

Kansas Route 66 Historic District – North Baxter Springs
Name of Property

Cherokee County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
		buildings
1		sites
5		structures
		objects
6	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (vehicular)

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

foundation: Concrete
walls: N/A

roof: N/A
other: Asphalt Roadbed

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

Route 66 passes through a small portion of southeast Kansas in Cherokee County. All 13.2 miles of the historic Route 66 roadbed in Kansas are extant and remain drivable, although modern bypasses carry the majority of traffic around some of the older segments. This nomination covers a 2.1-mile linear section of the original route in a rural area north of Baxter Springs, between the National Register-listed Brush Creek bridge on the north and Willow Creek bridge on the south. (See Figures 1 through 3.)

Elaboration

The nominated stretch of Route 66 passes through rural Cherokee County, between Riverton to the east and Baxter Springs to the south. The 2.1-mile segment is oriented on a north-south path. The south portion of the two-lane road passes through an open terrain with farm fields and the occasional residence on either side. The north part of the nominated road is flanked by groves of trees on either side. The highway retains its early 20th century character, due in part to the construction of a new bypass connecting Riverton and Baxter Springs in the early 1960s.

This nomination includes one contributing site (the historic road) and five contributing structures. There are two large box bridge/culverts, two small box culverts, and one weir/culvert combination. The paving and the construction of the ancillary structures took place in 1923. Most of the original concrete railings flanking the various small culverts have been removed; those associated with the larger culverts have been replaced with modern guardrails.

Inventory of Resources

1. Roadbed (contributing site)

This section of road is approximately 25 feet wide, with virtually no paved shoulder areas. This is very much in keeping with the character of the original 24-foot wide historic roadbed. Both sides have narrow grassy shoulders that slope downward from the edge of the roadbed into ditches that carry rainwater runoff. The existing layer of pavement is in fair condition with typical minimal cracks.

The road includes several ancillary features that were built as part of the improvements in 1923. These various culverts have a common design and are constructed of reinforced poured coarse concrete with a gritty, sandy aggregate. The function of the culverts was (and remains) to carry water beneath the roadway and to the creeks and streams.

2. Culvert #1 (contributing structure; 37.067901 / -94.740954)

This structure is a single-bay box culvert measuring 26 feet wide and 20 feet tall. It has angled wingwalls that extend outward from the culvert, below road level. There are modern guardrails on either side of the road.

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3. Culvert #2 (contributing structure; 37.062806 / -94.740834)

This structure is a single-bay box culvert measuring 23½ feet wide and 13 feet tall. It has angled wingwalls that extend outward from the culvert, below road level. It has modern guardrails on either side of the road.

4. Culvert #3 (contributing structure; 37.059235 / -94.740797)

This is a single-bay box culvert measuring 9 feet wide and 6 feet tall. It has angled wingwalls that extend outward from the culvert, below road level. It has a weir 14 feet wide stretching from end to end of the wingwalls.

5. Culvert #4 (contributing structure; 37.057752 / -94.740797)

This is a single bay culvert measuring 9 feet wide and 6 feet tall. It has angled wingwalls that extend outward from the culvert, below road level.

6. Culvert #5 (contributing structure; 37.045974 / -94.740775) – KHRI # 021-0390-00064

This culvert is located at an intersection of two paved roads (North Willow Avenue/S.E. 50th Street and North 10th Street. Specifically, it crosses under 10th Street on the east side of Willow/50th. This is a single-bay culvert measuring 3 feet deep and 7½ feet wide. Each side features one angled wingwall extending outward from the culvert below road level. The concrete railing is still in place at the southwest corner of the intersection, but it is damaged. The railing posts have recessed panels on the outward faces. The rails connecting the posts have chamfered edges.

Integrity

The district retains a high degree of integrity, particularly of setting, feeling, location, and association. The roadway retains its original width, with only limited grassy shoulder space in some areas. This stretch of roadway includes several original concrete box culverts, though their integrity has been lessened with the loss of most of the concrete railings. This collection of resources meets the registration requirements outlined in the multiple property nomination for their contribution to the cultural landscape of Route 66.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1923-1961

Significant Dates

1923, 1961

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Builder: Koss Construction Co., Des Moines, IA

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the federal designation of Route 66 and ends in 1961 with the completion of the Interstate 44 bypass, which routed the highway away from this area.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

A 2.1 mile section of Kansas Route 66 roadbed north of Baxter Springs is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of transportation. The district is nominated as part of the *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas* multiple property nomination as examples of the Roadbed and Culvert property types.

