



New Mexico Route 66 Association

Dedicated to education, promotion, and preservation of New Mexico's Historic Route 66 Scenic Byway and economic revitalization along its 604 mile stretch throughout the state since 1989. Est. 1989. A 501-(c)3 Non-Profit.

- 2004 New Mexico Heritage Preservation Award Winner
- National Scenic Byways Best Practices Recognition
- 2003 Preservation Project of the Year: New Mexico Route 66 Magazine

President: Melissa Lea Beasley Vice-President: Nam Tran



Revitalizing the Mother Road: New Mexico Route 66 Association's Transformational Journey Under Melissa Lea Beasley

Once on the brink of stagnation, the New Mexico Route 66 Association has undergone a remarkable transformation since Melissa Lea Beasley took the helm as president in 2016. As we approach the Route 66 Centennial in 2026, the association stands stronger than ever—boasting record-breaking membership, bold new initiatives, and a renewed commitment to preserving the legacy of America's most iconic highway.

A Decade of Growth and Innovation

Under Beasley's leadership, the association has not only expanded its membership base to an all-time high but has also redefined how Route 66 is celebrated and preserved. The 2024 board elections brought in a diverse mix of voices, reflecting the broader, more inclusive story of the Mother Road. Today, Route 66 is recognized as a highway rich in Native American, Mexican American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and African American heritage—an essential part of its enduring legacy.

A Modernized Digital Presence

The association has made significant strides in digital outreach, launching a newly revamped website packed with resources, including information on New Mexico's Route 66 communities, preservation projects, grant opportunities, and an ever-expanding business directory.

Additionally, the association's online newsletter ensures members stay informed with real-time updates on Route 66 news, economic developments, and upcoming events.

Its quarterly publication, *Route 66 New Mexico*, has more than doubled in size, featuring a sleek new design that aligns with the website and newsletter.

Preserving the Past, Guiding the Future

When the state discontinued its official Route 66 map the association created for them, the association stepped in—introducing a new, condensed version as a magazine centerfold, ensuring travelers have a reliable guide to navigate the historic highway.

Grant opportunities for businesses have also expanded, thanks in part to Beasley's involvement with the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership. This collaborative effort, spanning all eight Route 66 states, has unlocked new funding possibilities through partnerships with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service.

Additionally, the Road Ahead played a pivotal role in securing official federal recognition for the Route 66 Centennial, working behind the scenes to draft and advocate for the necessary legislation that ultimately led to the creation of the National Centennial Commission.



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Historic Restoration and Tourism Initiatives

One of the association's proudest achievements is the completion of the Tucumcari Neon Restoration Project in 2024, the largest neon restoration effort on Route 66. Funded by donations and a \$50,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this initiative brought together skilled professionals—including a neon specialist flown in from Los Angeles—to breathe new life into Tucumcari's glowing heritage. The project's success will be showcased in a series of documentary-style videos set for release in 2025.

Looking ahead, preparations are in full swing for the 2025 New Mexico Route 66 Association Motor Tour, scheduled for May 8-10. This annual fundraiser continues to grow in popularity, with an ever-evolving itinerary that allows participants to explore Gallup, Grants, Albuquerque, and everything in between—all while promoting local businesses.

The association also launched the New Mexico Route 66 Roadside Attraction Program, inspired by a similar initiative from Hampton Inn in the early 2000s. This effort aims to boost tourism and connect all eight Route 66 states with a comprehensive guide for travelers seeking these historic landmarks.

Expanding Economic Opportunities

Beyond preservation efforts, the association continues to support its members through exclusive offerings like wholesale, NMDOT-specification historic New Mexico US 66 signs, official association logo merchandise, and the newly launched Centennial-branded items. These sales help fund ongoing initiatives while giving local businesses unique products to drive revenue.

Additionally, the association remains an active voice in New Mexico's Centennial Coordination Group, attending statewide meetings to advocate for Route 66-related needs, ensuring that the centennial celebrations honor and benefit the communities along the route.

A Vision for the Future

In an exciting collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Transportation, the association is spearheading public art installations at key Route 66 rest areas and overpasses. This project will add a creative and cultural dimension to the traveler experience while preserving the highway's vibrant history.

Perhaps most importantly, after nearly a decade of operating solely on volunteer efforts, the association is now exploring the creation of an Executive Director position to ensure its continued success well into the next century.

As the Route 66 Centennial approaches, the New Mexico Route 66 Association stands as a beacon of preservation, economic development, and cultural celebration. Through visionary leadership, community engagement, and unwavering dedication, the association is not just keeping the spirit of Route 66 alive - it's propelling it into an exciting new era.