

## United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Route 66 in Wheeler County, Texas

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: Route 66 in Texas MPS

## 2. Location

Street &amp; number: South side frontage road of I-40 between Gray County (TX) and Beckham County (OK)

City or town: Shamrock

State: Texas

County: Wheeler

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☒

## 1. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
(☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my  
opinion, the property (☒ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☒ statewide ☐ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official / Title

8/7/2020

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

### Category of Property

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

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
8	0	structures
0	0	objects
8	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** Transportation: Road-related: roadbed

**Current Functions:** Transportation: Road-related: roadbed

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** No Style

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Concrete, Asphalt

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7 through 10)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** A, C

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Transportation, Engineering

**Period of Significance:** 1932-1970

**Significant Dates:** 1932, 1965, 1970

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Texas Highway Department (engineer and builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 11 through 17)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 18-19)

**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 #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☒ Other state agency (*TXDOT*)
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** approximately 85 acres

### Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates: (See continuation sheet 20)

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

**Verbal Boundary Description:** (See continuation sheet 21)

**Boundary Justification:** (See continuation sheet 21)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Leslie Wolfenden and Gregory Smith  
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Date: November 2019

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets 22-27)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets 28-32)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets 33-44)

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## Photograph Log

Route 66 in Wheeler County  
Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas  
Photographed 2019 by Leslie Wolfenden (Texas Historical Commission)

Photo 1  
Segment A, West End

Photo 2  
Segment A, East End

Photo 3  
Segment A, Concrete Box Culvert (south side) TxDOT 73-00 NC-7

Photo 4  
View at culvert looking east

Photo 5  
Segment B, West End

Photo 6  
Section B at Culvert B-07, Looking West

Photo 7  
Section B at Culvert B-07, Looking East

Photo 8  
Segment C, West End

Photo 9  
View on a rise looking east between Culverts C-02 and C-03.

Photo 10  
Segment D, West End

Photo 11  
View at Culvert D-03 looking south.

Photo 12  
Segment E, West End

Photo 13  
Segment E, East End, facing west

Photo 14  
View at Culvert E-02 looking east.

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Photo 15

Segment F, West end

Photo 16

View at Culvert F-02 looking west

Photo 17

Segment G, East End

Photo 18

View from top of rise looking west

Photo 19

Segment H, West End

Photo 20

Segment H, East End

Photo 21

Feature No. H-02 Concrete Pipe Culvert (south side)

Photo 22

Feature No. H-02 Concrete Pipe Culvert with inlet drain (north side), looking west

Photo 23

View at Culvert H-04 looking west

Photo 24

View at Culvert H-04 southwest at shelterbelt, looking southwest

**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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## Description

This property consists of eight discontinuous concrete segments of the original Route 66 highway across Wheeler County, Texas. Route 66 was designated as an official US highway in 1927, but the roadway in Wheeler County was not fully paved until 1932. It served as the roadbed for Route 66 from 1927 until 1970 when Interstate 40 was completed to the north. After the completion of Interstate 40, these segments of Route 66 were converted into the south-side frontage road of the interstate. The district is identified as Segments A, B, C, and D (west of Shamrock), and Segments E, F, G, and H (east of Shamrock). All eight segments are straight thoroughfares that follow rolling topography through open ranchland and farmland, and each has concrete culverts to allow dry creek drainage. The gaps between the nominated segments include a widened section of Route 66 in the city of Shamrock (12<sup>th</sup> Street) and looping roads leading to and from overpass bridges at the county road crossovers, which were between 1965 and 1970. These were not included in this nomination as they do not retain historic 1930s concrete pavement. There are few modern intrusions along the nominated sections, which retain a good degree of integrity and continue to evoke the era of pre-interstate highway travel in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

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Wheeler County is on the eastern edge of the Texas Panhandle, abutting the Oklahoma border, and is comprised of rolling prairies. The landscape consists primarily of native grasses with trees and shrubs along drainage areas of creeks and consists primarily of ranching and agricultural lands.

Old Route 66 in Wheeler County runs east-west at the south end of the county and consists of approximately 30 miles of roadway roughly parallel to Interstate 40 in a rural setting, and as a local street in the city of Shamrock (pop. approximately 1,800). These eight segments were built in the early 1930s and are the last extant portions of the original 18-foot-wide concrete pavement in Wheeler County. They follow what became standardized construction techniques for much of Route 66: pavement laid in two 9-foot-wide lanes, separated by a central seam to control cracking, with abutting slabs tied together with steel bars. Each poured section measures approximately 38' in length, and the linear expansion gaps between them create an audible rhythm when driving along the road. Concrete culverts along the road were widened between 1939 and 1941 to allow for 3-foot asphalt shoulders. The north side of these culverts were extended again in 1947-1952 when a lane was added; the north culverts were replaced mainly by inlet drains with metal grates.

Interstate 40 in Wheeler County was completed in 1968 (west of Shamrock) and 1970 (east of Shamrock), after which Route 66 became the south-side frontage road for the interstate. Both highway numbers continue to be shown on maps to this day even though Route 66 was officially decommissioned by the federal and state governments in 1985. The setting has been somewhat compromised by the construction of interstate 40 but the rural feeling is nevertheless intact.

## West of Shamrock

### Segment A

Segment A is approximately 0.8 miles of highway approximately 0.83 miles east of the Gray and Wheeler County line. It begins just east of County Line Road and runs in a straight line east to approximately 0.46 miles west of CR 2. The landscape to the south consists of ranchland, three farmsteads (c 1930-1955), and a 'shelterbelt' of trees in a double row (approximately 2,004 feet in length) near CR 2. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 38 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are some narrow patch areas across the road. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete pavement to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The culvert was extended in 1939 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in

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order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1947-48, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1965-68 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **Segment B**

Segment B is approximately 2.67 miles of highway approximately 3 miles east of the Gray County line. It begins approximately 90 feet east of County Road 3 and runs in a straight line east almost to County Road 6 (approx. 1,680 feet west of CR 6). The landscape to the south consists of ranchland, some irrigated cropland, and a 'shelterbelt' of planted evergreen and deciduous trees in a double row (approximately 2,500 feet in length) near County Road 6. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 42 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are some narrow patch areas across the road, two areas of wider asphalt patching (one approx. 74' wide, one approx. 41' wide) that cover both lanes of roadway, and one area of wider asphalt patching (approx. 225' wide) that covers only the east-bound lane. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The seven concrete box culverts were extended in 1939 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1947-48, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced by inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1965-68 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **Segment C**

