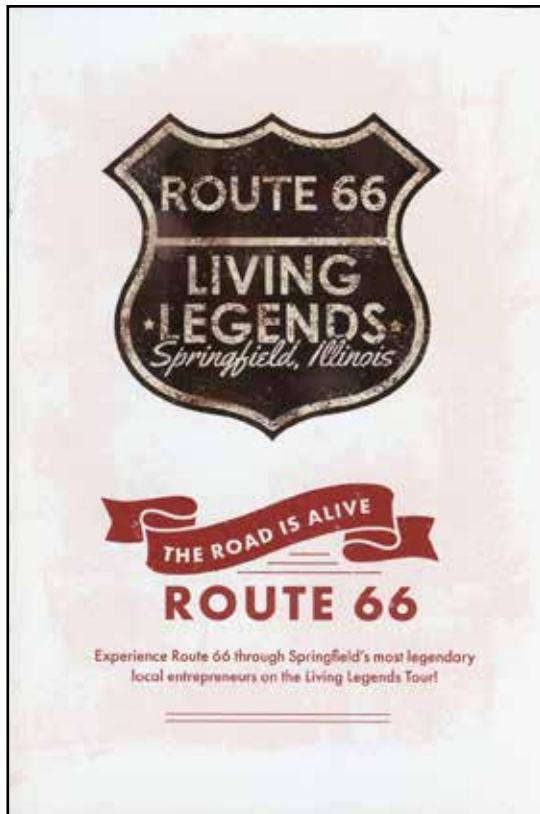


Object theaters are dynamic presentations that bring together video, music, sound, narration, and artifacts that are revealed at different times throughout the performance. It is an exciting way to introduce the themes of Illinois Route 66.

tow trucks, and stations. Station attendants tell what it was like in the fast paced days of "real service" stations. Travelers are encouraged to visit restored classic gas stations along the byway in Illinois.

- **Fast Lane Object Theater:** A rapid paced object theater engages audiences by immersing them in the roadscape of the 1950s neon corridor. The presentation would bring together a mix of projected images

and video, jukebox music, tantalizing sound effects, and real artifacts that are highlighted with spotlights during the program. People from the past would come back to life and relate the romance of days gone by. Waitresses, truck drivers, gas station attendants, sign makers, motel operators, Black business owners, family travelers, and others add their voices to create a personal connection with the audience.



Cover of the Route 66 Living Legends Passport booklet.

PASSPORT PROGRAMS

Passport programs are unique interpretive opportunities that encourage families and other travelers to explore resources along a byway. Prominent attractions are identified with unique stamps. Travelers pick up a printed pocket-sized booklet, which contains information about the different resources and a blank space for a unique passport stamp.

Adults and children alike are engaged in a scavenger hunt to fill up their passport booklet with unique stamps. The booklet has take-home value, as each stamp represents a memory from the trip.

Existing Program: Route 66 Living Legends Passport

Springfield's **Route 66 Living Legends program** was launched in 2020 by the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau. Visitors are encouraged to pick up a pocket-sized Explorer Passport booklet at one of four locations throughout the city. The passport booklet includes a simple map and introduces 8 entrepreneurs who have businesses or organizations along Route 66 in Springfield. Visitors are challenged to

meet each of these "living legends," learn about their stories, snap a photo, and get a signature for their passport books. They can then bring their completed passport to one of the Passport Prize Stop locations for a unique gift.

The booklet is well designed and easy to use. For each "legend" identified, an interpretive message describes the attraction on the left page and a professional photo of the person decorates the right page. If the "legend" isn't available in-person at a site, there is a full-size printed cutout of the person that travelers can take selfies with. There is also a stamp that features the legend's actual signature. The passport shares half of its pages with another explorer program called Abe's Hat Hunt.

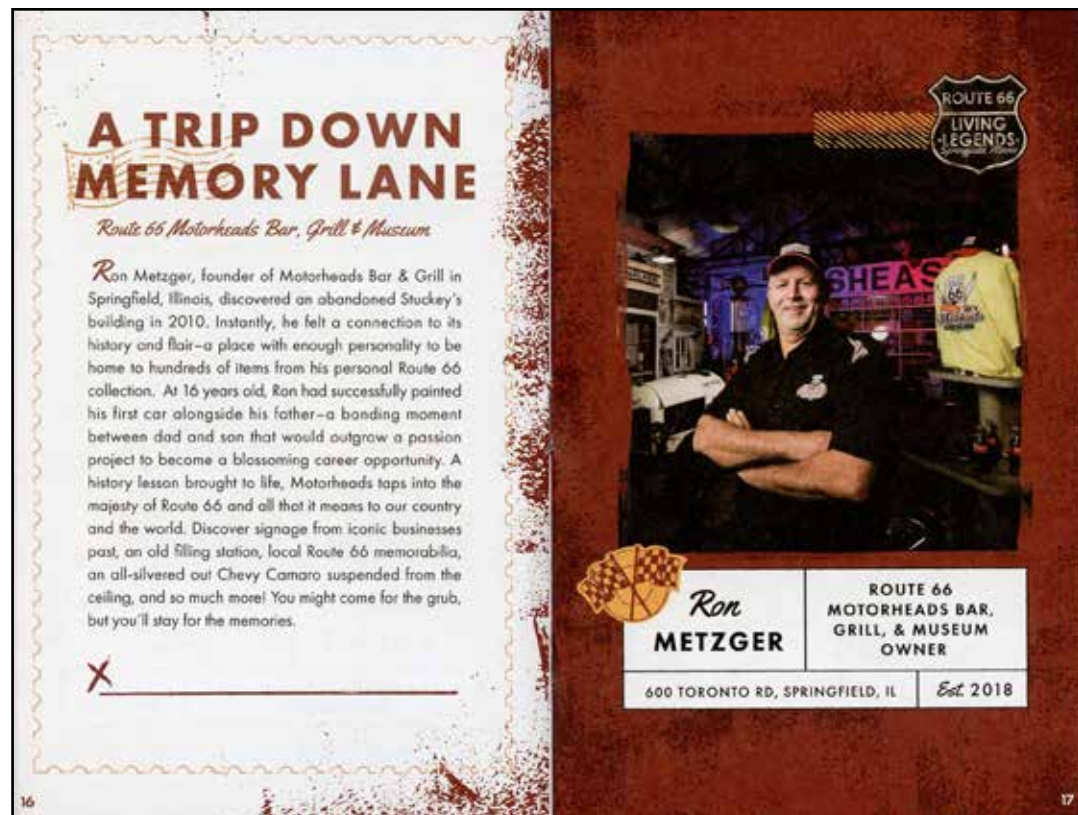
This innovative passport program provides opportunities for visitors to interact with unique personalities who have a passion for Route 66. These types of authentic experiences were identified by The Road Ahead Initiative round table in 2013 as being vital for preserving and sustaining Route 66 into the future. It also combines Springfield's two major tourism draws into one booklet:

Abraham Lincoln and Route 66. This can introduce a more diverse audience to the stories and legacy of the Mother Road.

Recommendations for Route 66 Living Legends Passport:

According to Scott Dahl, director of the Springfield CVB, while the passport was introduced in 2020, the program was never really launched due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dahl stated that travelers who have used the passport appreciated having it as an icebreaker to start conversations with the “living legends.” A few recommendations to continue enhancing the program:

- Expand the diversity and scope of entrepreneurs listed in the booklet. Currently, 6 out of the 8 “legends” are restaurant owners. Dahl reported that he has already scheduled a meeting in October 2022 to revisit the Living Legends program, which will include adding more people.
- Currently, the Living Legends page on the Springfield CVB website states, “Grab a pic and autograph as a memento of your visit and bring your completed passport to a Passport



Each “legend” in the passport booklet is featured with an interpretive message on the left and a professional photo on the right. A space is provided for a signature.

Price Stop for a unique gift!” It would be a definite challenge for travelers to gather all of the signatures, since many of the businesses included in the passport are restaurants, and travelers might only be in Springfield for a day or two. Consider reducing the requirement for a prize.

- The Living Legends passport is an excellent opportunity for Route 66 aficionados to connect with authentic individuals who have a passion for the road. As such, it tends to be written for an audience that already has some experience with Route 66—for example, it lacks a basic description of Route 66 and its



Abe's Hat Hunt is a scavenger hunt style passport program located in the same booklet as the Route 66 Living Legends. It includes stickers with different colored hats that are used to "stamp" each passport page attraction.

significance. To introduce Route 66 to more general audiences, especially families, another passport program could be developed in the style of "Abe's Hat Hunt" (see below).

Route 66 Scavenger Hunt Passport Program

The Route 66 Living Legends passport booklet also includes an "Abe's Hat Hunt" scavenger hunt that challenges visitors to find hidden hat images at Lincoln sites throughout Springfield and attach color-coded stickers on the corresponding site page. This is an excellent opportunity for families and other visitors to play a game while learning about the history of Lincoln.

While the "Living Legends" program is ideal for those who already have some knowledge of Route 66 and its significance, a passport program similar to "Abe's Hat Hunt" could be better suited to introducing serendipitous travelers to the Mother Road.

It is recommended that an additional passport program be developed that follows this "scavenger hunt" self-guided style format, which could appeal to a wider audience, especially families. A title like "Find Your Kicks on Route

66" would encourage visitors to seek out significant Route 66 resources in Springfield. Unlike the "Living Legends" program, this can include attractions that are unstaffed, such as the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience, Mahan's Phillips 66 Station, and historic road segments. Exterior passport stations allow users to fill their passport booklets, even when indoor attractions are closed.

Several options are available for participants to fill out their passport pages. To replicate the "Abe's Hat Hunt" program, Route 66 emblem stickers of different colors could be included in the booklet, with corresponding Route 66 shields hidden at each identified site. Another option would be to utilize the metal passport rubbings stations already included on many of the Illinois Route 66 byway media. A blank circle would be included in the booklet, and participants would need a pencil or crayon to make a unique rubbing.

As this new passport program better aligns with "Abe's Hat Hunt," it could be beneficial to combine them together in a single booklet, and move the "Living Legends" passport to its own separate booklet. This also leaves room for the "Living Legends" program to grow as additional legends are added.

Sites for the scavenger hunt passport program should be chosen based on their interpretive potential and significant connection to the Route 66 story.

Recommended sites include:

- Sherman Route 66 Memorial Rest Area
- Carpenter Park Route 66 pavement
- Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience
- Mahan's Phillips 66 Station
- Shea's Marathon Gas Station
- Springfield Visitors Center / Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices
- Route History Museum
- Cozy Dog Drive-In
- Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center
- Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum
- Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum
- Lauterbach Giant
- Knight's Action Park/Route 66 Drive-In
- Auburn Historic Brick Road



MAHAN'S FILLING STATION: ON THE MOVE

Next to Fulgenzi's Pizza & Pasta, 1168 E. Sangamon Avenue

This small filling station, dating to the 1920s, is believed to be the oldest surviving station in the state. It originally stood on Route 136 halfway between Easton and Havana, Illinois at Knuppell's Corner. Harry Mahan purchased the station and moved it to the town of Middletown before World War II. He ran it as a Phillips 66 Station until the mid-1950s. Harry's daughter Carolyn remembers, "He changed oil and tires by hand, and he sold fan belts, plugs and points, gum and candy bars in the station." In 2000, Bill Shea purchased the station and moved it by trailer 21 miles to his museum in Springfield, where he restored the building and added signs and pumps. In 2015, after Shea passed away, Jeff Fulgenzi purchased the station and moved it once again to its current site along Route 66.



Clue: Fill 'er up with the brand of gas that this station served for most of its life



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Concept rendering of a page in the Route 66 scavenger hunt style passport booklet.



The Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum displays vintage signs from Route 66 in Springfield and interprets the highway from a unique sign-making perspective (2021).

CORE INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE SITES

Core interpretive experience sites are “must see” primary attractions for byway travelers. Each site features a collection of interpretive opportunities that help tell the foundational stories of Route 66 in multifaceted ways. They are typically associated with tangible Route 66 resources that serve as icons for the interpretive messages.

The Springfield area already has several sites along the byway that serve as strong interpretive foci and rest areas for travelers. Some are currently in the process of being further developed, while others have a strong potential for being developed in the future. The following recommendations are intended to enhance the interpretive opportunities at each of these significant sites.

Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum

The Ace Sign Co. was founded in 1940 by Franklin G. Horn and his wife Alvina. They started the business with a pickup truck, hand lettering glass doors, vehicles, and oil cloth signs. Over time, they constructed many of the iconic signs that advertised businesses along Route 66 through Springfield. The company

has been acquiring and restoring these vintage signs and now has an impressive collection of over 85 signs on display. They are hung on the walls around their production facility. Notable signs include the restored “sputnik” from the Bel-Aire Manor Motel, one of the restored Sunrise Donut neon signs (the other is located at Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum), a 12-foot-tall 1953 neon Pepsi-Cola Bottle Cap, and a 1945 Cozy Dog sign.

The museum, advertised as a Route 66 historic attraction, is open and free to the public every weekday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The space can also be rented out for events.

The glow of colored neon and lights emanating from so many different signs is truly a step back in time. It inspires nostalgia and awe. The story of the Ace Sign Co. also provides a unique perspective, not only in its showcasing of the finished product, but also in revealing how these art forms were created.

The best way to experience the sign museum is with a tour led by one of the longtime Ace Sign Co. employees. The guide describes the historical significance of each of the signs, and provides

stories relating to the era. The guide also interprets how different signs are made.

Recommendations:

The Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum is one of the “must see” destinations for Route 66 travelers in Springfield. The experience is like no other. Some recommendations to enhance the visitor experience include:

- A guided tour is by far the best way for visitors to experience the sign museum. If visitors tour on their own, they may lack the context and insight to truly appreciate why the signs are important to Route 66 and Springfield. Unified interpretive labels in the museum or a brochure/booklet could help to tell the stories of the most significant signs and relate them to Route 66. Historic images could be integrated to reveal classic sign making techniques.
- For some visitors, walking through a working sign production facility to see the vintage signs may feel intrusive and uncomfortable. While likely not feasible in the current building, a separate public exhibit area for viewing the classic signs would enhance a visitor’s comfort level and therefore strengthen the interpretive experience.

