

5. Enhancing the Visitor Experience

The purpose of the Corridor Management Plan’s Visitor Experience element is to accomplish the following: define visitor expectations; examine potential audiences; develop primary themes for interpretation; and enhance visitor infrastructure. Potential enhancements are based upon desired visitor experiences and the available interpretive and resource opportunities. The chapter includes potential ideas for the kinds of interpretive tools and communication techniques that can be utilized to achieve the desired visitor experiences.

Strategies in this chapter are based upon issues and considerations identified through public outreach efforts conducted during initial phases (November 2013 through March 2014) of the project as described in Chapter 2, page 23. Initial strategies on enhancing visitor experience were reviewed at the May 22, 2014, web meeting. Additional input was received from stakeholders and land managers throughout the corridor.

Suggestions from public outreach included the following ideas among others:

- Adapt GPS systems to identify and recognize Route 66
- Use mobile application and web-based media to guide travelers, tell the story of Route 66 and identify landmarks on mobile devices
- Provide training to hospitality and service industry workers to share information with visitors
- Activate landmarks/unoccupied historic resources with lighting, signage and displays to help visitors understand the historic features
- Develop educational visitor information in multiple languages
- Generate programs that recognize and highlight local landmarks such as gas stations and old town sites
- Involve local historians in developing educational materials and awareness programs for Historic Route 66 through the Mojave Desert; link to BLM programs such as the BLM’s Discover the Desert initiative at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd/DiscovertheDesert.html> to connect people with BLM-managed public lands in the California Desert
- Provide preservation related resources and training to facilitate the preservation of Historic Route 66 resources
- Interpretive Themes should include “From Trail to Starship: Exploration and Transportation along the Route 66 Corridor” using

Visitor Experience Goal:

Enhance visitor infrastructure to support the promotion of sustainable tourism and community economic growth



Figure 118 Many of the significant “Route 66 Attractions” are marked by signs installed through a program originally funded by Hampton Inn.

the NASA Goldstone site tours as the best location to interpret the role of the Mojave Desert in space exploration

- Install a large “Route 66” sign on ‘B’ Hill in Barstow, similar in scale to the “Hollywood” sign

VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATIONS

Public outreach efforts identified expectations that visitors to the Mojave Desert portion of Route 66 should have met during their travel experience. A key concept is that this desert corridor is different than any other part of Route 66 (or any other early highway). Visitors should also understand how Route 66:

- Is an example of early and innovative engineering adaptation to desert topography and drainage
- Communities grew and adapted to harsh conditions
- Played a significant role in shaping roadside architecture
- Played a role in military training and preparedness, especially during World War II
- Shaped the communities that were dependent upon the travelers for their livelihood and how those same communities significantly impacted immediately after I-40 was built
- Served as both a backdrop and as a subject for film and the arts



Figure 119 An abundance of historic photographs from the heyday of Route 66 are readily available

POTENTIAL AUDIENCES

Understanding the audience likely to be traveling along the route helps to define the kinds of enhancements that are needed to achieve the visitor experience goal. Targeted and potential audiences are discussed more extensively in Chapter 7 Marketing. In summary, potential audiences include the following:

- Route 66 enthusiasts (national and international)
- Cultural heritage travelers
- California travelers (in-state, families, travelers visiting California as a destination, recreational travelers)
- Travelers associated with specific ethnic groups (African-American, Hispanic, Asian)
- Multi-generational travelers and travel groups
- Niche markets (seniors, railway enthusiasts, bicyclists, rock hounds, photographers, motorcyclists, military history buffs, amateur astronomers and space enthusiasts, fans of Charles Schultz and the ‘Peanuts Cartoon’ character of Spike)
- Route 66 Geocache Trail enthusiasts