West of Lela, Segment C is approximately 2.4 miles of highway that starts approximately 1,305 feet east of County Road 6 and runs in a straight line east to almost County Road 9 (approx. 2,090 feet west of CR 90). The landscape to the south consists of ranchland, some irrigated cropland, and four farmsteads (c. 1930-1970) consisting of main house with outbuildings. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 35 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow patch areas across the road and one area of wider asphalt patching (approx. 218' wide) that covers both lanes of roadway. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The nine concrete culverts were extended in 1939 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1947-48, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1965-68 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **Segment D**

West of Shamrock, Segment D is approximately 3.53 miles of highway that starts approximately 1,360 feet east of FM 1547, just east of the town of Lela, and runs in a straight line to almost to State Spur 556 on the west side of Shamrock (approx. 2,440 feet from State Spur 556). The landscape consists of ranchland, a 'shelterbelt' of planted evergreen and deciduous trees in a double row (approximately 2,085 feet in length) east of FM 1547, a RV park campground (1968 per current owner), two farmsteads (c. 1950-1975), and a mobile home (2012). The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 35 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow patch areas across the road (probably due to removal or repair of culverts) and six



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areas of wider asphalt patching (approx. 36' wide, one 137' wide, one 107' wide, one 135' wide, one 139' wide, one 78' wide) that covers both lanes of roadway and two areas of wider asphalt patching (approx. one 149' wide, one 126' wide) that covers only the east-bound lane. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The nine concrete culverts were extended in 1939 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1947-48, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1965-68 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **East of Shamrock**

#### **Segment E**

Located 0.76 miles east of CR 18, just east of Shamrock, Segment E runs east for approximately 0.5 miles of highway to just east of CR 19 (north side of interstate). The landscape consists of ranchland and a small modern metal shed for oil or gas. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 37 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow asphalt patch areas across the road. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culvert were constructed in 1932. The one concrete box culvert was extended in 1941 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1950-52, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1968-70 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

#### **Segment F**

Just east of Shamrock and separated from Segment E by approximately 0.5 miles of asphalt, Segment F runs east for approximately 0.8 miles between Airport Road and FM 2168/CR 21. The landscape consists of ranchland, a 'shelterbelt' of planted evergreen and deciduous trees in a double row (approximately 1,187 feet in length), three farmsteads (c 1930-50s), and one mobile home. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 47 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow asphalt patch areas across the road and one wider patch on the south lane that is approximately 79 feet wide. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The two concrete culverts were extended in 1941 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1950-52, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1968-70 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

#### **Segment G**

To the east of Segment F, Segment G heads east for approximately 1.0 miles, starting about 0.57 miles east of FM 2168/CR 21 and ending about 0.55 miles west of FM 1802/CR 23. The landscape consists of ranchland and

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agricultural land. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 48 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow asphalt patch areas across the road. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The two concrete box culverts were extended in 1941 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1950-52, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1968-70 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **Segment H**

West of the Texas/Oklahoma border, Segment H is approximately 2.31 miles of highway that starts approximately 1.2 miles east of CR 26 and runs in a straight line to almost the Oklahoma border or to approximately 2,490 feet east of CR 29. The landscape consists of ranchland, a 'shelterbelt' of planted evergreen and deciduous trees in a double row (approximately 5,060 feet in length) at the east end of the segment and remnants of two farmsteads. The private land is marked off by fence lines and utility poles. Interstate 40 lies approximately 60 feet to the north separated from the frontage road by a grass median. There are several narrow asphalt patch areas across the road and a section of the road has multiple cracks and asphalt paving near the H-2 pipe culvert, probably caused by water and weather issues. The start and stop points are indicated by changing from the original concrete paving to more modern asphalt paving. This segment has 18-foot-wide concrete pavement with three-foot-wide asphalt concrete shoulders on both sides. The concrete paved road and culverts were constructed in 1932. The four culverts were extended in 1941 when the asphalt shoulders were added. The road was widened again on the north side only, in order to add another highway lane to Route 66 in 1950-52, which is when the north-side culverts were removed and replaced with inlet drains. The north Route 66 lane was removed and replaced by east-bound and west-bound lanes of Interstate 40 with a north-side frontage road in 1968-70 with the original Route 66 road becoming the south-side frontage road for Interstate 40.

### **Related Previous Listing**

In 2006 the Route 66 Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railroad, the last extant bridge on Route 66 in Texas, was listed in the National Register. It is located between segments G and H and is not included in this nomination.

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## Statement of Significance

Route 66 was one of the nation's most significant highways during the early to mid-twentieth century, serving as the primary corridor between Chicago and southern California. This nominated property features eight discontinuous concrete segments of the original Route 66 highway across Wheeler County, Texas. The road was fully paved in 1931-32, and served as Route 66 until 1970, when Interstate 40 was completed to the north. Since completion of the interstate, these segments have served as its south-side frontage road. All eight segments are at least a half-mile long and are straight thoroughfares that follow rolling topography through open ranchland and farmland. Each segment includes concrete box culverts that facilitate dry creek drainage, but which are not counted on the inventory separately from the road segments. The setting has been only slightly compromised by the interstate highway; otherwise there are few modern intrusions and the property overall retains a good degree of integrity, evoking the experience of auto travel in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Route 66 in Wheeler County is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C at the state level of significance, in the areas of Engineering and Transportation, with a period of significance 1932-1970. Under Criterion C, these eight discontinuous segments of Route 66 are significant as representative examples of roadbed construction and engineering of the 1930s, retaining much of their original form, design, materials in a rural setting. The roadbed segments convey a strong sense of their historic time and place and are the best-preserved concrete sections of Route 66 in Texas. The property meets the registration requirements for the property type of "Roadbeds" as set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Route 66 in Texas," approved by the National Park Service in 2006.

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## Wheeler County, Texas

Wheeler County is on the eastern edge of the Texas Panhandle, along the Oklahoma border. Members of the Kiowa and Comanche tribes lived in the area until they were defeated in the Red River War of 1874 and removed to reservations in Indian Territory in 1875-76. The state legislature established Wheeler County in 1876, and in 1879 it became the first organized county in the Panhandle. In 1902 the Rock Island Railroad built westward from Oklahoma to Amarillo along the corridor that would be followed by Route 66. Several townsites in Wheeler County, including Lela and Shamrock, developed along the railroad, with Shamrock ultimately developing into the county's largest and most successful city. The number of farms in the county grew in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and cotton cultivation expanded rapidly, especially during the 1920s. The first successful gas well near Shamrock opened in 1923, followed by the first producing oil well in 1924, launching an oil and gas boom in the southern part of the county. This economic activity led to a doubling of the county population to 15,555 in 1930. The Great Depression led to consolidation of the county's small farms and the population declined to 12,411 by 1940. Reduced oilfield activity and the continuing consolidation of farms led to population decline through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The county population in 2017 was 5,358.<sup>1</sup>

## Route 66 in Texas

Route 66 crosses the largely rural Texas panhandle, running east-west to connect a string of small towns and farming communities with the city of Amarillo, which is set just west of the highway's halfway point in the state. This region of Texas featured an arid landscape and was relatively isolated from the rest of the state until railroads reached the area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1920s, Amarillo became the major commercial and corporate center of the region. Economic growth tied to oil, gas, and agriculture spurred a population increase and necessitated significant highway development through the panhandle, addressing calls to upgrade highways from the unpaved dirt paths that had served

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Donald R. Abbe and John Leffler, "Wheeler County," accessed April 03, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcw07>.