- As a core interpretive experience, the museum should be included as a site in the proposed scavenger hunt style passport program.
- While not directly on a Route 66 alignment, a wayside exhibit installed outside of the building can share the important legacy of the sign company, even when the building

is closed. A pushbutton audio unit could feature former owner, Joe Bringuet, and/or his son and current owner, Dennis Bringuet, speaking about their family’s connection to the sign making business. A rubbing passport station would encourage travelers to detour off the byway route and experience this unique story.



Dennis Bringuet, president of the Ace Sign Co., gives a tour of the restored vintage signs that adorn the walls of their production facility (2021).



Interior exhibits in the Route History Museum span a variety of topics ranging from the 1908 Springfield Race Riot to traveling during the Jim Crow law era (2021).



Exterior exhibits include traffic signs that recognize important Black entrepreneurs (2021).

Route History Museum

Opened in 2019, this unique museum and gift shop is located between the 1926–1930 and 1930–1940 Route 66 alignments in downtown Springfield. It interprets the stories and experiences of “tragedy, resilience, and excellence” of Black people along Route 66 and in the city of Springfield. These stories vividly illustrate that not everyone could enjoy the “freedom of the road” that Route 66 mythologized. Exhibits highlight the significant contributions of Black businesses, the challenges of traveling during the Jim Crow law era, the importance of The Negro Motorist Green-Book for Black travelers, Springfield as a stop on the Underground Railroad, the Great Migration of Black Americans moving from the rural South to Northern cities, and the 1908 Springfield Race Riot.

Creative exterior exhibits were added in 2021 to expand on these stories. Traffic signs recognize four important Black entrepreneurs in Springfield, two of whom were killed in the 1908 Springfield Race Riot. Murals on the wall showcase the Underground Railroad and people and resources significant to Black history in Springfield.

The museum offers a unique perspective on Route 66, sharing significant stories that are often buried or overlooked by popular culture. This is definitely a “must experience” stop for Route 66 travelers.

Dr. Gina Lathan and Dr. Stacy Grundy, founders of Route History, are enthusiastic visionaries who continue to expand the reach of Route History. They recently implemented a Junior Historian curriculum in partnership with the Springfield Urban League 21st Century program. They are also working with Landmark Illinois to document and survey sites in the state featured in The Negro Motorist Green-Book.

Recommendations:

An interview with Dr. Gina Lathan and Dr. Stacy Grundy in January 2022 provided insight into how these unique stories can be shared with greater numbers of Route 66 visitors.

- Include the Route History museum in all Route 66 marketing.
- Wayfinding to Route History from the nearby Lincoln Home National Historic Site and 9th Street (1930–1940 alignment) would be beneficial.

- Develop a Black history tour of Route 66 through the state, with Route History as a central hub.
- Develop an app or mobile website that could be used to promote Route History, Black businesses, and the locations of significant historical resources, such as the Ambidexter Institute (which educated Black children in math, science, and trades), the Lincoln Colored Home (one of the first orphanages for Black children in the U.S.), and Green Book sites. The app could incorporate historic photos and oral interviews.
- For serendipitous travelers, it may not be obvious what the Route History experience is without doing prior research. A sign at the corner of Cook Street and 8th Street advertises “Just Off Route 66 Sandwiches & Souvenirs,” which can lead to confusion. The building itself is only identified as “Route History” with a small icon on the entrance door. It is recommended that the sign and exterior be updated so that the resource is clear for visitors; for example, “Route History Museum: The Black Experience on Route 66.”
- The Route History site is an ideal location for an exterior Route 66

wayside exhibit, which would interpret the essence of the Black experience along the Mother Road and in Springfield. While not as dynamic as a guided tour of the museum, it would nevertheless provide significant interpretation to travelers when the building is closed. It could also encourage serendipitous travelers to enter the museum when open for a more detailed story.



Updated exterior signage will make the Route History experience clear to all travelers (2021).



Kenneth Lockhart interprets the murals painted on the exterior of the Route History museum, which is built in a 1930s-era former Texaco Gas Station (2021).



Both the interior and exterior of Motorheads is decorated with Ron Metzger's collection of vintage car and racing memorabilia (2021).



The interior museum features iconic Route 66 resources, such as one half of the neon Sunrise Donuts sign and a portion of Bill Shea's collection (2021).

Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum

Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum is a shrine to all things Route 66 and auto racing. Owner Ron Metzger opened this unique dining experience in a former Stuckey's gas station in 2018 as a place to display his collection of car and local Route 66 memorabilia. The walls, ceiling, and exterior are decorated with vintage signs, gas pumps, race cars, motorcycles, driving uniforms, engines, and other incredible artifacts. The museum, adjacent to the restaurant and open to the public, houses an operational 1915 Ford race car along with many other artifacts.

Motorheads preserves many of Springfield's iconic Route 66 resources that are no longer standing. These include the sign and seal fountain from the Bel-Aire Manor Motel, half of the Sunrise Donut neon sign (Ace Sign Co. has the other), and much of Bill Shea's original museum collection. It also boasts the world's largest Route 66 shield, a 32-foot-by-32-foot sign that sits atop the original Stuckey's poles.

Motorheads serves as the southern anchor and hub of Springfield's Route 66 attractions.

Recommendations:

Anyone who enters Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum will have an awe-inspiring and memorable experience. Here are some suggestions to enhance interpretive connections:

- As a "must see" anchor point for Route 66 in Springfield, Motorheads is an ideal location for an Experience Hub that identifies other Route 66 attractions in the area. The unique curved, chromed, and lit-up design of the hub will fit in well with the eccentric collection of artifacts outside of the building.
- A guided tour by Ron Metzger is by far the best way to experience the museum and its artifacts. Ron is a vivid storyteller and shares the history and context of each item. However, when Ron isn't available for a tour, unified interpretive labels outside and in can reveal the stories of artifacts and connect them to the overall Route 66 story. This would enrich the interpretive experience for self-guided tourists.



A tour of Motorheads by Ron Metzger is the best way to experience the artifacts, but if Ron isn't available, interpretive labels could help tell the story (2021).

Motorheads preserves a diverse collection of Route 66 icons from the region, such as the seal fountain from the Bel-Aire Manor Motel, which was demolished in 2015. Adding unified interpretive labels both inside and out can reveal the significance of each artifact.



SEAL FOUNTAIN

FROM THE BEL-AIRE MANOR MOTEL, SPRINGFIELD

This seal statue was part of a fountain that decorated the front lawn of the Bel-Aire Manor Motel. The motel was built by Chuck Ciesler around 1950 on Route 66 in Springfield. It was demolished in 2015. The classic neon motel sign is located on the Motorheads building just left of the main entrance.



Postcard of the Bel-Aire Manor Motel in the 1950s showing the seal fountain



Concept design for a label interpreting the Bel-Aire Manor Motel seal fountain.





A banner advertises the site of the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (2021).



The site currently features oversized snapshots and attraction cutouts from Illinois Route 66 communities (2021).

The Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience

The Route 66 Experience at Gate 2 in the Illinois State Fairgrounds is a major multi-year project being developed by the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. A preview of the exhibit area was opened from August 12-22, 2021 for Illinois State Fair and featured oversized postcards, photos, and cutouts of attractions from Illinois Route 66 communities.

In the future, visitors will have the opportunity to walk the entire Illinois Route 66 corridor in microform, starting at the Chicago skyline and ending at the Chain of Rocks bridge. Plans call for a Legends Neon Park with new and restored neon signs, a paved brick road, a Route 66 muffler man fiberglass giant, replicas of existing roadside attractions, retro billboards, a drive-in theater replica, and interpretive signs that highlight each Route 66 community. It is slated to be completed prior to the Route 66 Centennial Anniversary in 2026.

Recommendations:

While the specific design elements of the attraction are being planned by the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, recommendations that could enhance the visitor experience include:

1. Provide access to the Route 66 Experience off of Peoria Road.

Peoria Road is the main Route 66 corridor through the north side of Springfield, and it travels on the eastern border of the state fairgrounds, where the Route 66 Experience is located. Unfortunately, there is no parking outside or vehicle access into Gate 2. In order for travelers to access the attraction, they need to turn west off of Peoria Road onto Sangamon Avenue, north through Gate 1 of the fairgrounds, and then wind through small fairground roads to the site.

It is recommended that an access be developed directly from Peoria Road/ Historic Route 66 to the Route 66 Experience. This significantly enhances accessibility for Route 66 travelers and reinforces the connection to the byway. An access off of Peoria Road does currently exist adjacent to Fire Station #10, but this is limited to authorized vehicles only. Another access could be developed further to the south that would provide a more direct route to the Route 66 Experience parking area.



Concept plan for The Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience, developed by the Ace Sign Co. (2022).

Courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



The Route 66 Experience would be an ideal home for the restored Mahan's Filling Station.

Courtesy of Ace Sign Company



Concept rendering of the Giant Slide decorated with an Illinois Route 66 shield emblem.

2. Move Mahan's Filling Station to the site and renovate it as an interpretive opportunity.

Mahan's Filling Station, currently owned by Jeff and Annette Fulgenzi, is located just across the road from Gate 2 of the fairgrounds adjacent to Fulgenzi's Pizza & Pasta. In an interview with Jeff and Annette Fulgenzi in January 2022, the couple stated that the station "needs a proper home" and they would be open to the building being moved to another site.

The Route 66 Experience is an ideal location for the filling station, which dates from the 1920s and may be the oldest surviving gas station in Illinois. The fairgrounds site has enough space to allow for landscaping and period renovations. Constructing a brick base and roadway around the station (possibly with actual bricks recovered from abandoned Route 66 roadways), adding vintage Phillips 66 gas pumps, and landscaping around the building with Route 66 artifacts would create the perfect photo opportunity for travelers. An associated wayside exhibit can interpret the history and movement of this unique station.

3. Open the Giant Slide as a Route 66 opportunity.

The Giant Slide, located near Gate 1, has been a staple of the Illinois State Fair since it was installed in 1968. Fairgoers ride on burlap mats down the wavy 150-foot long yellow slide. Currently, it is only open during the 10 days of the state fair in August.

There is interest in opening the slide more often as a Route 66 attraction. A large "Springfield, Illinois Route 66" shield emblem has been applied to the slide by Ace Sign Co., encouraging travelers to "Slide Down 66." At the time of this writing, the owner of the slide is willing to sell to a local entrepreneur, who would open it seasonally on Saturdays for Springfield visitors.

An option to make the attraction more interpretive would be to open it as a "geographic slide." All 8 states that Route 66 runs through could be applied to the slide surface or attached to the fence. This would allow visitors to "slide from Chicago to LA."

4. Consider making the Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building a Route 66 information/discovery center.

Located adjacent to the Route 66 Experience, the Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building is a beautiful 1918 brick structure that would have been prominent along Route 66 in its heyday. If acceptable to the Illinois Department of Agriculture which manages the fairgrounds, the building could serve as a statewide tourism office and interpretive center focused on Historic Route 66. See page 122 for more information.



Courtesy of Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway



In August 2022, a 40-foot neon Illinois Route 66 shield sign was built and installed by the Ace Sign Co. as part of the Legends Neon Park at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience. Several other classic neon signs are also being restored by the Ace Sign Co. and will be located in the park.



Prior to being closed in 2013, Shea's Gas Station Museum was filled with Route 66 and gas station memorabilia, a "must see" stop for Route 66 travelers (photo from 2007).



Today, surrounded by chain link fence, the old Marathon Station is just a shell of the attraction it used to be (photo from 2021). Developing the site into an interpretive experience that explores the legacy of Bill Shea can bring back some of the magic.

Shea's Marathon Gas Station

In 1955, Bill Shea opened a Marathon gas station on Route 66, just down the street from a smaller Texaco station where he had worked for many years. Shea closed the station in 1982 due to the oil embargo crisis and decreasing traffic on the road.

Shea had a passion for all things Route 66 and collected a great variety of gas station and Mother Road memorabilia. Visitors would stop by just to see the amazing collection of historic artifacts. In 1995, the station officially opened as a museum with Bill Shea as the curator and docent. The attraction became internationally renowned as a "must see" stop on Route 66, and Bill Shea, with his storytelling and sense of humor, was an integral part of the attraction.

Bill Shea died at the age of 91 in December 2013. Shea's memorabilia was auctioned off in November 2015 after his family unsuccessfully tried to sell the station and its contents. The Marathon gas station is still standing as an artifact of the old highway, but it is now empty and surrounded by a chain link fence.

The property is currently owned by Randy Pickett. He and a partner purchased the building in 2017 with the

intent of opening a vintage car repair and maintenance shop. According to an interview with Randy in February of 2022, he is very interested in maintaining the integrity of the building and restoring the exterior to its 1950s appearance. He is now considering opening it as a place to sell Route 66 souvenirs and other interesting artifacts that he has acquired as a lifelong "picker."

Randy said that he has seen several groups stop and take pictures of the iconic building through the fence. Bill Shea's legacy lives on.

Recommendations:

The real authenticity of this site stems not from the physical building itself, but from the fact that Bill Shea owned it. His iconic personality needs to be revealed through interpretation. Recommendations to develop this site as a "must see" interpretive stop on Route 66 include:

- **Restore the Marathon gas station building to its classic 1950s appearance.** This includes repainting, adding vintage Marathon gas pumps, installing Marathon gas signage, and

adding the iconic “SHEA’S” lettering to the top of the building.

- **In front of the building, install a full-size photo cutout of Bill Shea in his uniform.** This can be fabricated out of exterior, 3/4"-thick high pressure laminate. The cutout serves as a thematic focal point for interpretation and as a photo opportunity.
- **Develop a wayside exhibit.** An associated Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit can reveal the history of Bill Shea and his significance to Route 66 through photos and stories.
- **Install a video exhibit.** An excellent video interview with Bill Shea was created by the Land of Lincoln Regional Tourism Office in 2012 and is available on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=swPIsXfb1Hk). It shows Bill’s true personality and talent for storytelling. Portions of the video would be ideal to show at the gas station site. An exterior video kiosk could be installed near the photo cut-out. One creative option would be to house the video kiosk inside a vintage gas pump.