Elaboration

*Baxter Springs History*¹

Baxter Springs is located in the extreme southeast section of Cherokee County in Spring Valley township near the Kansas border with both Oklahoma and Missouri. It is a short distance west of Spring River and 11 miles southeast of Columbus, the county seat. Cherokee County has unique beginnings as it was so closely located to then-pro-slavery Missouri and Indian Territory during its formative years in the mid-19th century. Euro-Americans were settling in the area by the 1850s, but Cherokee County did not officially form until after the Civil War in 1867. The U. S. military built rudimentary posts in the area, which was along a route connecting Fort Scott, Kansas to the north with Fort Smith, Arkansas to the south.

Officially incorporated in 1868, Baxter Springs, was named for John L. Baxter, who settled 160 acres near the Spring River in 1849. During the Civil War the Union established Fort Blair where a noteworthy confrontation occurred with Confederate guerilla troops lead by William Quantrill. After the war, the budding community became the first frontier cattle town on the southern border of Kansas. Higher prices for beef in the north made it cost effective for Texas cattle raisers to drive herds north. In 1868 a stockyard association offering corrals, water and grazing area for 20,000 head of cattle was established. The cattle trade spurred a considerable amount of activity in Baxter Springs with the community growing to over 4,000 by 1870. One account describes that “at least 80 carpenters were working in Baxter Springs with a backlog of work at least two weeks for each worker.” By the mid-1870s, railroads in Texas replaced the need for cattle drives north and the town’s population quickly dwindled to a mere 800 by 1876. During the 1880s, the community promoted the health benefits of the springs for which the community drew its name and sustained itself by promoting a sanatorium and bath house that attracted many visitors.

The next building boom for the community would not occur until the early 1900s when lead and zinc mining took hold as the leading industry. As early as 1876, lead and zinc deposits were discovered in nearby Joplin, Missouri and Galena, Kansas. A historical account of Baxter Springs notes that, “The mining district was extended from Sunnyside to Lincolnville then to Hattenville; from there to Cardine, Pitcher, Treece, Hockerville, and lastly to the doors of Baxter Springs...the foremost town of the entire mining district.”² This region of rich lead and zinc deposits located in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri became known as the Tri-State mining district.³

¹ This general history of Baxter Springs also is included in the recently approved state register nomination for the Ritz Theatre.

² “City of Baxter Springs Older than Newspaper,” *Baxter Springs Citizen*, 30 May 1946.

³ Baxter Springs Historical Society, *A Pictorial History of Baxter Springs, Kansas* (Marceline, MO: Heritage House Publishing, 1994), 74.

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The Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad developed through the city in 1870, connecting it with Joplin and Kansas City and bringing considerable opportunity for business.⁴ The city eventually became the junction of two divisions of the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad.⁵ Later in the 1920s, U.S. Route 66 developed through the city. According to the multiple property nomination, “hard-surfaced roads came relatively early to Cherokee County compared with other areas of Kansas,” due in large part to the success of the mining industry in the early 20th century.⁶

Once established, Cherokee County’s population grew steadily and was heavily influenced by the surrounding mining industry at the turn of the 20th century. The U.S. Federal census recorded 11,038 residents in Cherokee County in 1870, with the population peaking in 1900 at 42,694 and steadily declining throughout the 20th century.

Cherokee County Population⁷

1870: 11,038	1920: 33,609
1880: 21,905	1930: 31,457
1890: 27,770	1940: 29,817
1900: 42,694	1950: 25,144
1910: 38,162	1960: 22,279

Today, Baxter Springs has a population of just over 4,000.

Transportation History

The Federal Highway Act of 1921 ushered in a widespread and coordinated effort to build roads. State legislatures, including the Kansas Legislature, passed similar legislation promoting improved roads. According to the *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas* multiple property documentation form, “Through the end of 1925, federal and state authorities had supervised the construction of 460 miles of concrete roads, 350 miles of earth roads, 285 miles of gravel roads, 130 miles of brick roads and 60 miles of macadam roads for a total cost of nearly \$39 million. Of this amount \$16 million was federal funds.”⁸

The Federal Highway Commission designated U.S. Highway 66 as part of a new national interstate highway network on November 11, 1926. Route 66 was an east-west highway connecting Chicago to Los Angeles and included approximately 2,300 miles that traversed eight states. The route crossed a small portion of southeast Cherokee County, Kansas, connecting Missouri with Oklahoma. This path carried cross-country traffic until 1961 when the Interstate 44 bypass was completed and routed the

⁴ William Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas, vol. 2* (Chicago: Andreas Publishing Co., 1883), 1161.

