



The Road Ahead Looks Promising!

Route 66: The Road Ahead - Collaboration Workshops Completed

Date: 8/10/15

Over 300 people took part in the Route 66: The Road Ahead - Collaboration Workshops that concluded Wednesday, July 29th. Designed as a way for the Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative Steering Committee to gather feedback on a set of recommendations for the development of a national framework for collaboration amongst Rt. 66 stakeholders, the meetings were attended by members of Route 66 associations, tourism officials, economic development professionals, business persons, preservationists, educators, government officials, and others interested in reviving and renewing Historic Route 66. The Collaboration Workshops began on July 21st in Springfield, Illinois, and included meetings in Springfield, Missouri; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Amarillo, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Flagstaff, Arizona; and San Bernardino, California.

The purpose of the Collaboration Workshops was to gather feedback regarding a proposed new national framework for collaboration amongst Route 66 stakeholders. Workshop attendees participated in a series of small group discussions, during which they considered a suggested mission statement, a set of strategic outcomes/goals, and a draft structure for a new organization that would function as a national framework for collaboration. Participants also considered the idea of seeking Federal designation of Route 66 as a National Historic Trail.

The 2.5-3 hour Collaboration Workshop meetings were lively affairs, with participants actively engaged in discussing the ideas proposed by the Steering Committee. Mr. Bill Thomas, Chairman of the Steering Committee, facilitated the meetings, which began with Mr. Aaron Mahr, Superintendent of the National Park Service (NPS) National Trails Intermountain Region, and Ms. Kaisa Barthuli, Program Manager, NPS Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, providing background information on the role of NPS in its partnership with the Steering Committee, as well as a brief overview of how and why the Steering Committee was established. Mr. John Conoboy, retired management specialist in National Trails, was on hand to present background information and help facilitate the discussion regarding the proposed National Historic Trail designation for Route 66. Those in attendance were asked for direct input regarding all the ideas proposed by the Steering Committee, with written comments, questions, and recommendations collected from them at the conclusion of each meeting.

With the completion of the Collaboration Workshops, the Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative Steering Committee will now:

- Review and synthesize participant feedback into a report
- Distribute the report to Steering Committee
- Develop next steps based on the report findings
- Report out to stakeholders on next steps
- Implement the identified next steps

The report to the Steering Committee will be completed by or before September 30, 2015. A report and next steps will then be distributed to stakeholders and the general public by or before November 20, 2015.

Copies of the proposed mission statement, set of strategic outcomes/goals, draft organizational structure, and information pertinent to the possible designation of Route 66 as a National Historic Trail can be reviewed at the Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative informational website at: <https://sites.google.com/site/66roadahead>, along with a complete listing of Steering Committee members and other background information.

The Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative is a response to recommendations from the Route 66 Economic Impact Study (2012) and the Route 66: The Road Ahead Strategic Roundtable (2013), organized by the World Monuments Fund and NPS with funding support from American Express. The initiative is focused on an inclusive, representative approach to developing a national framework for collaboration designed to leverage new opportunities and innovative partnerships in heritage tourism and historic preservation along the Mother Road.

For additional information please visit the Route 66: The Road Ahead Initiative informational website at: <https://sites.google.com/site/66roadahead>, or contact Mr. Bill Thomas, Steering Committee Chair at: rt66theroadahead@gmail.com.

