

NOMINATION DISCUSSION

Unlike nearly all other designated ASCE Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks, Route 66 was not constructed as a single project with an identifiable construction start date and construction end date. Creation of Route 66 was the collection of many individual efforts at the state, county and local level that created what eventually became a continuous numbered highway from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California.

- 1. Historic Significance:** Route 66 is representative of the early development (circa 1920's) of cross-country highway routes in the United States. While many individual segments of Route 66 may not have historic civil engineering significance, may not have contributed particularly to civil engineering or regional development, and are not otherwise unique, there were many notable civil engineering features constructed and achievements accomplished at many locations along the Route 66 alignment during its development. As the first continuous numbered cross-country route connecting the Midwest (Chicago) with the Pacific Coast (Los Angeles and Santa Monica) Route 66 is historically significant for its effect on regional and national economic, social, and political development. Collectively, many worthy elements combine to make Route 66 credible for designation as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.
- 2. Contributions:** The two following paragraphs are from Oxford Research Encyclopedia, "The History of Route 66", Stephen Mandrgoc¹ and David Dunaway²

During its existence from 1926 to its formal decommissioning in 1985, US Highway 66, or Route 66, came to occupy a special place in the American imagination. For a half-century and more, it symbolized American individualism, travel, and the freedom of the open road with the transformative rise of America's automobile culture. Route 66 was an essential connection between the Midwest and the West for American commercial, military, and civilian transportation. It chained together small towns and cities across the nation as America's "Main Street." Following the path of older trails and railroads, Route 66 hosted travelers in many different eras: the adventurous motorist in his Ford Model A in the 1920s, the Arkies and Okies desperate for a new start in California in the 1930s, trucks carrying wartime soldiers and supplies in the 1940s, and postwar tourists and travelers from the 1950s onward. By its nature, it brought together diverse cultures of different regions, introducing Americans to the "others" that were their regional neighbors, and exposing travelers to new arts, music, foods, and traditions. It became firmly embedded in pop culture through songs, books, television, and advertisements for its attractions as America's most famous road.

Travel on Highway 66 steadily declined with the development of controlled-access interstate highways in the 1960s and 1970s. The towns and cities it connected and the many businesses and attractions dependent on its traffic and tourism protested the

¹ Stephen Mandrgoc: University of New Mexico - Albuquerque, Center for Southwest Research

² David Dunaway: University of New Mexico - Albuquerque, Department of English

removal of the highway designation by the US Transportation Department in 1985, but their efforts failed. Nonetheless, revivalists who treasured the old road worked to preserve the road sections and attractions that remained, as well as founding a wide variety of organizations and donating to museums and libraries to preserve Route 66 ephemera. In the early 21st century, Route 66 is an international icon of America, traveled by fans from all over the world.

- 3. Uniqueness:** Route 66 is different from each of the 12 existing National Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks that are roads. Those roadways, their locations, dates of completion, and short descriptions are listed chronologically below. In terms of date of construction, period of use, purpose, and function, Route 66 is clearly distinctly different from the existing Historic Civil Engineering Landmarks as noted in parentheses.

El Camino Real (1) – New Mexico and Mexico, 1500's. The oldest and longest historical trail in the Western Hemisphere, extending from Mexico City to Santa Fe. (Much earlier period of use)

El Camino Real (2) – Louisiana, Texas and Mexico, 1500's. Running from Mexico to Louisiana, the El Camino Real-Eastern Branch was a major Spanish pioneer transportation artery that provided support, defense and political stability for early colonists. (Much earlier period of use)

King's Road -- Florida and Georgia, 1775. The principal overland transportation link between the former British Colony of St. Augustine and the 13 Colonies, the King's Road was originally 126 miles long. (Much earlier period of use)

National Road -- Cumberland, MD to Vandalia, IL, 1811-1839. The first U.S. roadway to be financed with federal money. (Much earlier period of use)

Mullan Road -- Montana to Washington, 1860. The first major engineered highway in the Pacific Northwest, the Mullan Road was designed to facilitate the movement of troops and supplies across the Rocky Mountains between the Missouri River basin in the Great Plains and the Columbia River Basin. (Much earlier period of use)

Old Columbia River Scenic Highway -- Oregon, 1913 – 1922. The roadway design blended 74 miles of roadways, tunnels, viaducts, and overlooks into the natural environment harmoniously. (designed as a scenic highway)

Going-to-the-Sun Road -- Glacier National Park, Montana, 1932. The first major trans-mountain scenic highway in the United States. (designed as a scenic highway)

Blue Ridge Parkway – Virginia and North Carolina, 1936 – 1987. A 469-mile long parkway designed to emphasize the natural environment. (designed as a scenic highway)