⁵ Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedic of State History, vol. 1* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 160-162.

⁶ Elizabeth Rosin, *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Topeka: Kansas Historical State Historical Society, 2003), E8.

⁷ Historical Census Browser. Retrieved 28 July 2014 from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>.

⁸ Rosin, *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas*, E7, quoting W. V. Buck, “Kansas Highway Development and Road Legislation,” in *The History of the State of Kansas*, ed. William E. Connelley, (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc. 1928), 984.

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highway away from this area. U. S. 66 was removed from the U.S. Highway System on June 27, 1985.⁹

Development of Route 66 through Baxter Springs

Route 66 entered Cherokee County east of Galena, passing the Eagle-Picher Smelter, turning south proceeding along Galena's Main Street. The road turned west toward Riverton and eventually curved south at the Brush Creek bridge headed toward Baxter Springs. In town, the road followed Military Avenue through downtown, proceeding south to the Oklahoma State line. Figure 3.

This nominated segment of U. S. Route 66 north of Baxter Springs, located between the Brush Creek bridge on the north and Willow Creek bridge on the south, was a portion of Federal Highway Project #142. The project had an estimated total of \$142,000. The breakdown was presented as follows in *The Baxter Springs Herald*.¹⁰

Federal Aid:	\$69,000
State Aid	\$30,000
Joplin & Baxter Road boosters	\$10,000
Donated by others to the District	\$15,750

The estimated cost of the bridges was to be \$44,000. But, after applying the various donations and Federal Aid, the county's part totaled about \$13,000. Federal Aid on the proposed extension of the Spring Valley concrete road, west of Riverton, was available in the sum of \$15,000 per mile.¹¹

The Cherokee County Commissioners signified that the type of road to be used shall be of uniform thickness of coarse concrete and be 18 feet wide.

Bids were advertised and then opened on March 12, 1923. The Koss Construction Company of Des Moines, Iowa, was selected as the lowest bidder for the construction of the road. The project called for a uniform seven-inch slab extending 4 ½ miles for a total of \$164,817.17. The Maxwell Construction Company of Columbus, Kansas was awarded the contract for the construction of four bridges as follows: 130-foot rainbow arch bridge, \$25,937.40; 18-foot bridge, \$5,933.96; 16 foot bridge, \$3,118.21; and an 80-foot bridge, \$11,467.70. The bridge contract totaled \$46,457.17.¹² (The 80-foot Willow Creek bridge and the rainbow arch Brush Creek bridge are at the north and south ends, respectively, of the nominated area. The Brush Creek Bridge is listed in the National Register, but the Willow Creek bridge was replaced with a newer structure.)

The March 15, 1923 edition of the *Baxter Springs Citizen* includes editorial remarks about the route chosen for the important new highway. It had been determined that the route would reach Baxter Springs from the east, but, as the editorial pointed out, it would be more beneficial to the city if the highway connected with Military Avenue, the main thoroughfare, and proceeded through the downtown. The editorial advocated working with the communities of Hockerville and Quapaw in Oklahoma because they stood to benefit if the route came south out of Baxter Springs. Indeed, this is the route the highway would take.

⁹ A detailed history of U.S. Route 66 through Kansas can be found here: Rosin, *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas*.

¹⁰ "Concrete Road Now Assured," *The Baxter Springs Herald*, 8 February 1923.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Des Moines Firm to Build Road," *Baxter Springs Citizen*, 12 March 1923.

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The development of the road brought high hopes for economic development and prosperity. Evidence of this come with one particularly interesting newspaper reference in the *Baxter Springs Citizen*, which referenced an article published in the *Kansas City Star* recalling a convention of Ford dealers where an unnamed speaker noted that “four cities of the United States were destined to experience unusual growth in industry and population during the year 1924. Los Angeles was the first city he named, Long Beach was the second, the third was a city in the East and the fourth was Baxter Springs, Kan.”¹³

This stretch of highway was part of the original segments designated by the federal government on November 11, 1926. The route largely bypassed Kansas, due to the considerable lobbying for a southern route by Tulsa resident and long-time Good Roads advocate Cyrus Avery. He served on the Federal Highway Commission’s Joint Board, which developed the initial concept of this interstate highway.¹⁴

Route 66 through Kansas was featured as part of Tour 7 in the New Deal-era auto-touring guide to Kansas. The Work Projects Administration’s *Kansas: A Guide to the Sunflower State* was published in 1939 as part of the American Guide Series that included a travel volume for each state. The guide focused less on the road itself and more on its setting, noting the Galena Smelter and the various lead and zinc mines surrounding Baxter Springs. The details about Baxter Springs give little information on tourist accommodations along the route, instead focusing on the area’s 1860s-era history.¹⁵

This section of road remained an integral part of Kansas Route 66 until a bypass was completed in the early 1960s, which was part of a comprehensive road improvement project that included the construction of the Interstate 44 bypass. As a result, the road has largely served local traffic and tourists traveling the old route. The Kansas Department of Transportation designated Kansas Route 66 a Kansas Historic Byway in 2011.¹⁶

¹³ “Nation’s Eyes are on Baxter,” *Baxter Springs Citizen*, 28 February 1924.

¹⁴ Rosin, *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas*, E4.

¹⁵ James R. Shortridge, ed., *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas: Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers’ Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984): 439-442.

¹⁶ “Kansas Historic Route 66 Byway receives state designation,” Kansas Department of Transportation news release, 29 November 2011. Copy on file with nomination.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

The Baxter Springs Citizen. 8 February 1923; 28 February 1923; 12 March 1923; 15 March 1923. (Baxter Springs, KS.)

The Baxter Springs Herald. 8 February 1923. (Baxter Springs, KS.)

Blackmar, Frank. *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, vol. 1*. Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912.

Cutler, William. *History of the State of Kansas, vol. 2*. Chicago: Andreas Publishing Co., 1883.

Cherokee County Commission. Meeting Minutes for January 29, 1923; February 6, 1923; 12 March 1923; 21 May 1923. Cherokee County Genealogical and Historical Library, Columbus, KS. (Copies on file with nomination.)

Historical Census Browser. Retrieved 28 July 2014 from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>.

The Joplin Globe. 8 February 1923. (Joplin, MO.)

Rosin, Elizabeth. *Historic Resources of Route 66 in Kansas* National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2003.

_____. Kansas Historic Resources Inventory Reconnaissance Form # 021-0390-00063. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 2002.

Rowland, Mary. "Kansas and the Highways, 1917-1930," in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 5, 1 (Spring 1982): 33-51.

Shortridge, James R., ed. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas: Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Kansas*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _N/A_

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 26.5

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____ (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | <u>37.071274</u>
Latitude: | <u>-94.741156</u>
Longitude: | 3 | _____
Latitude: | _____
Longitude: |
| 2 | <u>37.040590</u>
Latitude: | <u>-94.740587</u>
Longitude: | 4 | _____
Latitude: | _____
Longitude: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The 2.1-mile linear boundary includes the 25-foot-wide roadway, its associated historic culverts, and the adjacent right-of-way, all of which is owned and maintained by Cherokee County. The north boundary point (37.071274, -94-741156) is located just south of the Brush Creek Bridge, where a new/modern road has been installed. The south boundary point (37.040590 -94.740587 is at the north edge of Baxter Springs where a modern bridge crosses Willow Creek.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

This linear boundary includes the historic roadbed and associated features within a 2.1-mile stretch. This section represents the portion of the road with the highest integrity.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marla Larison (with KSHS staff edits)
organization Kansas Rt. 66 Historic Byway date July 15, 2014
street & number 3306 SE Boston Mills Road telephone 620-674-8449
city or town Columbus state KS zip code 66725
e-mail _____

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Cherokee County Commissioners
street & number 110 W. Maple St. telephone 620-429-3256
city or town Columbus state KS 66725

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: U.S. Route 66 Historic District – North Baxter Springs

City or Vicinity: Baxter Springs

County: Cherokee State: KS

Photographer: Sarah J. Martin

Date

Photographed: July 2, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number (see figure 4 for photo directions):