If an exterior video kiosk isn’t feasible, portions of the audio from

the video could be compiled and added to a pushbutton audio unit on the wayside exhibit. Hearing Bill’s voice creates a personal and emotional connection.

- **Incorporate artifacts.** If the building will be open as part of Randy Pickett’s business, consider adding some artifacts from Shea’s original

museum (vintage signs, oil cans, Shea’s uniform) that could provide authenticity to the site. Ron Metzger, owner of Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum, purchased many of Shea’s artifacts. If agreeable to Ron, perhaps he would be willing to loan them as an exhibit at the restored gas station.



Conceptual rendering of the Shea’s Marathon Gas Station interpretive site, with vintage Marathon gas pump and video kiosk, photo cut-out of Bill Shea, and a wayside exhibit.



Visitors at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site (2009).

The Lincoln Home has been a hub for Springfield visitors since Lincoln's time. This "Rally Photograph" was taken on August 8, 1860, when 80,000 people marched to show support for Presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party.



Courtesy of National Park Service

Lincoln Home National Historic Site Information Center

From 1926 to 1977, Route 66 (later called City 66) passed by the Lincoln Home and other Lincoln attractions in the downtown area. Lincoln Home attracted more than 200,000 visitors annually and Route 66 was a principal highway to the site.

Prior to its designation in 1972 as a National Historic Site managed by the National Park Service, Lincoln Home was managed by the Illinois Conservation Department. To connect with all of the travelers on Route 66 stopping at the site, the state added an information center housed in a trailer at the parking

lot of the Lincoln Home off of 9th Street (Route 66). It was staffed by employees paid by the Springfield Tourism Commission.

In 1970, Conservation Department funds were authorized to replace the trailer with a permanent "Information

Center" building. The city constructed a "board sidewalk" which established a one-way circular flow from the parking lot "to reduce the confusion among visitors to the home and surrounding buildings." The center, completed in the fall of 1970, was a "shed-type" design with materials and colors to match the adjacent Lincoln Carriage House. The Information Center was in service until the completion of the National Park Service Lincoln Home Visitor Center.

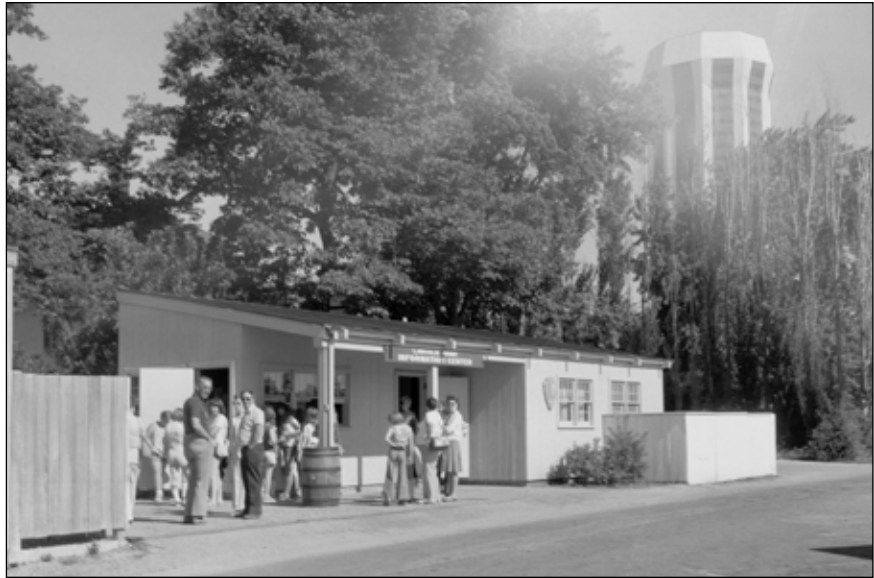
In 2020, Lincoln Home administrators inquired about the demolition of the old Information Center building. The Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer determined that the building was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places "for its association with Route 66" (Appleman, 2020). A followup study by Sullivan | Preservation found little connection between the building and the original Route 66 (1926-1977), as the highway had been largely bypassed by the time the information center was built (Sullivan, 2020). However, the building does offer an opportunity to connect with current Route 66 byway travelers.

Courtesy of National Park Service



The Land of Lincoln Information Center building in 1973.

Courtesy of National Park Service



Visitors at the Information Center in 1973.

Courtesy of National Park Service



The old Information Center as it appears in 2022.

Courtesy of National Park Service



The interior of the old Information Center, which is currently used by the National Historic Site for storage (2021).

Courtesy of National Park Service



The exterior of the old Information Center building can be renovated to its 1970s appearance, like the photo above.



An Illinois Route 66 upright orientation wayside exhibit can introduce Lincoln Home visitors to the significance of the Mother Road.

In an interview by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters (2022), Timothy Good, Lincoln Home Superintendent, and Timothy Townsend, Chief of Interpretation, expressed interest in developing the Information Center into an interpretive opportunity exploring the relationship between Route 66 and Lincoln Home. Tim Good indicated that the vast majority of Lincoln Home visitors don't realize there is a Route 66 story here. Tourists have been part of the Lincoln Home history for more than 100 years. Tim Townsend said there is great interest in Route 66. Visitors are frequently seen taking selfies in front of an original Route 66 sign displayed in the gift shop.

Recommendations:

The 1970 Information Center building is an ideal opportunity to introduce Lincoln Home tourists to the story and significance of Route 66.

- **Restore the exterior of the building to its 1970s appearance.** The "Land of Lincoln Information Center" sign mounted over the entrance and the National Park Service shield completes the look.

- **Install an upright orientation wayside exhibit at the front of the building.** One side can introduce visitors to the significance of the Mother Road, with an inset photo of a Route 66 billboard advertising the Lincoln sites. The main message would describe the Mother Road as a prime tourist corridor. The other side would show a map of regional Route 66 attractions.
- **Develop a series of interior exhibits that focus on tourism at the Lincoln Home.** Tourists have flocked to the Lincoln Home for more than 150 years, and Route 66 was the main corridor that funneled them to the site from 1926 to the 1970s. The interior of the Information Center can be developed into a self-guided interpretive experience that explores this unique perspective on tourism. Flat panel exhibits on the wall adorned with three-dimensional artifacts can trace the history of tourism at the site, from the massive crowds who attended Lincoln's presidential rally in 1860 (highlighted with the dramatic "Rally Photo") to "modern" tourists who stopped off of Route 66 on their journey west. The story of "information centers" along

Route 66 can also be told, another important amenity for travelers looking to experience America.

Depending on space, a mock-up information desk with a full-size cutout of a friendly attendant offering information could help bring the building to life and serve as a tangible icon for interpretation.

- **Consider parking a classic car at the front of the Information Center.** This would create an early tourism ambiance.
- **Construct a wooden sidewalk** facsimile that connects the Carriage House to the Information Center and to the replica three-quarter scale “Lincoln Marriage House” at the end of the block. Provide signage directing visitors to these opportunities.
- **Develop a wayside exhibit for the exterior of the replica “Lincoln Marriage House” (now Conference Center).** This would tell the story of the three-quarter scale house built in 1968 as another Lincoln attraction for tourists.

Courtesy of National Park Service



A three-quarter scale replica of the house where the Lincolns were married opened in Springfield in 1968.

Courtesy of National Park Service



Today, the building is used as the Lincoln Home National Historic Site's conference center.



Concept design for an interior exhibit in the old Information Center that focuses on Lincoln tourism in Springfield. The full-size cutout is of Louise Beagles, an official hostess of the Information Center in 1972.



The U.S. Route 66 Memorial Rest Area in Sherman is an ideal site for developing an interpretive experience (2014).



The existing picnic table silhouette statue and rest area wayside exhibit identifies the park as a significant interpretive site (2022).

Route 66 Memorial Rest Area, Sherman

This small park, located on the north side of the Village of Sherman, preserves two sections of original 1926 Route 66 pavement and is believed to be the location of a wayside rest area on the Mother Road. The two sections of pavement, built out of Portland cement in 1922, are separated by a drainage channel.

Rest areas were important during the early days of Route 66 when cars were slow and didn't have air conditioning. The sites featured shade trees and picnic tables, a perfect place for travelers to cool down, stretch their legs, and have a bite to eat.

In 2007, the mayor of Sherman acquired the property for the village, and in 2010 concept plans were introduced to make it into a Historic Route 66/Veteran's Memorial Park. The plan included a parking area, restroom building, picnic pavilion, shallow pond, a pedestrian bridge to span the two sections of Route 66, and a Veteran's memorial wall. At the time of this writing, the plan has not been implemented.

Recommendations:

This location is ideal for development as a Route 66 interpretive site. It is one of the first stops that southbound travelers can make as they head into the Springfield metro area. It has authentic Route 66 resources, can continue to serve its original function as a rest area, and can introduce travelers to other significant resources in the region.

An Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway statue and wayside exhibit were installed in the park in October 2022 (see pages 116–117). The full-size statue of children eating at a picnic table attracts the attention of travelers, while the interpretive sign reveals the significance of the site as a wayside rest area.

Some other recommendations to develop the site include:

- **Install direction signs on Sherman Boulevard to guide travelers to the Memorial Rest Area.** While the park is visible from Sherman Boulevard (Historic Route 66), serendipitous travelers are not likely to associate the site with Route 66. Direction signs to the park would not only guide visitors to the site, but also emphasize

the significance of the site as a historic Route 66 resource.

- **Connect the two sections of Route 66 pavement with a historic bridge.** There is a significant opportunity to connect the two park parcels together, enlarging the scope of the site. While not original to this site, incorporating a metal span or other type of historic bridge can help to tell the story of early road making.
- **Implement portions of the site development park plan.** The construction of a parking lot, restroom building, picnic pavilion, and picnic tables would provide amenities for travelers, while also reinforcing the idea that this was a rest area along Historic Route 66.
- **Paint center lines and Route 66 emblems on the original concrete.** As shown in the concept park plan, adding these small touches enhances the significance of the old roadway for visitors.
- **Add thematic wayside exhibits.** One wayside exhibit associated with the statue has already been installed that interprets rest areas along Route 66. Other wayside exhibits could interpret the construction of the original pavement, the historic

bridge (if one is installed), and the significance of the road following train tracks.

- **Install an upright orientation wayside exhibit.** An upright Route 66 exhibit would attract attention similar to an experience hub, but the simple design makes it more cost

effective. One side could interpret the significance of Route 66 in the Village of Sherman and how it changed alignments over time. The other side could feature other Route 66 attractions in the area.



An architectural plan for the Route 66/Veteran's Memorial Park in Sherman was developed in 2010.



Concept idea for a developed pull-off along the Historic Brick Road that would provide a safe parking area for travelers taking photos and offer a centralized location for interpretive messaging.

Historic Brick Road North of Auburn

The beautiful 1.5-mile section of brick road north of Auburn (Snell Road and Curran Road) is a popular attraction for Route 66 enthusiasts. It is a “must see” photo opportunity that is heavily marketed by the City of Springfield, the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, and other entities. It adorns the covers of publications (including the 2008 Interpretive Master Plan) and digital media as a focal point resource for the entire state byway.

Yet, most travelers don’t know the history of this section of road since there are no interpretive opportunities on-site. The roadway was originally paved with concrete in 1920 and was still concrete when Route 66 followed the curves in 1926–1930. Only after this section was bypassed by Route 4 in 1932 was it resurfaced with hand-lain bricks.

Recommendations:

The historic brick road is a well-maintained example of brick road building, with original concrete foundations, curbing, bridges, and culverts. Due to its popularity with Route 66 travelers, it is an ideal location to develop as an interpretive site.

- **Create a small pull-off area for parking.** Nearly all travelers will want to stop and take photos on this section of road. While the road carries very little traffic, there isn’t an official pull-off for vehicles. Creating a small parking area along a scenic section of the road will make it more comfortable for travelers to stop and take photos. It will also serve as a hub for interpretation.
- **Develop an Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit.** The sign should interpret the history and significance of this section of road. Historic photos can reveal the process of brick road making. Readers will be encouraged to look for roadway artifacts, such as original concrete bridges and curbing.
- **Make this a passport station site.** This is an ideal location for a “scavenger hunt” style passport program station. Adding a metal raised passport station to the wayside exhibit will encourage travelers to make a souvenir rubbing.

- **Develop a grain bin or silo mural.**
There is an opportunity to work with private landowners near the brick road to develop a grain bin or silo mural that could add to the ambiance of the experience. One option would be a classic 1930s roadster driving over the brick pavement with lush fields of corn in the background.

Concept rendering of a grain bin mural that could provide ambiance along the Historic Brick Road.



Concept rendering of a wayside exhibit pull-off area installed along the Historic Brick Road. This also provides an ideal photo opportunity.



The original Route 66 pavement in Carpenter Park offers an ideal opportunity to create an interpretive walking trail (2021).

INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

Interpretive trails are walking and biking paths where signs or other media tell the story of the site. While these are often associated with natural history sites (parks, wildlife areas, nature centers), there is a strong opportunity to develop one or more trails in the Springfield area that interpret Historic Route 66.

A trail provides a unique Route 66 experience, removing travelers from the hustle and bustle of automobile culture and immersing them in an intimate, quiet, and natural landscape. It has the potential of introducing different audiences, such as outdoor enthusiasts, to the story of Route 66.

Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail

Carpenter Park, a 434-acre City of Springfield park, is located on the north side of town adjacent to the Village of Sherman. The floodplain forest habitat along the Sangamon River is favorite of hikers and wildlife watchers. It was acquired in 1921 as the only virgin woodland in the Springfield city limits.

An abandoned stretch of 1922 concrete road forms the eastern border of Carpenter Park. The roadway served as Route 66 from 1926 to 1936. It was closed to traffic in 1936, leaving behind a unique example of early road making. It preserves the two-lane highway design, the original cross-section with curbing, and the original Portland cement surface.

Recommendations:

This site offers the opportunity to walk on an authentic Route 66 roadway, which curves downhill below a canopy of trees on its way to the Sangamon River. It ends on a bluff overlooking the river, where a bridge once spanned. The quiet, contemplative experience is very different from other Route 66 attractions.