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the region to that point. The establishment of Route 66 through the Texas panhandle was a key event in the region's road development. An overview of the region written in 1940 for the Works Projects Administration, describes the area:

US 66 slices through the center of the Texas Panhandle, east to west, crossing the High Plains through a region once occupied by great herds of buffalo and bands of Kiowas and Comanches... Today this level expanse is rich, producing oil, gas, wheat, small grain crops, and fine Herefords. At intervals the countryside is covered with a pall of smoke from factories and refineries... The population of the region is predominantly native-born white. Since settlement is comparatively new, any 25-year resident is considered an old-timer.<sup>2</sup>

The Federal Highway Act of 1926 led to the establishment of a federal highway commission to select and design a system of interstate highways with uniform numbers and signs. Route 66 stretched over 2,200 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles. The Texas portion of Route 66 is the second smallest state segment of the old highway, cutting across seven counties for a distance of 177 miles, roughly parallel to modern Interstate 40. The early highway was a dirt road that took a crooked path across the Panhandle, featuring numerous square turns as it followed section lines, and crossing the Rock Island Railroad line numerous times. In 1929, Route 66 between Amarillo and Shamrock remained unpaved, requiring travelers to open at least four barbed wire gates during the course of the 100-mile trip. Without breaking down or getting stuck in the thick Panhandle mud, drivers might average 60 miles per day. Construction of Route 66 through Texas began in the late 1920s. From the east, Route 66 entered Texas crossing the Oklahoma-Texas border just south of the North Fork of the Red River near the town of Texola, Oklahoma. In Texas, Route 66 was designed to follow the alignment of State Highway 75, along the general alignment of what was once the Postal Highway between New Mexico and Oklahoma City. State Highway 75 was renamed US Highway 66 and paving commenced by the early 1930s.<sup>3</sup>

### Route 66 in Wheeler County

In 1916, Wheeler County initiated construction of the roadway that would become part of Route 66 across the southern part of the county. With state and federal assistance, the county undertook major road improvements beginning in 1928, and began construction of concrete segments of the recently-designated Route 66 in 1931. Prior to the paving of Route 66 in the 1930s, the highway's alignment in the eastern Panhandle changed four times in a five-year period, as the road was straightened out and many railroad crossings eliminated. The route shifted slightly just to the west of Lela to improve the crossing of several creeks in that area.

Initial surveys for drainage and drainage structures began in the spring of 1929.<sup>4</sup> In March 1929, a special session of the Wheeler County Commissioners Court voted to accept an offer from the Texas Highway Commission to pave all of Route 66 in the county, but the onset of the Great Depression most likely delayed the project until 1931.<sup>5</sup> In February 1931, the state highway commission awarded funds for the construction of the highway west of Shamrock.<sup>6</sup> At the 1931 meeting of the U.S. Highway 66 Association in Oklahoma, Shamrock was announced as the host city for the following year's meeting. The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* reported that

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<sup>2</sup> "Route 66: Across 1930s Texas," from *Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State*, compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Projects Administration for the State of Texas, 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Cassity, "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study." (Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails System Office – Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 15, 2004), 76-78.

<sup>4</sup> "Wheeler County Road Surveys to Start Soon." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 17 Mar 1929.

<sup>5</sup> "Mobeetie Road Will be Paved." *Abilene Reporter-News*, 24 Mar 1929.

<sup>6</sup> "Many Projects on State Award List." *Austin American*, 10 Feb 1931.

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Completion of paving in Oklahoma of the remaining gaps in Highway 66 – “the Main Street of America” – and extension of paving between Shamrock and Amarillo, Texas, before the 1932 convention was the goal of the association set today. This, officials pointed out, would provide a paved highway “from the Texas Panhandle to anywhere in the East.”<sup>7</sup>

In June 1931, the state awarded a contract for the construction of a 17-mile-long caliche base and bituminous surface road in the eastern half of the county to J.W. Zemper of Amarillo, for the sum of \$204,783.<sup>8</sup> That same month, the western half of the highway opened to traffic.<sup>9</sup> In March 1932, the contract to pave the eastern segment with concrete was awarded to L.E. Whitman & Co. of Shamrock, for the sum of \$217,481.<sup>10</sup> Work proceeded quickly, and by August, the *Amarillo Globe-Times* announced that construction of Route 66 in Wheeler County was complete, “adding another unit to the transcontinental route that is now out of the mud.”<sup>11</sup> In the late 1930s, asphalt shoulders were added to either side of the concrete pavement. Another lane was added to the north in two phases (1947-48 and 1950-52) to accommodate west-bound traffic.

From 1956 to 1965, interstate construction was a main focus for the Texas Highway Department, including plans for an interstate highway across the Panhandle roughly along the alignment of Route 66. Texas adopted a cost-savings strategy to upgrade existing highways to modern federal interstate standards, so the new Interstate 40 paralleled much of Route 66 in the Panhandle and converted the existing Route 66 into frontage road. For Wheeler County, construction of the Interstate 40 started in 1965 and was completed by mid-1970, which resulted in the original Route 66 remaining in situ as the south-side frontage road, removal of the west-bound lane with replacement by two new interstate lanes (west-bound and east-bound), and construction of a new frontage road on the north side of the interstate. The bypass around Shamrock and curved roads at crossover intersections were done during the interstate construction. The small community of Lela had several blocks through the middle of town removed to make way for the new interstate. With a small number of exceptions, the concrete alignment of Route 66 remains intact as the south-side frontage road of Interstate 40.

### **Texas Route 66 Associated Property Types: Roadbed**

(Adapted from the “Route 66 in Texas” Multiple Property Submission, 2006).

