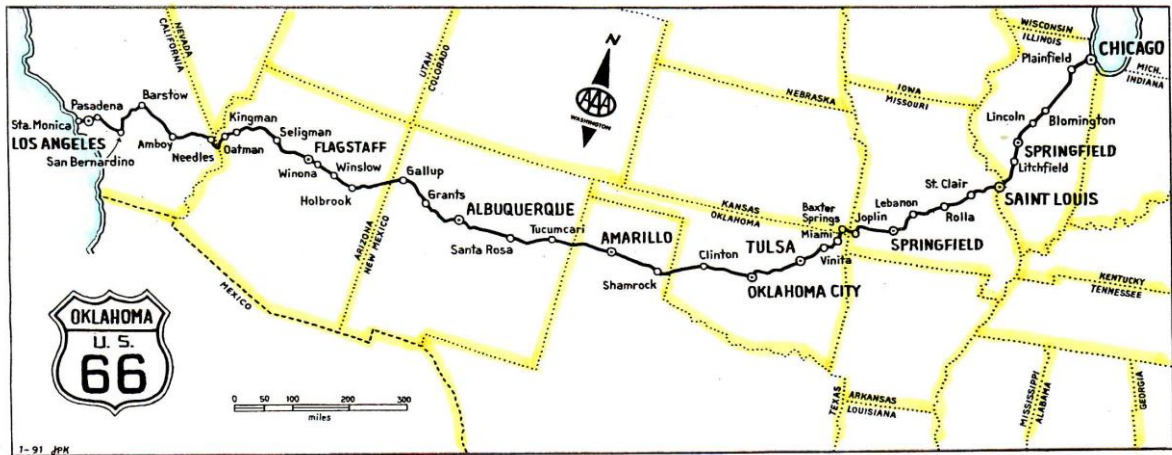




AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

Route 66



*"Route 66 is a giant chute
down which everything loose in this country
is sliding into southern California."
---- Frank Lloyd Wright*

No other road in America, perhaps in the world, elicits such a magical tug on the heartstrings of nostalgia as Route 66. Immortalized in song, in books and on film, this highway, more than any other, has come to symbolize America in the early and mid-twentieth century.

The famous US-66 signs first went up along the 2,500-mile roadway in 1926. From Chicago Route 66 angled southwestward across the fertile farmlands of central Illinois. Crossing the Mississippi at St. Louis, US-66 headed through the rolling woods and farmlands of southern Missouri, touched the southeast corner of Kansas, then ran through the oil boomtowns of Tulsa and Oklahoma City. From the Oklahoma capital the highway struck due west, traversing the high plains of the Texas panhandle and eastern New Mexico. East of Albuquerque Route 66 tackled its first mountain range, spanned the Rio Grande then ascended the continental divide between Grants and Gallup, New Mexico.

Skirting the Painted Desert and Navajo Reservation of northern Arizona, the highway dropped down to the Colorado River and entered California. After crossing the Mojave Desert, Route 66 swung over Cajon Pass and entered the Los Angeles Basin. Originally US-66 ended in downtown Los Angeles – in 1935 it was extended 16 miles west to Santa Monica.

". . . Gallup, New Mexico;
Flagstaff, Arizona, don't forget Winona;
Kingman, Barstow, San Bernardino . . ."
--- lyric by actor-songwriter Bobby Troup

As well as linking dozens of cities and towns and hundreds of villages, Route 66 became the way west for vacationers bound for the Southwest and Southern California. Thousands of families displaced by the Great Depression and Dust Bowl followed this highway west to the promise of work and better living conditions. Author John Steinbeck chronicled the trek of the Joad family from Oklahoma to California in his 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. In 1940 John Ford's film version earned several Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

In the early 1960s a popular television series, titled *Route 66*, followed the adventures of two young men who traveled the highway. Throughout the Midwest and Southwest motorists can still 'fill-er-up' at Phillips 66 service stations – the Oklahoma-based petroleum corporation utilizes a US-66 shield as its logo.

Part of the mystique and nostalgia for Route 66 stems from the fact that it is little more than a memory. In the mid-1950s work commenced on the interstate highway system, a massive infrastructure project consisting of high speed, controlled-access divided highways, designed to link the nation's metropolitan areas. This growing web of freeways greatly improved America's mobility and changed the geography of our cities and their relationship with rural and small-town America.

The interstates spelled the doom of many U.S. highways: **US-10** (replaced by I-94 and I-90 between Fargo and Seattle); **US-99** (replaced by I-5), to name a few. Several interstates duplicated the storied route of US-66: I-55 from Chicago to St. Louis; I-44, St. Louis to Oklahoma City; I-40 from Oklahoma City to Barstow, CA; I-15 to the San Bernardino area and I-10 west to Santa Monica.

