



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**

Save the past. Enrich the future.

May 27, 2021

The Honorable Darin LaHood
U.S. House of Representatives
1424 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
U.S. House of Representatives
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: The Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act

Dear Congressman LaHood and Congresswoman Napolitano,

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support for the Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act. The National Trust enthusiastically endorses this bill and look forward to working with you to ensure its enactment.

Interests of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded charitable, educational, and nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949 to “facilitate public participation in historic preservation” and to further the purposes of federal historic preservation laws. The intent of Congress was for the National Trust “to mobilize and coordinate public interest, participation, and resources in the preservation and interpretation of sites and buildings.” With headquarters in Washington, D.C., 28 historic sites, more than one million members and supporters, and a national network of partners in states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust works to save America’s historic places and advocates for historic preservation as a fundamental value in programs and policies at all levels of government.

Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act

We appreciate your leadership on this legislation to designate Route 66 as a National Historic Trail. In the 115th Congress, this legislation had strong bicameral and bipartisan support, was endorsed by the National Park Service, and passed the House unanimously.

Historic Route 66 stretches approximately 2,400 miles from Chicago, IL to Santa Monica, CA, passing through eight states and more than 300 communities. This vital transportation corridor between the Midwest and southern California has endured as a symbol of freedom and mobility while epitomizing a new optimism that pervaded the nation’s economic recovery following World War II.

It is along this route that the National Trust embarked on a Route 66 road trip in the summer of 2018, making 232 stops on the journey from Illinois to California and collecting petition signatures in support of a National Historic Trail designation for Route 66. To date, the petition collected more than 64,000 signers from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, while over 80 organizations, businesses, and local governments from the 8 states bisected by Route 66 have pledged support for the designation.

Route 66 was found by the National Park Service (NPS) to be nationally significant in its 1995 *Route 66 Special Resource Study*, which determined that Route 66 met the eligibility requirements for a National Historic Trail. Numerous buildings along Route 66 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and a 2012 Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) establishing the road’s national significance was recently approved by the Keeper of the National Register. Route 66 has been designated a

National Scenic Byway in four states, including one segment that has been designated an All-American Road—the highest designation offered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Route 66 is internationally recognized as representing America's love of the automobile and open road. As a Dustbowl migration route, a World War II strategic military route, and a vacation travel route, it has been celebrated in music, literature, television, movies, and popular lore. The National Trust has been supportive of Route 66 preservation efforts for many years, including it in our signature National Treasures program, participating in symposiums, providing strategic assistance, and including Route 66 on the 2018 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

When Congress passed the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program in 1999, a program administered by the National Park Service, Route 66 was described as a symbol of the American people's heritage of travel and their legacy of seeking a better life. Unfortunately, this program has phased out, making the passage of this legislation and historic trail designation vital to highlighting the significance of Route 66, the idiosyncratic culture of independent businesses, kitschy roadside architecture, and unique attractions associated with the route.

We applaud you for your deep commitment to recognizing the national significance of Route 66, and we look forward to working on securing passage of the legislation during the 117th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Bowman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pam Bowman
Senior Director of Public Lands Policy
National Trust for Historic Preservation