Route 66 is significant not only as part of the first effort to numerically designate and federalize highways in the United States, but as one of the first major transcontinental transportation routes from Chicago to Los Angeles. Route 66 continued to function as a major transportation route for both trade and leisure travel. In Texas, as in many of the states through which Route 66 passes, the life of the road extended well into the 1970s when Interstate 40 subsumed the old route and bypassed many small towns that had been dependent on Route 66 to generate commerce. Although Texas was one of the last states to complete paving Route 66, the road still served as a significant transportation artery through the Panhandle. It served military, farming, cross-country shipping of goods, Dust Bowl emigrants, and finally, it provided a means of automobile-related leisure travel and recreation.

Former portions of Texas Route 66 became the access roads for I-40, or in cases where I-40 did not parallel old Route 66, the roads were turned back to the care of the county road departments. The roadway and its associated structures are significant in that they offer material evidence of how Route 66 appeared to early motorists. In

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<sup>7</sup> “Shamrock to Host Road Group.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 Apr 1931.

<sup>8</sup> “Highway 66 Job Is Still Uncertain.” *Pampa News-Post*, 14 Jun 1931; “Wheeler County Contract Awarded.” *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 24 Jun 1931.

<sup>9</sup> “U.S. Highway 66 Now Open to Shamrock,” *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 24 Jun 1931.

<sup>10</sup> *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, 2 Mar 1932.

<sup>11</sup> “Close Gaps in Paving Along Highway 5, 66,” *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 8 Aug 1932.

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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addition, intact sections of road retain physical marks of the early highway, including demarcation of shoulders (indicating the narrow width of the two-lane roads), and the marking of paving segments (the expansion control grooves between concrete pours are still visible in many sections that have not been significantly altered). The extant road segments are significant as reminders of early accomplishments in the field of road building and engineering during the first decades of the Federal Highway System. Changes in these road segments demonstrate the progression of road building technology and planning, including basic improvements and safety features. Segments of Route 66 are significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation. They may also be significant under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as representative examples of the typical road-building design standards set forth by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials.

### **Integrity**

The Texas Historical Commission undertook a comprehensive survey of Route 66 in Texas in 2002, with funding from a grant administered by the NPS Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. The area of investigation included all historic alignments of Route 66, properties visible from the highway (now Interstate 40) in rural areas, properties located directly on the highway in the city of Amarillo, and the commercial districts of every other community that once were served by Route 66. The 2002 survey informed the 2006 multiple property submission. The first listings under the MPS included two historic districts (in Glenrio and McLean), one motel (Vega Motel in Vega), the last extant Route 66 vehicular bridge in Texas (Wheeler County), and a 7.2-mile-long section of roadway in Conway, Carson County. The survey was extensively updated in 2018, again with funding from the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, producing an extensive database and collection of digital photographs that were beyond the technical scope of the 2002 survey. The period of significance of the most recent survey was extended to 1985, the year that Route 66 was officially decommissioned. The revised survey report concluded that

Only a few segments of road retain historic integrity. These include the stretches of the south access road through Wheeler County, an unpaved section in Gray County between Alanreed and McLean, a segment of road to the west of Conway (NR listed), and the intact segment of road through Glenrio (contributing to the Glenrio NR district).<sup>12</sup>

The Conway road was identified in the 2002 survey (along with a concrete segment west of the Amarillo airport) as the Route 66 sections in Texas with the highest degree of integrity. The Wheeler County segments were identified as potentially eligible, with the caveat that their proximity to the interstate highway was detrimental to their integrity of setting. The Conway section, in comparison, was located away from the interstate and thus retained a high level of integrity of setting, but the concrete had been covered in a layer of asphalt, which diminished its integrity of materials and workmanship. The Wheeler County road sections retain a very high degree of integrity in all areas with the exception of setting due to their proximity to the interstate. While the construction of the interstate and road interchanges effectively broke the Wheeler County road into segments, however, one can drive on the segments and still experience the feeling of travelling on historic pavement, and the visual and audible presence of traffic on the interstate is a minimal intrusion on the road's rural setting. Most importantly, the nominated road conveys the sense of historic materials design and workmanship, as it retains the original concrete paving, the pour marks are still visible (and felt as the car moves over the pavement), and the original width is still discernable.

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<sup>12</sup> Texas Historical Commission, "Route 66 in Texas: Updated Historic Resources Survey" (2018), 16.

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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## Conclusion

These eight segments of the original Route 66 in Wheeler County are nominated under Criteria A in the area of Transportation and C in the area of Engineering at the state level of significance. The road segments are significant as representative examples of roadbed construction and engineering of the early 1930s to 1970s. These segments meet the Registration Requirements established by the "Historic Road Infrastructure of Texas, 1866-1965 MPS" and the "Route 66 in Texas MPS" for Criterion A under Transportation as they exhibit "the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s)." The surrounding land use has remained very similar to historical times with ranchland and farmlands to the south; although Interstate 40 was constructed to the north by mid-1970, the landscape to the north also retains its ranchland and farmlands with very little modern development. The addition of the interstate can be construed as a continuation of Route 66's evolutionary history as Route 66 was not decommissioned until 1985. The roadway itself retains its historic width of 18'-0" with three-foot-wide asphalt shoulders on either side and concrete culverts that were either built or modified during the period of significance.

