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Another Trip on Route 66: Preservation , Commercialism, and Heritage Tourism

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Introduction

Route 66, the internationally recognized and revered historical transportation corridor, although de-authorized as a federal highway in the early 1980s, survives better than ever both in reality and in the popular imagination. People drive extant portions of the highway to acquire insights into an earlier, less demanding, and in some ways more interesting America. In its heyday Route 66 served as a 2,400 mile long state-of-the-art transportation corridor linking downtown Chicago with Los Angeles. The highway traversed eight states: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California along a diagonal right-of-way linking the Midwest with the West Coast (See Figure 1). Since the early 1990s an inchoate coalition comprised of federal agencies such as the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service, state level entities, private individuals and numerous devotees have taken initial steps to interpret, preserve, and commemorate extant portions of Route 66. In addition to limited segments of actual useable roadbed, a dwindling number of contemporary roadside attractions still survive. Several semi-private organizations including the Route 66 Association of Illinois, the Missouri Route 66 Association, and the California Historical Route 66 Association, as well as several European groups, have also been organized to perpetuate public appreciation and understanding of the highway. This continuing flurry of activity demonstrates an enduring widespread fascination with the old roadway.

The Route 66 renascence in recent years is not an isolated phenomenon but an integral aspect of Americans' rediscovering their vernacular past. Growing interest in such cultural remains as Route 66 represents a widening appreciation of America's rich and diverse heritage. Fascination with the past is nothing new in America. Military veterans visited and commemorated the killing fields of the American Revolution, War of 1812, Civil War, western Indian wars and 20th century overseas battlefields. Through the years, interest in touring homes of the rich and famous has flourished. People have toured the homes of former presidents including Mt. Vernon in Virginia (George Washington), Monticello in Virginia (Thomas Jefferson), the Hermitage in Tennessee (Andrew Jackson), the Lincoln home in Illinois and Springhill, commonly referred to as Hyde Park, in New York state (Franklin D Roosevelt). As time passed, payment of staff, property and inheritance taxes and upkeep became increasingly problematic, the palatial residences owned by the great 19th century American industrial barons were opened to the paying public, thereby providing tax write-offs while also partially helping to defray staggering operations and maintenance costs. Today one can tour the former estates of the DuPonts, Rockefellers, Dukes, Vanderbilt's and their lesser-known contemporaries throughout the United States, properties of immense historical and cultural value which would have otherwise been forsaken as heirs of these industrial families have chosen to make their own homes elsewhere. Historically oriented attractions such as Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and Williamsburgh in Virginia lure and fascinate thousands of eager visitors annually.

Beyond all this, something else has occurred in the past quarter century on a wider scale throughout America--heritage tourism. Interest in the nation's vernacular past represented by industrial and manufacturing sites and various transportation corridors have attracted new visitors, vacationers, school groups, and out-of-country travelers. For example, nineteenth century industrial sites in Paterson, New Jersey (industrial development); Lowell, Massachusetts (textile manufacturing); Richmond, Virginia (the Tredegar Iron Works known as the Arsenal of the Confederacy during the Civil War), as well as early iron and steel production in western Pennsylvania reflect the heritage tourism movement. Such tourism focuses on the promotion and interpretation of a community's or region's inherent remnant industrial, manufacturing, or transportation infrastructure on a systemic basis, not merely emphasizing one site or museum. Heritage tourism incorporates (as examples illustrate below) the entirety of a region's cultural resources to attract visitors who require goods and services while traveling, thereby contributing to the local economy.

