

**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND CONVENES STRATEGIC ROUNDTABLE
TO DISCUSS HERITAGE TOURISM AND PRESERVATION
ALONG HISTORIC ROUTE 66**

Following the dramatic analysis and statistics revealed through the Route 66 Economic Impact Study of 2012, World Monuments Fund (WMF) convened a strategic roundtable to explore the sustainability of the highway as a cultural and recreational venue and an economic engine for the eight states the route passes through. The event, titled “The Road Ahead,” was held on November 20 and 21 at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California, close to Cars Land, a Disney venture inspired by Route 66. The event was organized by WMF with the support of American Express, and arranged as a series of panel discussions drawing more than 100 people representing government, business, tourism, and preservation.

Amir Eylon, Vice President of Partnership and Development Services for Brand USA, a public-private organization established to promote international travel to the United States, stated: "As the destination marketing origination for the United States, Brand USA has the opportunity to promote both our country's most recognizable icons and the hidden gems, like Route 66. As visitors explore Route 66, they go beyond the gateways and connect along a unique set of authentic experiences that they can only get here.

Route 66, also known as the Mother Road, runs from Chicago to Santa Monica and is America’s most celebrated automobile highway and a famous symbol of twentieth-century American culture and history. The construction of the interstate highways in the middle of the twentieth century bypassed many communities along Route 66, and subsequently numerous towns and cities along the route have faced economic hardship. The plight of these communities was the basis for the 2006 Disney/Pixar film *Cars*.

Economic Impact Study

“The Road Ahead” followed on the publication of an economic impact study completed in 2012 that shed light on the importance of heritage tourism and historic preservation along Route 66 as a contributor to local, state, and national economies. The study, undertaken by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, in collaboration with the US National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program and WMF, with the support of American Express, outlines the benefits of

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heritage preservation for the communities. Among the many noteworthy findings of the study are that tourists spend \$38 million per year in communities along Route 66; preservation through revitalization programs and museums add some \$94 million in annual investments; some 2,400 jobs are created each year; and that economic activities directly related to the route add some \$127 million annually to the GDP. Tourism is often the most important or only economic engine for many of the towns along the route, and Route 66-themed motels, restaurants, and shops anchor the downtowns of many small communities. The preservation of the highway and the revitalization of communities along it are thus inextricably linked. Developing new opportunities for communities along the route through partnerships and preservation activities is key to generating jobs and increasing economic growth.

The strategic roundtable highlighted stories of revitalization along the road and the broad international and national interest in traveling Route 66. Capitalizing on these successes and opportunities means effectively utilizing historic preservation as a tool for sustainable development, providing positive economic, social, and environmental benefits to the 5.5 million people who live along the Mother Road. The iconic landscape and idiosyncratic architecture of Route 66—as well as those dedicated to its stewardship—provide a unique backdrop for experiencing the most fundamental of American ideals: freedom, individuality, and opportunity. As a once thriving corridor of commerce and creativity, the Mother Road’s past serves as a strong foundation for a revitalized future, marrying old and new to continue to tell the many stories of America’s main street.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world’s treasured places. For nearly 50 years, working in 100 countries, its skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. www.wmf.org, www.twitter.com/worldmonuments, and www.facebook.com/worldmonuments.

Media Inquiries:

Brittany Brown, 646 424 9594, bbrown@wmf.org
Ben Haley, 646 424 9594, bhaley@wmf.org