- 1 of 10: Modern road sign at north edge of district
- 2 of 10: Route 66 roadway at north end of district where old road bypasses NR-listed Marsh Arch bridge, camera facing N
- 3 of 10: Route 66 roadway near north end of district, north of bridge/culvert #1, camera facing N
- 4 of 10: Route 66 roadway, just south of bridge/culvert #2, camera facing S
- 5 of 10: Route 66 roadway at south end of district, camera facing N
- 6 of 10: Roadway at bridge/culvert #1, showing modern guardrails, camera facing S
- 7 of 10: Bridge/culvert #1, camera facing S
- 8 of 10: Bridge/culvert #2, camera facing S
- 9 of 10: Bridge/culvert #4, camera facing N
- 10 of 10: Bridge/culvert #5, camera NW

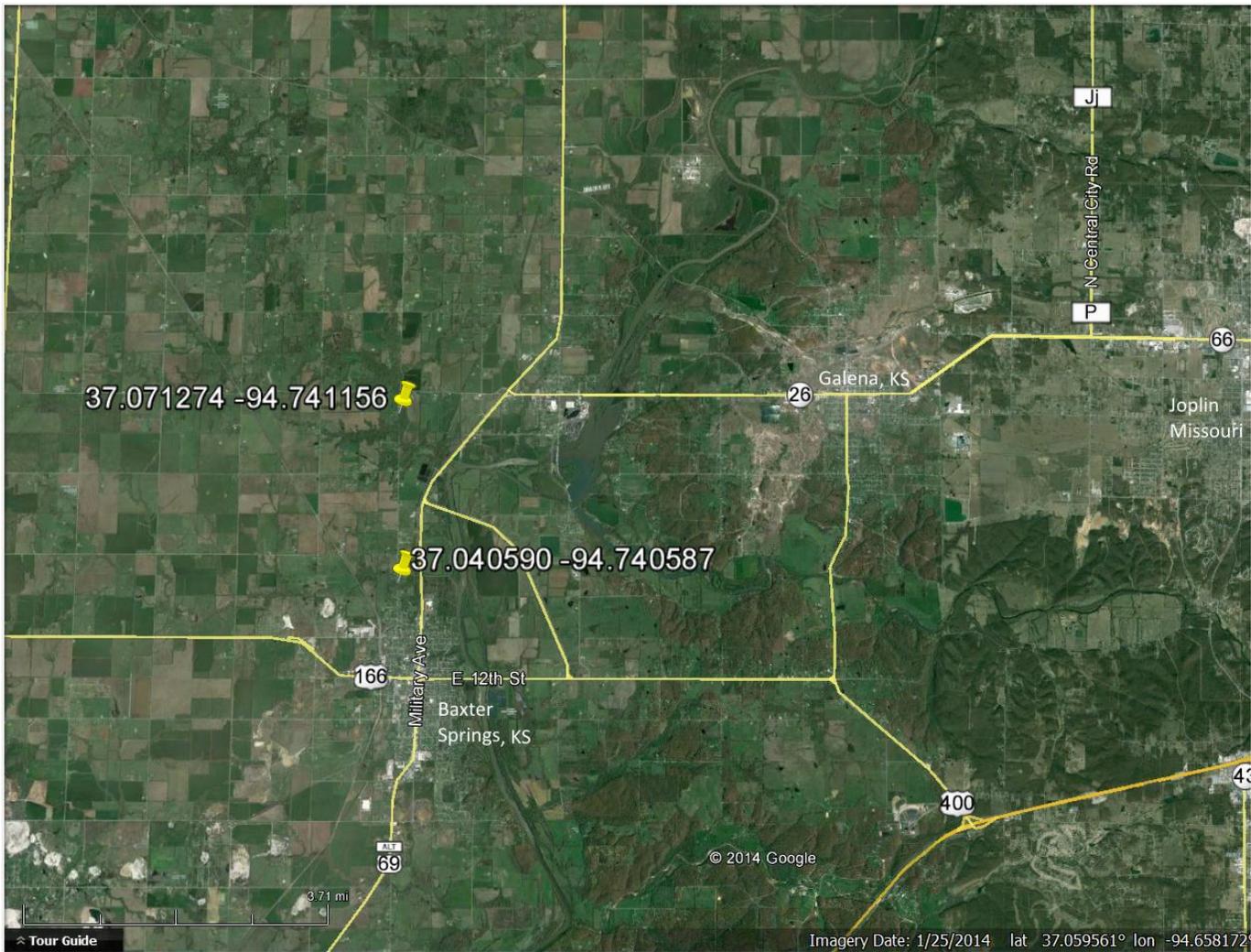
Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