BROAD THEMES AND CONTEXTS SPECIFIC TO THE MOJAVE DESERT REGION

Interpretation and storytelling is one of the best ways to engage residents and visitors, strengthen local identity and enhance quality of life in communities along Historic Route 66. Interpretation helps

residents relate to the place in which they live. Interpretation can help both residents and visitors to better understand how Route 66 shaped their community and its desert landscapes. Interpretation can build support for the needed preservation initiatives. Interpretation, when done well and in a coordinated way, provides more things to see and do, enticing visitors to stay longer, to buy a meal, to stay overnight and to come again during a different season. Historic Route 66 should present itself as a unified interpretive attraction and experience in which the corridor's many local and regional interpretive partners and sites participate, each telling its own story within the context of the whole. A unified interpretive experience is achieved by first identifying broad interpretive themes.

Interpretive themes are the most important ideas or overarching concepts that link the stories together into a regionally-scaled exhibit hall, an outdoor museum connected together by the ribbon of pavement that is Route 66. There are at least five overarching themes significant to Route 66 and its Mojave Desert context:

- **Early patterns of exploration, settlement, and adaptation to harsh desert conditions**
- **Influence of the railroad on community development and the alignment of Route 66 through the Mojave Desert**
- **Route 66 and the evolution of wagon roads into modern highways**
- **Route 66 and military desert training**
- **Vastness and the ephemeral nature of the desert as seen in its geology, ecology and its night sky**

ENHANCE VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Historic, cultural and natural resources found along Historic Route 66 provide opportunities that can be used as a foundation for achieving the overall goals for sustainable heritage tourism. However, some investments are required to make this heritage available for those that may not be as familiar with the history as the Route 66 enthusiast. Investing in visitor infrastructure along Historic Route 66 in the Mojave Desert will also help to introduce new visitors to its rich history, nature and culture. Existing visitor infrastructure is a limiting factor in expanding the potential travel markets for Historic Route 66 through the Mojave Desert. Even



Figure 120 Needles Union 76 Station with antique cars and pumps (photo courtesy of Doran Sanchez, BLM).



Figure 121 The restoration of El Garces in Needles presents an important opportunity to establish a gateway site for visitor information and interpretation



Figure 122 The Barstow Visitor Center is already located at the Harvey House



Figure 123 Mojave River Valley Museum, Barstow



Figure 124 Desert Discovery Center, Barstow



Figure 125 Needles Museum interior

Figure 126 Barstow murals



Route 66 enthusiasts sometimes turn north toward Las Vegas after leaving Arizona due to a lack of visitor infrastructure. A frequent anecdotal refrain from travelers is “there is nothing there” when speaking of Historic Route 66 across the Mojave Desert from Needles to Barstow.

1. ESTABLISH GATEWAY COMMUNITIES TO ORIENT VISITORS

More signage, wayfinding and interpretive resources are needed to identify Route 66 and its significant resources and points of interest. Efforts to increase awareness of Historic Route 66 in the Mojave Desert should start in two of its three gateway communities—Needles and Barstow. Victorville is a third gateway community for the Mojave Desert Region of Historic Route 66 but is outside the study area for this CMP and will be the focus of the central region CMP.

Figure 127 BLM-developed gateway and kiosk at Five Mile Road exit from I-40 provides a model design for additional gateways and kiosks





The following actions are needed to establish Needles and Barstow as the Gateway Communities:

- 1.1 Use Harvey Houses in Needles and Barstow as the primary Mojave Desert visitor information centers for Route 66
- 1.2 Introduce primary themes at existing museums and visitor centers
 - Route 66 “Mother Road” Museum, Barstow
 - Mojave River Valley Museum, Barstow
 - Desert Discovery Center, Barstow
 - Western America Railroad Museum, Barstow
 - Needles Regional Museum
- 1.3 Support existing efforts to establish walking tours and driving itineraries in Needles, highlighting local Route 66 history (camps, motels/neon, gas stations, etc.) and its interpretation through Needles’ murals
- 1.4 Support existing efforts to establish walking tours and driving itineraries highlighting Barstow murals, motels/neon and interpreting Old Spanish Trail/Route 66 where they share the roadbed on Barstow’s Main Street
- 1.5 Establish interchange visitor orientation kiosks at Five Mile Road exit (completed) and at a location to be determined at the Barstow end of the corridor to introduce I-40 travelers to Route 66 sites and across the Mojave Desert