- **Clean and repair the historic roadway.** Overall, the old pavement looks to be in good condition, but over time, trees, branches, and other debris have blocked portions of the corridor. The debris should be removed from the site and the pavement washed free of mud and gravel. If there are large holes or cracks that could be hazardous to walking, they should be filled in

a way that preserves the historic integrity of roadway.

- **Develop a small parking area at the entrance to the roadway.** The start of the historic pavement is currently accessed at the entrance to Carpenter Park off of Cabin Smoke Trail. Visitors park in front of a gate that is labeled as “No Parking.” There are some flat grassy areas here that could be developed into a small parking area.
- **Consider connecting to other Carpenter Park trails.** Carpenter Park has nearly 12 miles of trails. There may be an opportunity to connect the Route 66 trail with other park trails, allowing users to walk loops and see other habitats.
- **Install an upright orientation wayside exhibit.** An upright exhibit would attract attention and serve as a trailhead for the walking path. A sign on the side facing the parking lot would introduce the interpretive trail with a short description and a map. The opposite side (that visitors would see when returning) could highlight other Route 66 attractions in the area. See page 115 for a close-up of the trailhead sign concept.

- **Install interpretive trail signs.** A series of trailside exhibits installed along the roadway would interpret the significance of this portion of Route 66 through time—the construction of the roadway as State Bond Issue 124, highway improvements such as Portland cement and curbing, the routing of

Route 66 over the existing roadway, the shifting of Route 66 to another corridor, the abandonment of this portion of roadway and how it serves as a prime example of early highway engineering today.



Concept design for an upright orientation wayside exhibit that will serve as a trailhead for the Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail.



Concept design for a trailside exhibit support, which would be fabricated out of 3/8"-thick steel and feature a cutout of the Illinois Route 66 shield.

The trailside exhibits would be of a simpler design than the chrome-style wayside exhibits recommended at other sites. A more traditional design will better fit the natural landscape and be more cost efficient. The supports would consist of 3/8"-thick weathering or powder coated steel, with the top bent at a 45° angle. The Illinois Route 66 emblem

would be cut-out in reverse on the vertical plate. A 17" wide by 11" high interpretive panel, fabricated out of 1/2"-thick high-pressure laminate, would be attached to the angled top plate. The sign faces would be designed with the unified colors, fonts, and elements recommended for wayside exhibits, experience hubs, and upright orientation waysides.

Written in Concrete



This ribbon of concrete survives just as it was when abandoned in 1936.

It was originally built as State Bond Issue 124 in 1922. In 1926, having no pavement of its own, Route 66 took over the new hard road and the Old Iron Bridge crossing the Sangamon River.

This roadway serves as a significant example of early highway engineering and workmanship. Look for 1920s highway design features such as 16-foot wide, 6-inch thick concrete pavement with expansion cracks every 30 yards, curbing, and four-foot gravel shoulders. This section of road was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.



A photo of the new four-lane Route 66 Sherman bypass in 1936 shows how quickly highway engineering standards evolved since this original section of road was built. However, the Sangamon River still flooded the roadway at times, stalling traffic until the water receded.

Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail

Concept design for a trailside interpretive panel, sized at 17" wide by 11" high and fabricated out of 1/2"-thick high-pressure laminate material, resistant to weathering and vandalism. This panel should be placed next to a section of the roadway that best shows its engineering features.

- **Construct an overlook deck at the end of the trail.** The trail ends at a scenic bluff above the Sangamon River where the Old Iron Bridge once carried Route 66 traffic. It is an ideal location for an overlook deck. This provides hikers with a scenic destination and offers a natural gathering space for additional interpretive opportunities. A sign mounted to the overlook railing could interpret the Old Iron Bridge and the Carpenter Mill that once stood here.

The Old Iron Bridge



You are standing on the edge of the Old Iron Bridge, which once crossed the Sangamon River. Built in 1892, the bridge connected the village of Sherman to Springfield. Route 66 crossed the bridge until it was bypassed in 1936.

Across from this overlook, William Carpenter built a mill in 1845 to saw lumber and grind corn for local farmers. He also operated a ferry to cross the Sangamon River. The mill closed in 1870 and was left to slowly deteriorate. Look for the remains of the rock dam that provided waterpower.



This photo shows the Old Iron Bridge spanning the Sangamon River next to the deteriorating Carpenter Mill, also known as the Rock Dam Mill. The bridge was dismantled in 1937 and set aside to be reused at another river crossing. However, it likely ended up as scrap for the World War II effort.

Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail

Concept design for an interpretive sign that would be installed on the overlook deck. It interprets the Old Iron Bridge and Carpenter Mill. Note how elements are repeated on all trailhead panels.



Concept design of an overlook deck with a view of the Sangamon River at the end of the Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail.

Photo by Molly Goodman



Courtesy of Village of Sherman



Photo by Hal Eskew



Sherman Village Park, conveniently located along the main alignment of Route 66, offers numerous amenities for Route 66 travelers and community members (2021).

Sherman Village Park Route 66 Path

Sherman Village Park is a 30-acre community area along Route 66 that features an amphitheater, shelters, ponds, picnic areas, and a one-mile walking/biking path. It serves as a convenient rest area for Route 66 byway travelers and is especially attractive for families with its modern playground and a music-themed splash pad (currently under development).

Recommendations:

The walking/bicycling trail that borders the park on the west follows the historic 1926–1936 alignment of Route 66, which connects to the original pavement in Carpenter Park (see previous page). This offers an opportunity to create an interpretive Route 66 themed experience for trail users.

- **Install an upright orientation wayside exhibit at the main parking lot.** An upright exhibit will attract attention and connect park users to the idea that Route 66 once traveled through the park. It can encourage users to “Walk Old Route 66” by following the paved path. The other side of the exhibit can highlight other Route 66 attractions in the

area, including the Carpenter Park pavement which this trail connects to.

- **Install a wayside exhibit.** An Illinois Route 66 wayside exhibit along the west side trail can interpret the 1926–1936 alignment of the Mother Road that the users are currently walking on. This reveals the significance of the highway, not just to travelers, but also to residents who might not know the connection between Sherman and Route 66.
- **Enhance the trail to visually connect with Route 66.** Consider modifying a short portion of the west border trail to visually create a sense of “walking on Route 66.” Some options include painting the Route 66 emblem on the surface, adding Route 66 benches, replacing a section of asphalt with bricks, and installing Burma Shave signs.
- **Create a connector to the Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail.** A short section of abandoned roadway still exists at the southwest corner of the park, which connects to the historic Carpenter Park pavement just across Cabin Smoke Trail. There is an opportunity to connect the

Village Park's walking trail to the Carpenter Park pavement by signing and maintaining this connector. This increases the size of the trail network and provides other opportunities for park users and Route 66 travelers alike.

Courtesy of Kyle Holtgrave, www.alltrails.com



A portion of the Sherman Village Park walking trail follows the 1926–1936 alignment of Route 66. Adding interpretive opportunities here could introduce the Mother Road to diverse audiences (2021).



Burma Shave advertisements, like these restored signs outside of Godley, could be installed along the walking trail to create a Route 66 atmosphere (2007).



A short segment of abandoned roadway on the southwest corner of the park could connect to the Carpenter Park Route 66 Interpretive Trail located just across Cabin Smoke Trail (2021).



Architectural rendering of a portion of the Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center, showing where a large mural will be visible from 11th Street.



Bronze sculptures outside of Scheels stores are made by renowned artists George and Mark Lundeen.

ROUTE 66 INTRODUCTORY SITES

Several resources in the Springfield area lack a direct connection to the Route 66 story, but serve as significant gathering areas where Route 66 and its attractions can be introduced. Installing interpretive opportunities at these sites can connect with diverse audiences.

Site Recommendations

1. Springfield-Sangamon County Transportation Center (The Hub)

A new intermodal transit station is currently under construction between 9th Street (1930–1940 Route 66 alignment) and 11th Street in Springfield. When completed, it will serve as a hub for Amtrak trains, Sangamon Mass Transit District (SMTD) buses, intercity buses, and taxis. Construction of the center is planned to be completed in 2025. Thousands of travelers will flow through this complex on a daily basis, making it an ideal location for Route 66 information.

Two large murals will be installed on the exterior walls of the hub. Artist Danielle Mastrion’s mural will feature prominent Sangamon County residents and iconic attractions, which includes

an Illinois Route 66 sign front and center.

2. Springfield Scheels

Opened in 2011, the Springfield Scheels is a massive 200,000-square-foot sporting goods store and entertainment complex. It features a 65-foot Ferris wheel, 16,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, wildlife mountain, historical walk of U.S. presidents, rollerball bowling lanes, shooting gallery, arcade, candy shop, and cafe. It is a major attraction to the Springfield area, and therefore another ideal site for Route 66 information.

Adding a Route 66 themed sculpture to the outdoor collection of bronze statues would be a dramatic way to introduce the Mother Road to diverse audiences. For example, a family traveling down the dusty road during the Great Depression, loaded down with their few possessions, could interpret Route 66 as the “road of flight” as people followed the highway in search of a better life.

An associated upright orientation wayside exhibit could introduce the story of Route 66 on one side and

display area Route 66 attractions on the other. This would encourage shoppers to explore the byway located just a few blocks away.

3. Scheels Sports Park at Legacy Pointe

This large sports complex, built near the Scheels store, will include 16 baseball fields, 16 multi-purpose fields, and a 160,000-square-foot indoor dome with basketball and volleyball courts, and a turf training area. A family entertainment area will have laser tag, an arcade, and a Ninja Warrior course. The complex is scheduled to open in summer of 2023. It is projected to attract 540,000 visitors annually.

4. Bank of Springfield (BOS) Center

Constructed in 1979 and renovated in 2010, this multi-purpose facility hosts a variety of events, including concerts, tradeshows, sporting events, and graduation ceremonies. It is located on the west side of 9th Street near downtown Springfield, which was the 1930–1940 alignment of Route 66.

Interpretation Recommendations

Since two of these facilities are currently under construction and Scheels is owned by a corporate entity, recommending a “one-size-fits-all” approach to

interpretation isn’t feasible. The Convention and Visitors Bureau should approach each of these facility decision makers with a proposal to provide a Route 66 introductory exhibit or exhibits. Different options may be appropriate depending on the location and space:

- **Touchscreen Exhibit (page 120)**

A touchscreen computer kiosk provides guests with a wealth of information about Route 66. An associated wall-mounted panel can attract attention to the kiosk.

- **Experience Hub Kiosk (page 106)**

This chrome-style, curved exterior kiosk introduces Illinois Historic Route 66 and includes two smaller panels on Springfield attractions. Colored light-up lettering along its curve helps the structure to stand out, even in crowded areas.

- **Upright Orientation Wayside Exhibit (page 112)**

A rectangle, powder-coated aluminum exhibit with two back-to-back panels introduce Illinois Historic Route 66 on one side and Springfield attractions on the other. To stimulate interest and grab attention, an Interpretive Sculpture could be added (see page 116).

- **Wall-mounted Panels**

If standalone structures don’t fit the space appropriately, introductory and attraction panels could be mounted directly to walls where people congregate.

Courtesy of the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance



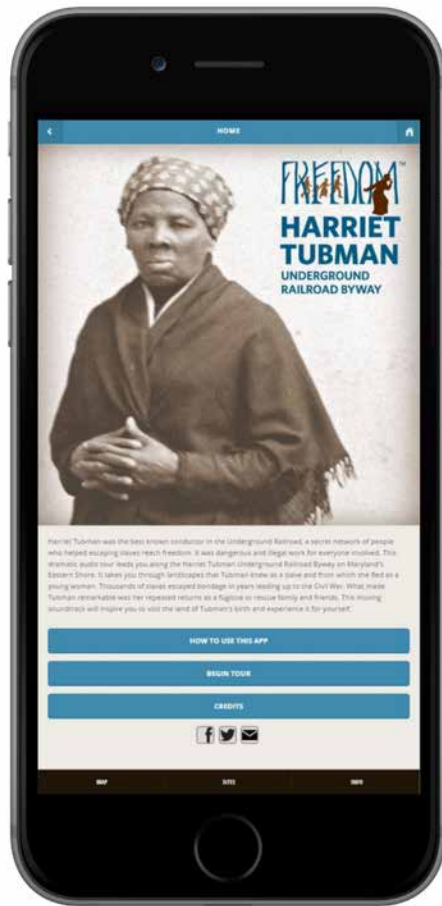
Planned design for the Scheels Sports Park at Legacy Pointe.

Courtesy of Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau



Bank of Springfield (BOS) Center.

Courtesy of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway



The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, located in Maryland, created an effective tour app for travelers. It is an excellent example of how mobile tours can be made interpretive. The dramatic audio guide brings to life stories of slavery, escape, cruelty, and compassion. It is available both as a downloadable app and as a mobile tour website.

MOBILE TOURS

The vast majority of Americans now own mobile devices. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), 85% of adults owned a smartphone in 2020, which is up from just 35% in 2011. About 53% of adults own a tablet device, up from 10% in 2011. Perhaps even more telling is that 96% of people between 18 and 29 now own a smartphone.

Smartphones have become the all-purpose technology. The implications for communicating about byways is limitless. Travelers expect to stay connected and find information through social media sites, Internet searches, GPS navigation, apps, and other technologies that are constantly evolving. The increased use of personal mobile devices opens up a world of opportunities for sharing interpretive messages.

Mobile tours combine sound, images, video, text, and interactive components to create rich interpretive experiences. They are ideally suited to byways, providing directions to nearby attractions and offering interpretation during drives.

Mobile Tour Websites

These websites specifically incorporate design that is more functional on the smaller touch screens of smartphones and tablets. When used for guided tours, they can blend text, photos, sound, and interactive buttons and links to other sites.

Benefits of a mobile tour website:

- Provides an interactive experience.
- Functions with all types of web-enabled mobile devices; just requires an Internet browser.
- No need to download files, as everything is streamed directly online.
- Relatively easy to create and update using standard website editing tools.
- Services can be added to the website to track visitor usage.

Limitations of a mobile website tour:

- Requires access to the Internet via a strong cellular signal or a Wi-Fi connection.
- Website programming is limited by layout, responsiveness, and tools. They don't always appear as polished or react as efficiently as native apps.

- Design must be developed for a variety of Internet browsers, since all display content slightly different.

Mobile Tour Apps

Apps are digital programs that are downloaded and installed directly to a mobile device. They are accessed through company-specific online stores like the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Like mobile websites, apps use text, photos, and audiovisual components in engaging, interactive ways.

Benefits of a mobile tour app:

- Generally much faster and more responsive than web-based media.
- Encourages interaction. Can use the device's camera to create augmented and virtual reality experiences.
- Provides almost limitless options for design and techniques.
- Can use the mobile device's GPS to trigger site-specific messages or to list attractions near the user.
- Does not require Internet access to run (although some features of the app may require online access).

Limitations of a mobile tour app:

- Apps must be downloaded and installed onto a mobile device. Depending on content, this may take up a considerable amount of space.
- Since they are specific to a mobile device's operating system, multiple apps must be developed to reach the largest number of users.
- Apps must be updated every time a mobile device's operating system is updated; high maintenance costs.

QR Codes

QR (Quick Response) codes consist of an array of black and white squares that connect mobile devices to online media such as websites, audio messages, and videos. They can be added to publications, interpretive panels, or even objects and artifacts. A traveler uses the camera on their mobile device to scan a code with a QR reader app, which decodes the information and shows the online content.

While QR codes were declining in popularity several years ago, they are now experiencing a resurgence due the COVID-19 pandemic and phone

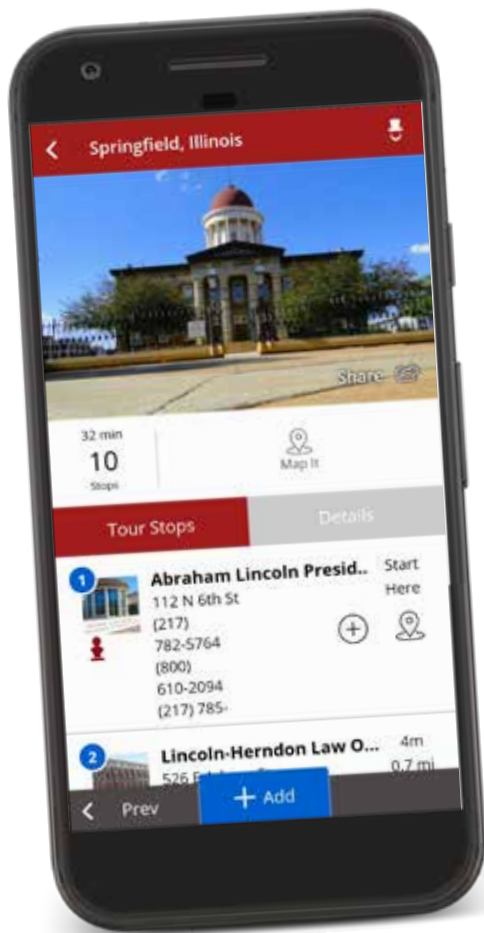
Courtesy of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway



Augmented and virtual reality experiences help to bring a site to life. A traveler uses the camera on their mobile device to look at a designated scene, which is modified to tell a story. At some sites, the scene might change to show what it looked like historically. In others, character actors appear and narrate their experiences. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway app added several of these virtual experiences in 2021.



Scanning a QR code to view a video along the Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway in Iowa (2014).



The Explore Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway app helps travelers plan their trips.

manufacturers incorporating readers directly into their device cameras.

Benefits of QR Codes:

- Quickly connect mobile devices to online resources without needing to type lengthy website addresses.
- Can be created and printed on media at no additional cost.
- Online resources can easily be developed, changed, or updated at minimal cost.
- Different QR codes can be generated to link to different messages. A wayside exhibit might have one QR code for adults and one for children.

Limitations of QR Codes:

- QR codes require access to the Internet via a cellular signal or Wi-Fi.
- Traditional black-and-white QR may not fit the media design.
- Once created, a QR code will always link to the online address that it is encoded with. If the online address changes, the QR code on all media also will need to be changed

Existing App: Explore Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway

The Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, in conjunction with Visit Widgit, developed an app in 2020 that can be downloaded for free on Apple and Android devices. The app features an interactive map and search function that allows travelers to plan their trips and explore the byway. Users can choose categories such as “Dining,” “Stay,” “Events,” and “Tours” which are highlighted on the map with more information. Springfield, for example, has a tour with 10 stops that include Route History, the Cozy Dog Drive-In, and Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum. Each attraction has a description and links to its website and phone number.

While not specifically designed for interpretation, it is an ideal wayfinding and planning tool for travelers to experience Illinois Route 66 and its interpretive attractions.

App in Development: Route History Metaverse Experience

In May 2022, the Route History museum in Springfield was awarded a tourism grant to develop a Route History Metaverse Experience, a virtual statewide Illinois tour of the Black experience on Route 66. Geographic locations identified in the Negro Motorist Green-Book and other significant sites will be interpreted through interactive augmented and virtual reality technology. According to the grant proposal, “Route History Inc. will create a shared virtual space of the Black experience that resembles Black experiences of the physical world along the entire Illinois portion of Route 66 during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights era” (Route History Inc., 2021).

The ambitious project will share the untold stories of the contributions of Black people, the places that Black people owned and operated, and the historic events that shaped the lives of Black people along Route 66.

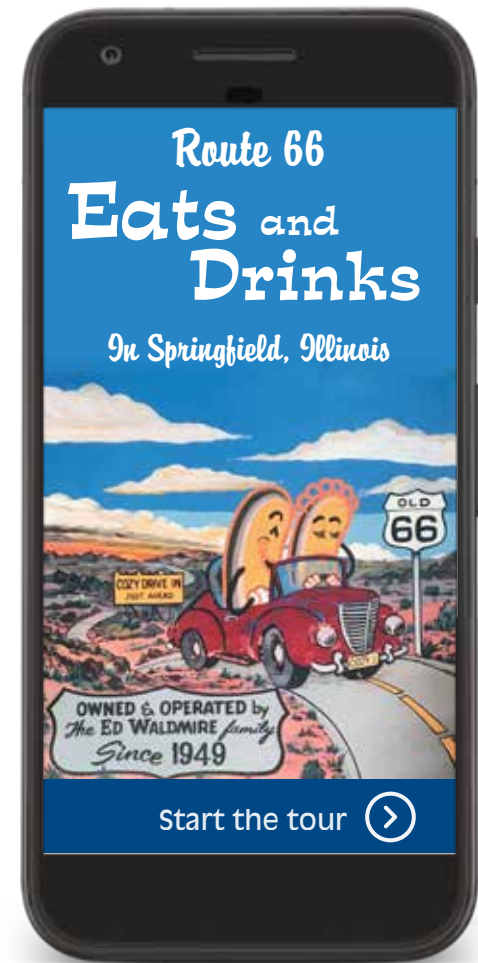
Recommendations for other Route 66 Mobile Tours in Springfield

The rich stories of Route 66 in Springfield can be brought to life for byway travelers with the help of sights and sounds that they can access on their own mobile devices. Once a dynamic audiovisual tour is developed, it can be distributed in several ways to reach the widest audience.

Specific resources and audiences can also be targeted by audiovisual tours, creating a package of thematic interpretive experiences for marketing purposes.

1. Route 66 Eats and Drinks in Springfield, Illinois

This tour would highlight the eateries that are directly associated with Route 66, either in a historic context or based on their current theme. A map would lead travelers to each site, with photos and descriptions of the restaurant or bar. Owners would be featured with short clips of video content. A digital format makes it easy to update as restaurants change hands and names.



Concept design for the title screen of a mobile tour that would feature Route 66 diners, cafes, and restaurants in Springfield.

Sites on the tour include:

- Fairlane Diner, Sherman
- Weebles Bar and Grill 66
- Fulgenzi's Pizza and Pasta
- Jungle Jim's Cafe
- Maldaner's Restaurant
- The Chili Parlor
- Cozy Dog Drive-In
- Mel-O-Cream Donuts
- Curve Inn
- Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum
- Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop
- Dew Chilli Parlor
- Lake Springfield Tavern
- Sangamo Brewing Company

2. Lodging along Route 66 in Springfield, Illinois

Restoring and marketing vintage lodging along Route 66 was one of the recommendations of The Road Ahead roundtable in 2013. The Springfield area has a few active and former motels that retain their Route 66 era character. A tour can highlight each of these sites with maps, historic photos, and interpretive descriptions.

Sites to include on the tour:

- Pioneer Motel (vintage sign)
- Lazy A Motel (Southwest Vernacular style)
- Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center (former Holiday Inn)
- Motel Shamrock (on the bypass)
- Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum (to see vintage motel signs)
- Ace Sign Company Sign Museum (to see vintage motel signs)

3. Touch the Real Road: Route 66 in Springfield, Illinois

This tour focuses on the authentic experience of walking or driving on the existing historic roadway sections of Route 66. The Springfield area is fortunate to have three sections of Route 66 on the National Register of Historic Places, and several other accessible sections with interesting histories. The app would include a map that leads to each of the sites, along with historic photos and descriptions of what makes each site unique.

Sites on the tour include:

- Route 66 Memorial Rest Area, Sherman
- Carpenter Park Route 66 Pavement

- North Cotton Hill Abandoned Brick Curve
- Abandoned Pavement Under Lake Springfield
- Olde Carriage Way/Old Rte 66
- Old Chatham Road Bridge/Lick Creek Wildlife Preserve
- Auburn Historic Brick Road

4. Route 66 Sign Scavenger Hunt

Route 66 is often referred to as the "Neon Corridor." Travelers seek out vintage and thematic signs that are related to the Route 66 era. The signs offer excellent photo opportunities and an authentic connection to the historic road. Springfield is unique in that it has a historic sign company, the Ace Sign Co., that fabricates and restores vintage signage. A scavenger hunt style app is ideal for encouraging travelers to seek out these unique resources.

Sites on the tour include:

- Ace Sign Company Sign Museum
- Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill, and Museum
- Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience (Legends Neon Park)
- Other resources that install vintage signs as part of a streetscaping initiative (see page 92)

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APPENDIX



The 6th Street Corridor through downtown Springfield, part of the 1926–1930 Route 66 alignment (2021).

APPENDIX: SPRINGFIELD ROUTE 66 ALIGNMENT MAPS

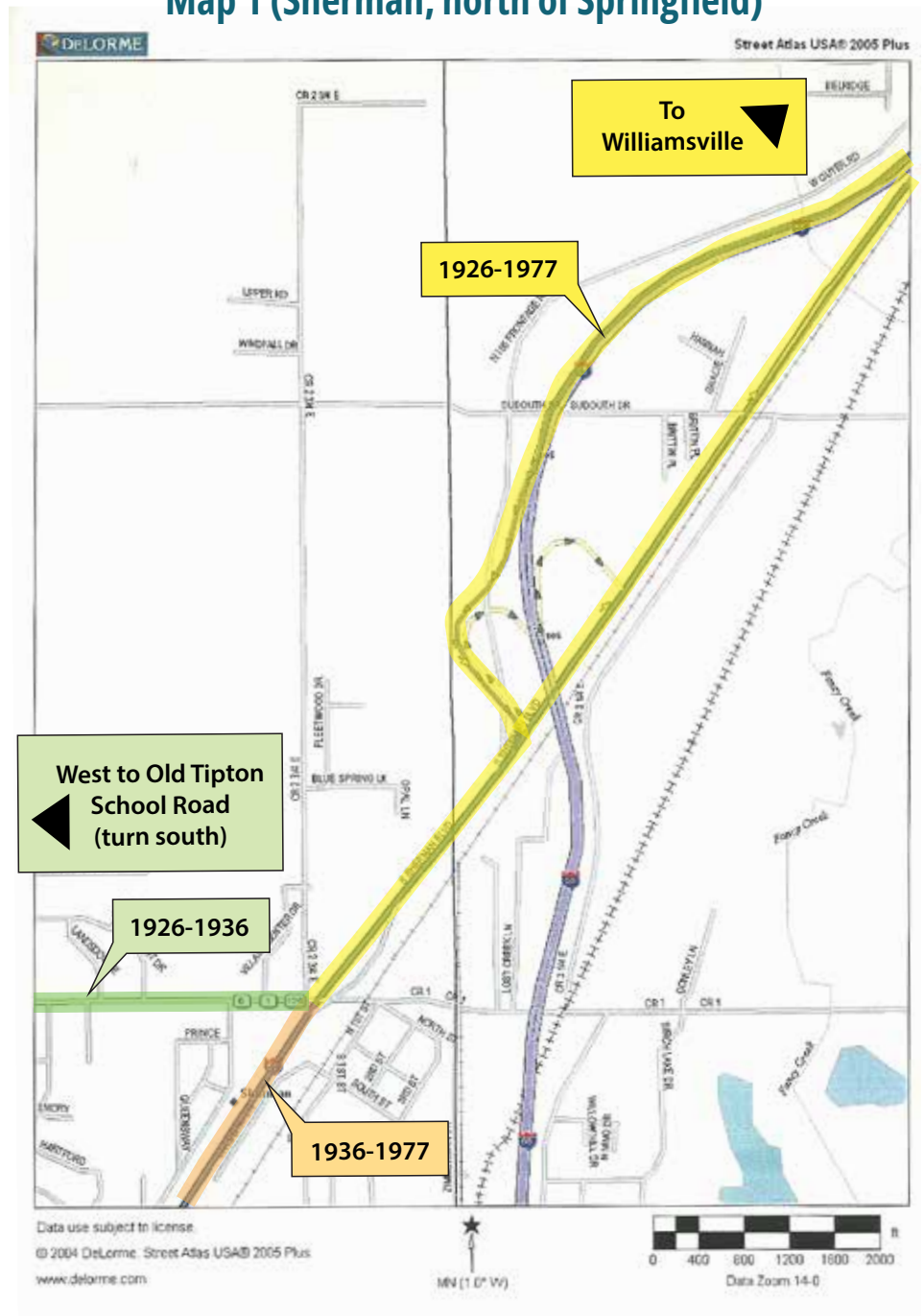
Route 66 was realigned numerous times through Springfield due to changing traffic patterns in the growing urban area.

