

**Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership**  
**Board of Directors' Meeting - Minutes**  
*Friday – Saturday, February 16-17, 2017*

*Attendees: Sharlene Fouser (AZ), Scott Piotrowski (CA), David Bricker (CA), Johnny Miller (IL), Bill Kelly (IL), Jeff Fulganzi (IL), Renee Charles (KS), Tommy Pike (MO), Brad Nickson (OK), Melissa Beasley (NM), Cindy Carson (NM), David Dunaway (NM), Larry Clonts (TX), Bill Thomas (Chair), Aaron Mahr (NPS), Kaisa Barhuli (NPS)*

Bill Thomas welcomed sixteen members of The Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership Board, on Friday morning, thanking them for agreeing to work together to make Route 66 a nationally recognized road.

The first order of business was the nomination of officers. The following slate was nominated and accepted unanimously: Bill Thomas – Chairman, David Bricker – Vice Chairman, Renee Charles – Secretary, and Bill Kelly – Treasurer.

Following a brief discussion, the Board unanimously approved the following mission statement for The Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership:

***The mission of the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership is to revitalize and sustain Route 66 as a national and international icon, for the benefit of all Route 66 communities, travelers, and businesses/attractions through collaborative partnerships focused on promotion, preservation, research/education, and economic development.***

The Board reaffirmed the organization's outcomes, goals and organizational structure as discussed in previous meetings in Anaheim and Albuquerque.

The role and purpose of the Board was discussed, reinforcing its purpose to provide foresight, oversight, and insight while leaving the day-to-day administration of the organization to the Chairman, Executive Director, the Executive Committee, and the Working Groups.

Bylaws were discussed at length, amended as needed, and adopted by unanimous vote. Board meeting logistics were discussed and tabled until Saturday to allow for Task Force updates.

A report from the National Historic Trail Task Force was presented by John Conoboy (Task Force Chair), with comments from Aaron Mahr (National Park Service (NPS)), Amy Webb (National Trust representative), and Grant Stevens (also from the National Trust). Their updated notes noted the following significant progress:

- Congressional Bill HR801 has been submitted requesting that Rt. 66 be identified as a National Historic Trail. The bill can be read at [congress.gov](http://congress.gov).
- While it has been determined that Rt. 66 qualifies for National Historic Trail status, the Rt. 66 Corridor Preservation program will sunset in 2019.
- If/when Rt. 66 achieves National Historic Trail status, the opportunity exists for support from the National Trust via public advocacy.

Bill Thomas provided the Financial Sustainment Task Force progress update:

- Identified three potential corporate sponsors...
  - Phillips 66 –some progress was made with their marketing department, but ultimately Phillips 66 decided not to move forward with the Road Ahead.
  - Harley Davidson – Thomas reported that they were having difficulty making a connection at HD, as a result, Johnny Miller and Scott Poitrowski volunteered to help pursue further contacts.
  - State Farm - Discussions are ongoing for an initial \$15K-\$25k per year sponsorship.
- Connections have been made with Atlas Obscura who is interested in helping
- Jessica Webber (Netherland’s-based expert in augmented reality games and tourism) has been contacted about how this technology might be used with the Road Ahead
- Affinity credit cards are also being explored

Moving on to working group updates, David Bricker presented the following projects of the Preservation Working Group:

- Assisting with gaining National Treasure status
- Seeking ways to share best practices between states that have different jurisdictions
- Developing advocacy policy for the Board’s next meeting
- Drafted a letter for states’ departments of Transportation; a federally-funded project or action must identify potential effects/impacts on historic properties for compliance with Section 106.

Kaisa Barhuli reported as the acting Chair of the State Advocacy Working Group:

- Purpose is to increase the amount of information and coordination between state organizations and to communicate with the RAP Board.
- Set goals:
  - Discuss and identify Rt.66 concerns and give them to the Board for consideration
  - Find areas of common interest, activities, and problems
  - Assist Board in communicating it work to the wider Rt. 66 community
- Identified critical topics:
  - Status of scenic byway programs in each state and their management
  - Road navigation issues for travelers
  - State perspectives
  - Attracting future stewards, such as youth and coordinating festivals

Bill Kelly reported for the Promotion Working Group:

- The Road Ahead Facebook page was launched and urged all to “friend” the page
- The Road Ahead website was positioned to go live by the end of the first quarter
- There is a good chance that the Rt. 66 Centennial Commission will become federal law, as it is supported by both parties. When this happens the Promotion Working Group plans to help communities and attractions be prepared to ramp up for promoting 2026.
- Working to establish a Rt. 66 legislative caucus to establish centennials in each state, using Illinois as an example of how Rt. 66 acts as an economic engine.

