

Route 66, SH 207 to Interstate 40 Conway, Texas

Route 66, SH 207 to Interstate 40 Conway, Texas is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Source of the following photo and the first six paragraphs of the Overview is: <https://www.nps.gov/places/route-66-texas-sh-207-to-interstate-40.htm>



NPS Photo courtesy of Rhys Martin

Overview of Route 66, SH 207 to Interstate 40 Conway, Texas

The segment of Route 66 between State Highway 207 and Interstate 40 is the longest and best preserved section of Route 66 in Texas. Turn off your cell phone, and you won't need the GPS. Put on your Ray Bans. Open a Coca Cola, the kind that comes in a sweating green glass bottle. Put some Sinatra on the player, and roll down the windows. It's time to drive the 7.2 miles of Route 66 west of Conway, Texas.

Motorists on the two-lane road will pass a windmill after a mile or so. Driving a little farther, they will see concrete agricultural buildings on the south side of the road, important reminders of the regional economy. As the road intersects County Road L (dirt) and, a little later, County Road K (also dirt) stop to look around, because with the exception of a single windmill way off in the distance, visitors can see not a single modern intrusion, only wide open range. The abandoned railroad bed beside this stretch of Route 66 serves as a reminder of how expansive the landscape is, and how quiet.

Early in the 1900s, this roadway was little more than a dirt path. In 1930, the path was paved, and by 1940, it was a bustling highway. An aerial view today looks much the same as it did then, a straight line of highway framed on both sides by square agricultural fields in various shades of brown, yellow, and green.

Between 1930 and the mid 1960s, travelers along this stretch of Route 66 experienced much of what you see today. From here to Carson County (where travelers can get back on I-40) you will experience only old Route 66, fences, dirt farm roads, grain elevators, and more windmills.

When Interstate 40 was completed through Carson County, this section of Route 66 became Texas Farm Road 2161, part of the county's highway system. Today it is the longest and best preserved section of Route 66 in Texas, carrying local traffic and travelers out to capture the distinctly American ambiance of old Route 66. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

This section of Route 66 is in the vicinity of Conway, TX and is labeled locally as Texas Farm Rd. 2161. Access from the east is from State Highway 207/County Rd. N and from the west is from Interstate 40 exit 89.

The following paragraphs are from the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.

This property is a 7.2 mile section of Route 66 between Conway and Interstate 40 in Carson County, Texas. Conway is located in the Texas Panhandle, twenty miles east of Amarillo. This section of roadbed was designated as Route 66 in 1930 and was paved later that year. It served as the roadbed for Route 66 from 1930 until ca. 1965 when Interstate 40 was completed 1.3 miles to the north. After the completion of Interstate 40, this section of Route 66 was incorporated into the Carson County highway system and is now known as Texas Farm Road 2161. From Conway to Interstate 40, the historic roadbed of Route 66 extends through open rangeland and farmland. There are few modern intrusions along the roadbed and it retains much of its mid-20th century integrity and design.

Roads in this section of Texas were little more than dirt paths in the early twentieth century. The trip from Amarillo to Tucumcari, New Mexico, a journey of approximately 110 miles, averaged a full day. But as the oil industry prospered in the 1920s, activity in the region called for improved roads, and by 1928 this same trip required only three hours. The establishment of Route 66 through the Texas panhandle was a key event in the region's road development. Route 66 extended in a rather direct east-west alignment across the panhandle passing through a series of small towns most of which had fewer than five hundred residents. These included Shamrock, McLean, Alanreed, and Groom in eastern Texas, and Vega, Adrian, Landergin, and Wildorado in the western part of the state. Centrally located Amarillo in Potter County was the only sizeable city through which the road passed.