It is readily apparent that the fascination with Route 66 typifies the growing heritage tourism phenomenon that has placed economic and social value on remnant bits and pieces of America's past. These cultural remnants include canals, western trails, early turnpikes and highways, and railroad systems originally developed in the 19th century, systems that (except for highways linking rural areas, communities, and cities to one another) have all but disappeared or been replaced in the 21st century. Much has been done to preserve and interpret various canal artifacts including locks, aqueducts, and extant sections of towpaths in the eastern United States. They have been made user friendly and now serve the outdoor aficionado for hiking, running, biking, camping, and touring. Abandoned canals such as the Erie Canal between Albany and Buffalo, New York; the Chesapeake and Ohio linking Washington, D.C. with Cumberland, Maryland; and the Ohio & Erie connecting Cleveland and Portsmouth, Ohio have found new uses and societal value. As with canal remnants, sections of historic trails used to settle the west including the Santa Fe, Oregon, Mormon, and California trails today attract visitors interested in their cultural values. Many former railroad rights-of-way that provided the linkages with the western reaches of a growing nation in the 19th century have evolved into a recreational system commonly referred to "rails to trails".

Thus the interest in Route 66 is part of a much larger movement in America. Other early hard surface highways that have received similar evaluation and scrutiny primarily for their associative cultural values include Route 30—(the Lincoln Highway) connecting New York City to Portland, Oregon. Route 40, known originally as the National Road, linked Baltimore and Vandalia, Illinois. This early turnpike was the lynchpin of the first great federal public works program to enhance the transportation network in America. The federal level support was referred to as Internal Improvements in the years preceding and following the War of 1812. This federal government economic aid package to the states featured highway construction, canal building, and upgrading the nation's harbors to generate economic development in that era.

America has a very disposable infrastructure. Unlike Europe where both rail and canal systems continue as viable economic tools that help sustain national economies, America's 19th century transportation system has just about disappeared except for those canals preserved for their historical and recreational value and a handful of long distance rail lines used primarily for freight and commodity hauling. As a further example of America's disposable society, a number of trans-continental hard surface highways have been abandoned or superceded by the interstate highway system, an

idea President Dwight Eisenhower picked up from his travels in the defeated Germany in 1945 and a significant legacy of his administration in the 1950s

Other factors influencing interest in America's past include greater discretionary income due to the post World War II economic boom that has lasted for well over half a century. There is a growing retirement age population in all first-world nations due to enhanced public and private retirement programs, increased personal savings, and the booming stock market of the past 20 years. This retirement contingent is the best educated ever thanks to the great spurt in both public and private higher education after the Second Word War; these individuals need some thing to do. Golfing as a lifestyle, gambling excursions to Las Vegas, sea cruises, and loafing by the swimming pool do not keep this active population busy for long. Among other interests, these affluent seniors seek travel, historical sites, and educational opportunities. This American phenomenon is not much different than that occurring simultaneously in Great Britain. One can go to out-of-way spots like Dartmouth, Devon in mid-October and see the streets jammed with senior citizens on guided tour bus visits, learning about that community's significant contribution to the nation's seafaring heritage spanning the Elizabethan Age to World War II.

There is a great interest in heritage tourism in America for folks of all ages, visiting and touring significant cultural resources that reflect America's growth and development. Heritage tourism has developed into an annual multi-billion dollar enterprise as Americans and visitors from many lands travel throughout the nation to learn of its past. There is growing awareness of and appreciation for industrial, transportation, and other cultural resources presented in a systemic approach. So it may be argued that the overarching interest in Route 66 is endemic to a growing sophistication of the American public for the total story, not just one localized or isolated aspect of that history. Beyond its influence on the contemporary Route 66 story, a comprehensive discussion of heritage tourism is beyond the scope of this piece.

Regarding its contribution to the heritage tourism movement in America, Route 66 is significant as the nation's first all-weather two-lane concrete surface highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles. When contrasted with transcontinental corridors such as the Lincoln Highway and U.S. Highway 40 (originally the National Road), Route 66 does not stand out as America's oldest or longest road. What sets this segment of national highway infrastructure apart from its contemporaries is that it remained the shortest, year-round route between the Midwest and the Pacific Coast for many years. U.S. Highway 66 reduced the distance between Chicago and Los Angeles by more than 200 miles, making the route popular among thousands of motorists traveling westward.