Figure 128 Amboy School presents an opportunity to establish an educational support facility for educational programs, training, exhibits and artists or scientists in residence programs



Figure 129 Establish a similar program to the Amboy School as Essex School, but at a smaller scale

2. DEVELOP REGIONAL INTERPRETIVE SITES TO SUPPORT AND EDUCATE VISITORS

New investments in facilities within the heart of the Mojave Region of Route 66 are needed. These additional resources can be used to support educational programs, hospitality training, visitor support

Figure 130 This parking area at the Ludlow I-40 exit presents an opportunity to install a gateway kiosk similar to the one developed by BLM at the Five Mile Road exit east of Needles





Figure 131 Existing parking area at Klinefelter along the US 95 alignment of Historic Route 66 presents an opportunity to interpret the role the railroad played in shaping the Route 66 location



Figure 132 The "oasis" at Fenner



Figure 133 Essex Post Office



Figure 134 Existing wayside exhibit at Danby presents a model design prototype for additional wayside exhibits

services and coordinated interpretive exhibits and artists-in-residence programs. Visitor support and education is needed to draw Route 66 visitors into the Mojave Desert, increase their comfort level and knowledge about how to safely and productively visit the desert.

The following actions are needed to establish regional interpretive sites with visitor support and interpretation:

- 2.1 Support efforts to establish regional multi-service destinations as focal points for interpretation at locations with existing services at the following four locations
 - Goffs
 - Essex School
 - Amboy School
 - Ludlow Main Street (outdoor interpretation supported by cafes)
- 2.2 Seek funding for feasibility studies and necessary preservation planning for adaptive re-use of the Essex and Amboy Schools
- 2.3 Pursue funding for development of master plans in support of regional interpretive sites at Goffs and Ludlow (site location, site development and visitor infrastructure planning)

3. IDENTIFY PRIORITY SITE SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERPRETATION AND COORDINATION

Throughout the planning process, Route 66 enthusiasts suggested places in addition to the regional service centers noted above (Ludlow, Amboy, Essex and Goffs) for interpretation and storytelling. The following actions are based on potential stories and site opportunities to share them.

- 3.1 Develop smaller-scale site specific interpretive



Figure 135 "Then" and "Now" exhibits can be developed for many viewpoints using readily available historic photographs and postcards; Chambliss Store, above, in its heyday and right prior to its 2014 rehabilitation



destinations focused primarily on the Route 66 related themes at the following locations:

- Needles sites - Carty’s Camp plus motels, gas stations, Charles Schultz sites and General Patton on the golf course
- Klinefelter - former railroad community ghost town
- Fenner (I-40 exit) - Roadside commercial area
- Essex - post office, school and town well; and the nearby Essex and Clipper Divisional Camps, located within the Desert Training Center and established by Patton in 1942
- Danby pull-off - enhance existing pulloff with shade structure and Patton encampments story
- Chambless
- Roadrunner Cafe
- Landmark that commemorates the original story of Bagdad
- Siberia
- Historic Bridge at Ludlow (on former alignment no longer in use)
- Hector Road pull-off
- Newberry Springs (Whiting Brothers and Cliff House)
- Agricultural Inspection Station
- Daggett (Garage, Hotel, Store and Alf’s Blacksmith Shop)
- El Rancho, Barstow



Figure 137 Roadrunner Cafe



Figure 138 Original Bagdad street view from 1939 postcard



Figure 139 Original Bagdad site today



Figure 136 “Then” and “Now” showing the Cliff House Pool in Newberry Springs in its heyday and in 2014



Figure 140 Daggett Inspection Station



Figure 141 Former cafe near Daggett

4. ESTABLISH CONSISTENT VISUAL AND GRAPHIC IDENTITY

It must be easier for travelers to associate authentic sites with their Route 66 travel experience. One way to accomplish this is through distinctive graphic design elements that are consistently applied throughout the corridor.

The following actions are needed to establish a distinct visual and graphic identity for Historic Route 66 through the Mojave Desert:

- 4.1 Prepare a visual and graphic identity guide that provides sites and attractions with simple and easy to use templates for use in all printed, web-based, mobile, signing media. The graphic identity guide should start with an analysis of existing environmental signing and communication elements
- 4.2 Incorporate identity into community wayfinding to direct Route 66 visitors to full service visitor information sites
- 4.3 Use visual and graphic identity to provide reassurance to travelers of the authenticity of sites, attractions and visitor services
- 4.4 Apply visual and graphic identity to all web-based and mobile technologies, printed media, events and programming to reassure travelers of the authenticity of visitor information, trip planning, itinerary building, and programmed activities

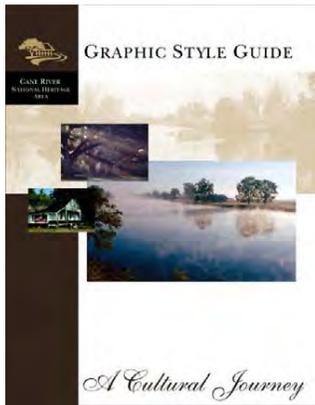
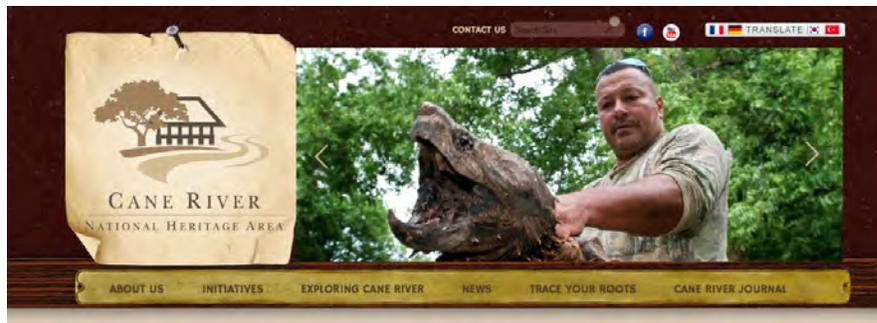


Figure 142 Visual and graphic identity system established for the Cane River National Heritage Area in Louisiana using the graphic style guide (top) and applied to wayfinding signs (above and far right); visitor center exhibits (center) and web page (below). Color, type, and graphic design help to provide a consistent look and feel for print and web media (courtesy of Dawson Associates and Cane River National Heritage Area)



5. DEVELOP INNOVATIVE WAYS TO TELL THE ROUTE 66 STORY

Route 66 enthusiasts who participated in the planning process identified several innovative ideas to tell the Route 66 stories. Use of “then” and “now” photographs, and connecting to the Mojave Desert and Cultural Heritage Association (MDCHA) on-line web site would provide the quickest and most interesting approach.

Critical to the success of the visitor experience is the integration of storytelling with authentic places. Avoid the use of traditional interpretation that relies upon “words on a stick.” The following actions suggest some alternative ways to reach the traveler through innovative storytelling.

- 5.1 In cooperation with the MDCHA, link the on-line exhibit using images from the Frasher Foto Postcard Collection of the Pomona Public Library to on-site QR codes at the locations in the field
- 5.2 Pursue funding opportunities to bring the MDCHA exhibit into Historic Route 66’s landscape
- 5.3 Identify potential exhibit sites for QR codes based upon availability of post card image, cell and/or wi-fi service, tied to a safe place to pull off and use
- 5.4 Develop a theme for each town that emphasizes different resources and coordinates the story from place to place
- 5.5 Partner with universities, National Park Service and others to share expertise and resources
- 5.6 Use film history of Route 66 for stories and to encourage broader programming in the arts and culture (e.g. Grapes of Wrath, Bagdad Cafe)