When US Highway 66 was planned through Texas in the 1920s, various routes were recommended. There was also an extensive push across the panhandle to have the highway fully paved. In 1928, E.W. Bowen, a prominent highway booster from Tucumcari spoke to a group of Amarillo businessmen about the benefits of having a paved roadbed between their towns, citing ease of traffic and quicker travel as key advantages. Bowen encouraged Amarillians to attend a meeting between the governors of Texas and New Mexico and officials from both state highway departments regarding interstate highway improvements, which was scheduled to take place the following month. Bowen also boasted of a new paving process that had been used in his state. The new pavement material was of "sand and oil mixed on the road by machinery," and

provided a layer about four inches thick that could be sloped for drainage. The process "made it possible to surface a road after it had been graded and culverts and bridges installed." Other benefits of the pavement were its dust proof quality and low cost, which averaged around \$1,000 per mile. It does not appear that this type of paving was utilized on the section of roadbed west of Conway.

Although Route 66 was designated in 1926, its route through Texas remained in dispute for several years in Carson and Potter Counties east of Amarillo. Carson County officials including a local judge traveled to Austin in support of the road and helped to secure its location. The route through Carson County was finalized by August 24, 1930, when an article in the Amarillo Daily New-; declared the "U.S. 66 Highway Tangle Solved." The paper stated that state and federal officials had approved relocation of the highway between the town of Conway to the Potter County line along a route north of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. Local residents were jubilant over the announcement as the dispute over its location had delayed the paving of a ten-mile section of roadbed for over a year. Following this announcement, Carson County officials announced "We will start work at once on plans for the unpaved strip of the road" . . . "and we believe it possible to let a contract for grading and drainage structures when the state highway commission meets in September."^ The road west of Conway was paved with concrete in 1930 and this hard surfaced road was opened to Amarillo.

From 1930 to the mid-1960s, this two-lane roadbed served as the alignment for Route 66 west of Conway. This roadbed extended through open range land and farm land and paralleled the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad for several miles. A 1956 highway map of Carson County shows the roadbed as Route 66 and with few houses or other buildings along this alignment.' When Interstate 40 was completed through Carson County, federal management of Route 66 ended and it was incorporated into the county's highway system as Texas Farm Road 2161. The highway continues to be used for local traffic south of the interstate as well as providing a sense of time and place for Route 66 travelers.

Throughout Texas, Route 66 is primarily an access frontage road for 1-40 for much of its length. The 7.2 mile section CI Route i)6 -between Conway and 1-40 continues to be used as a state highway and possesses the highest degree of integrity of any rural section of Route 66 in Texas. The nominated property retains integrity of location, setting, feeling and association not only because of the preservation of the original roadbed, but also because of the largely unaltered farmland and rangeland through which it extends.

1. **Historic Significance:** (from National Register of Historic Places Registration Form) This segment of original Route 66 roadbed west of Conway in Carson County, Texas is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C at the state level of significance, in the areas of Engineering and Transportation. Route 66 was one of the nation's leading highways during the early to mid-twentieth century, and served as the primary corridor between Chicago and California. The road reflects the history of transportation from this era and both the forces which brought it into being and those that diminished its use. Under Criterion C, this segment of Route 66 is significant as a representative example of roadbed construction and engineering of the 1930s. The road retains much of its original form, design, materials and the surrounding setting has changed little since the road's construction. The roadbed segment conveys a strong sense of its historic time and place and is one of the longest and best preserved sections of Route 66 in Texas.
2. **Contributions:** Supported Route 66's role in contributing to regional and national growth.
3. **Uniqueness:** See Uniqueness narrative for Route 66 as a whole in the Nomination Discussion section.

4. **Date of original construction:** Paved in 1930.
5. **Names of key engineers:** Designer unknown.
6. **Photographs:** Included above.
7. **Additional documentation:** National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Available at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/40968509>
8. **References:**
Amarillo Daily News, 13 July 1928 and 24 August 1930.
Carson County Highway Map, Texas State Highway Department, 1956.
Cassity, Michael. "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study." Rute 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails System Office, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2004.
Randel, Mrs. Ralph E. ed. A Time to Purpose, A Chronicle of Carson County. Panhandle, Texas: Carson County Historical Survey Committee, 1966.

Location: East terminus in Conway, Texas: 35 12 27.3 N 101 22 56.8 W
West terminus: 35 13 15.8 N 101 30 4.4 W

Local and vicinity maps:

