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**Illinois Office of Tourism Launches New Video Series:
“Illinois Recharged: Real Stories on Route 66”**

*New content series spotlights influencer journey to promote travel on Illinois’ historic Route 66
ahead of centennial anniversary*

CHICAGO - The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Office of Tourism announces the release of its new video series, [Illinois Recharged: Real Stories on Route 66](#), produced in collaboration with Matador Network and Rivian Automotive, Inc. This three-part video series showcases the iconic Illinois stretch of Route 66, as experienced by three travel influencers and friends—[Tonia Hope](#), [Phil Clavert](#) and [Brian McIntosh](#)—traveling in a Rivian R1S electric vehicle (EV), custom-wrapped with Route 66 branding.

“Route 66 is a cornerstone of Illinois’ tourism industry, and the businesses along this historic route play a key role in our state’s economy,” **said DCEO Director Kristin Richards**. “Illinois Recharged: Real Stories on Route 66 will spotlight the stories of these businesses and encourage more visitors to explore and support the communities that make the Illinois stretch of Route 66 so special.”

“We are thrilled to launch this new video series celebrating the Mother Road’s rich history ahead of the Route 66 Centennial anniversary in 2026,” **said Daniel Thomas, deputy director of DCEO, Office of Tourism**. “This initiative highlights a future-forward way to enjoy Route 66, while promoting Illinois’ commitment to sustainable travel. By showcasing the local businesses and attractions along Route 66, we hope this series will inspire visitors to plan their own EV adventure in Illinois.”

“Road trips are about variety and surprises, and this series really captures that spirit with impactful small businesses, thought-provoking historical sites and tastes of timeless tradition,” **says Matador Network CEO Ross Borden**. “Plus that bright blue, Enjoy Illinois-wrapped Rivian R1S cruising down scenic highways from Chicago to the Mississippi is a sight to see, and really ties in both the past and future of this storied roadway.”

Their 300-mile journey begins at the famous Begin Route 66 sign in downtown Chicago and continues south, ending at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge in Granite City. Along the way, the influencers visit notable landmarks and unique craftsmen, artists and small businesses, many of them in our [Illinois Made](#) program, providing an authentic snapshot of life on Route 66 today.

Episode Highlights:



- **Episode 1:** The adventure begins by exploring some of Chicago's most iconic attractions, with stops at landmarks like Navy Pier and Illinois Made Makers like Justice of the Pies and You Are Beautiful.
- **Episode 2:** The influencers dive into Route 66's rich history, visiting significant landmarks such as Old Joliet Prison in Joliet, the Route 66 Hall of Fame Museum in Pontiac and the fully restored Ambler-Becker Texaco Gas Station in Dwight.
- **Episode 3:** The journey concludes with a taste of Illinois' local flavor and charm, featuring stops at Ropp Jersey Cheese in Normal, Epiphany Farms restaurant in Bloomington and the whimsical Pink Elephant Antique Mall in Livingston.

In addition to showcasing the influencers' experience on the Mother Road, the series also highlights the convenience of [EV travel in Illinois](#), thanks to the state's extensive network of EV charging stations.

"Rivian proudly builds all of our vehicles in Normal, Illinois," **said Alan Hoffman, chief policy officer at Rivian.** "This series showcases the ease of EV travel throughout the state of Illinois, and we're thrilled to have played a role in celebrating the historic Route 66."

This new video series builds upon the previously launched [Real People, Real Stories, Real Outdoors](#) collaboration with Matador Network, which captured the essence of Illinois through exploring its great outdoors.

All three episodes of Illinois Recharged: Real Stories on Route 66 are now available to stream on [The Roku Channel](#), reaching audiences in U.S., Canada and U.K. To watch the episodes and learn more about Illinois' stretch of Route 66, visit [EnjoyIllinois.com](#) or find the series on [Enjoy Illinois' YouTube Channel](#).

About the Illinois Office of Tourism

The Illinois Office of Tourism leads tourism industry efforts to inspire visitation to, and within Illinois, resulting in significant economic impact and quality-of-life benefits for all Illinois residents. We are committed to making Illinois a model of inclusivity and celebration of diversity.

Illinois is a state that embodies innovation, craft, surprise and creativity. Whether domestic and international visitors are traveling for business or leisure, the Illinois Office of Tourism is their trusted guide in crafting an unforgettable experience.

To learn more, visit [EnjoyIllinois.com](#).

About Rivian

Rivian (NASDAQ: RIVN) is an American automotive manufacturer that develops and builds category-defining electric vehicles and accessories. The company creates innovative and technologically advanced products that are designed to excel at work and play with the goal of



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accelerating the global transition to zero-emission transportation and energy. Rivian vehicles are built in the United States and are sold directly to consumer and commercial customers. The company provides a full suite of services that address the entire lifecycle of the vehicle and stay true to its mission to keep the world adventurous forever. Rivian vehicles all share a common goal — preserving the natural world for generations to come. Learn more about the company visit <https://www.rivian.com>.

About Matador Network

Matador Network is the Internet's #1 adventure lifestyle publisher. Matador Network is a leading lifestyle brand redefining travel media with original shows and docs, cutting-edge adventure stories, and global social commentary. Our audience of active and affluent explorers are based in large cities across North America, Europe and beyond. To learn more visit <matadornetwork.com>.