Historic U.S. Route 66

Officially established on November 11. 1926, US Route 66 began in Chicago, Illinois and terminated in Los Angeles, California a distance of 2,448 miles. It was one of the original highways in the US highway system, and probably the most famous.

Originally, there were no official roads crossing America. There were dirt trails used by settlers during the development of the west and there were railroads. Individual towns established themselves around these transportation routes. When someone wanted to travel to another town with their vehicle, they either took the established trail or used a frontage access road for the railroad. Since towns were situated on an existing railroad line or trail, the primary trading businesses were located on that route. That led to the term "Main Street" for a town's business. As traffic increased between towns, these "Main Streets" became connected into a continuous road. One of the nicknames of US 66 was *"The Main Street of America".* Of course, there were several other roads running throughout the west. Most of these also evolved from pre-existing trails or frontage service roads for nearby railroad routes.

Establishment of a highway system

In the early 1920s, there was recognized a need to formally develop, manage and fund a national highway system. Prior to this, individual towns maintained the streets within their jurisdictions and perhaps a short distance outside of their boarders, but certainly not to the next town.

What was unique about Route 66 was that it traveled diagonally from the northern mid-west to southern California thus connecting smaller rural towns along the route. Many roadside services such as service stations and diners established their business models as a result of this road. In fact, it has been stated that Route 66 led to the invention of the motel.

In the early 1930s work on the road was stopped due to the great depression. During that same period thousands of people from the mid west dust bowl region traveled to California in search of work and a better life. Work resumed on the road as part of President Roosevelt's *New Deal* using WPA resources. The entire distance of the road was paved by 1938.

Over the years there were several upgrades of the road necessitating realignment of certain sections. In any given area, it is not uncommon to have as many as five "original road" sections

Post war highs

After world war II, Route 66 prospered as tourism and motor commerce expanded westward. The US highway system reached its zenith in the early 1950s just before the Interstate Highway System was developed. When Interstates were completed, they often relegated the existing US route to secondary status. In the case of Route 66, several Interstate Routes –most notably I-40 in the southwest– completely supplanted it. US Route 66 was decommissioned in 1985.

Rebirth of a legend

Route 66 captures and represents the pioneering spirit of pilgrims set on coming west. It played a major role in the development of the United States in general ant the southwest in particular. Today, it is not possible to drive the original route from Chicago to Los Angeles. But several portions of the original route have been preserved and can still be driven on. Many of the downtown sections of towns and frontage roads are in fact original alignments. In the Needles area, the original road is known as *Arizona State Route 66* and runs from Saligman, AZ through Kingman AZ (Andy Devine Blvd) southwest as a *BLM Scenic Backcountry Byway* to Toppock, AZ at US I-40. In California, the original 66 is known as *The National Old Trails Highway.* It runs from west of Needles, CA through Goffs, Essex, Amboy, Ludlow, Newberry Springs, then through Barstow on to L.A. Through numerous clubs, associations, and interested individuals the spirit and grandeur of a pioneer trail that helped to settle the west continues to live on.

CALIFORNIA

Route 66

"The Main Street of America"

Needles Field Office
1303 South U.S. Hwy 95
Needles, CA 92363

Phone: (760)326-7000
Fax: (760)326-7099
www.blm.gov/ca/needles

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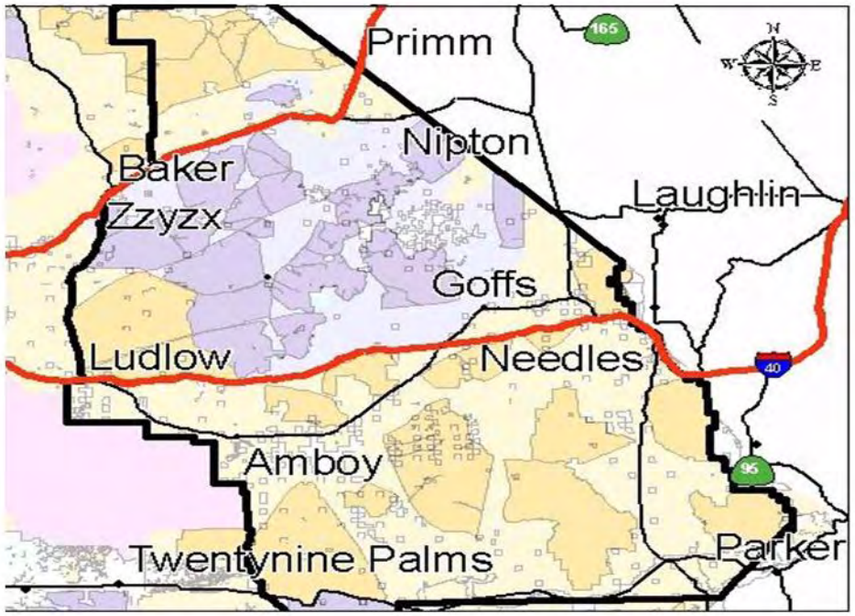

OHV Use

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) provide fun, entertainment, and discovery. However, many of the desert's most attractive and fragile resources can be destroyed if vehicle access is not properly controlled. Resources, cultural and natural, can be unintentionally damaged or destroyed by uncontrolled vehicle use. We all have the responsibility for the proper use of vehicles, so please remember to TREAD LIGHTLY on public and private lands. Stay on open routes of travel

NO CROSS COUNTRY TRAVEL

BLM/CA/GI-2009-018+8300

Please Be Advised

Military explosives can be found most anywhere in the desert. Large areas of the desert were and still are used for bombing ranges and maneuvers by the U.S. Armed Forces. There may be unexploded devices that can cause serious bodily injury or death if handled. Report any such devices to the Federal Interagency Communications Center toll free at (888) 233-6518 or call 911.

The Twenty-nine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center borders the western edge of the Needles Field Office Area of responsibility. This is a live bombing range. Do NOT enter the bombing range!

Desert Safety

- Summer temperatures routinely exceed 110° Fahrenheit. Each year people are lost, injured, and sometimes die while visiting desert areas. Take precautions to prevent finding yourself in an emergency situation.

- Always tell someone your plans, or leave a visible note on the dash of your vehicle with your expected route, destination, and time of return. Stick to your itinerary.

- Carry plenty of water. Drink at least a gallon per day.

- Take food or snacks. In the heat, you may not feel hungry, but your body needs nourishment.

- Never go alone.

- Take a good map and compass.

- Carry a first aid kit, signal mirror, flashlight and matches.

- Take a CB radio or cellular phone.

- Wear sunscreen and sunglasses.

- Dress in light colored, loose fitting clothes. Long-sleeves, long pants, a hat, and sturdy shoes will help protect you from the sun, coarse volcanic material, and sharp, spiny vegetation.

- Bring a jacket with you, as evening temperatures may drop 30 degrees or more.

- Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition. Check your tires, spare tire, jack, lug wrench, and fluid levels. Always start with a full tank of gas and try not to let it fall below half a tank before filling up again.

- If you are stranded, stay with your vehicle. Don't panic. Your vehicle is easier to spot than a person walking. Lift your hood. Attempt to signal for help using a mirror or by using newspapers to make an X on the ground.

- Watch for snakes, spiders, and scorpions among the rocks.

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In Case of Emergencies Contact the Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) at (888)233-6518 or call 9-1-1.