



Route 66 Centennial Coordination Group Special Meeting

February 25, 2025, 11:00 am
444 Galisteo St, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Chair Bill Lee.

Roll Call

Members Present

Bill Lee (Chair)
Raymond Mondragon (Vice Chair)
Johnny Pena
Scott Verhines
Elmer Torres
Evan Williams
Johnny Pena
Scott Verhines
Acting Secretary Lancing Adams (NMTD)
Secretary Ricky Serna (NMDOT)
Daniel Gutierrez (NMEDD – Designate)
Deputy Secretary Danielle Gilliam (NMENV – Designate)
Deputy Secretary Michelle Roberts (NMDCA – Designate)

Members Not Present

Alicia Ortega

Welcome & Introductions

Chair Lee welcomed all attendees and introduced the purpose of the meeting, emphasizing, the goal today is to review projects that can best represent New Mexico in the Route 66 Centennial celebrations. We want to ensure we endorse initiatives that are feasible, well-supported, and align with our broader goals for 2026. Chair Lee then asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Participants went around the room, stating their names and affiliations. Before proceeding, Chair Lee also noted, "We have a sign language interpreter available for this meeting. If anyone requires assistance, please let us know so we can accommodate accordingly."

Motion to Approve the Agenda

Chair Lee directed Coordination Group members to the next item on the agenda—approval of the agenda. Chair Lee proposed an amendment to the agenda to include a public comment period before adjournment and to renumber the agenda items appropriately.

Motion by Vice Chair Mondragon to approve the agenda with the amendment proposed by Vice Chair Mondragon to place Public Comment as #7 on the agenda and adjournment as #8 on the agenda, seconded by Member Johnny Pena Torres. Motion carried unanimously.

Project Review Panel & Discussion

Acting Secretary Lansing Adams opened the discussion by providing context on why the special meeting was convened. He stated that at the end of April, New Mexico will be hosting the National Route 66 Commission in Albuquerque, an event that will bring together representatives from multiple states. He emphasized that this is a major opportunity for the state, and the goal of the meeting was to endorse projects ahead of this national event.

Adams clarified that this is only the first stage of the endorsement process and that additional submissions and recommendations would continue. He reminded attendees of how the committee arrived at this point, noting that the group had initially voted on a rough scoring process to assess projects. Since then, the committee worked with KW Consulting and internal staff, and many members had submitted their score sheets for the eight projects under consideration. Through this process, seven projects were recommended for endorsement.

Adams then introduced the topic of forming a subcommittee to evaluate projects more efficiently. He stated that the group needed to consider whether they could assign a smaller team to review and vet projects before making recommendations to the full committee. This would help streamline the process and reduce the need for large group meetings for every decision. He then invited members to share any concerns or additional comments regarding how the committee had reached this point.

Chair Bill Lee added that he had spoken with Vice Chair Raymond Mondragon and Acting Secretary Adams about the importance of demonstrating progress during the ongoing legislative session. He emphasized that lawmakers need to see that the committee is taking action and moving forward with Route 66 Centennial initiatives. He noted that House Bill 2 includes funding for the Centennial, which was great news, as it meant the committee could continue supporting projects.

Lee further explained that HB 2 had passed the House floor and was moving to the Senate, and the committee felt it was crucial to advance project endorsements now so the legislature could see their progress. He expressed that the committee had done stellar work in a short amount of time, engaging communities, gathering project proposals, and moving forward efficiently. He

concluded by reinforcing that this progress was a strong reflection of the committee's efforts and commitment to the Centennial celebration.

Adopt of Executive Committee – Discussion & Possible Action

Chair Bill Lee introduced the proposal to create an executive committee to streamline project reviews and accelerate decisions at the state and national levels. He expressed support for the idea. He then handed the floor to Acting Secretary Adams to expand on the proposal.

Acting Secretary Adams explained that forming a smaller group would allow the committee to work more closely with facilitators and efficiently handle project submissions and recommendations. He suggested assigning a select group of members to conduct the initial vetting, making it easier for the full committee to review and approve projects. Chair Lee proposed that the Chair and Vice Chair should be part of this group. He then suggested adding Acting Secretary Lansing Adams and asked for one additional volunteer from the committee to assist with scoring future projects.