The following maps were included in the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan to define the route of the byway through Springfield, which is indicated by a solid blue line. Based on several sources, the alignments have been highlighted with different colors indicating the years that the sections were likely part of Route 66. Alignments not included in the original corridor management plan are also highlighted. For alignments where there are conflicting opinions, the different sources are identified.

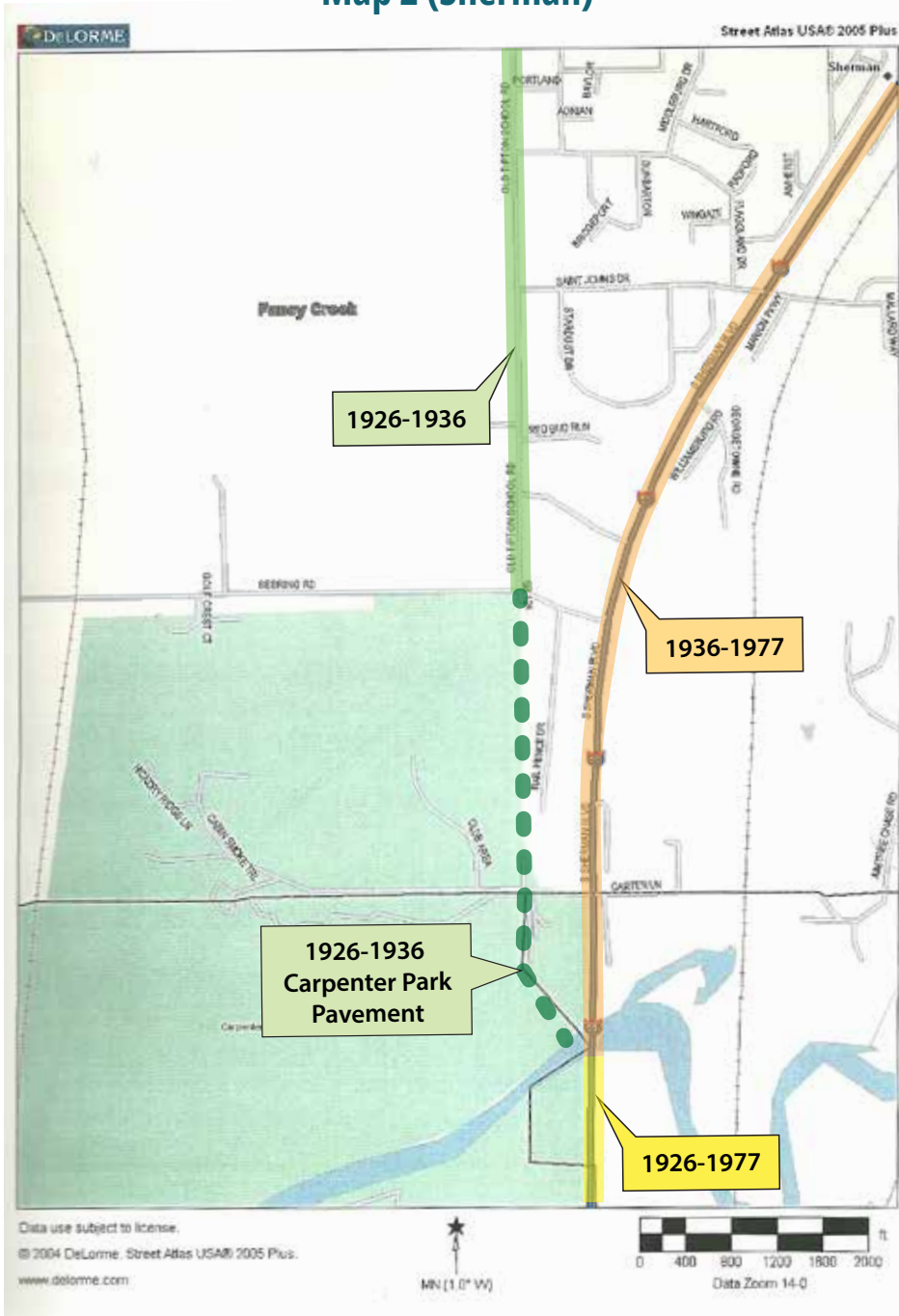
The sources include:

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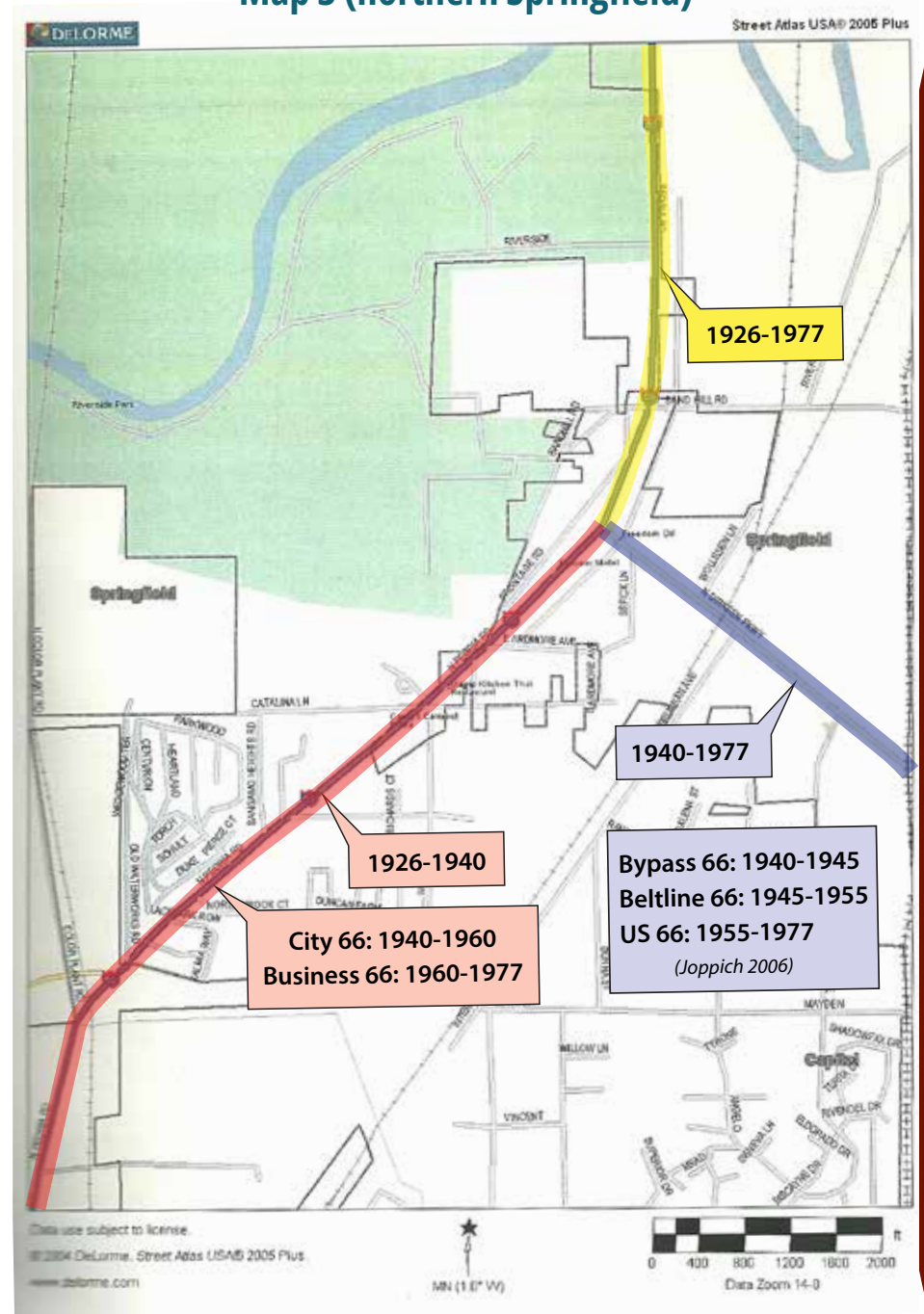
Map 1 (Sherman, north of Springfield)



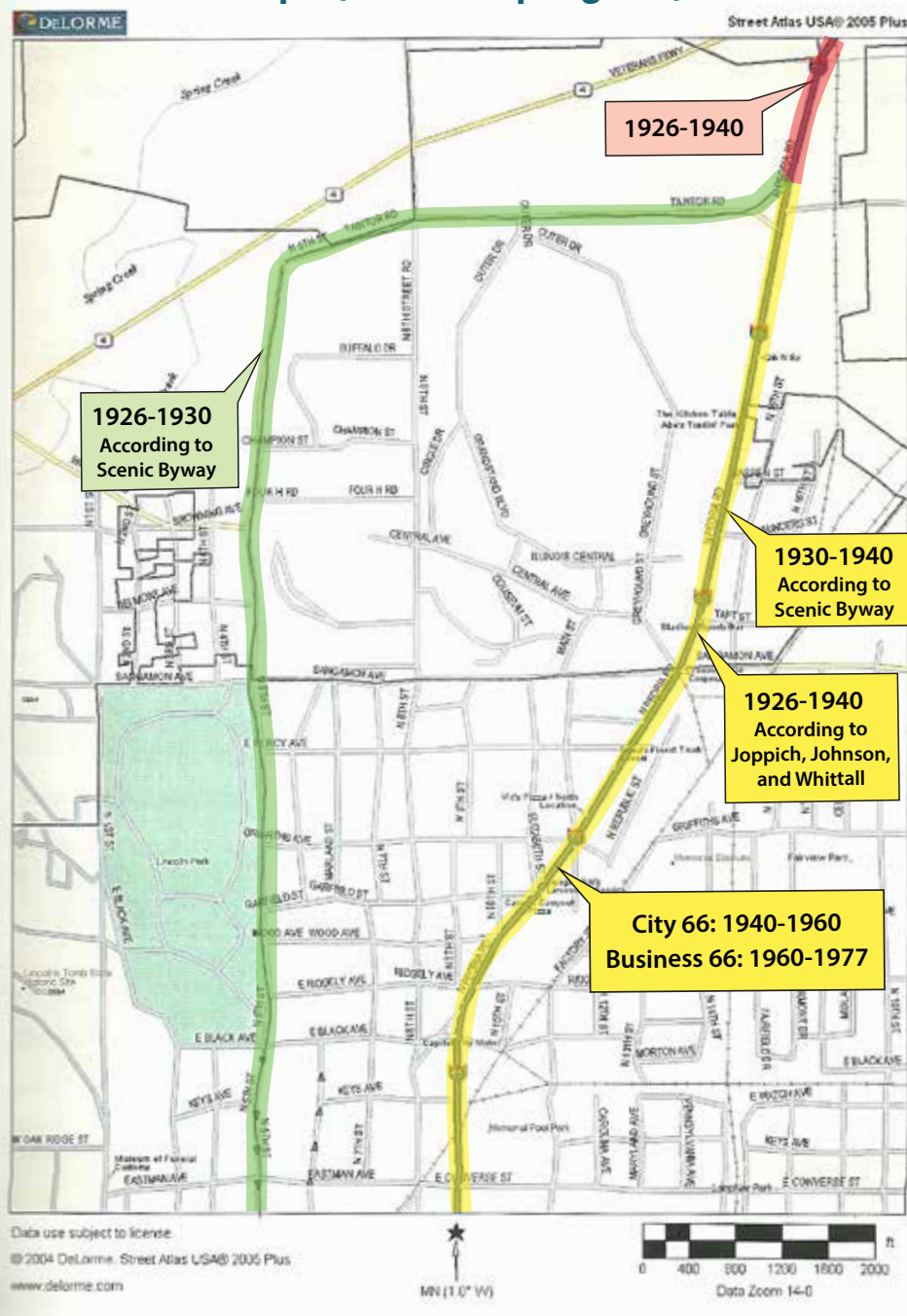
Map 2 (Sherman)



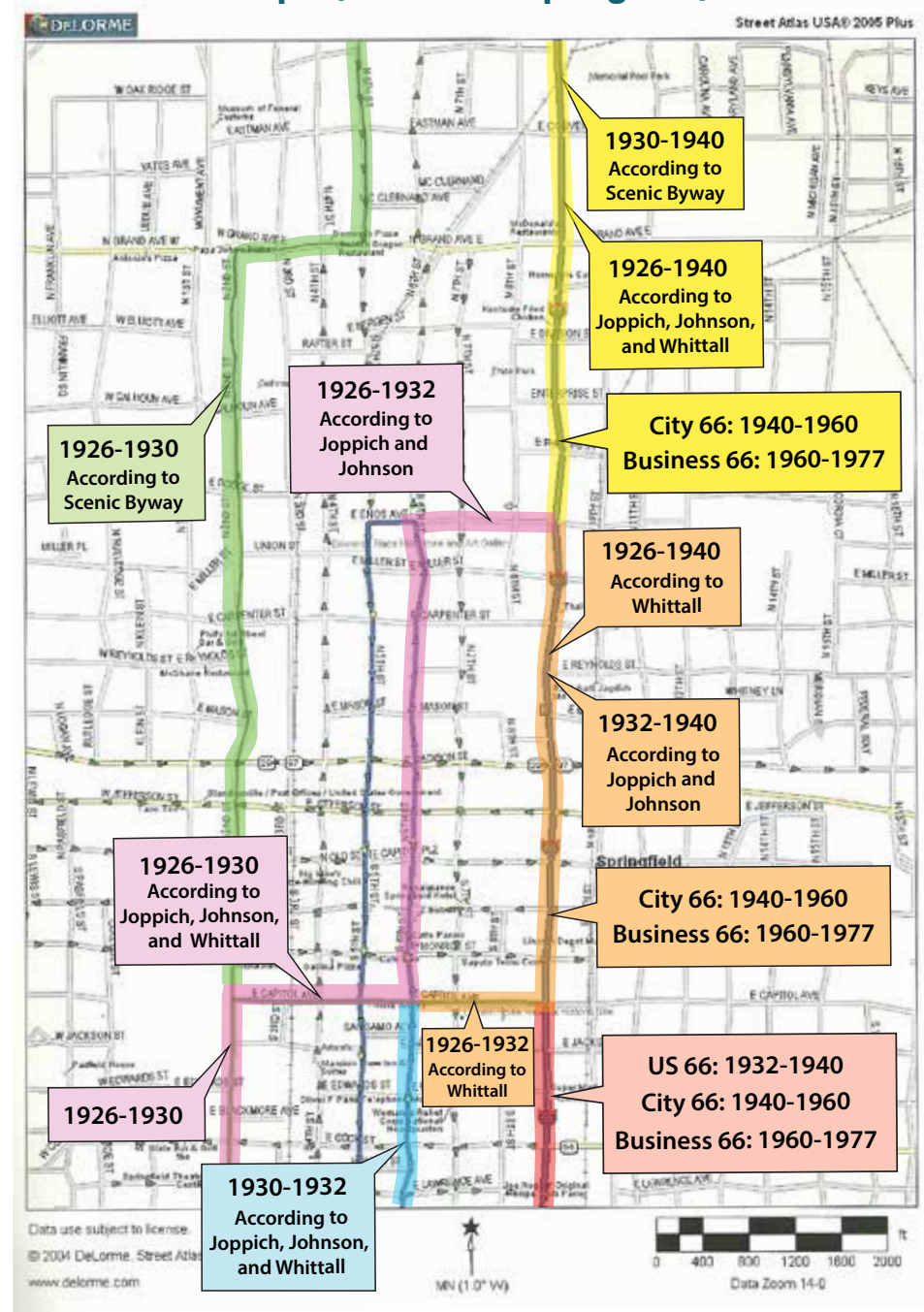
Map 3 (northern Springfield)



