



March 7, 2022

Dear Illinois Congressional Delegation,

As representatives of communities along and adjacent to the Route 66 corridor or as representatives of organizations that have a keen interest in Route 66, we write in support of H.R. 3600, a bill that would designate Route 66 as a National Historic Trail. We believe designating Route 66 as a National Historic Trail will help preserve and promote the road itself as well as increase economic development opportunities for the communities that have long supported its cultural heritage, intrinsic qualities and idiosyncratic character.

In 2026, travelers from across the world will embark on a yearlong centennial celebration of Route 66, the Mother Road. Each year, tens of thousands of visitors spend millions of dollars to traverse Route 66. Domestic and international travelers are in search of the nostalgia and historic character that Route 66 provides. Driving Route 66 retraces the past by experiencing its heritage, culture and the stories it has to tell. The simple experience of driving the road, taking in the landscape, witnessing the charm and uniqueness of the communities that line the road and meeting the diverse people the road supports, is at the heart of many Route 66 experiences.

Route 66 is a remarkable road, and its historic significance cannot be disputed. It is far-reaching, stretching from Chicago to Santa Monica, and it provides not only a way to navigate history, but also a way to support the people and businesses that provide economic development for their communities. The route is an economic force for Illinois tourism and the seven other states it spans. However, promotion and preservation are still ongoing challenges, and economic development resources remain limited.

In 1999, Congress created the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, which expired in 2019. In 2005, Route 66 was designated a National Scenic Byway to promote tourism, preserve the distinct character of and address the slow deterioration of assets along the Mother Road. In 2019, Congress created a Route 66 Centennial Commission. The great State of Illinois approved a state-level Route 66 Centennial Commission in 2018. In anticipation of the Centennial celebration, only five short years away, the next step to preserve, promote and ignite tourism opportunities along the corridor is to designate Route 66 as a National Historic Trail.

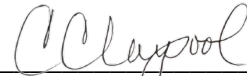
A National Historic Trail portrays an image of our nation's diverse history; Route 66 embodies everything a National Historic Trail should. Shortly after World War II, America witnessed a major change in culture. People began to move and travel outside of their communities. Personal automobiles made travel and exploration easier and more affordable, and Route 66 made the freedom of the road attainable for most, but not all. Designating Route 66 as a National Historic Trail will ensure the road remains one of the most popular driving destinations in the world and will provide a permanent program to preserve, promote and economically revitalize Route 66.

Furthermore, this designation will foster an environment to explore a more equitable and inclusive review of Route 66, specifically focusing on Green Book locations. A National Historic Trail designation will enable Route 66 communities to thrive, provide opportunities to tell numerous known and unknown compelling stories of the road and it will create a favorable environment for our communities to maximize the opportunity of the Centennial celebration.

Sincerely,



Bonnie McDonald, CEO
Landmarks Illinois



Casey Claypool, Executive Director
Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum
Christina Shutt, Executive Director

Arts Alliance Illinois
Claire Rice, Executive Director

Atlanta Public Library and Museum
Christina Vannoy, Director

Bloomington-Normal Area CVB
Crystal Howard, President & CEO

City of Atlanta
Adam McVey, Mayor

City of Collinsville
John Miller, Mayor

City of Countryside
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John Hicks, Mayor

City of Granite City
Michael Parkinson, Mayor

City of Lincoln
Peggy Bateman, City Clerk

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Steve Dougherty, Mayor

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Downtown Springfield Inc
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Kristen Fries, Superintendent

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Gaylord Building Historic Site
Dennis Cremin, Board Chairman

Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau
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J.H. Hawes Grain Elevator Historic Site
Bill Thomas, Director

Heritage Corridor CVB
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Illinois Heritage Association
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Illinois State Museum
Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Director

Illinois Main Street
Joi Austin, Director

Joliet Area Historical Museum
Greg Peerbolte, CEO

Joliet Area Chamber of Commerce
Mike Paone, Vice President

Logan County Tourism Bureau
Alice Roate, Executive Director

Plainfield-Shorewood Chamber of Commerce
Tasha Marsaglia, Executive Director

Pontiac Tourism Office
Liz Vincent, Tourism Director

Route History
Stacy Grundy, Vice President

Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership
Bill Thomas, Chairman

Springfield CVB
Scott Dahl, Director

Slovenian Heritage Museum
Georgene Agnich, Special Projects Director

Slovenian Union of America
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Michael Garvey, Village President

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Dave Kimsey, Village President

Will County Historical Museum

Sandy Vasko, Executive Director