A member then raised a procedural concern, pointing out that the term "executive committee" might not be appropriate, as such committees typically consist of officers rather than general board members. The member suggested that the group should be referred to as a subcommittee instead. Chair Lee deferred to counsel for clarification. Counsel confirmed that the committee had the authority to form a subcommittee, and Chair Lee agreed to propose it as a subcommittee rather than an executive committee.

At this point, Member Elmer Torres volunteered to join the subcommittee. Chair Lee acknowledged Elmer's strong connections to Pueblo and Native American communities along Route 66 and stated that their participation would be crucial in ensuring fair representation in project scoring.

With the subcommittee structure set, Chair Lee called for a motion to formally establish it.

Motion by Vice Chair Mondragon to approve the agenda with the amendment proposed by Vice Chair Mondragon to place Public Comment as #7 on the agenda and adjournment as #8 on the agenda, seconded by Member Johnny Pena. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Member Johnny Pena to create the subcommittee consisting of: Chair Lee, Vice Chair Mondragon, Acting Secretary Adams, and Member Torres; seconded by Member Danielle Gilliam. Motion carried unanimously.

The subcommittee was officially established and would be responsible for scoring future project and presenting recommendations to the full committee.

Route 66 Centennial Celebration Projects/Activities – Endorsement Approval

Chair Bill Lee introduced Item 6, stating that the primary purpose of the meeting was to finalize project endorsements for submission to the National Route 66 Commission.

He reiterated that New Mexico is expected to be the only state hosting the National Route 66 Convention in April, where representatives from all Route 66 states will convene. Chair Lee described this as a major opportunity for the state and expressed pride in the committee's work. He urged all members to attend, stating, *"Let's make this a big deal and really make New Mexico shine."* He then directed members to their packets containing the proposed projects for endorsement, emphasizing that the next step was to formally approve these projects for national submission.

Chair Lee provided an outline of the seven projects that were recommended for endorsement. He stated that these projects were not ranked in any particular order but had gone through a thorough vetting process. The projects were:

1. Augmented Reality Project (City of Albuquerque) – A digital enhancement initiative that would create an interactive experience along Route 66.
2. Gallup Summer Indian Dance & Art Market (City of Gallup) – A cultural tourism event celebrating Indigenous traditions and artistic heritage.
3. Journey Through Time: Pueblo Life & Route 66 (Indian Pueblo Cultural Center) – An exhibition highlighting the historical and cultural intersections of Pueblo communities and Route 66.
4. Route 66 Connected (University of New Mexico) – A research-based virtual exhibition featuring the historic businesses, people, and communities along Route 66.
5. Route 66 Municipal Golf Course Celebration (City of Santa Rosa) – A tourism-driven event centered around a historic golf course along the Route 66 corridor.
6. Spokes on 66 Car Show (Grants MainStreet) – A large-scale car show to celebrate the historic highway's car culture and legacy.
7. Route 66 Public Arts Project at Rattlesnake Draw Rest Area (New Mexico Arts, Department of Cultural Affairs) – A public arts initiative to create installations at a Route 66 rest stop.

Deputy Secretary Roberts raised the issue of scoring transparency, stating that it would have been useful to see a composite scoring summary before making final decisions. She suggested that a ranking of projects could have influenced whether all projects should be endorsed together or if some should be prioritized.

Chair Lee responded by explaining that when he conducted his own scoring process, he expected to see significant differences between projects but ultimately found the scores to be fairly close. He acknowledged that some projects stood out while others had weaker areas, but overall, he believed the projects were competitive and worth submitting.

Deputy Secretary Roberts suggested that the subcommittee should play a larger role in reviewing and presenting detailed scoring breakdowns in the future. She proposed that individual scores should be anonymized while still providing a summary of rankings, ensuring greater transparency and informed decision-making.

Further discussion ensued about the importance of ensuring feasibility for endorsed projects. Secretary Ricky Serna cautioned that some projects, particularly those requiring significant infrastructure investments, might not be viable within the required timeline. He emphasized that endorsement does not mean funding and that projects should be financially prepared before advancing.

Member Pena asked whether the National Route 66 Commission would consider the state's scoring and prioritization when making its selections. Acting Secretary Lansing Adams confirmed that the scoring process aligns with the national framework, and that New Mexico's recommendations would be reviewed accordingly.