Like other highways of its day, Route 66 reflects the origin and evolution of road transportation in the United States. The often-romanticized highway represents an outstanding example of the transition from dirt track to superhighway. Not only did Route 66-underscore the importance of the automobile as a technological achievement, but, perhaps equally important, it symbolized unprecedented freedom and mobility for every American who could afford to own and operate a car or truck. When a cascading number of motor vehicles and the rise of the long distance trucking industry increased the need for improved highways, the federal government pledged to link small town America with all of the nation's metropolitan centers.

The period of outstanding historical significance of Route 66 is 1933 to 1970. The national system of public highways brought geographic cohesion and economic prosperity to many regions of the nation. As a key component of the federal highway

network, Route 66 linked the isolated and predominantly rural West to the densely populated urban Midwest and Northeast. Chicago had long served as an important entrepot for goods that were transported to the South and West. The building of Route 66 helped ensure the continuation and economic health of this vital transportation center. The origins of Route 66 came at a time of unparalleled social, economic, and political disruption and global conflict wrought by the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Second Word War in the 1940s. This lengthy period of unsettled conditions in the United States hastened the largest internal movement of Americans in the nation's history. One result was the irreversible transformation of the American West from a rural frontier to a trend setting metropolitan region.

Perhaps more than any other American highway, Route 66 symbolized the new optimism that pervaded the nation's economic recovery. For thousands of returning American servicemen and their families, Route 66 represented more than just another road. "It became", according to a contemporary devotee, "an icon of free-spirited independence linking the United States across the Rocky Mountain divide to the Pacific Ocean." More recently Route 66—imaginatively documented in prose, song, film, and television—has come to represent the essence of the American highway culture to countless motorists who traversed its corridor during the more than five decades of its useful lifetime.

Despite its grip on the popular imagination, the impetus to do something systematic and comprehensive to preserve and interpret Route 66 at the national level is a fairly recent development. For example on September 28, 1990, Congress enacted P. L. 202-400, the "Route 66 Study Act of 1990." Responding to the act's legislative mandate, the National Park Service, in an era of rising interest and fascination with historical topics and sites, conducted a major study of the entire corridor in the early 1990s. Then too, private sector commercial interests viewed the positive economic benefits accruing from federal level involvement and supported the National Park Service project. Some critics concerned with federal governmental backing of projects similar to the Route 66 study view this as the "park barrel" approach to resource preservation. Although not originally created as an economic development bureau, the National Park Service has in recent years been thrust into direct contact and relationship with private sector commercial interests in a number of projects throughout the United States. In an era of declining public sector resources, the National Park Service has intensified its efforts to deal directly with external interests to develop strategies and tactics to promote sustainable management of significant cultural resources such as Route 66. Through the development and nurturing of complex partnership arrangements, the National Park Service may be able to leverage its credibility and influence in the protection and interpretation of nontraditional (as opposed to a battlefield, historic house, or mill building) cultural resources represented by Route 66. The growing emphasis on sustainability correlates well with the traditional preservation mission of the Park Service.

Working with these diverse and sometimes conflicting agendas articulated by the Route 66 supporters, National Park Service planners and historians developed several viable alternatives that appeared in the July, 1995 "Route 66 Special Resource Study." The study outlined future commemoration and preservation of Route 66 based on partnerships between the public and private sectors. One alternative recommended preservation of key resources under a strong centralized management entity. Another scenario, "the national historic trail" concept, sought to give Route 66 national trail status to preserve significant resources and provide for partnership management. A "no further federal action" alternative would have allowed then existing conditions to

continue and programs to operate while permitting actions to occur not involving the federal government. Thus a mix of federal, state, local, and private entities would have continued their individual activities. The “commemorative re-designation” alternative called for the placement of new Route 66 signs along all the various alignments that developed over time from Chicago to Los Angeles. Under this alternative, proposed federal action would have been confined to the manufacture and placement of standard Route 66 signs. Finally, a “heritage highway” alternative would have established national recognition of the route and its history and provided resource preservation and a technical assistance program without federal management. A sunset provision would have limited federal involvement to ten years. Once the study was completed, the National Park Service stepped aside to await congressional action. It must be noted that while the Park Service is often charged by Congress to conduct studies, only Congress through legislation can create new parklands or the President, through executive order, mandate new national monuments. Hence the National Park Service does not create the parks it manages.