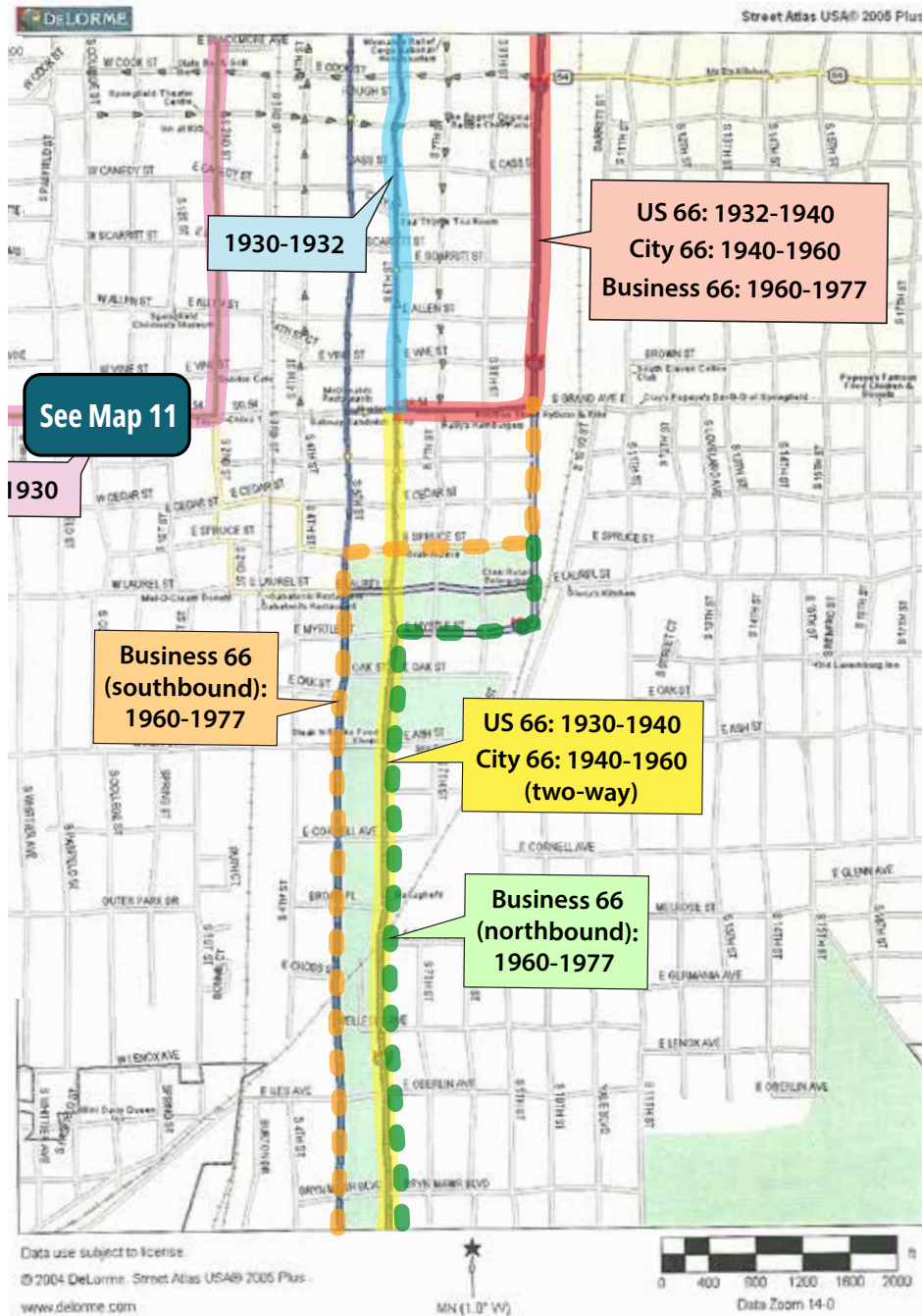
Map 4 (northern Springfield)



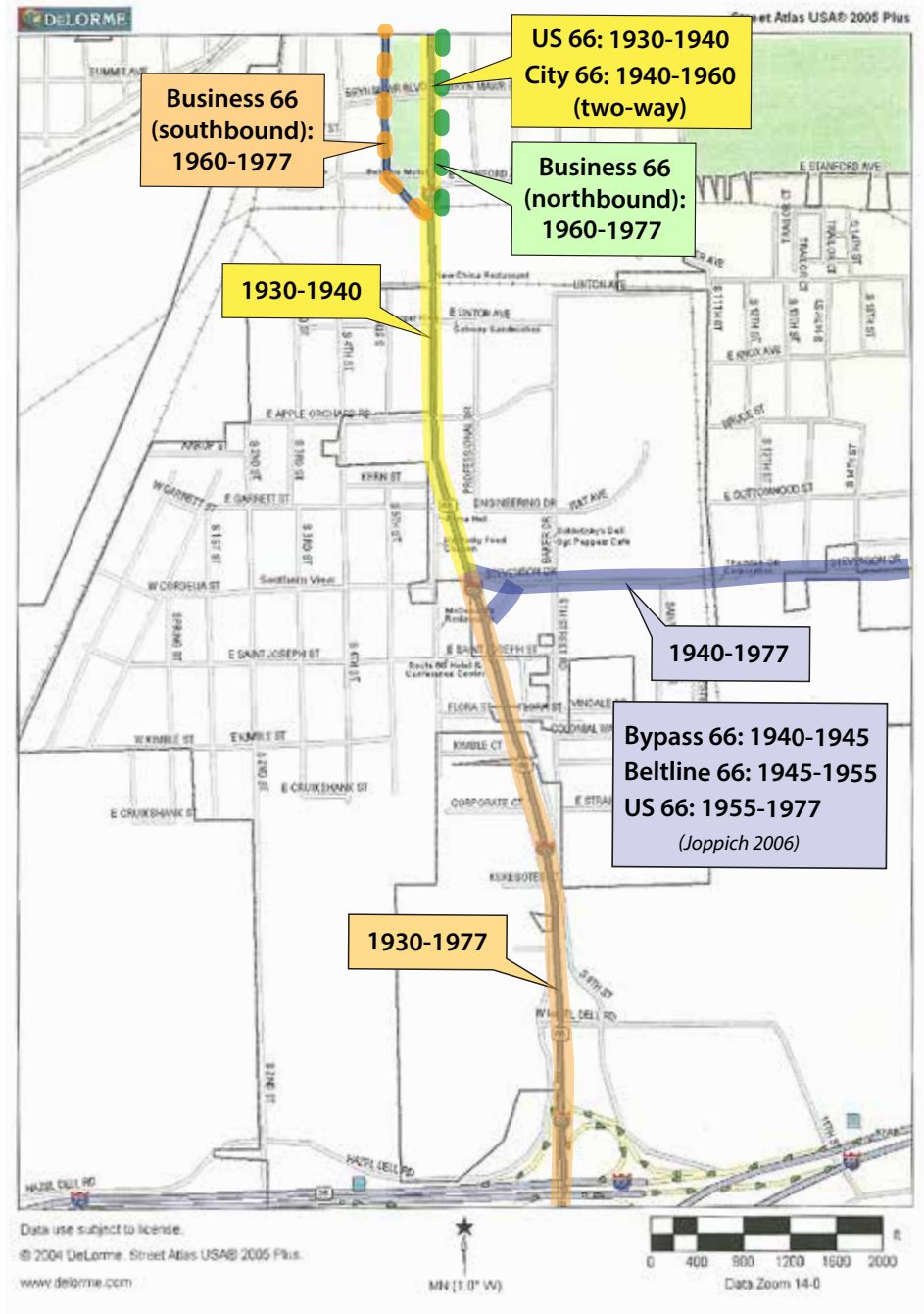
Map 5 (downtown Springfield)



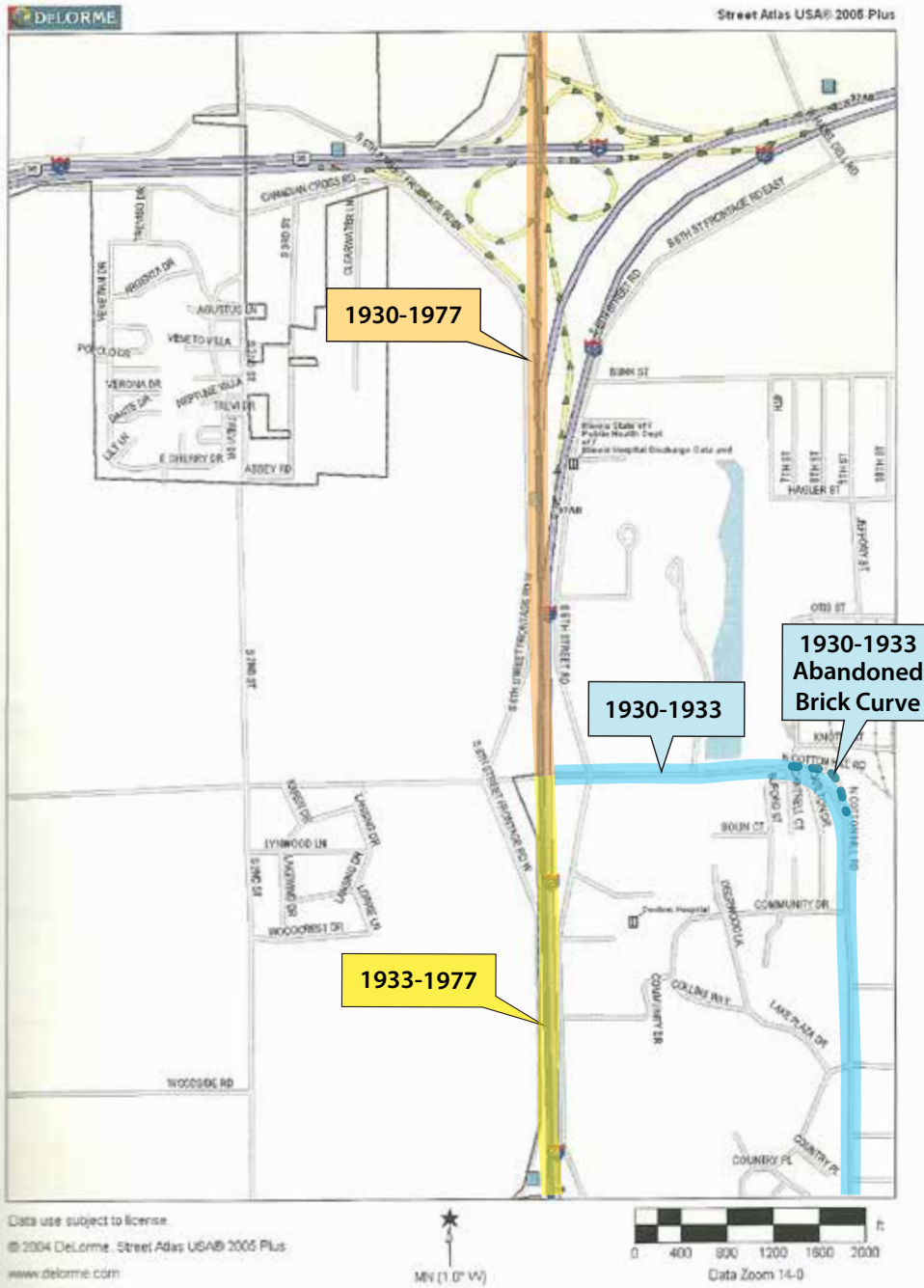
Map 6 (downtown Springfield, 1930–40 alignment)