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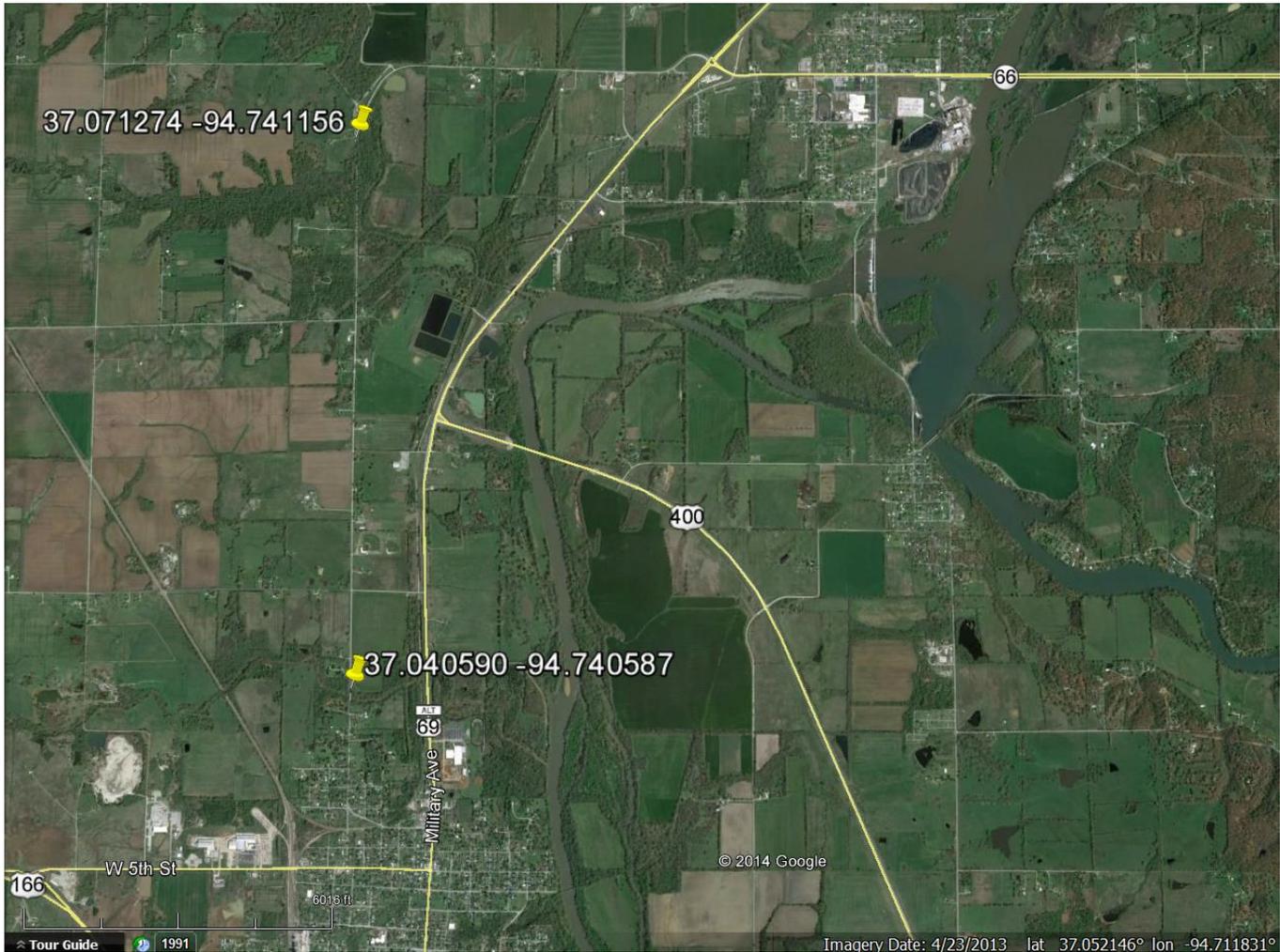
Figure 1: Contextual Aerial Image showing the nominated section of Route 66 north of Baxter Springs. Google Earth 2014.



