



City of Needles

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Vice Mayor Ellen Campbell
Councilmember Tona Belt
Councilmember Jamie McCorkle
Councilmember JoAnne Pogue
Councilmember Henry Longbrake
Councilmember Larry Ford
City Manager Patrick Martinez

Needles Route 66 Arch Project – T-Mobile Hometown Grant Proposal

Population: 4,900 (rural, <50,000)

Entity Type: Local government (eligible applicant)

Community Background

Founded in 1883, the City of Needles is a historic Route 66 community nestled along the western banks of the Colorado River in eastern San Bernardino County, within California's Mojave Desert. Once a bustling stop along the famed "Mother Road," Needles has a proud legacy rooted in tourism, rail, and river commerce. Today, the city serves as a gateway to the Mojave National Preserve and continues to welcome travelers exploring the iconic Route 66. Despite its rich cultural and historical assets, Needles is one of the most disadvantaged and isolated rural communities in California. Median household income is \$48,061 and approximately 55% of residents receive public assistance. Needles is also home to members of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, adding cultural diversity and heritage but underscoring the need for economic opportunity and revitalization.

Project Overview: Route 66 Arch – A Landmark for the Next Century

To celebrate its deep connection to Route 66 and revitalize its historic downtown, the City of Needles proposes constructing a **13.5-foot by 16.5-foot metal Route 66-themed novelty drive-through arch**. Designed in the shape of the classic Route 66 highway shield, this distinctive structure will sit near the Needles Train Park and historic El Garces Building along Front Street, allowing vehicles to pass through and creating a unique **photo opportunity**.

The arch will:

- Serve as a **visual anchor** for downtown revitalization.
- Mark the **upcoming 100th Anniversary of Route 66 in 2026**.
- Attract travelers, encourage social media sharing, and drive foot traffic to local businesses.
- Reignite civic pride in a historically underserved area.

Community Engagement

- The Route 66 Arch has been discussed for nearly a decade through **public meetings, visioning sessions, and City Council workshops**.
- More than **150 residents** have participated in design discussions; surveys and social media polls show strong public enthusiasm for creating a Route 66 landmark.
- Local business owners have voiced support, citing increased visitor stops and sales opportunities.
- The **Fort Mojave Indian Tribe** and the **Needles Chamber of Commerce** have expressed partnership interest.

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Budget & Funding Plan

Item	Cost
Steel fabrication & powder coat	\$28,000
Structural engineering & design	\$5,000
Site prep & concrete foundation	\$6,000
Electrical & solar LED lighting	\$4,500
Smart QR tourism sign / plaque	\$1,500
Installation (crane & labor)	\$4,000
Permitting & inspections	\$1,000
Contingency (10%)	\$5,000
Total Project Cost	\$55,000

- **City of Needles match / in-kind:** \$5,000 (completion of structural engineering and design, in-kind match of staff time to complete).
- **T-Mobile Request: \$50,000** (covers fabrication, lighting, smart sign, and installation).

Project Timeline (Shovel-Ready)

Phase	Date
Final design & permit approval	March 2026 (complete)
Fabrication contract awarded	April 2026
Steel fabrication & finishing	May – July 2026
Site preparation & foundation	August 2026
Arch delivery & installation	September 2026
Lighting/tech setup & inspection	October 2026
Ribbon Cutting & Centennial Kick-off	November 2026

All city approvals are complete; building permit ready to issue once funding is confirmed. No Caltrans or state highway approvals required for this site.

Letters of Support (to be attached)

1. Needles Chamber of Commerce / Visitor Center
2. Needles Regional Museum
3. Needles Tourism

These letters confirm community buy-in, business support, and the project's alignment with regional tourism goals.

Technology & Innovation Tie-In

- **Solar-powered LED lighting** with smart controls for energy efficiency.
- **Interactive QR code plaque** linking visitors to city tourism pages, Route 66 history, and local businesses.
- Opportunity for **T-Mobile brand placement** as "Connectivity Partner," reinforcing the company's rural technology mission.

Impact & Measurability

- **Visitor Growth:** Over 500,000 visitors annually stop in Needles (Jack Smith Park & river tourism). Projected 10% increase in downtown stops = +50,000 visitors/year.
- **Local Economy:** Each visitor stop estimated at \$12 average spend = ~\$600,000 new downtown revenue annually.