The Board agreed to begin meeting at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday and adjourned for Friday.

Saturday began with a return to the subject of “How to Function as an Organization.” The discussion covered open vs. closed meetings, executive sessions, stakeholders’ issues, and the purpose of the Road Ahead Board Meetings. As a result, the Board decided to set an open meeting policy that would allow the public to attend with strict parameters for participation and making the meeting minutes available to the public.

A lengthy debate over Road Ahead communications followed. The pros and cons of email, telephone, teleconferencing, Skype, and face-to-face meetings were discussed.

Transitioning to communicating with the press, Bill Thomas requested that when the Working Groups submit their quarterly progress summaries, that they include a summary paragraph that could be compiled and forwarded to the state associations for local press releases and to Ron Warnick at Route 66 News. Thomas also asked for a single point of contact in each state to whom he should forward press releases from the Road Ahead (in addition to the Road Ahead Board members). The Board clarified that the Chairman is the sanctioned ambassador to external and internal stakeholders and therefore the spokesperson for the Road Ahead. That does not restrict other board members from speaking to the press, but does put the burden on them to clarify for whom they are speaking when making public comments.

Moving on to Working Group updates, Jeff Fulganzi presented for the Economic Development Working Group. Emphasizing the need for the Road Ahead to tell the story and sell it to local, state, and federal officials and for additional staff, his update covered the following goals and gave many supporting examples of current isolated efforts:

- Prepare economic development tool kit of case studies to share at the local level, that would be disseminated (along with other important information) in a centralized online location – perhaps the Rt. 66 website.
- Develop a tourist survey that would be used in every state so that data collection would be consistent throughout the journey. Illinois was asked to lead the effort, reaching out to other states for their thoughts on survey questions. At the time of this meeting, California, New Mexico, and Oklahoma had not responded.
- Still figuring out how to update the Rutgers impact study as it pertains to the Road Ahead’s goals.
- Create inventory of various state assets to help develop plans at state, regional, and local levels, and create a training program and process to educate these enthusiasts for maximum benefit to the Road Ahead.
- Develop an aid for travelers to navigate the missing sections of the national route.
- Create a package to market for 2026 to both international and national tourists.
- Identify a way to tap into the impending transfer of wealth from the baby boomer generation to their children, starting with a repository on the Rt. 66 website.

David Dunaway next presented the updates for the Education and Research Working Group, noting that the first goal of finding educators who are teaching about Rt. 66 is complete. The group’s purpose is assisting educational institutions, by providing a base of comprehensive and accurate information, as well as, promoting collaboration among educators with the public. The group’s next priority is to gather syllabi and other materials to teach courses and inspire more teachers for three identified education groups: public education, higher education, and tourist education. Another priority is to present a Research Rt. 66 Conference in 2019.

Bill Thomas led off the Advisory Group reports with an update from the International Advisory Group, noting that Dries Bessels (Netherlands) has agreed to chair the group and is in the process of forming the core group. It was suggested that the group consider how to interpret Rt. 66 information in foreign languages as it begins to set its goals.

Emerson Vallo, Tribal Advisory Group Chair, and Aimee Awonohopay expressed their pleasure at the opportunity to include the American native perspective on the Rt. 66 story. They have 5 individuals in their group representing 25 tribes. The group is just beginning to develop its goals, so the Road Ahead raised the following questions for consideration as they begin to meet:

- How do we learn about the varying tribal perspectives on Rt. 66 across the country
- Preservation of tribal art forms from along the route
- How can the Road Ahead deal with tribal leadership without offending
- How can tourists, both domestic and international, engage with native Americans without offence
- Tribal nation support of Rt. 66 legislation

Other concerns and issues discussed:

- Continuing relationships with parallel organizations who were involved with the Road Ahead Steering Committee
- Achieving more diversity in Board membership – opening discussion for adding two seats; one from the Tribal Advisory Group and one from the International Advisory Group
- Attracting more diverse travelers on Rt. 66
- How to submit reimbursement sheets for expenses
- Members should expect to receive a draft policy on how to decide where board meetings are held and a suggestion on how the public can comment from Bill Thomas.

Scott Piotrowski moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Tommy Pike. The motioned carried and the meeting was adjourned.