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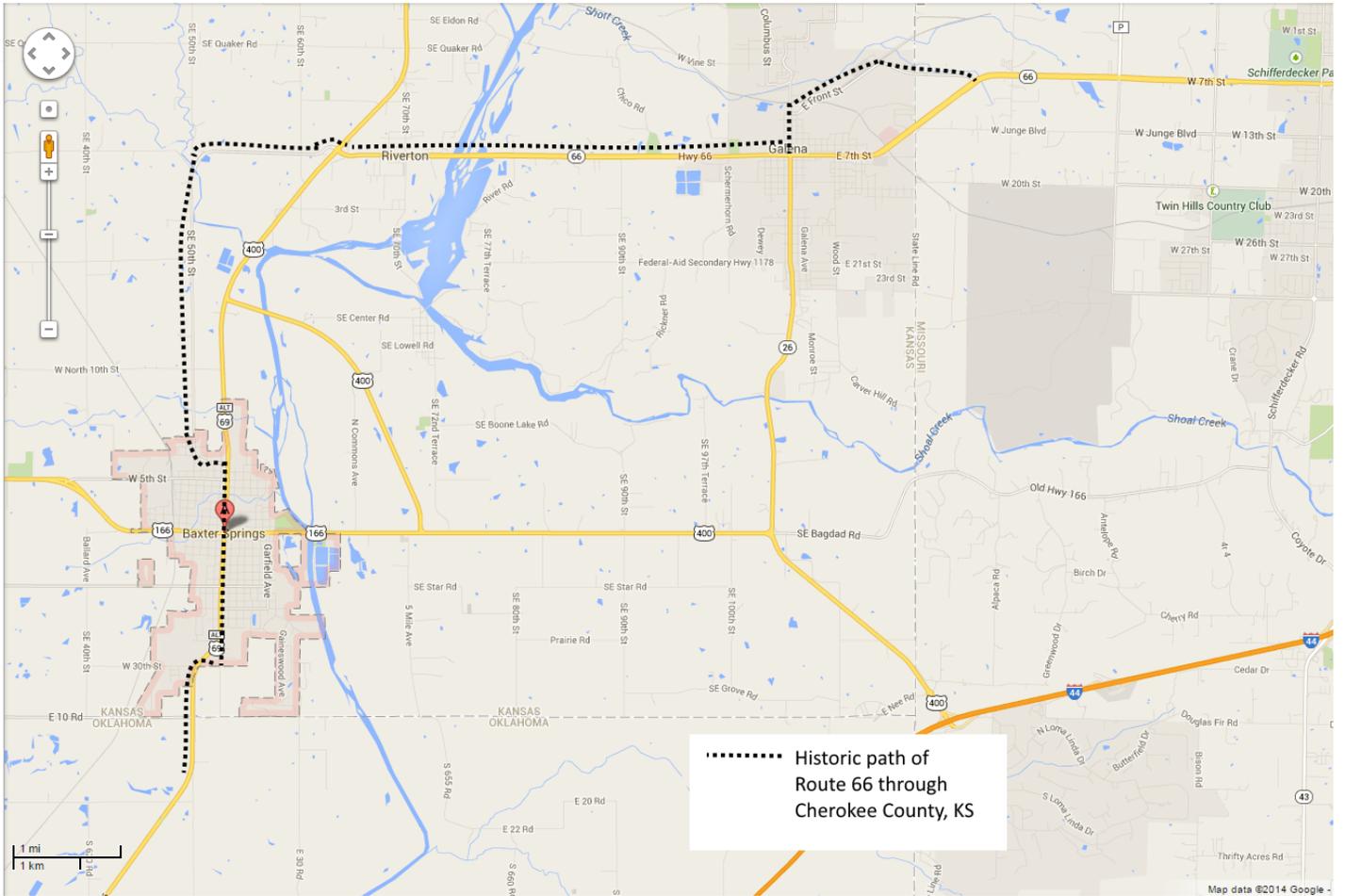
Figure 2: Close-in Aerial Image showing the nominated section of Route 66 north of Baxter Springs. Google Earth 2014.



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Figure 3: Map showing historic path of Route 66 through Cherokee County. Google Maps, 2014.



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Figure 4: Photo directions. Google Earth 2014.

