



THE ROAD AHEAD PARTNERSHIP

August 14, 2019

Historic Preservation Specialist Adds Voice to Section 106 Projects

Oklahoma's William H. Murray Bridge is the subject of a Federal Highway Administration project. Thanks to the work of Anne Haaker, the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership has a voice in the proposed "build" project. The Murray Bridge is one of the most iconic bridges along Route 66 and is quite possibly of national significance, so it is good to know that the Oklahoma Department of Transportation is embracing its stewardship responsibilities for this landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Anne Haaker joined the Road Ahead Partnership last fall as Historic Preservation Specialist. One of her first actions was to establish the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership as Consulting Party on Section 106 Reviews along the historic route. This classification puts the Road Ahead on a list to receive early notice of any upcoming federal projects that may have an impact on historic places in the United States and the opportunity to voice an opinion throughout the project planning process.

In the case of the Murray Bridge, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation provided three alternatives for making improvements to US-281 bridge over Canadian River (as the Murray Bridge is referred to in the project proposal). Haaker has responded on behalf of the Road Ahead to express the preference of "rehabilitation" of the bridge. According to Haaker, "alternatives two and three would both so significantly alter the historic fabric of the bridge that they would result in adverse effect findings during a formal 106 consultation."

Haaker is also allowed to participate as a consultant for projects along Route 66 that were already in the works, such as the Amarillo Helium plant that is being demolished in order to widen the highway. This project had already passed the Review process in which the Texas Department of Transportation agreed to earmark significant funds to produce educational material for visitors and tourists to learn about the significant contributions the plant made during the WWII era.

The Section 106 Review is an important tool for influencing federal decisions regarding historic Route 66 properties. Each year, the federal government is involved with about a half-dozen projects that affect landmarks along the Mother Road. These projects have the potential to harm the landscape and economic value of historic Route 66.

Simply put, whenever a federal project (or state project that involves federal funds or agency certification) is planned that might adversely affect properties of U.S. historical significance, the law requires the agency to explore ways to reduce the harm to the property and come to an agreement on how to proceed with the project. This process is what is commonly referred to as a NHPA Section 106 Review (National Historic Preservation Act of 1966). This ensures that federal agencies actively consult with consulting organizations/parties that have legal or economic relationships to the properties involved. Final project approval is up to the federal agency with the concurrence of the state historic preservation agency (SHPO).

As a Consulting Party, the Road Ahead should be advised of future projects, however if you know of any state or federal projects that might adversely affect historic Route 66 in your state, please make us aware by emailing your concern to rt66theroadahead@gmail.com. Possible projects may include federal property (ie. Military base, park, courthouse), use of federal funds (Highway Administration, Transit Administration, railroad Administration, Housing and Urban Development, FEMA), and/or require federal approval (Army Corp of Engineers, FAA, FCC, etc).

Established in 2015 with the support of the National Park Service and the World Monuments Fund, The Route Road Ahead Partnership's mission is to revitalize and sustain Route 66 as a national and international icon through partnerships focused on promotion, preservation, research and education, and economic development.

###

Photo: Canadian River Bridge.jpg



Caption:

Also known by the Bridgeport Bridge and the Pony Bridge, the William H. Murray Bridge is perhaps the most iconic bridge on all of Route 66. It was built in 1933 to span the South Canadian River, 21 miles west of El Reno, Oklahoma, and has been rated structurally deficient for current highway needs. ***Photo by Rhys Martin, Cloudless Lens Photography.***

Contact:

Bill Thomas, Chairman
Rt. 66 Road Ahead Partnership
rt66theroadahead@gmail.com
217-648-5077