Pennsylvania Turnpike -- Pennsylvania, 1940. The first limited access long-distance highway in the United States. (designed as a limited-access facility)

Arroyo Seco Parkway – Los Angeles, 1940. The first urban freeway to be built in the United States west of the Mississippi River. (designed as a limited-access facility to serve an urban area)

Alaska Highway – British Columbia, Yukon, Alaska, 1942. Constructed as a military supply route in a very remote area during World War II. (purpose was a military supply route)

Maine Turnpike -- Maine, 1947. The first major modern limited access highway to be built without any state or federal funding. (designed as a limited-access facility)

Although there were many other “highways” contemporaneous with Route 66 in their development and use, none has captured the American imagination or enjoyed the degree of name recognition.

Two other “highways” that were created in the early 1900’s were the Lincoln Highway and the Dixie Highway.

The Lincoln Highway

The following paragraph is from Wikipedia:

The Lincoln Highway is the first transcontinental highway in the United States and one of the first highways designed expressly for automobiles. Conceived in 1912 by Indiana entrepreneur Carl G. Fisher, and formally dedicated October 31, 1913, the Lincoln Highway runs coast-to-coast from Times Square in New York City west to Lincoln Park in San Francisco, originally through 13 states: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. In 1915, the "Colorado Loop" was removed, and in 1928, a realignment relocated the Lincoln Highway through the northern tip of West Virginia. Thus, there are 14 states, 128 counties, and more than 700 cities, towns and villages through which the highway passed at some time in its history.

Dixie Highway

The two following paragraphs are from Wikipedia:

Dixie Highway was a United States auto trail first planned in 1914 to connect the Midwest with the South. It was part of a system and was expanded from an earlier Miami to Montreal highway. The final system is better understood as a network of connected paved roads, rather than one single highway. It was constructed and expanded from 1915 to 1929.

The Dixie Highway was inspired by the example of the slightly earlier Lincoln Highway, the first road across the United States. The prime booster of both projects was promoter and businessman Carl G. Fisher. It was overseen by the Dixie Highway Association and funded by a group of individuals, businesses, local governments, and states. In the early years, the U.S. federal government played little role, but from the early 1920s on it provided increasing funding until 1927. That year the Dixie Highway Association was disbanded and the highway was taken over by the federal government as part of the U.S. Route system, with some portions becoming state roads.

Compared with Route 66, the Lincoln Highway was dedicated 14 years before a route numbering system was adopted for U.S. numbered routes. Like Route 66, the Lincoln Highway was the collection of many individual efforts at the state, county and local level. Compared to both the earlier Lincoln and Dixie Highways, Route 66 benefitted from a greater federal role in funding of highway construction.

4. **Date of original construction, and other significant dates:** The Route 66 route number was assigned in 1926 for a route linking Chicago, Illinois with Santa Monica, California. The Route 66 route number was officially discontinued in 1985. Dates of construction are given in each of the descriptions of the 15 civil engineering features.
5. **Names of key engineers:** Names of key engineers are given in each of the descriptions of the 15 civil engineering features
6. **Photographs:** Photographs are included in each of the descriptions of the 15 civil engineering features.
7. **Additional documentation:** Additional documentation is included in each of the descriptions of the 15 civil engineering features.

8. **References:** The following references relate to Route 66 as a whole. Additional references are included in each of the descriptions of the 15 civil engineering features.

[The History of Route 66](#) - Stephen Mandrgoc and David Dunaway

[Building The Highways](#) - Linda Hall Library

[Route 66: Departments of Transportation](#) - National Park Service

[Route 66: Associations and Organizations](#) - National Park Service

[H.R. 801 Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act](#) - U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs

[Travel Route 66](#) - National Park Service

[Route 66 1926 - 1945](#) - National Park Service

[Route "66" The Mother Road](#) - Federal Highway Administration

[Creation of a Landmark: The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916](#) - Federal Highway Administration

[Highway History Bibliography: U.S. Route 66](#) - Federal Highway Administration

[U.S. Route 66](#) - Wikipedia

[National Old Trails Maps](#) - Automobile Club of Southern California

[Bridges of Route 66](#) - Jim Ross

PhD Theses and Other Publications

Huddleston, John David, Good Roads for Texas: A History of the Texas Highway Department, 1917-1947, Texas A&M University, August 1981

Corbett, William Paul, Oklahoma's Highways: Indian Trails to Urban Expressways, Oklahoma State University, 1982

Mason, Phillip, The League of American Wheelmen and the Good Roads Movement 1890-1905, M.A. Thesis, The American University, 1957