Although the 1995 study contained positive recommendations for further action, progress on federal recognition of Route 66 languished on the legislative front until the passage of P. L. 106-45 in August 1999. This law recognizes one of the earliest examples of the 1929 National Highway System Program. Route 66 has become a symbol of the American heritage of long distance travel and the corresponding vision of a better life. Although remnants of this historic twentieth century transportation corridor are deteriorating rapidly, many significant physical resources such as structures, features, and artifacts associated with the historic roadway remain extant today. Intangible Route 66 resources include the history, nostalgia, and popular culture that convey positive feelings of adventure, individualism, and mobility, giving an additional dimension to this historic transportation corridor. Today the National Park Service has been charged by Congress to work cooperatively with state agencies, private organizations and individuals to deal with the historic road, its impact and significance in twentieth century America.

In 1926, Congress designated Route 66 as part of the first national route-numbering scheme that featured the U.S. shield shaped sign to denote the new national highway system. From 1926 until 1984, Route 66 assumed a significant socioeconomic role from the Midwest to the West Coast. The roadway served as the major avenue for large-scale migration to California during the 1930s Dust Bowl years. During World War II the Route 66 corridor channeled huge numbers of men and women to military bases or armament factories on the West Coast. In the affluent postwar 1940s, 1950s and 1960s when the American workforce enjoyed greater leisure time, Route 66 became the major road west attracting millions of vacationers providing a welcome economic stimulus to Main Street communities. Small businesses such as locally owned gas stations, motels, and restaurants developed in the rural Midwest as well in the sparsely populated Southwest to provide necessary services for travelers. Edge-of-town development influenced by the birth of Route 66 was particularly noticeable in Springfield, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Tulsa, Oklahoma, Oklahoma City; Amarillo, Texas; Tumcomcari, Albuquerque, Gallup, (all in New Mexico); Flagstaff, Williams, Kingman, all in Arizona) and other smaller, more remote places along the highway.

The 1956 interstate highway system legislation ultimately replaced Route 66 with interstate highways 55, 44, 40, and 15. In late 1984 the completion of the final portion of I-40 in northern Arizona west of Flagstaff resulted in the de-authorization of the 58-year-old highway. Contrary to this apparent death knell, something surprising has occurred in the past 15 years as renascent interest in Route 66 has attracted domestic

and international visitors who are realizing a dream to travel along the celebrated "Mother Road." This colorful sobriquet was coined by author John Steinbeck in his evocative 1939 Dust Bowl era novel Grapes of Wrath, which tells of the displaced Joad family's epic journey to California. The road became a symbol of the automobile age because it encompassed the geography of continuing westward migration, a hallmark of the American experience ever since Europeans first settled the continent in the 1600s, as well as the need to symbolize the mobility and independence of the American people.

Continuing interest in the Route 66 saga has been stimulated through the recent period by a media blitz. Steinbeck's novel was followed by a 1940 movie adaptation starring Henry Fonda and Jane Darwell, the 1946 pop song by Bobby Troup, a 1962 television series starring Martin Milner and George Maharis. Then too, a plethora of recent media coverage on morning news/entertainment shows and evening news magazine venues have piqued the public's imagination. A minor avalanche of guide books, articles, and newspaper features stimulate contemporary interest. Bars, restaurants, and antique shops exploit the road sometimes with little more than a Route 66-type sign. Experts lead tours along the road, the National Trust for Historic Preservation sponsored a tour following its annual conference in St. Louis in 1992 and a European auto club shipped members' antique cars to American to drive the entire route.

Motivated by burgeoning attention in the media, private groups often look to the public sector for assistance and guidance to protect the Mother Road's dwindling and deteriorating resources. The public sector constituency must comply with various laws, policies, and regulations that deal with cultural resources in the United States. Federal agencies have a mandated responsibility to survey, evaluate, and register properties that possess National Register of Historic Places significance on lands managed by these agencies. State historic preservation offices are taking the lead in some areas to identify significant cultural resources along the Route 66 corridor. Thus much professionally researched information about the road and its affiliated resources has been generated in recent years.