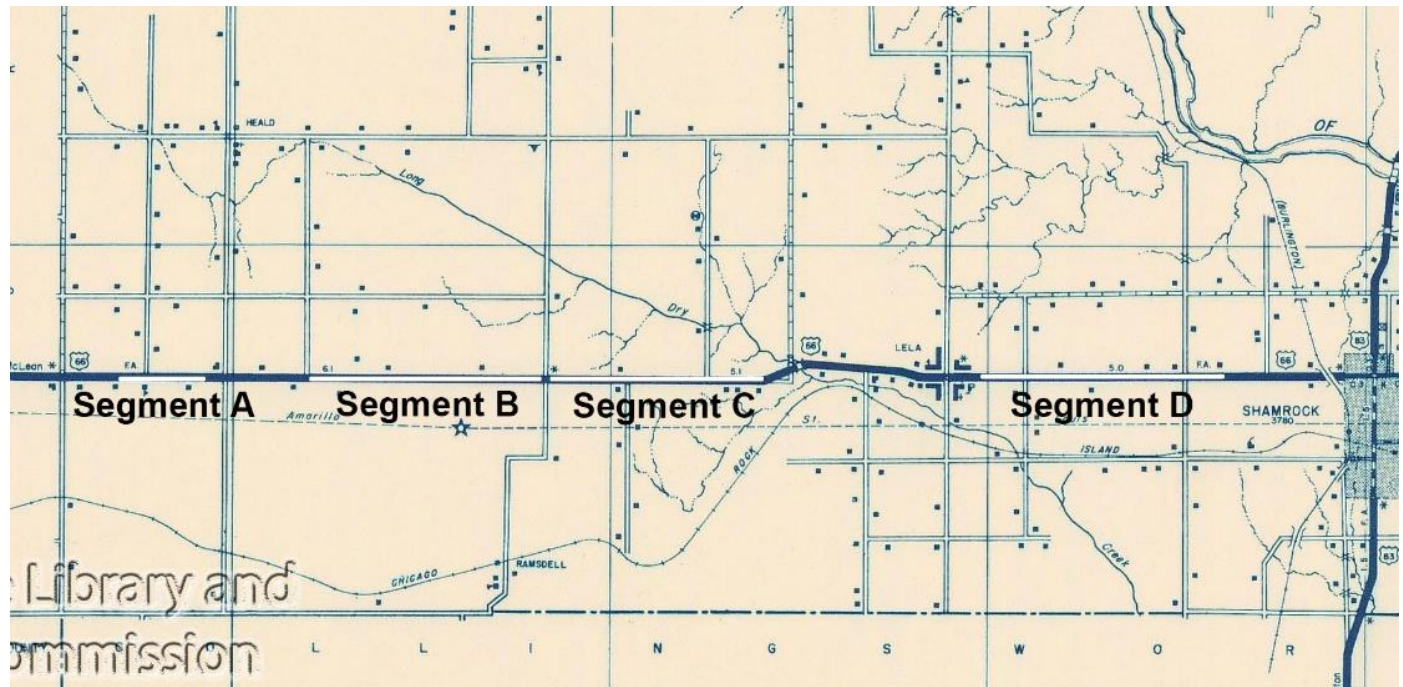
The segments also meet Registration Requirements for Criterion C under Engineering as they "possess engineering and design significance recognizable to the period of significance," are representative examples of the typical road-building design standards set forth by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials and retain "the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historical identity," including pavement width and surface materials, alignment, concrete culverts, and ROW width. Although the setting has been somewhat impacted by the construction of Interstate 40 and the resulting increase in traffic, it still retains sufficient setting of ranch and agricultural lands, particularly to the south. The existing handful of residences and farmsteads are few and far between and date to circa 1930 up to circa 1980.

The period of significance is 1932 to 1970, from the year that the highway was paved to the year the interstate was completed and the former highway road was relegated to access road status.

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

**Timeline for Segments A, B, C, D (west of Shamrock, TxDOT CS #0275-12)**

- 1927: Route 66 officially designated in Texas
- 1931: SH 75 graded but unpaved
- 1931-32: SH 75 paved with culverts
- 1939: Route 66 extended culverts on both sides to add shoulders
- 1947-48: Route 66 extended culvert barrels north to add separate lane; changed north-side culverts to inlet drains
- 1965-68: Interstate 40 and north-side frontage road constructed to north
- 1985: Route 66 decommissioned

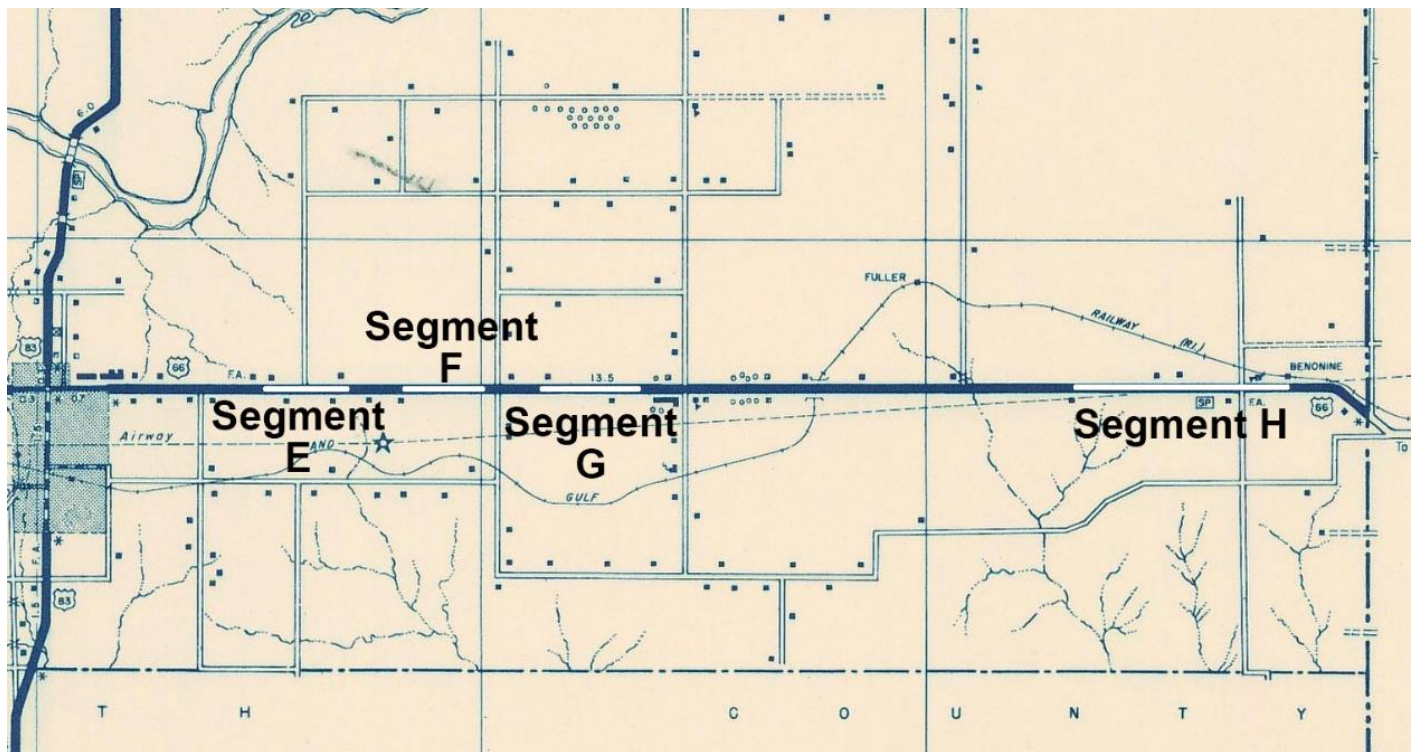




Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

**Timeline for Segments E, F, G, H (east of Shamrock, TxDOT CS #0275-13)**

- 1927: Route 66 officially designated in Texas
- 1931: SH 75 graded but unpaved
- 1932: SH 75 paved with culverts
- 1940-41: Route 66 extended culverts on both sides to add shoulders
- 1949-52: Route 66 extended culvert barrels north to add separate lane; changed north-side culverts to inlet drains
- 1968-70: Interstate 40 and north-side frontage road constructed to north
- 1985: Route 66 decommissioned



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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- CSJ Files (Control-Section-Job) or "As-Built" files, Childress District, Wheeler County
    - CS# 0275-12
    - CS# 0275-13
- Highway Designation File, U. S. Highway No. 66, [www.dot.state.tx.us/tpp/hwy/us/us0066.htm](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/tpp/hwy/us/us0066.htm)
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- Penick, Monica and Gregory Smith. "Route 66 in Texas MPS," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2006.
- Thomason and Associates. "Route 66, SH 207 to Interstate 40, Carson County, Texas," 2006.
- Thomason and Associates. "Historic Properties Associated with U. S. Highway 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica 1926 to 1985," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2012.
- Thomason, Philip, and Teresa Douglas. "Route 66 Bridge over the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railroad, Wheeler County, Texas," 2006.