These interstates were built in sections over a 30-year period and during the early years US-66 coexisted with the new breed of highway. As the freeways were completed the US-66 designation became superfluous. In the mid-1970s US-66 signs came down in California. In federal parlance US-66 was 'decertified.' Over the next decade the signs disappeared from Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma and Illinois. The last sections to be decertified were in New Mexico (1984) and a stretch west of Joplin, MO (1985).

In some states the new interstate was built over US-66's right-of-way. In most areas, however, the freeways blazed an entirely new alignment, relegating 66 to the status of a frontage road or business route through cities and towns. In a few districts the freeway greatly diverged from US-66. Even in the pre-interstate era Route 66 itself switched alignment. Between Kingman, AZ and Needles, CA US-66 originally climbed over Sitgreaves Pass near Oatman. In the 1940s this was abandoned in favor of an easier route following the Sacramento Wash.

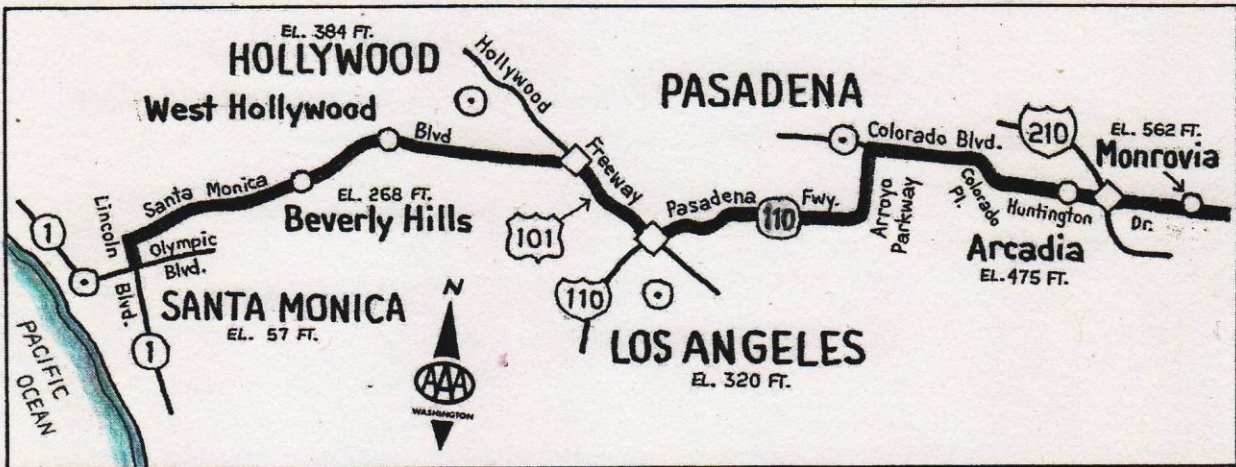
Route 66 may be gone, but it's far from forgotten. All along the historic highway Route 66 associations have sprung up lobbying for more protection and re-designation. Collectively these state groups together with the National Route 66 Association work for preservation of the road and were instrumental in getting sections designated a National Scenic Highway. There are even "Historic US-66" signs along parts of the route in California and Arizona.

More and more travelers are planning a trip following this historic highway. Some may be quite content to stick to the interstates that approximate the route. Purists, however, will want to drive as much of the original roadway as possible. Armed with detailed state maps and a knowledge of the route's historical alignment, this is quite feasible. Much of the appeal of an excursion such as this, lies in the slower pace of life off the interstates – getting there is all the fun!