Figure 143 Frame and transparent image used to exhibit “then and now” photographs as seen by a camera

Figure 144 Screen shot of “Desert Waysides: Burton Frasher’s California Route 66” web-based exhibit by Chris Ervin for the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association (<http://www.historypin.com/attach/uid45548/tours/take/id/1977/title/Desert%20Waysides%20Burton%20Frasher%27s%20California%20Route%2066/#11>)

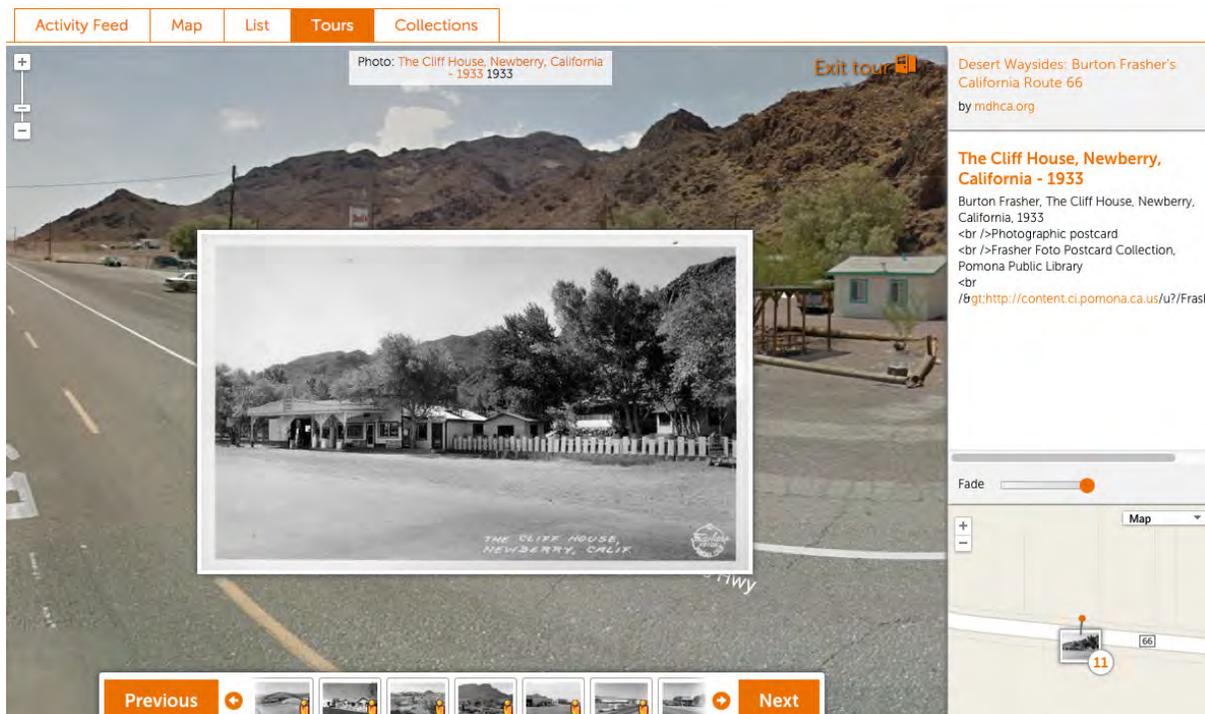


Figure 145 Historic photographs can be placed in the landscape to help visitors better visualize the military training activities that took place throughout the corridor; - bringing back “lost and found” sound can also contribute to the experiential interpretation of the “then and now” photography; photo on left from Camp Essex correlated to existing view;



- 5.7 Bring back Route 66 imagery from advertising to help tell the story of Route 66 (Burma Shave and others)
- 5.8 Develop interpretive itineraries using AMTRAK travel
- 5.9 Prepare printed map and exhibit guide excursions

