



**Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission Meeting
West End Service Station-Edwardsville, Illinois
October 31, 2024**

Members Present: Cory Jobe, Casey Claypool, Scott Dahl, Bonnie McDonald, Rep. Larry Walsh Jr., Bob Navarro, Rep. Marty Moylan, Rep. Mike Coffey Jr. & Milton Sees

Ex-Officio Members Present: Kristin Richards (DCEO), Becky Locker (DCEO), Daniel Thomas (IOT), Charles Watkins (Office of Lt. Governor Stratton), Dave Joens (Illinois State Archives) Jamie Reynolds (IDNR) Daivid Williams (IDOT) & Carl Mikyska (IDOT)

Guests in Attendance: Mayor Art Risavy, Nicholas Lemay, Bill Thomas & Kaisa Barthuli

Chairman Jobe called the meeting to order at 10:11am

The Honorable Mayor Art Risavy, City of Edwardsville, welcomed the commission and recognized local officials and Chairman Jobe for their efforts to purchase and preserve the West End Service Station and shared their excitement for the forthcoming Route 66 Centennial.

Kaisa Barthuli, National Park Service (NPS) Route 66 Program Manager, presented how the National Park Service got involved in the care and preservation of Route 66. The road was commissioned from 1926 to 1985 and included eight states, and its roadway linked the Midwest to the west coast. By 1985, its popularity had decreased, and the route was incrementally replaced with five additional roads. In 1990 Congress asked the NPS to conduct a study, the Route 66 Corridor Special Resources Study Act, due to Route 66's national significance.

In 1999 Congress passed legislation creating the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. The program collaborates with private, nonprofit, and government partners to identify and prioritize Route 66 preservation needs. The program provides cost-sharing/seed grants (179 to date) and assists with preservation planning, research, educational outreach, and technical assistance. Barthuli mentioned several Illinois examples including Del Rhea's Chicken Basket, Ariston Café, the Rialto Theater and more. She also discussed efforts to create the Route 66 National Historic Trail and work with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The NPS is working on the centennial celebration to encourage people to travel along Route 66 and is working with parks along the route to commemorate the event including special events, a map, the Junior Ranger Program and a passport stamp.

Chairman Jobe thanked Barthuli and opened the floor for questions. She was asked about Black experiences along the route and those are in the works. She also addressed other legacy experiences such as Native American history.

There will be a multi-pronged effort to tell these stories and to support research programs to best tell this historical narrative and the whole Route 66 story. There were also questions about economic development in Atlanta and Pontiac.

Bill Thomas, Chairman of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership and member of the US Route 66 Centennial Commission, updated the commission on the Federal Commission and its centennial strategy. The Federal Commission had its first meeting on 2/21/23 and they are charged with the study and recommendation of activities and projects, as well as identifying federal agencies to implement. The Commission does not have implementation authority or receive federal funding. There are currently 25 official centennial projects and activities, and some of these are the Route 66 National Kick-Off (a virtual event and they have requested to hold the event on 4/30/26), the Route 66 Centennial Caravan Cavalcade ("The Great Race" with vintage cars), AAA Route 66 Road Fest, The Mainstreet of America Video, Travels with Darley (an eight segment series on Route 66), Centennial Light Capsules (digitally mapped and projected Route 66 signs) and a variety of other programs and activities such as creating a stamp series, a toolkit development and a microgrant program.

Internationally, they are working with the US Department of Commerce to create a Route 66 hub on the Brand USA site to encourage international travel especially from Canada, Mexico, UK, Germany, Brazil, and Australia. Domestically they are creating a communications plan, a website that will be a one-stop resource for consumers (and then states will have their own pages). If members of the public have ideas or want to get involved, they can visit a special website (<https://route66centdev.wpengine.com>).

Chairman Jobe thanked Thomas and opened the floor for questions. There was discussion if there was integration between American 250 and the Route 66 Commission (there is some), and about working with the National Park Service to connect our past to our present. There was also mention of resources and American 250 grants.

Chairman Jobe provided updates on the Route 66 Illinois marketing and trade efforts. He recognized the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Office of Tourism for their ongoing support. There have been a variety of projects completed over the past 12 months. He mentioned logo development (and showed a visual). Jobe said that members have been working on the centennial for the past 3 years.

Commission advertising efforts have included running ads in Route Magazine and Road Runner Magazine (domestic) and America Journal, Essentially American Magazine, the GLUSA Guide (UK and Germany), and digital display (international). Jobe showed examples of the creative that ran. They also represented the Commission at various festivals including the Rose Bowl (there were thousands of people at the Float Fest event) and European Bike Week. Trade efforts included IPW 2024 (with almost 80 appointments) and Brand USA Travel Week. Video assets were created to highlight the route in Illinois and included Travels with Darley and a Route 66 motorcycle shoot (both were shown). A new Route 66 profile sheet was also created highlighting sites in Illinois to be distributed at trade shows, visitor centers, and more.

Chairman Jobe again thanked DCEO and IOT for their grants and support and opened the floor for questions. An attendee asked if there was Route 66 Commission participation in the Chicago Lowrider Event and there was not. It was also asked if they have reached out to any national car organizations, and they have not yet.

Daniel Thomas, Illinois Office of Tourism Deputy Director, provided a high-level update of the Office's effort to promote the Route 66 Centennial. He mentioned how they operated and worked with their 38 convention and visitor bureau partners statewide, primarily through grants and marketing. He mentioned IOT's mission of inspiring travel and adding to the overall quality of life, and how at the state they are leaning into inspiring and preserving the legacy of the route for generations. Thomas talked about the Route 66 video series which provided an opportunity to highlight EV travel in Illinois and the Illinois Made program. He thanked the CVBs who assisted in creating the videos and showed video teasers from each of the three influencers that were filmed. The series is the 2.0 evolution to the previous outdoor series, and they are very proud of it. The videos can be viewed on Roku and YouTube. He provided an overview of the variety of domestic and international advertising programs and noted that these were part of their "always on" strategy, and that diversity is part of all that they do.

Thomas discussed the State's international trade program and how 25 percent of budget is allocated to support these important efforts. He highlighted the Brand USA Mega FAM--and how the state hosted 70 agents on closing night, and a successful Mexico FAM. Looking "future forward" – for the third time, Chicago will host IPW, the largest global travel trade show, this coming June. Round four of the grants will be announced soon. The state has allocated money to continue to invest in Route 66, and this is the time to collaborate, be efficient and make the dollars stretch. The Office will continue to promote Route 66.

Chairman Jobe thanked Thomas and opened the floor for questions. Scott Dahl asked how many EVs were on the road in Illinois now? Thomas did not know but is interested in finding out.

There were no Commissioner Comments.

There were no Public Comments.

Chairman Jobe thanked host and noted that meeting notes and information will be sent out following the meeting.

Chairman Jobe adjourned the meeting at 11:47am.