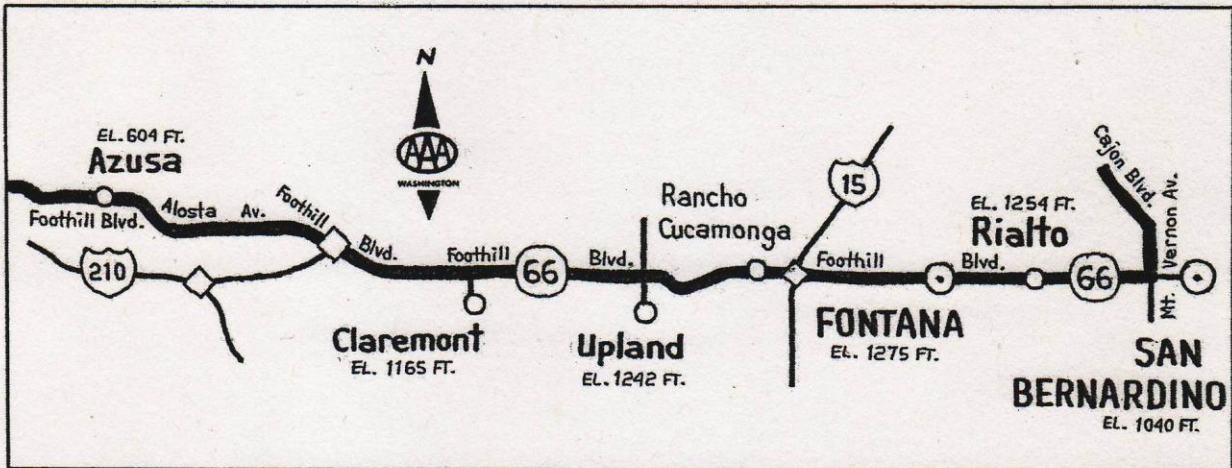
THE FOLLOWING STRIP MAPS TRACE THE ROUTE OF US-66 FROM SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA TO CHICAGO, ILLINOIS . . . Current highway numbering is shown.