6. USE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP TELL THE STORIES

Technology—both high tech and low tech—is needed to tell the stories in ways that will reach the intended audiences. The following ideas should be pursued as part of an overall interpretive master plan for the corridor:

- 6.1 Use interactive recordings so that a visitor can get a better sense of the sounds of the desert
- 6.2 Expand use of historical images in empty storefronts (e.g. Palm Springs example)
- 6.3 Use technology (Mobile Application or GPS-enabled software, downloaded audio files from web, CD) to tell the story as a visitor is traveling (e.g. Highway 395 through Owens Valley)
- 6.4 Take better advantage of interpretive opportunities at roadside rest areas
- 6.5 Use Pinterest or Instagram to communicate stories as a means of capturing younger generation



Figure 146 Cadiz Summit “then and now” imagery can be viewed from a hill across Route 66

7. INCREASE LEVEL OF CARE FOR RESOURCES

Historic Route 66—when managed as an outdoor museum that interprets local history as part of a larger story—will yield secondary benefits, such as subtle encouragement of private land owners along the route to clean up their land. Adding additional eyes on the landscape may also improve landowner protections against vandalism. Leverage for state and federally sponsored preservation and clean up programs and grants can be gained by linking them to Historic Route 66’s efforts to establish an “outdoor museum.”

The following actions will help increase the level of stewardship for Historic Route 66 resources throughout the Mojave Desert:

- 7.1 Target future enhancements to support coordinated interpretive development
- 7.2 Give priority to interpreted sites for preservation and enhancement funding, technical assistance and marketing assistance
- 7.3 Work with property owners to clean up sites (taking care to respect historic and environmental resources)
- 7.4 Work with local government to develop recognition programs for interpreted sites (expand upon existing site marker programs)
- 7.5 Work with BLM and state agencies to link recreational opportunities with Route 66 interpretation (e.g. introduce interpreted themes at recreational sites and provide information about Route 66)
- 7.6 Develop technical assistance program for property owners having Route 66 resources (with help and coordination with other states and NPS)



Figure 147 Three-dimensional interpretive exhibit on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail [Photos by K. Dahl, copyright 2007, permission requested]



Figure 148 Gallatin City Hotel ruins preserved in place

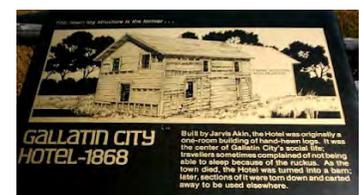


Figure 149 Gallatin City Hotel interpretive panel

- 7.7 Work with property owners to preserve and enhance roadside character by best practices in community design and historic preservation to preserve, maintain and enhance the character defining features of existing communities (including both incorporated cities of Barstow and Needles, and the unincorporated communities of Goffs, Fenner, Essex, Danby, Chambless, Amboy, Ludlow, Newberry Springs and Daggett)
- 7.8 Develop design guidelines for use by the rural communities noted to provide guidance, at a minimum, on the following issues and principles:
- **Building and yard placement** - Buildings should be sited in the front of the lot facing Route 66 with parking and ancillary uses to the side or rear.
 - **Architectural Design** - Adapt, re-use, expand, or replace commercial structures in a manner that is sensitive to their historic character; small-scale commercial structures should reinforce the patterns established in Route 66's Heyday period in proportion, fenestration, material and color choices
 - **Roadway access** - Driveway access should be the minimum necessary to achieve safe access and egress and no more. Due to the low volume of traffic on Historic Route 66, acceleration and deceleration lanes, if needed at all, should be the minimum length necessary for safety
 - **Fencing and screening** - should utilize materials that have minimal visual contrast and be attractive in and of themselves as part of the streetscape areas
 - **Lighting** - should be full, cutoff fixtures to reduce light trespass and glare; light standards should minimize visual contrast with the community context
 - **Signing** - Use Route 66 Heyday era signing styles for capturing the character defining features of small-scale commercial buildings in rural areas (see Figures 1, 18, and 19 for examples)
 - **Construction** - minimize the footprint of construction vehicles and equipment storage by using areas that are already paved, or areas where the ground has already been extensively disturbed