## Newspaper Articles

"Close Gaps in Paving Along Highway 5, 66." *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 8 Aug 1932.

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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“Highway 66 Job Is Still Uncertain.” *Pampa News-Post*, 14 Jun 1931; “Wheeler County Contract Awarded.” *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 24 Jun 1931.

“Many Projects on State Award List.” *Austin American*, 10 Feb 1931.

“Mobeetie Road Will be Paved.” *Abilene Reporter-News*, 24 Mar 1929.

“Shamrock to Host Road Group.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 Apr 1931.

*Tyler Morning Telegraph*, 2 Mar 1932.

“U.S. Highway 66 Now Open to Shamrock,” *Amarillo Globe-Times*, 24 Jun 1931.

“Wheeler County Road Surveys to Start Soon.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 17 Mar 1929.

Texas State Library and Archives Map Collection

General Highway Map Wheeler County, Texas 1936

General Highway Map Wheeler County, Texas 1956

General Highway Map Wheeler County, Texas 1971

USGS Quadrangle Maps

Fuller 1963

Ramsdell 1963

Shamrock East 1963, 1978

Shamrock West 1963, 1978

Shamrock 1983

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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## Section 10: Geographical Data

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

#### **Segment A**

1. West End Latitude: 35.226582 Longitude: -100.524514
2. East End Latitude: 35.226616 Longitude: -100.510811

#### **Segment B**

1. West End Latitude: 35.226643 Longitude: -100.484949
2. East End Latitude: 35.226603 Longitude: -100.437671

#### **Segment C** (west of Lela)

1. West End Latitude: 35.226611 Longitude: -100.427678
2. East End Latitude: 35.226642 Longitude: -100.385535

#### **Segment D** (east of Lela and west of Shamrock)

1. West End Latitude: 35.226607 Longitude: -100.338691
2. East End Latitude: 35.226556 Longitude: -100.276226

#### **Segment E** (east of Shamrock)

1. West End Latitude: 35.226497 Longitude: -100.205613
2. East End Latitude: 35.226500 Longitude: -100.197705

#### **Segment F**

1. West End Latitude: 35.226501 Longitude: -100.188551
2. East End Latitude: 35.226488 Longitude: -100.174533

#### **Segment G**

1. West End Latitude: 35.226465 Longitude: -100.156344
2. East End Latitude: 35.226448 Longitude: -100.139583

#### **Segment H** (west of the TX/OK border)

1. West End Latitude: 35.226355 Longitude: -100.056336
2. East End Latitude: 35.226421 Longitude: -100.015408

Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated property is a discontinuous district consisting of eight concrete road segments along the Old Route 66/Interstate 40 south-side frontage road. The westernmost point is approximately 0.8 miles east of the Wheeler/Gray county line, and the easternmost point is approximately 0.85 west of the Texas-Oklahoma state line. The nominated area is comprised of only the public property within the right-of-way, measured 25 feet from either side of the road's center line to include the original roadbed and historic improvements.

**Segment A:** approx. 0.83 miles east of the Gray and Wheeler County line, from County Line Road continuing east to approx. 0.46 miles west of CR 2, being 0.8 miles of frontage road;

**Segment B:** approx. 90 feet east of CR 3 continuing east to CR 6, being 2.67 miles of frontage road;

**Segment C:** approx. 0.25 miles east of CR 6 continuing east to approx. 0.38 miles west of CR 9, being 2.4 miles of frontage road;

**Segment D:** approx. 0.26 miles east of FM 1547 by the town of Lela continuing east to approx. 0.46 miles from State Spur 556 just west of the town of Shamrock, being 3.53 miles of frontage road;

**Segment E:** approx. 0.76 miles east of CR 18 east of Shamrock continuing east, being 0.5 miles of frontage road;

**Segment F:** approx. 0.52 miles west of CR 21 east of Shamrock continuing east to approx. 0.28 miles west of Airport Road being, 0.8 miles of frontage road;

**Segment G:** approx. 0.57 miles east of FM 2168/CR 21 east of Shamrock continuing east to 0.55 miles west of FM 1802/CR 23, being 1.0 miles of frontage road;

**Segment H:** approx. 1.18 miles east of CR 26 continuing east to approx. 0.47 miles east of CR 29, being 2.4 miles of frontage road.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes the historic roadbed and all publicly-owned property within the ROW.

The north and south boundary lines extend along the highway's right-of way and include the 18-foot-wide roadbed as well as 10 feet of right-of-way on either side.