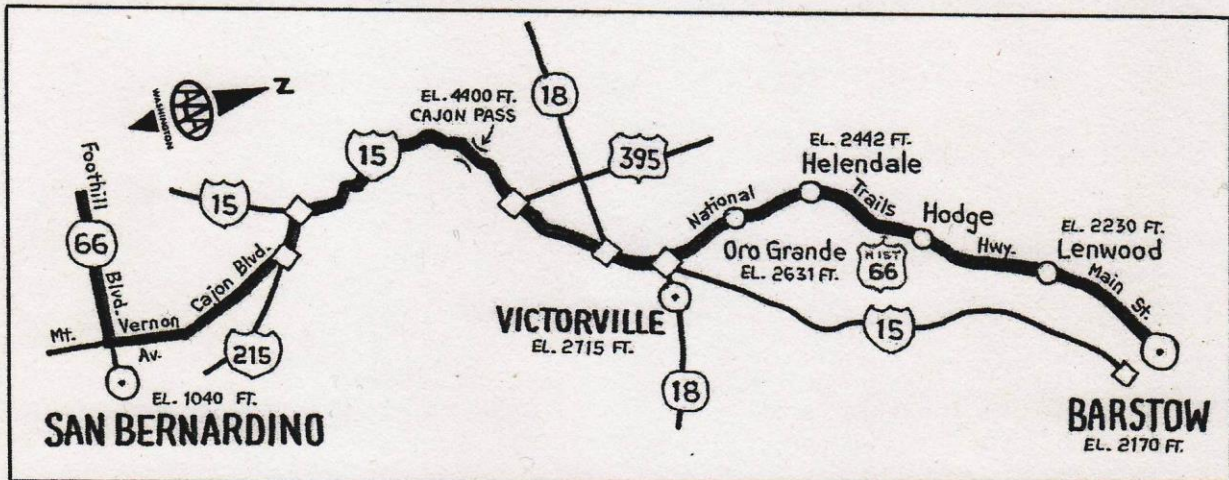
Santa Monica - Monrovia, California



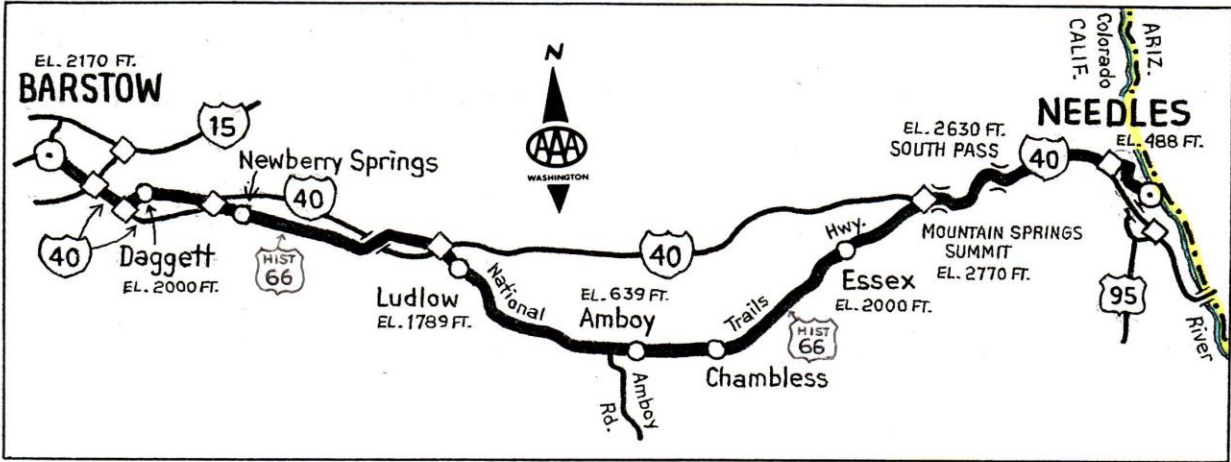
Azusa - San Bernardino, California



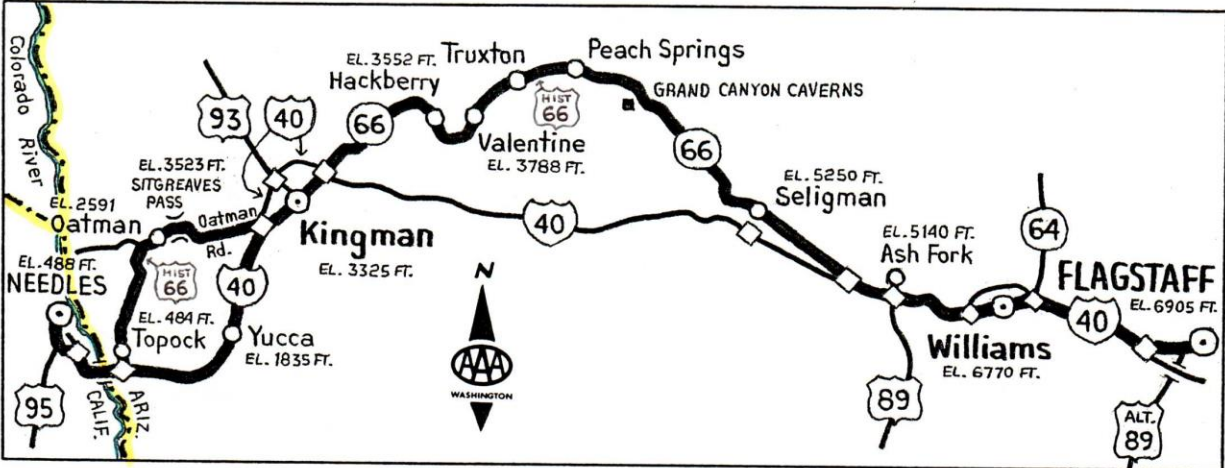
