



STATE STRATEGY IN BUILDING, SUPPLYING, & MAINTAINING COMMUNITIES: PROMOTE STATE TOURISM TO BUILD COMMUNITIES

By: Oklahoma Lt. Governor Matt Pinnell

A state strategy to help build communities and promote small businesses is to promote tourism along a trail or set of assets in the state:

- Create or promote a state tourism trail highlighting assets or history in your state
- Generate dollars to small and locally owned businesses
- I'm making the case for the Great American Road Trip on Route 66!

Route 66 is also known as the Mother Road or the Main Street of America. One of the nation's original highways, Route 66 ran from Chicago, Illinois, through Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona ending in Santa Monica, California. The 2,448 mile route became the great 'American Road Trip' and was popularized by both the hit song "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" and the 1960's Route 66 television series.

Oklahoma's stretch of Route 66 has more drivable miles — more than 400 — than any other state. As the state Secretary of Tourism and Branding, I know Oklahoma can be the center of the world when it comes to Route 66. The tourists along Route 66 are from every state and from around the world. I want to grow tourism on Route 66 to bring sales tax dollars to communities and commerce to small business. I want to improve and maintain Route 66 as a great first and lasting impression of Oklahoma to positively impact our population growth, entrepreneurship, workforce, and more.

I organized the state's first Route 66 Convention attended by about 150 people, including Route 66 business owners and advocates. We worked to identify ways to improve tourism. One was to improve Route 66 signage. Starting in Spring of 2021, the state will spend about \$20,000 to replace about 80 signs and add about 320 sign sin other places – all related to Route 66.

The centennial of Route 66 is scheduled for 2026 (*November 11th*) marking the day 100 years ago when Route 66 received its numerical designation. Oklahoma and Missouri are already planning promotions and celebrations and a Congressional Act is awaiting presidential signature. Oklahoma will kick off Route 66 centennial celebrations in June of 2021 as home of the AAA U.S. 66 Road Fest event stretching from Tulsa to Oklahoma City and including communities all along the state's 420-mile section of the historic highway.

After the ongoing, unprecedented pandemic, we will ask ourselves what is America and who are we. What better exercise to figure that out than to actually go see it? Oklahoma will show visitors America's raw beauty, its diversity, its freedom, and the melting pot of people and cultures that line the pavement.

Matt Pinnell was elected as the 17th Lieutenant Governor of the State of Oklahoma on November 6th, 2018. In that role, he serves as President of the Oklahoma State Senate, and is a member of multiple constitutional boards and commissions. Lt. Governor Pinnell also serves as Secretary of Tourism and Branding on Governor Kevin Stitt's cabinet.