8. LINK RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES TO ROUTE 66 TO EXPAND AUDIENCES

The Route 66 experience is about the feeling of the place that can only be captured by getting visitors out of their cars and into the landscape. Historic Route 66 introduces new visitors to its desert landscape (and vice versa) in many ways:

- Through recreation opportunities on adjoining public lands
- Through adventure bicycling opportunities as a designated National Bicycle Route
- As astronomers and amateur star gazers with abundance of high quality night sky that can be supported with quality camping and recreational experiences
- Through an abundance of designated off-road vehicle opportunities
- As visitors who seek out recreational opportunities of the Colorado River near Needles
- As visitors to the NPS's Mojave National Preserve, the Kelso Depot Visitor Center, and other attractions within the Preserve
- As visitors with an interest in "Spike," the Charles Schultz character who lived in Needles (as did Charles Schultz for a period of time)

The following actions are recommended to take better advantage of Historic Route 66 and its role in film, the arts, and outdoor experiences :

- 8.1 Reach out to the arts community of Southern California to increase awareness of the ephemeral qualities and opportunities associated with Historic Route 66 through the Mojave Desert
 1. Evaluate the feasibility of adapting the schools at Essex and Amboy for housing artists in residence, hostels for educational tours, and/or performance and gallery spaces
 2. Evaluate the feasibility of adapting abandoned buildings that are still intact for exhibit and gallery spaces
 3. Develop programs to coordinate and bring new works of performing, visual and design artists who are inspired by the Mojave Desert. Help them tell the stories of the Route 66 communities, first by utilizing the web and secondly, to adaptively reuse gallery spaces (see <http://mojaveproject.org>)



Figure 150 Historic Route 66 already serves as a significant geocaching destination (see Chapter 7 marketing)

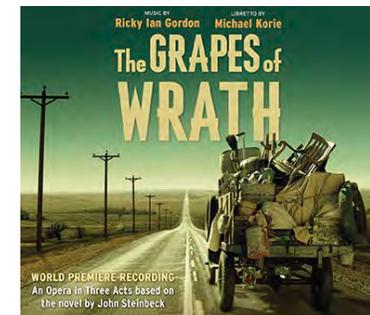


Figure 151 Historic Route 66 continues to serve film industry and the arts; especially those seeking landscapes that retain the qualities of the desert context



Figure 152 Well designed exhibit panels can be utilized, such as these for an exhibit at the Presidio, to extend the life of existing exhibits into rehabilitated Route 66 structures

Figure 153 Ulrich Wulff, Danish artist studio in Chambliss - Working in an abandoned gas station, Wulff completed a number of watercolor studies inspired by the desert (<http://www.tifsigfrids.com/items/ulrich-wulff-november-16-2013/>)



9. AMERICAN INDIANS AND ROUTE 66

A project of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA),¹ Route 66 played a major role in the history of the United States. It's been called "America's Main Street" and "The Mother Road;" and it continues to draw the adventurous motorist. While images of American Indians were often used by businesses along the Route to entice travelers west, very little about the historic and cultural relationship between the Tribes and Route 66 is available.

AIANTA's American Indians and Route 66 project will correct that omission and develop interpretation, publications and a destination website to provide educational and promotional opportunities previously unavailable to the tribes and other businesses.

There have been two studies on this subject: "Documenting the American Indian Experience of Route 66," (2005) and an ethnographic study called "Route 66 Native Americans" (2009). Both cover only a portion of Route 66, limiting the number of tribes addressed; and both relied heavily on literature rather than obtaining participation from all relevant tribes. AIANTA proposes to help tribes tell their stories and become part of today's Route 66.

The project will create publications and develop oral histories telling the stories of Indian Country from the Tribal perspective before Route 66, how it has changed for each of the Native Nations along the Route and what there is to see and do today.

¹ Source: <http://aianta.org/aianta-projects.aspx>