



Parks & Open Spaces CASE STUDY

Illinois Historic Route 66 National Scenic Byway

Road of Dreams
Illinois Historic Route 66 National Scenic Byway

Designers: Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters
Frames and Supports : Best Exhibits



Route 66, the most famous road in America, born in 1926 as part of the new numbered highway network, helped to transform the American west from an isolated frontier to an economically vital region of the country.

Synonymous with fun and adventure, Route 66's charm lies in its diverse personality. So when Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point was contacted by the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, Inc., to help revive a 421-mile portion of the 2,500-mile route, they jumped at the chance to add to that personality by developing the byway's strong visual identity. "One of the main goals of the project," says Jim Buchholz, assistant director, Schmeckle Reserve, "is to organize the stories of Route 66 to create a unified, positive visitor experience that will keep tourists in the communities longer and encourage them to tell others about their trip."

The Illinois Route 66 project, funded by the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, the Illinois Department of Transportation and a Federal Highway Administration grant, features three phases. The first phase, which was completed in May of 2008, focused on developing an interpretive master plan incorporating multiple access points and hundreds of attractions from Chicago to St. Louis.

The second phase, completed in September of 2010, featured interpretive wayside panels with a design as unique as the route itself. Graphic panels shaped in a streamlined design went into simulated chrome supports meant to resemble features of 1950s automobiles. The frame and supports feature curved legs, shiny simulated chrome etched racing stripes, prominent Route 66 shield logos, and a tactile chevron inspired by cars of that era.

Schmeckle Reserve chose to partner with iZone to produce the high-quality durable high-pressure laminate panels that would be an integral part of telling the story of Route 66 for years to come. "We chose iZone because we've had great success with them in the past," says Ron Zimmerman, director, Schmeckle Reserve. "iZone has been very receptive to special orders and making needed changes, and has had a great response to our clients' concerns," he says.

“This was really a creative and innovative approach to wayside exhibits. The structures are very unique and really stand out. iZone panels are an essential part of that collective whole, and we’re very satisfied with the results.” iZone, based in Central Texas, manufactures full-color, durable all-weather signage and custom graphic laminate with the shortest lead time in the industry. Boasting a 10-year warranty and utilizing recycled paper content, iZone prints, presses, and finishes all under one roof, creating fade resistant, graffiti resistant, scratch resistant and waterproof panels.

The third phase of the project features highly visible ‘experience hubs’ in communities representing major regions along the byway. The nine-foot tall kiosks offer a collection of interpretive panels and maps, also produced by iZone, designed with simulated neon LED push-button lights and push-button audio units that play the popular 1946 song “Get Your Kicks On Route 66.”

For additional information on the Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project, visit <http://illinoisroute66.org/>.