- **Digital Reach:** Social media posts tagged #Route66Arch expected to generate >1M impressions annually.
 - **Equity:** Benefits low-income and tribal residents by increasing small business traffic and local job hours for fabrication/installation.
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Sustainability & Maintenance

- **Ownership:** City of Needles Public Works Department will maintain the arch.
 - **Funding:** Annual maintenance cost (\$1,000) absorbed into existing Parks & Recreation budget.
 - LED/solar system chosen for **low operational cost and long lifespan.**
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Grant Request & Why T-Mobile Matters

We respectfully request **\$50,000** from the T-Mobile Hometown Grant program to close the final funding gap for construction and installation. T-Mobile's investment will:

- **Deliver a long-awaited landmark** just in time for the Route 66 Centennial.
 - Showcase **T-Mobile's commitment to small-town revitalization, connectivity, and cultural preservation.**
 - Provide a **high-visibility, brandable destination** for travelers, with a direct technology story (smart signage & solar lighting).
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Conclusion

The Route 66 Arch will be more than a structure—it will be a **symbol of resilience, identity, and renewal** for Needles. With T-Mobile's support, this project will transform our historic downtown into a destination, fuel economic activity, and strengthen civic pride in one of California's most rural, underserved towns.

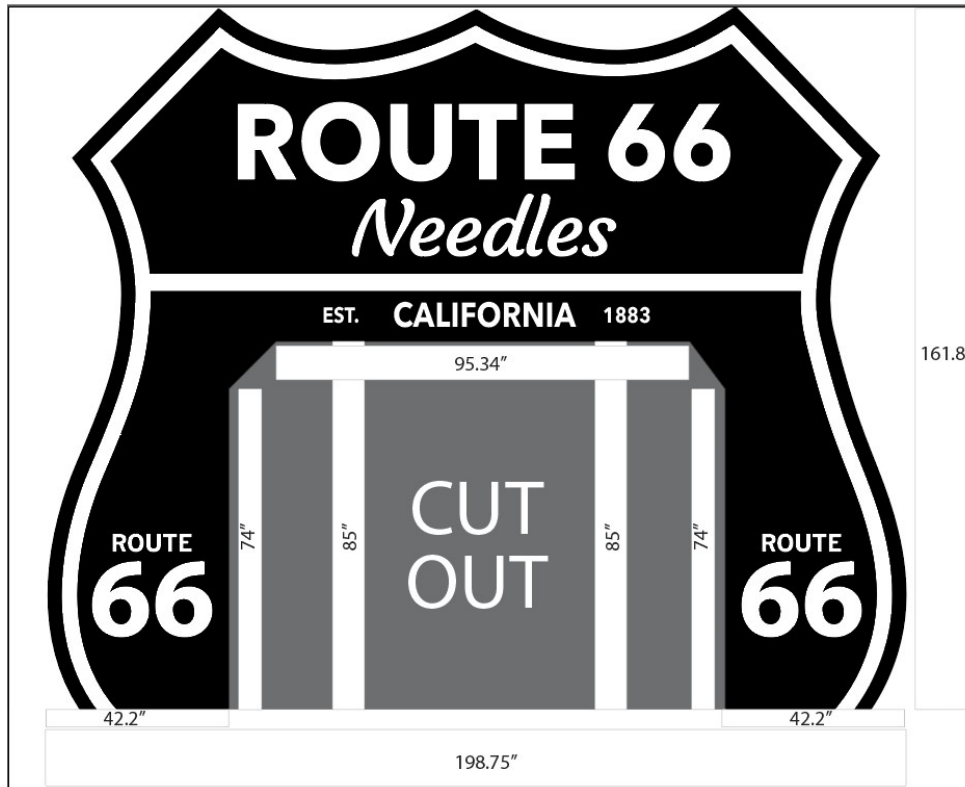
Together, we can ensure Needles remains a vital part of the **Route 66 story for the next 100 years**—and celebrate it with a modern, tech-connected landmark that proudly says: *This is Needles.*

Attachments:

- Rendering of proposed arch & site map
- Five letters of support
- Photos of downtown/Front Street
- Final design & permit approval letter

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Proposed Project – Installation of a 13 ½ ft x 16 ½ ft metal Route 66 Drive-Thru Arch



Proposed Location – Front Street at the City of Needles Train Park