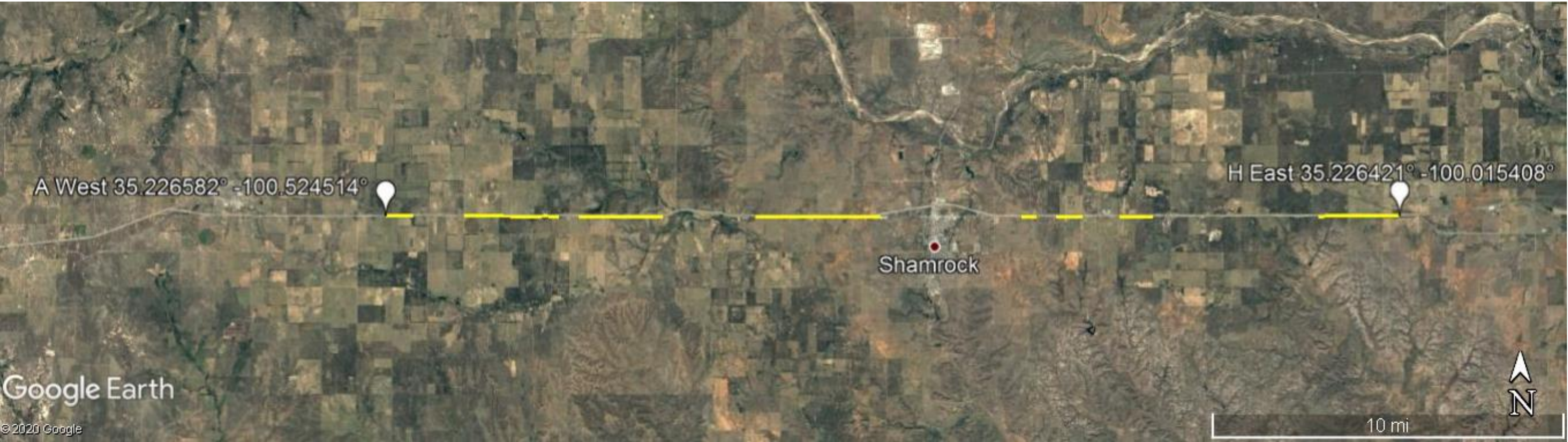


Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Wheeler County, Texas



Google Earth Map (accessed April 3, 2020)  
Nominated segments in yellow  
Exterme west and east points indicated with coordiantes





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Map 1: Route 66/Interstate 40 runs through Shamrock across the bottom of Wheeler County, Texas (Google Maps 2019).

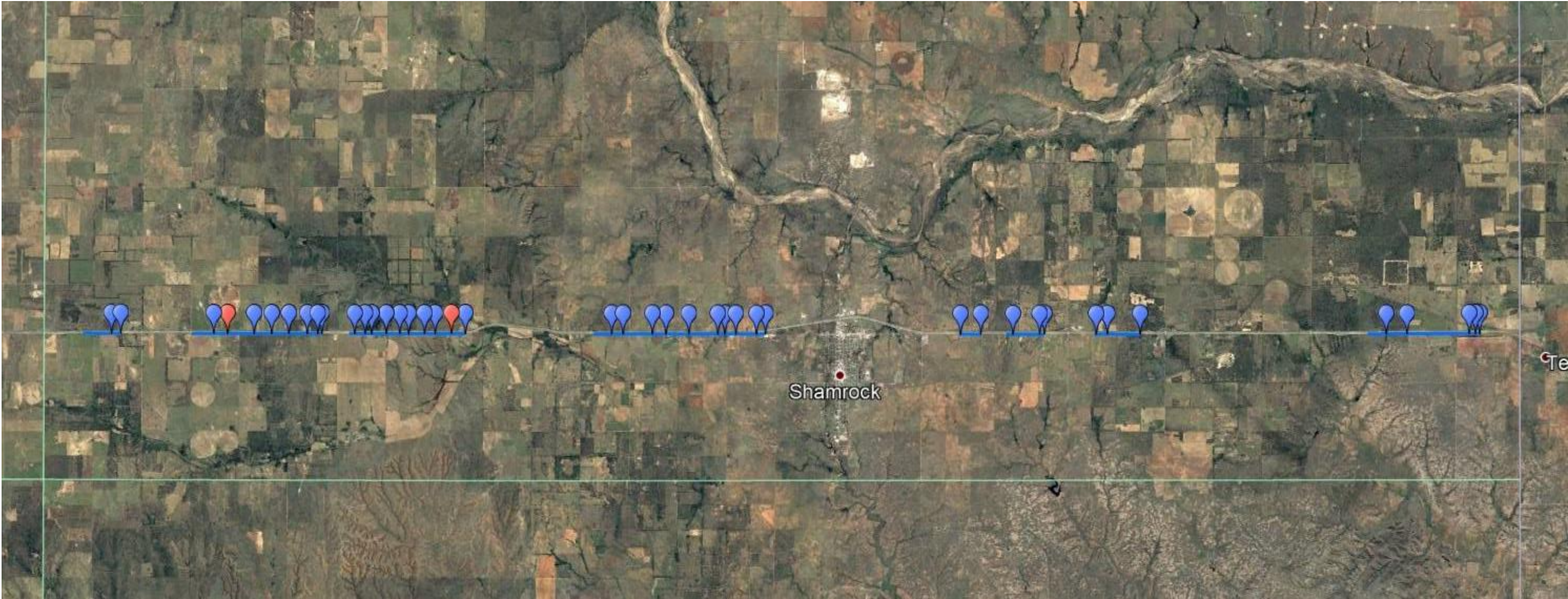




Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Map 2: Location of Route 66 across Wheeler County, Texas (USGS Quadrangle Map Shamrock 1983).

Google Earth map showing location of road segments and culverts along Route 66 in Wheeler County (red: non-historic, blue: historic).





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Route 66 National Map  
Source Encyclopedia Brittanica (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Route-66>)