San Bernardino - Barstow, California



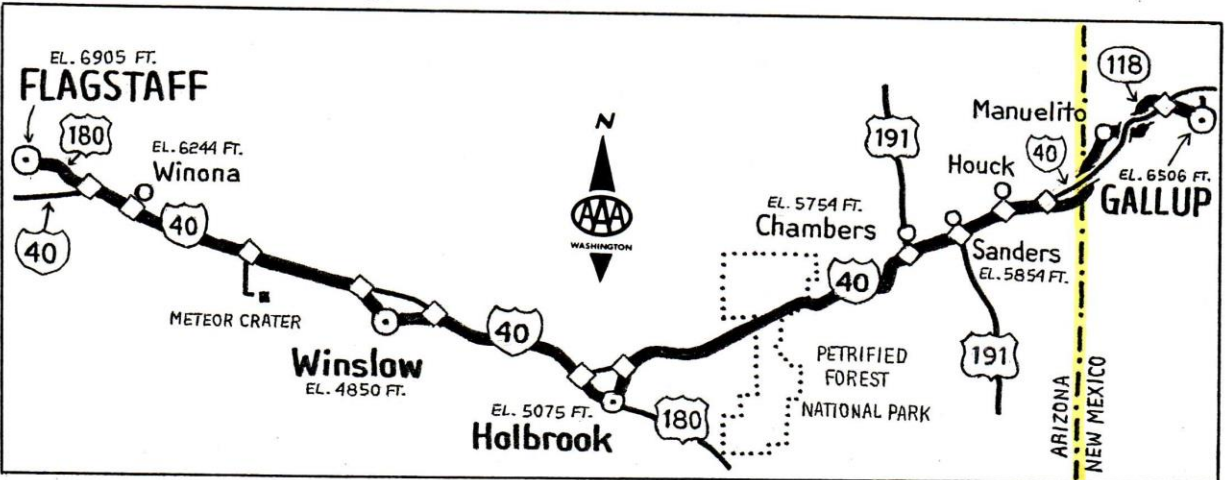
Barstow - Needles, California



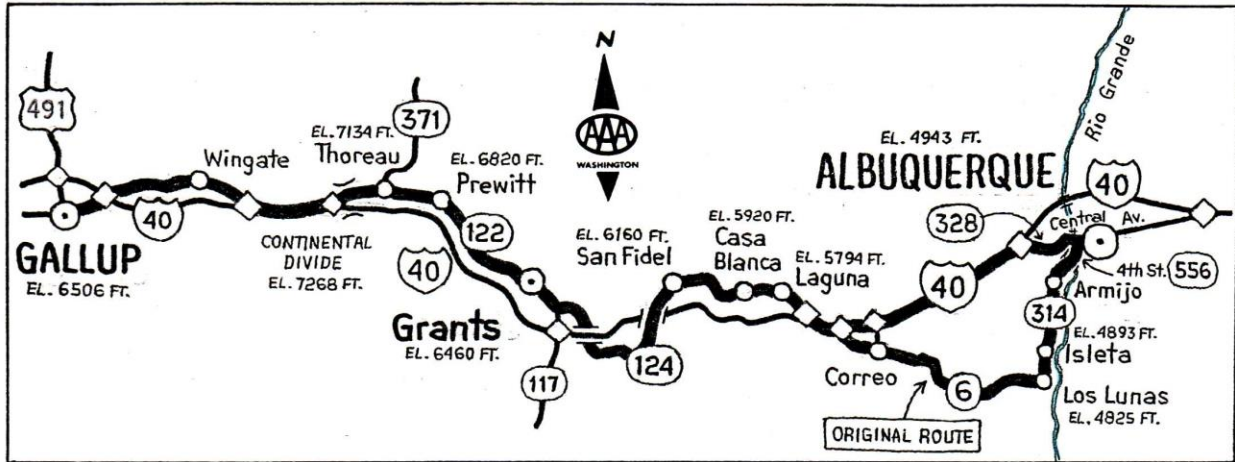
Needles, California - Flagstaff, Arizona



