



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Preserving Route 66 is a Good Investment for the Future

\$132 million spent per year in communities along Route 66

A recently completed economic impact study shows that \$132 million per year is spent in communities along historic Route 66. This information sheds new light on the importance of heritage tourism and historic preservation along Route 66 as a contributor to local, state, and national economies. Route 66, which runs from Chicago to Santa Monica and is known as the Mother Road, is America's most celebrated automobile highway, and a symbol of twentieth-century American culture and history. The study was directed by professor David Listokin of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and was carried out between 2008 and 2011 in collaboration with the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program and World Monuments Fund, with the support of American Express.

The study demonstrates the tremendous influence tourists have on the economies of towns and cities along the route:

- More than 85% of Route 66 travelers visit historic places and museums, and these tourists spend \$38 million dollars a year in these communities.
- Heritage preservation, through Main Street revitalization programs and museums, add another \$94 million in annual investments.
- The national impact is an annual gain of 2,400 jobs, \$90 million in income, \$262 million in overall output, \$127 million in gross domestic product and \$37 million in tax revenues.
- At the local level, the restored Route 66-themed motel, restaurant, and gift shop anchor the downtown in many small communities and bring new life and revenue to towns once bypassed by the Interstate Highway System.

In other words, preserving Route 66 is a good investment with significant community and economic benefits.

“This study shows that preserving historic places is important to travelers on Route 66, and brings enormous pride as well as social and economic benefits to those living along the route,” said National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program Manager Kaisa Barthuli. “We will continue to work with communities and other partners to preserve the special places that tell this vibrant part of American history, which in turn creates valuable economic opportunities.”

“The 2008 World Monuments Watch brought attention to the cultural value of America’s Mother Road,” said World Monuments Fund President Bonnie Burnham. “The Watch was the catalyst for developing this study, which now demonstrates the tremendous economic value tied to those traveling this historic route and argues for investment in preservation.”

The study draws on a wide array of empirical information on Route 66 from the national decennial census, a first-ever comprehensive survey of Route 66 travelers, a Route 66 museum survey, Route 66 case studies, and other sources. The result is a better understanding of the mosaic and dynamics of America’s Main Street, and the identification of opportunities to improve preservation of this resource and to enhance its already significant heritage tourism and economic contribution. The organizations behind the study are currently working to raise awareness of the significant findings among both the private and public sectors. A follow-up event, including industry, government, and others, is being planned for 2012, with a goal of leveraging the new knowledge provided by the Economic Impact Study toward improved investment and innovative partnerships in heritage tourism and historic preservation.

A Synthesis of Findings of the Route 66 Economic Impact Study, along with a two-volume Technical Report, are available at: <http://www.wmf.org/dig-deeper/publication/route-66-economic-impact-study-synthesis-findings>.

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy at Rutgers

The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is one of the nation’s key centers for the theory and practice of planning and public policy scholarship and analysis. The school was established in 1992 by the Rutgers University Board of Governors to provide a focus for all of Rutgers’ initiatives and programs of instruction, research, and service in planning and public policy. The Bloustein School was ranked No. 3 in the United States in the latest survey of the nation’s top graduate programs in urban planning by Planetizen, a Los Angeles–based planning and development network. <http://policy.rutgers.edu/>.

National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program

The National Park Service, Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program was established in 2001 to help preserve the special places and stories of historic U.S. 66. The program collaborates with private individuals, organizations, government agencies, and others to identify and address the priority needs of this historically significant American icon. The program offers cost-share grants to assist with preservation, planning, research, and educational initiatives. Learn more at www.nps.gov/rt66.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 45 years, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. wmf.org, twitter.com/worldmonuments, and facebook.com/worldmonuments.

American Express

American Express is a global services company, providing customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. Historic preservation has long been the hallmark of American Express' involvement in the community, reflecting the company's recognition of the importance of cultural sites and monuments as symbols of national and local identity, and the role that their preservation can play in attracting visitors and revitalizing neighborhoods. Learn more at americanexpress.com and connect with us on facebook.com/americanexpress, foursquare.com/americanexpress, linkedin.com/companies/american-express, twitter.com/americanexpress, and youtube.com/americanexpress.

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For more information: <http://www.nps.gov/rt66>