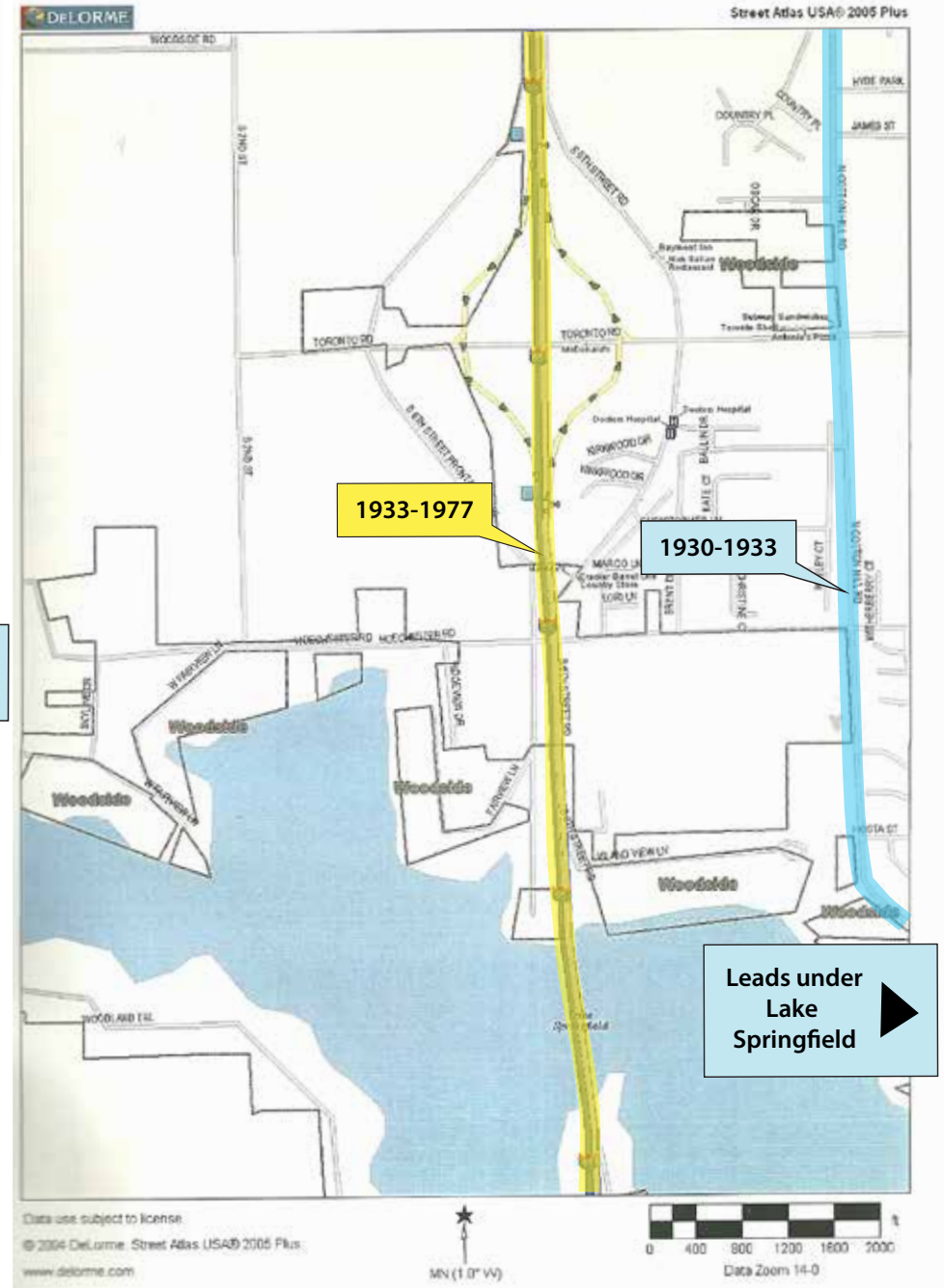
Map 7 (southern Springfield)



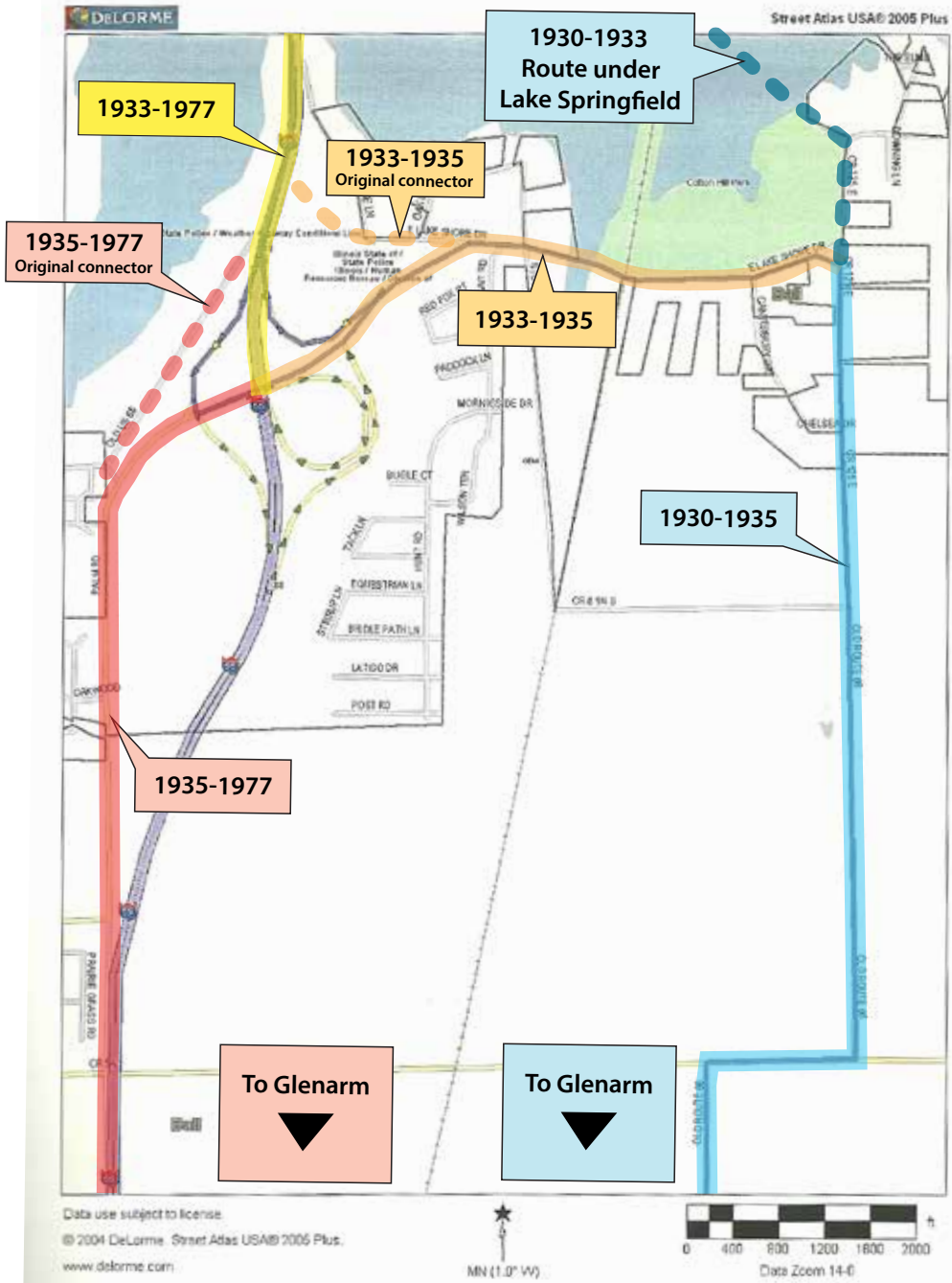
Map 8 (southern Springfield)



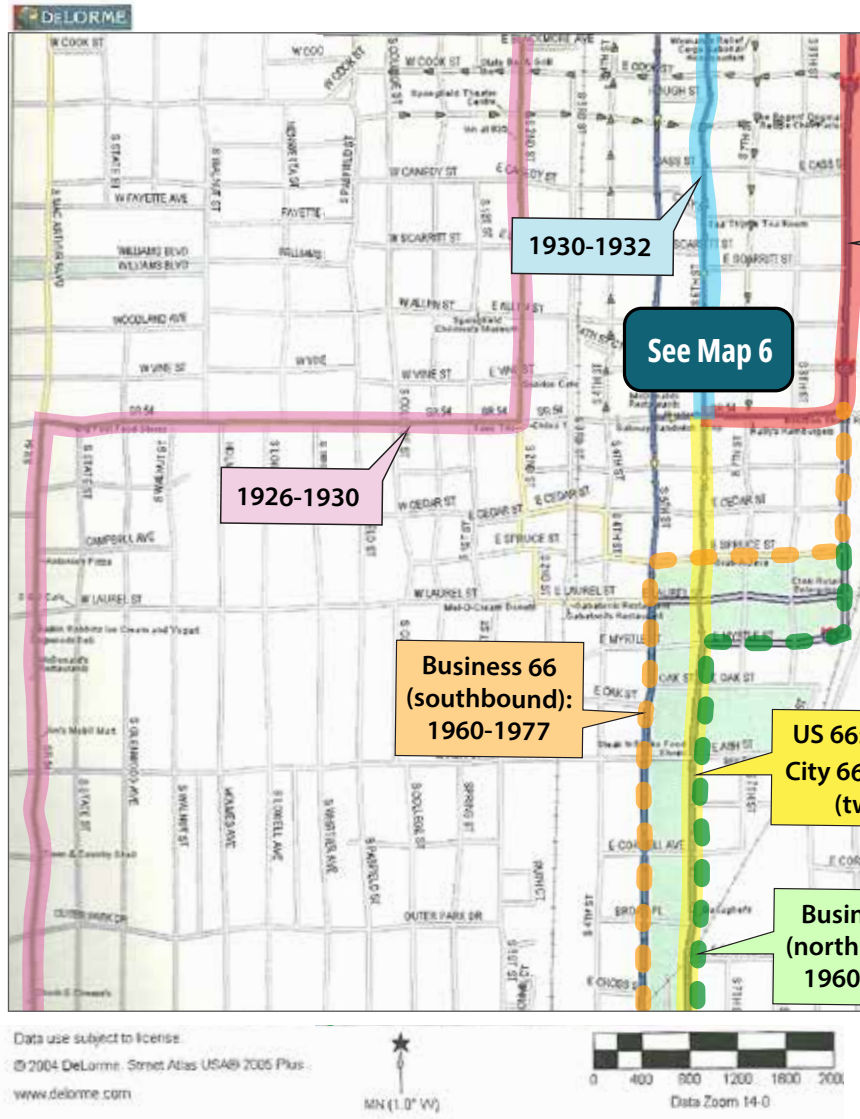
Map 9 (southern Springfield)



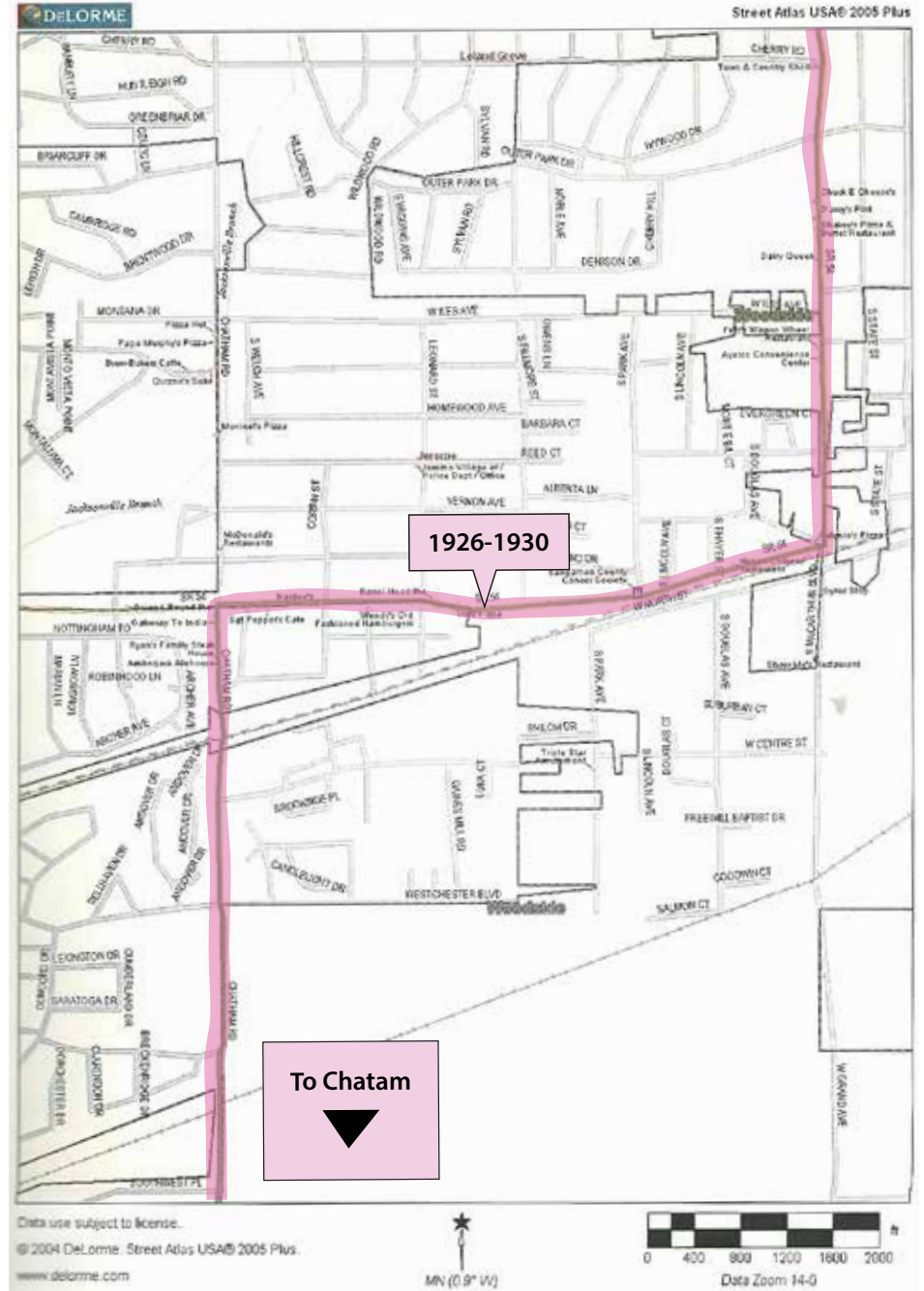
Map 10 (southern Springfield/Lake Springfield)



Map 11 (downtown Springfield, 1926–30 alignment)



Map 12 (southern Springfield, 1926–30 alignment)



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Restored vintage signs displayed at the Ace Sign Co. Sign Museum (2021).