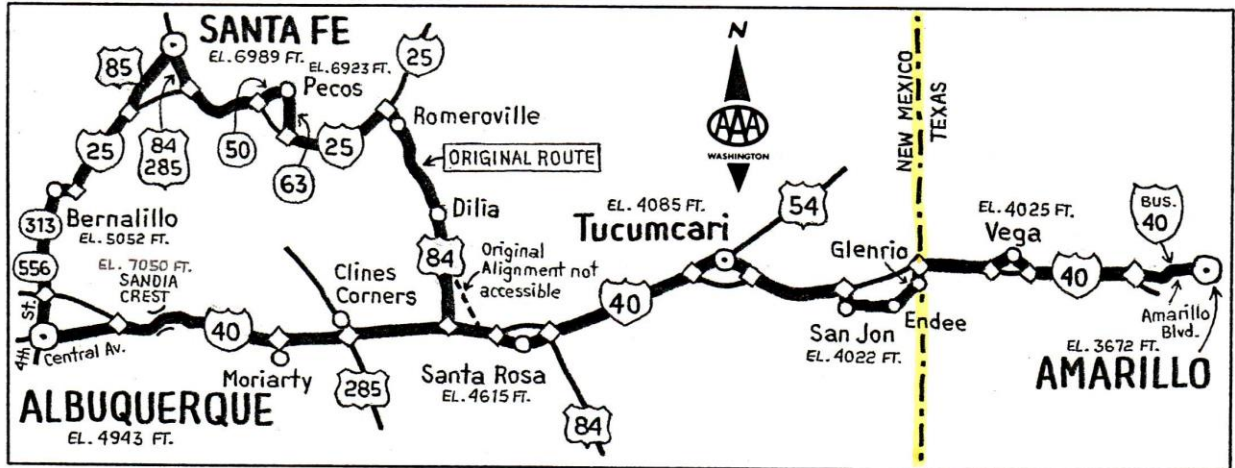
Flagstaff, Arizona - Gallup, New Mexico



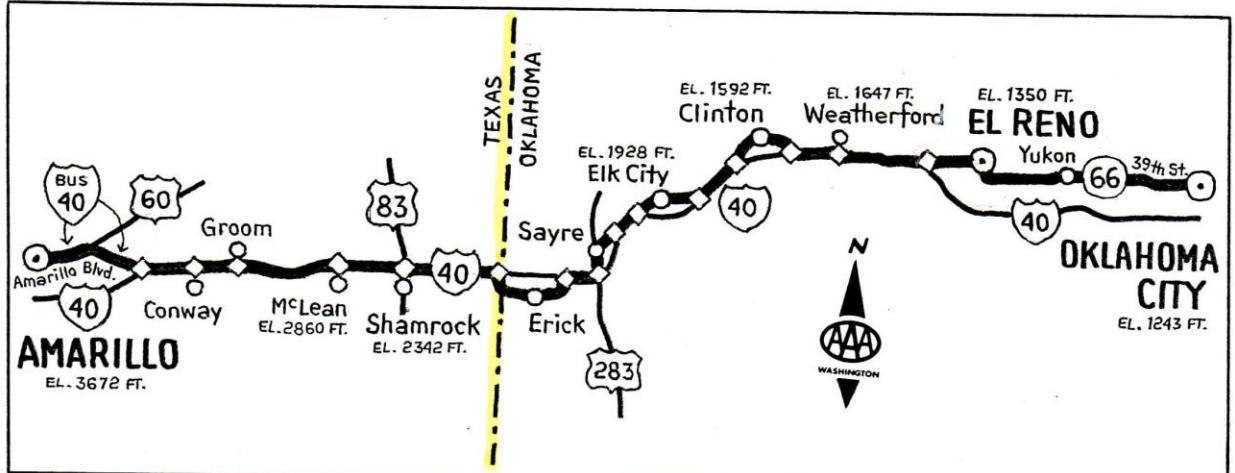
Gallup - Albuquerque, New Mexico



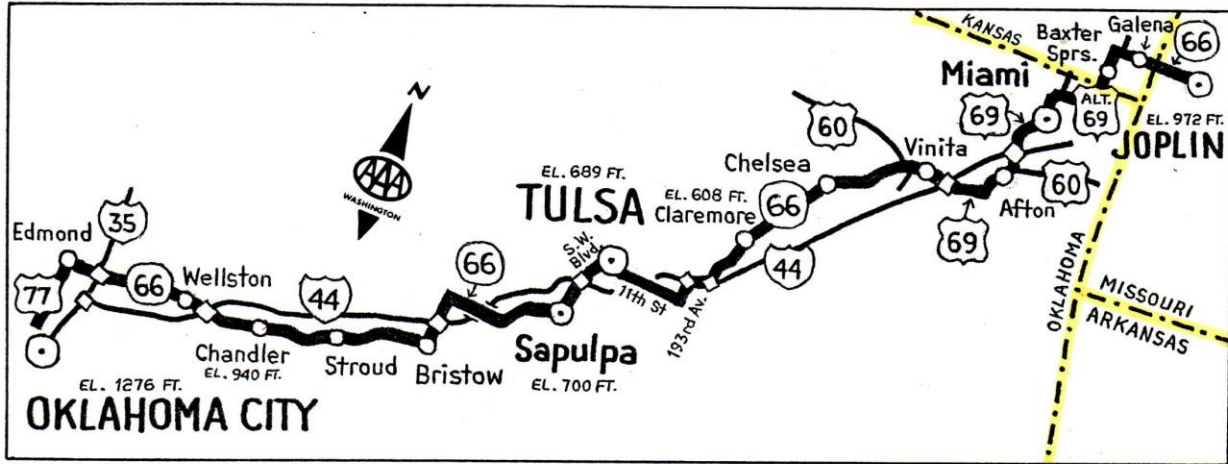
Albuquerque / Santa Fe, New Mexico - Amarillo, Texas



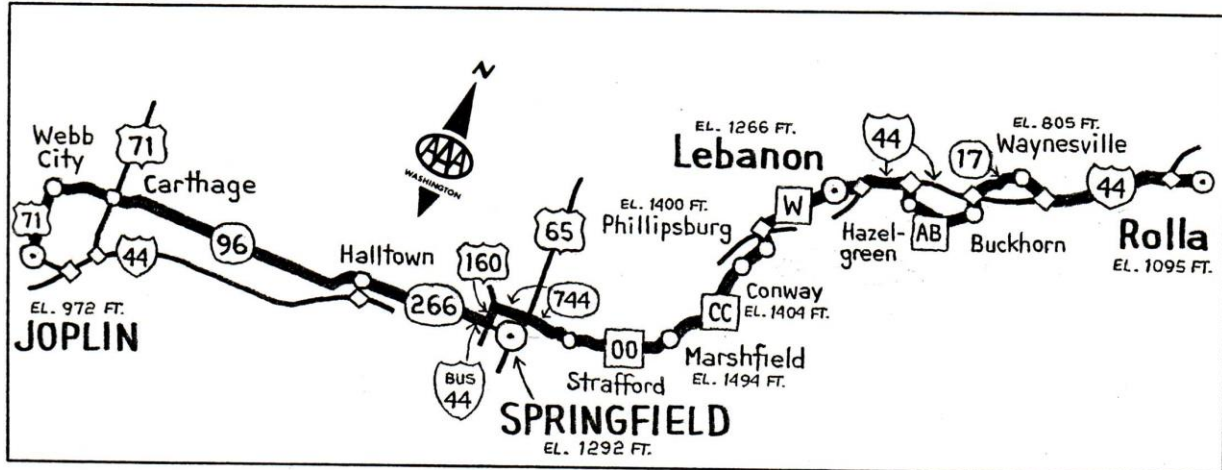
Amarillo, Texas - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