Another influential Route 66 constituency projects a different and sometimes conflicting agenda—one that views renewed interested in the Mother Road as an economic boon for faltering local economies especially in many small communities bypassed by the more recent Interstate highways. Some local (and not so local) economic entities view future involvement by the National Park Service as a potential boon to their development schemes to exploit the Route 66 phenomenon. As stated above, although not originally founded as a promoter of economic development, in recent years the National Park Service has had to deal with private sector economic issues affecting parks and new initiatives. In coping with this thrust, the bureau has had to deal cooperatively with contrasting forces represented by wide ranging agendas in the 1990s. Collaborating with commercial interests that promote economic development along the Route 66 corridor is not necessarily a negative situation—after all much of what the old highway meant to the growth of the United States in the twentieth century was based on transportation related commercial issues.

Those interests who seek profit from the Route 66 renaissance through promotional materials or sale of souvenirs do not generate the most concern to potential preservation interests. Although slapping a Route 66 logo on an old building may cheapen the story; it does not harm the structure. Contemporary entrepreneurs often produce mundane generic strip development, which clogs traffic patterns within historic transportation corridors leading to or from a community. The conflicting economic

interests along the route that control land and buildings within the historic transportation corridor, and perceive these earlier resources as unprofitable in today's marketplace, create more anxieties. Local redevelopment interests on the westside of Albuquerque have led to the wholesale demolition of various Route 66 era establishments on Central Avenue replacing them with parking lots to serve nearby Old Town. In suburban St. Louis, the exquisite Coral Court motel turned off its art deco neon sign for the last time in January, 1995; it was not long before the roadside lodging site was re-developed as a strip commercial area.

It is sad to see these forlorn remnants of the past disappear, but like the message of passage contained in Texan bandleader Bob Wills' classic song, Faded Love, for many small town commercial enterprises and "Ma and Pa" operations housed in aging buildings, their time too has passed. The casual observer can call up an elegiac appreciation of their original purpose and role in a community but many Route 66-era structures have little contemporary economic value due to condition, size, location, or purpose. Preservationists and other devotees of the past must almost develop a triage approach of what can actually be saved from the wrecking ball and brought back to a useful life. Not every remnant and fragment of a nation's past needs to be saved, but a healthy, representative and useful sample must be protected. Also as locally significant vernacular style business enterprises, they do not necessarily attract the interest and resources of national level preservation organizations, for example the apparent lack of action to prevent the demise of the Coral Court motel in St. Louis.

Despite the natural deterioration and actual razing of a sizeable portion of Route 66 era roadside development, some structures and types of businesses remain extant attracting and serving new customers today. For example, a number of Route 66 period motels including the Wagon Wheel in Cuba, Missouri, the El Vado in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the unique Wigwam in Holbrook, Arizona and Rialto, California remain in operation within the historic transportation corridor. Another category of Route 66 related businesses is still doing well—the roadside café, diner, or restaurant (Pig Hip in Broadwell, Illinois; Ted Drews' Frozen Custard in St. Louis, Missouri; and Bob's Bar-B-Que in Arcadia, Oklahoma). For the most part, period gas stations have been replaced by corporate mini-marts that specialize in lottery tickets and junkfood. The good news is that several examples of local eclectic service station architecture remain extant in Carlinville, Illinois, Afton, Oklahoma, and Rancho Cucamonga, California. Few of the Route 66 corridor's unique thematic commercial enterprises still exist. The last extant orange shaped fruit and juice stand has been relocated across the street from its original site to the parking lot of a Wal-Mart in Rialto, California. Colorful snake pits (tourist traps) designed to attract the unwary travelers and their cash laden wallets tawdry displays and shoddy merchandise have gone out of business have been replaced by more sophisticated venues of culturally sanitized entertainment.

