



THE ROAD AHEAD PARTNERSHIP

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rt. 66 Steps Closer to National Historic Trail Status

Gaining National Historic Trail recognition for Route 66 is a primary goal of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership (RAP), and recent national and state legislative votes are helping to achieve that goal.

The first major step forward was when legislation, introduced by Illinois Congressman Darin LaHood to designate Route 66 a National Historic Trail, passed out of the National Resources Committee by a unanimous vote on Wednesday, January 10, at which Rep. LaHood and other Members of the House spoke of the importance of preserving the road for future generations. RAP Chairman, Bill Thomas, was invited to testify at the November 2017 legislative committee hearing, along with Rep. LaHood and other Members of House, regarding the economic impact of Rt. 66.

“For nearly a century, Route 66 has been a crucial transportation artery for the heartland of America. Many towns in my district and others across our nation have seen the Mother Road keep tourism, employment, and revenues up, leading to a higher quality of life and civic pride. It is vital that we highlight and preserve this national historic roadway for future generations, and this committee vote gets us one step closer to that goal,” said Rep. LaHood.

Thomas noted, “Stakeholders who attended the 2015 Collaboration Workshop meetings held by the Road Ahead all along Rt. 66 made it known that designating the Mother Road a National Historic Trail was a top priority.” The designation will also establish an ongoing, permanent focus on Rt. 66 at the Federal level and help support promotion and preservation activities vital to the future of Route 66.

LaHood's office is now working to package the legislation with other "non-controversial bills," in the hope it can be passed by the full House of Representatives by mid-summer. The goal is for the bill to be approved by the Senate and signed by the President by the end of this year.

100 years in 2026

Route 66's Centennial year will be celebrated in 2026 — the same year as the United States Celebrates its 250th birthday. Even now, states along the Route are in the planning stages for leveraging these two milestones for building awareness, both nationally and internationally, as must visit tourist destinations.

On May 10, 2018, it was announced that both houses of the Illinois state legislature passed a bill to establish the Rt. 66 Centennial Commission. Illinois is the first of the eight Route 66 states to pass such a bill. It passed without opposition and, if signed by the governor, the Commission will be appointed to plan and sponsor Route 66 centennial events, programs, and activities, in addition to encouraging the development of programs to involve all citizens in Route 66 centennial events.

For ongoing updates and more information on you can help build awareness and support for National Historic Trail status and the establishment of a 66 centennial commission in your state, stay tuned to the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership website (route66roadahead.com).

Established in 2015, with the support of the National Park Service and the World Monuments' Fund, The Road Ahead Partnership's mission is to revitalize and sustain Route 66 as a national and international icon through partnerships focused on promotion, preservation, research and education, and economic development.

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