Secretary Serna raised concerns about projects that may require additional funding beyond what is available. He asked if the committee should verify financial backing before submitting endorsements to avoid sending projects that might not be realistically implemented. Chair Lee acknowledged the concern and agreed that the subcommittee should refine its vetting process for future endorsements.

Motion by Vice Chair Mondragon to endorse all seven projects that were presented and advance them to the National Route 66 Commission, seconded by Acting Secretary Adams. Motion carried on a 7-3 vote. Chair Lee adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

Chair Lee thanked the committee for their work, reaffirming that these endorsements represent a major milestone in New Mexico's preparation for the Centennial celebration.

Public Comment

Chair Bill Lee introduced Item 7, the public comment period, which was included in the agenda after an amendment earlier in the meeting. He invited guests and committee members to share any final remarks, questions, or updates related to the Route 66 Centennial initiatives. A remote participant, Susie, was called on to provide her comments, but due to technical difficulties, her audio did not come through. Chair Lee noted that they would circle back to her later if she was able to reconnect.

Matt Robinson, representing the City of Gallup Tourism, was next to speak. He expressed gratitude to the committee for advancing the Gallup Summer Indian Dances project and stated that his office was ready and willing to assist with the April event. He encouraged the committee to reach out if any additional support was needed in ensuring a strong New Mexico presence at the national event. Chair Lee responded by thanking Matt Robinson for his submission and willingness to help, acknowledging that local engagement from communities like Gallup was critical in making the Centennial event a success.

Following Matt Robinson's remarks, Susie was called on again, but she was unable to provide comment due to ongoing technical issues.

A Santa Fe-based tour guide raised a question regarding the pre-1937 alignment of Route 66, which originally passed through Santa Fe and Las Vegas, NM, before being rerouted directly through Albuquerque. They noted that New Mexico Magazine had not included this segment in a recent feature and asked whether the early alignment of Route 66 in Northern New Mexico was being formally recognized in the Centennial initiatives.

Chair Lee responded, confirming that one of the first actions taken by the Route 66 Centennial Coordination Group was to ensure that all historic segments of Route 66, including the pre-1937 alignment, would be included in the Centennial recognition efforts. They reassured the speaker that the importance of the Santa Fe and Las Vegas segments was acknowledged and that these areas were part of the broader Route 66 celebration efforts.

Member Pena noted that the Route 66 Visitor Center in Albuquerque would be hosting a large-scale car show. They stated that most regional car clubs would be participating and that the event would also include live music performances. The committee was encouraged to attend and support the event. Member Pena asked about the venue selection for the April event, particularly regarding the attendance of members from the U.S. Route 66 Centennial Commission. They inquired whether a venue had been officially submitted and suggested that the Route 66 Nine Mile Hill venue, which has a 400-person capacity, could be a strong option.

Acting Secretary Adams noted that event logistics were still being finalized, and that further information would be provided once venue details were confirmed. He thanked Jen Schroer for her instrumental role in coordinating efforts, noting that we wouldn't have this opportunity without her.

At the request of Chair Bill Lee, Secretary Ricky Serna provided an update on efforts to evaluate and replace Route 66 signage across New Mexico. He first acknowledged Angelica Trujillo for her contributions to this initiative. Secretary Serna explained that the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) districts had conducted an inventory assessment of existing Route 66 signs, categorizing them into good, fair, and poor condition. The department is now working quickly to replace all signs classified as poor along state roadways.

Secretary Serna stated that NMDOT is exploring the possibility of adding a Centennial designation to the new signs. Secretary Serna also mentioned that there were some concerns about the size of the Centennial logo and its placement on the signs. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the design remains consistent with the statewide Centennial branding efforts while also adhering to roadway safety and visibility standards.

Beyond signage, Secretary Serna stated that the department is also reviewing the replacement of Route 66 pavement markings. While these markings are more costly, NMDOT is working to determine how much can be included within the current budget. Secretary Serna concluded by stating that the department is committed to getting as much of this work completed as possible and will continue to coordinate with the committee on updates and next steps.

Vice Chair Mondragon also took the opportunity to recognize the efforts of KW Consulting, specifically Jason Espinoza and his team, for their continued support in Route 66 Centennial planning.

Adjournment

Motion by Member Johnny Pena to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Elmer Torres. Motion carried; none were opposed. Chair Lee adjourned the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

Approved by Coordination Group vote at public meeting held on October 20, 2025.

Signed by:



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Coordination Group Chair Bill Lee