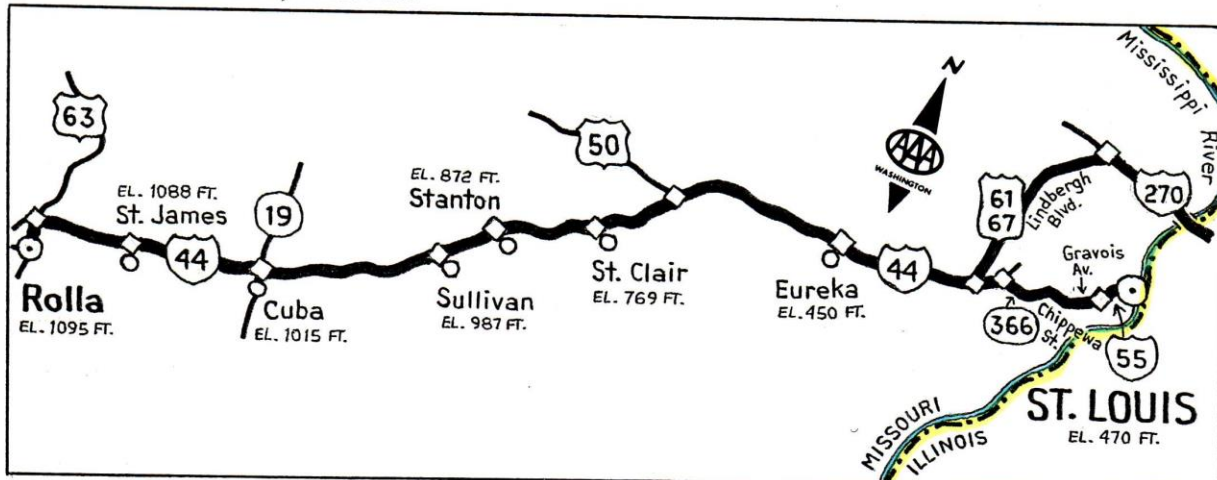
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - Joplin, Missouri



