A neon sign with a red and blue sign

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Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission Meeting

July 31, 2025

**Members Present:** Cory Jobe, Casey Claypool, Scott Dahl, Robert Navarro, Liz Vincent, &

Rep. Lawrence Walsh Jr.

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Kristin Richards (DCEO), Lisa Link (IOT), Jamie Reynolds (IDNR) & Carl Mikyska (IDOT)

**Guests in Attendance:** Jessica Basham (Governmental Consulting Solutions, Inc.), Erika Holst (Curator of History-Illinois State Museum), Greg Peerbolte (CEO of Joliet Area Historical Museum), and Bill Thomas (Chair of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership and member of the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission)

Chairman Jobe called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Cory Jobe gave an update on key projects including the centennial passport program. He is working with the Illinois Office of Tourism on this project. The centennial passports will include 66 sites with verbiage for each site. They are in the finalization stage of the project. A total of 50,000 passports are being printed nw and should be ready at the end of September. They will be distributed to DMO’s throughout the state. The passports will be free and will help support small businesses.

Cory also updated everyone on the special 44-page magazine which will be implemented with the help of Dot Dash Meredith. The magazine will include trip ideas and will reach 250,000 households with Travel & Leisure Magazine. It will debut in November. It is a travel leisure magazine. There will be no ads in the magazine. A digital version will be available on the Enjoy Illinois website when available.

An update was also given on the centennial wayside exhibits project. The idea from the exhibit came from the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byways Association. There will be signs in various locations and well-known stops in 17 communities. These signs will include directions to local sites and nearby towns. We partnered with the CVBs along the road for this project.

Bill Thomas, Chair of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership and member of the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission, was excited to announce that the American Society of Civil Engineers nominated Route 66 from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California as a National Historic Civili Engineering Landmark.

Bill also discussed that there will be 3 official Great Race caravans that will be live streaming in June. They will leave Santa Monica and drive to Chicago. The caravan will also stop in Springfield, MO for a remote satellite event on April 30.

A primary initiative will be public communications. Raising public awareness through a new website, social media channels, various activities, celebration and commemorations will be a focus of the initiative. There will be a national events calendar on the website. Once example will be car shows. If you are interested in car shows, car show events will be available on the calendar. If you would like to add an event to the calendar, notify Bill and he will make sure it is included on the website.

Casey Claypool updated the commission on projects from the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Association. She discussed the centennial coin project. There will be 300 sets of byway coins sold. The coins will display 12 well known stops, and the 13th coin will be a byway coin. They will be available on November 11 at Motorheads for sale. They will be sent to various locations to sell the remaining sets. An example of the coin for the Route 66 Legends Neon Park was shown.

The Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byways is also working on an activity guide for children. These will be free to children and will feature stops, scavenger hunts, and puzzles. It will give the kids an opportunity to enjoy a Route 66 road trip.

Casey also discussed the signage and roadway enhancements. Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byways is working with IDOT on the signs. IDOT will produce and install the signs. They will provide better directionals. There will be at least two per community and more in more populated areas.

The mobile app and visitor guides were also discussed. The will coordinate these two so they work together. They are currently working on the design and layout so the guide will become a collector’s piece. The guide will come out in mid-to-late January for 2026. A total of 70,000 guides will be disbursed.

A two-day event will be held on November 10 and 11 at Motorheads in Springfield, Illinois. There will be a gala on November 10 for members and non-members. It will be a ticketed event. On November 11, there will be a statewide conference. The focus will be on preserving Route 66 and what the future looks like. There will be a family friendly Route 66 birthday event which will be a ticketed event. They will include a last hurrah of the past 100 years. It will be open to the public. Purchasing a coin set will give the purchasers a free ticket. The plans are still in progress as they are currently working on sponsorships, hotels, and shuttles.

Erika Holst, Curator of History at the Illinois State Museum) discussed that they are developing an exhibition about the road at the museum. She showed a presentation regarding the 100 stories to commiserate 100 years of the road. This is a oral history project where they interviewed various people and their experiences on the mother road during important times in American history, including D-Day, World War II and pre-civil rights. One of the stories is about an African-American family traveling on Route 66 and their experience at various locations throughout their travels on the road.

A special thanks was given to DCEO and for their $4 million grant program which helped tremendously with the marketing efforts for Route 66. An additional special thanks was given to Representative Walsh Jr. for all of his contributions to the commission, including being a key proponent of Route 66 funding including an additional $1 million dollar funding.

John Paget could not make it to the meeting so Cory Jobe gave an update on the new Route 66 film John will be producing. John is a well-known Director and filmmaker. He will be doing a shoot of the road which will show on PBS. The filming will be done in Illinois from September 3-10, 2026. On September 3, it will focus on the Chicago area and there will be various events that will be held around the filming. The film will include various stops throughout Illinois and will go to Edwardsville, Illinois. They are in the process of finalizing the Chicago locations. It will take a full year of planning for this project and will benefit the full road; however, Illinois will be the biggest benefactor. Other stops include Joliet, Pontiac, Springfield, and Litchfield.

Cory also mentioned the Great Race will run on Route 66 from Illinois to California in 2026. The race will start in Springfield in June, and the first overnight will be in Collinsville on June 20, 2026 in conjunction with the Catsup Bottle Festival.

Greg Peerbolte, Joliet Area Historical Museum, his appreciation for support from DCEO and Representative Walsh. They have quite a few projects in the works including restoring the first Dairy Queen in Joliet, Illinois. They are working on restoring the Dairy Queen. Greg also discussed the ongoing work at the Joliet Prison-now a very popular Route 66 stop. Greg mentioned that Joliet will be one of the host satellite cities for the National kick off next April.

Jessica Basham, government consultant, introduced herself and was happy to be a part of the meeting.

The next meeting will be in person on Thursday, October 30, at 10:00 am. The meeting will possibly be held at the Motorheads location in Springfield, Illinois. More details will come at a later date.

Chairman Jobe adjourned the meeting at 11:01 am.