Integrity of the Mother Road's right-of-way and road surface provides an additional topic of concern for preservationists, Route 66 aficionados, and public agencies. While lengthy portions of Route 66 have disappeared (either replaced by the interstate corridor or just plain abandoned), major segments can be driven upon especially in the western states. While this is fun for those who enjoy a "shunpike" (traveling what author William Least Heat-Moon termed his Blue Highways) quest across the United States on lesser traveled backroads, it must make managers and staff in state highway departments extremely nervous. Their mission is to provide safe, all weather highways for the traveling public; they are not in the history or the nostalgia business. As for tourists and "roadies" attempting to view or travel on extant though un-maintained segments of historic Route 66, these public sector functionaries harbor concerns. The

state and local highway bureaucracy view with alarm possible accidents and litigation resulting from enthusiasts placing themselves in harms way driving on antiquated roadway remnants distracted while experiencing a bit of nostalgic Americana. These concerns are not unfounded—some portions of historic Route 66 are not meant for modern high speed travel and pose definite safety hazards, especially those portions of roadbed which are not maintained or abruptly terminate at a dirt barricade or bridge-less stream. The costs to bring extant road segments to current standard would be prohibitive and would irreparably alter the historic character of these remnants. Narrow two lanes, at grade driving, close to the ditch experiences as well as lower speeds combine to make travel on Route 66 remnants truly memorable in this era of long distance, high-speed travel on the interstate highway system.

What makes Route 66-era roadside development so endearing today is its individuality. Historically the environment along the Route 66 corridor, although easily categorized into several travel related support enterprises, reflected (for better or worse) local tastes, construction materials, style, developers, and builders. The various categories of road related enterprises, lodgings, service stations, food outlets, and tourist traps-while similar in function and purpose-captured the imagination of the traveling pubic through wildly diverse structural design and appearance as well as attendant signage. It is precisely for those reasons that tracing the historic road and its ancillary roadside development has provided so much enjoyment for discerning travelers in the recent past. A visit to a portion of the Route 66 corridor is not for one who feels the need to drive 600 miles a day on high-speed interstate highways. Instead with plenty of time, patience, and well-thumbed guidebooks and maps, a present day journey along the Route 66 corridor becomes a visual feast and a soul satisfying travel experience.

Contemporary highway development does have a dark side, which promoted the spread of unplanned edge-of-town strip development and incipient sprawl throughout the United States. Several observers have described and interpreted this development in published works including James Howard Kunstler's The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Fall of America's Man-Made Landscape and Joel Garreau's Edge City: Life on the New Frontier. These authors have argued that, historically in the United States, land use planning and zoning controls amounted to a non-issue (and continues to this day) given the dismal appearance of rampant strip development in and near the nation's cities and communities. Certainly few zoning standards were applied to the early limited development along Route 66. Twentieth century transcontinental highways such as Route 66, the Lincoln Highway, and the much earlier National Road helped spin-off roadside development, but in a much smaller scale than did the great web of expressways and interchanges that resulted from the National Defense Highway Act of 1955. The Interstate Highway system has greatly transformed and impacted the landscape of modern America.

Besides the construction of the interstate highway system, burgeoning population growth since the end of the Second World War and the overarching generic appearance of present-day strip development based primarily on ubiquitous franchise operations proliferating in the past 40 years has also influenced this landscape transformation. Franchise America reflects the overwhelming commercial success of standardized product lines to support the extra one hundred thirty million Americans on the scene since the heyday of Route 66. These commercial venues include fast-food emporiums such as McDonalds, Wendys, and Burger King; lodging chains ranging from the inexpensive Motel 6 and Super 8 operations to the mid-range Holiday Inn and Hampton Inn. Significant edge-of-town impacts such as suburban sprawl and air pollution have

been created by the phenomenal growth of big box retail outlets such as Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, The Home Depot and Lowe's chains.