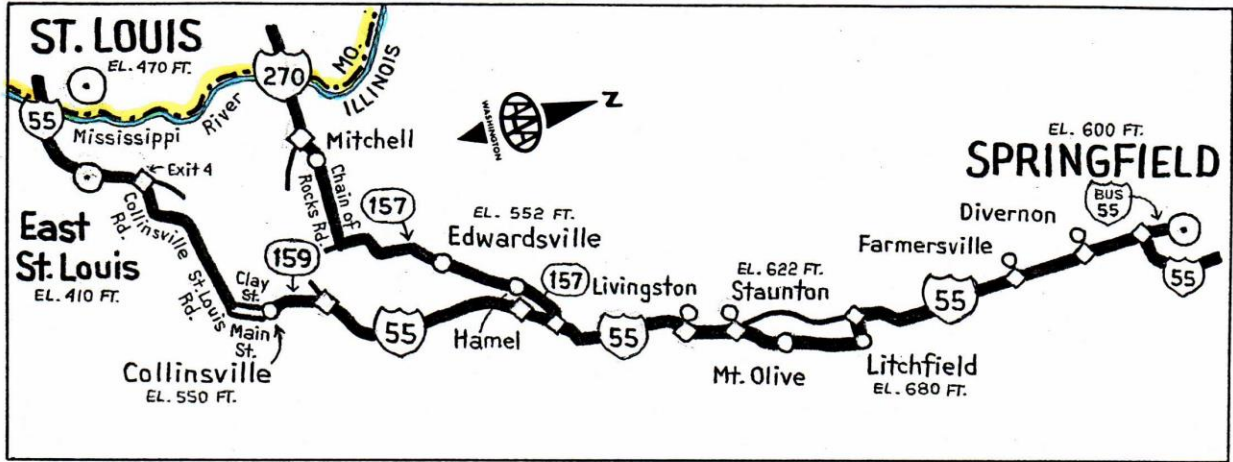
Joplin - Rolla, Missouri



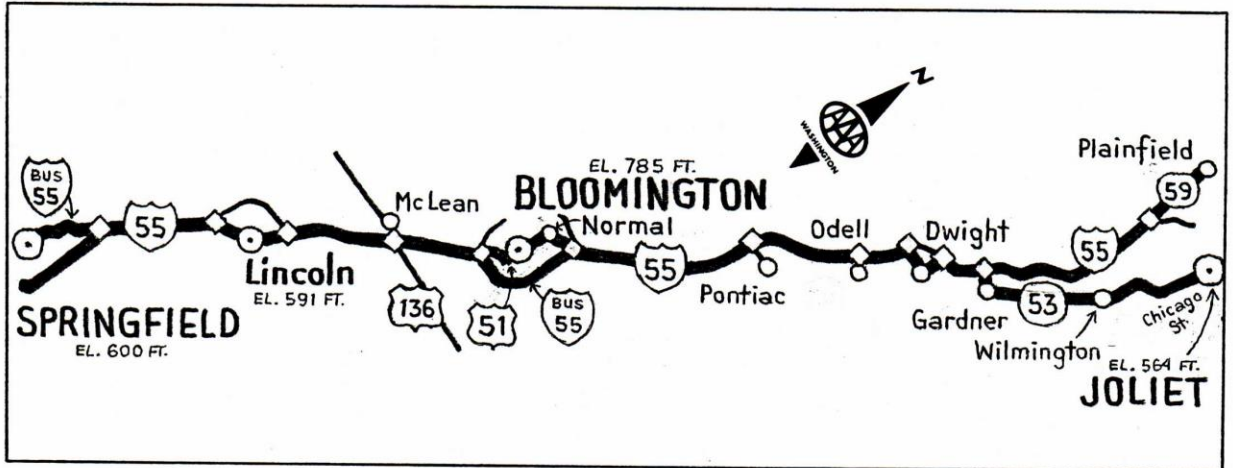
Rolla - Saint Louis, Missouri



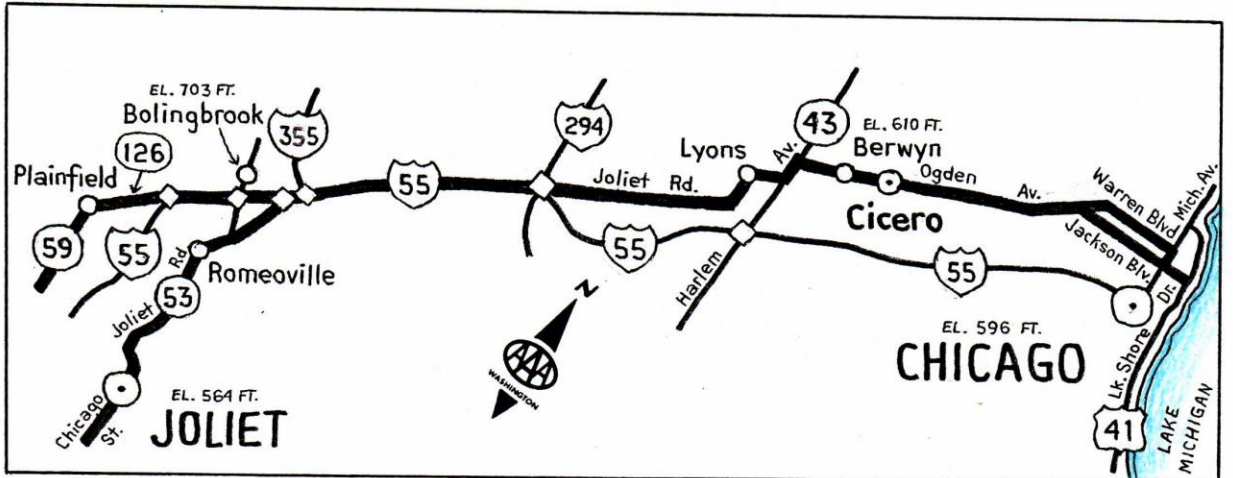
Saint Louis, Missouri - Springfield, Illinois



Springfield - Joliet, Illinois



Joliet - Chicago Illinois



ROUTE 66 WEB LINKS



NATIONAL HISTORIC ROUTE 66 FEDERATION*

<https://national66.org/>

**Outstanding resource for guidebooks, maps, and videos available for purchase.*

HISTORIC ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA

<https://www.historic66az.com/>

CALIFORNIA HISTORIC ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION

<https://www.route66ca.org/>

ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS

<https://www.il66assoc.org/>

ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI

<https://www.missouri66.org/>

NEW MEXICO ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION

<https://www.rt66nm.org/>

OKLAHOMA ROUTE 66 ASSOCIATION

<https://www.oklahomaroute66.com/>

ROUTE 66 IN TEXAS

<https://www.rt66oftexas.com/>

Text and Maps by John King, July 2012

Edited by Todd Nemish, June 2022