For these reasons, crucial provisions contained in the 1999 "Historic Route 66 Corridor Act" (P. L. 106-45, enacted August 10th) will provide challenges to those management entities responsible to balance the history buffs and cultural resource purists with those commercial interests who view the road as a potential cash cow. After all, it was the grim economic realities of the 1930s that lay behind the origins and development of Route 66. The preservation and management on a sustainable basis of an earlier two-lane 20th century highway poses challenges of a higher order. Although other noteworthy historic transportation corridors have received national designation and commemoration, many 19th century transportation rights-of-way such as major trails, canals, and rail lines have been abandoned and affiliated resources deteriorated or vanished. These resources for the most part are not potentially economically viable due to purpose, present-day condition or remote location. Surviving resources along the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails as well as other 19th century western trails are extremely sparse and generally located on public lands thus protected to some extent by land managing agencies including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Trail ruts for the most part are long gone although some examples do survive and are preserved and interpreted by the NPS, BLM, and USFS, state and private entities. Canals in large measure no longer serve a useful economic purpose (although canal-era remnants are preserved and interpreted). Numerous abandoned railroad rights-of-way have been converted to multi-purpose recreational trails. In addition, portions of historic railroad lines have been converted to seasonal train ride experiences such as the East Broad Top Railroad in south central Pennsylvania, the Georgetown Loop Railroad just west of Denver, Colorado, and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad connecting Chama, New Mexico with Antonito, Colorado.

Unlike the abandoned wagon trails, the abandoned canals, and defunct rail lines, highways provide other issues. To date, diverse efforts have been made by private associations, individuals, and the commercial sector to preserve and interpret Route 66 and its cultural resources. Public entities have erected some signs along the road corridor; the U.S. Forest Service has nominated extant road segments near Williams, Arizona to the National Register of Historic Places. Communities along the road corridor have toiled to save contemporary structures and enact local preservation districts. The "Historic Route 66 Corridor Act" directed the National Park Service to support efforts of state and local, public and private individuals, nonprofit Route 66 Associations, Indian tribes, state historic preservation offices, and others. The National Park Service will cooperate with these external entities regarding preservation or restoration of structures or other cultural resources, of businesses and sites of interest along Route 66. The NPS will serve as a clearinghouse for communication among federal, state, and local agencies, as well as nonprofit entities, will participate in cost-sharing programs and will award monetary grants not to exceed $10 million over 10 years. Only time will tell how the federal bureaucracy responds to congressional direction and whether or not sufficient funding will actually be appropriated to implement the legislation. While congressional members love to have their "photo ops" with key constituents at newly designated National Park System units, which make prime campaign fodder for the next election, they may be less enthusiastic about creating a money consuming cookie monster along a 2,400-mile long highway corridor. These are exactly the tough issues that are so difficult to convey to Route 66 enthusiasts who demand that the federal sector actively preserve and manage the old highway.

The subsequent success of the national Route 66 legislation will only come to fruition if a wide ranging and diverse coalition emerges to make the dream of commemorating and sustaining this significant twentieth century transportation corridor for future generations. This coalition will be comprised of allied governmental agencies, public/private preservation entities and imaginative commercial interests. As is the case with any of these publicly sponsored preservation and economic development initiatives, funding is always problematical. Other than some initial contacts by those National Park Service employees charged with helping implement the recent law with their opposite numbers on the state and local scene, little activity has occurred on the part of the National Park Service other than a workshop in Oklahoma City in 2000. This is not due to lack of will but until Congress authorizes and appropriates sufficient funds the federal sector will remain on the sidelines. As of late autumn, 2000, the National Park Service has received a $500,000 appropriation for fiscal year 2001 to fund its mandate to partner with the various entities enumerated in the 1999 legislation and will seek full funding for fiscal year 2002. The federal bureau will employ an historical architect to oversee its partnership responsibilities with other public and private entities involved with the future of Route 66. Other entities and individuals continue their activities even though a principal actor, the National Park Service, lags behind. A good start has been made to deal with Route 66 to preserve and protect what remains of its physical history for future generations. Now it is incumbent for this eclectic coalition of the friends and allies of U.S. Highway 66 to advance the project to the next level in the twentieth first century.

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