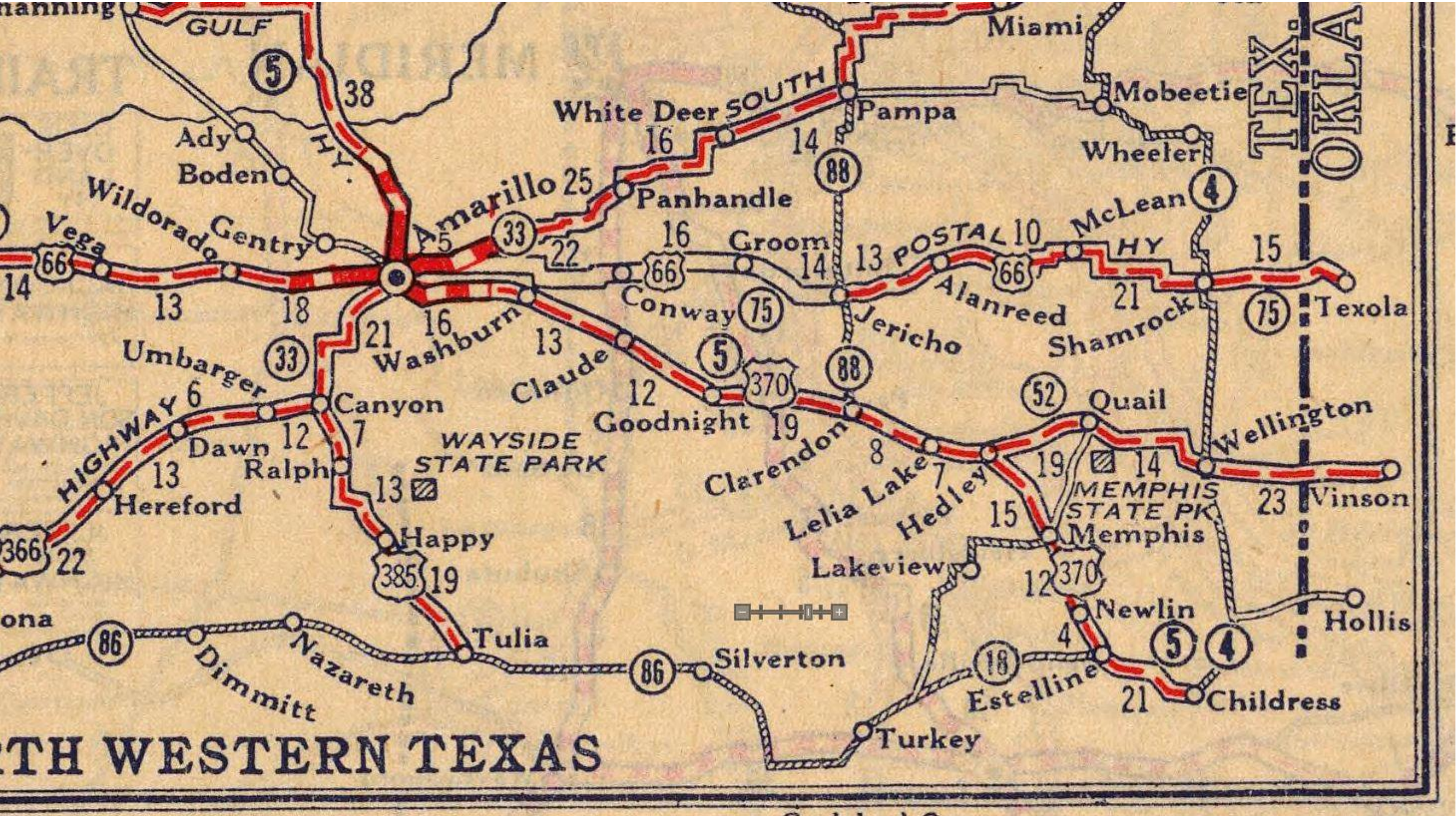
Typical Texas Route 66 Sign, date and location unknown.  
Source: TxDOT





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

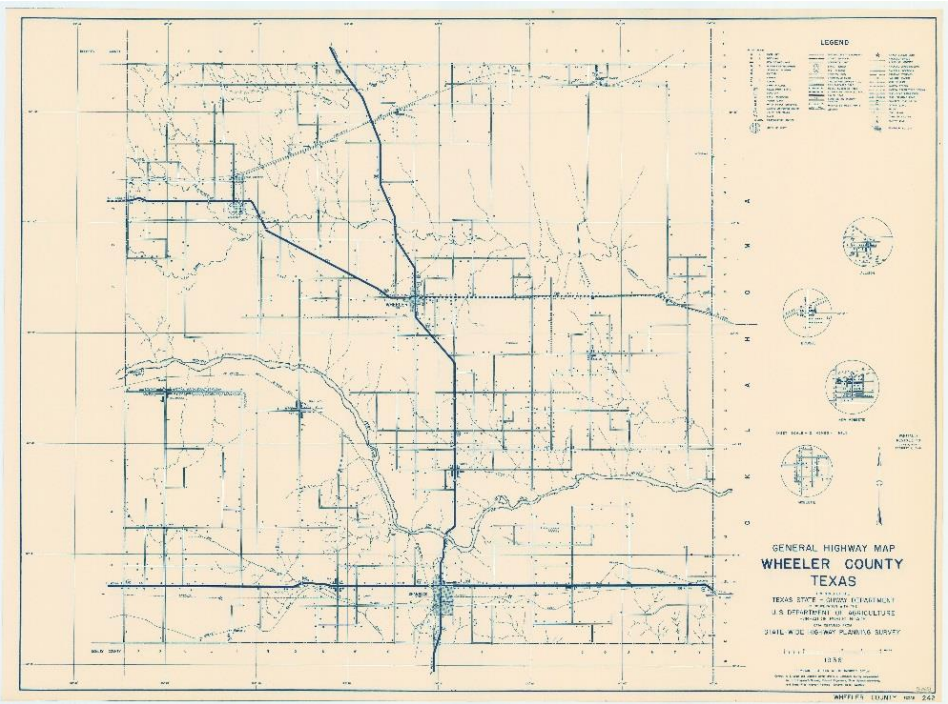
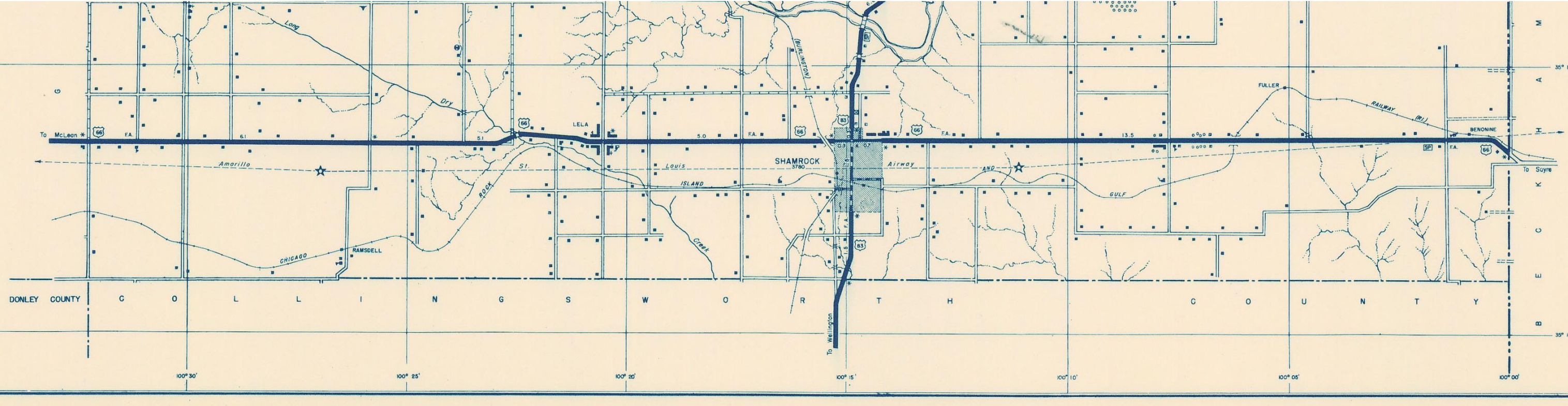
1927 Rand McNally Map (detail) showing the crooked path of Route 66 east of Amarillo  
Texas State Library and Archives





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

1940 Wheeler County Highway Map (detail)  
Texas State Library and Archives



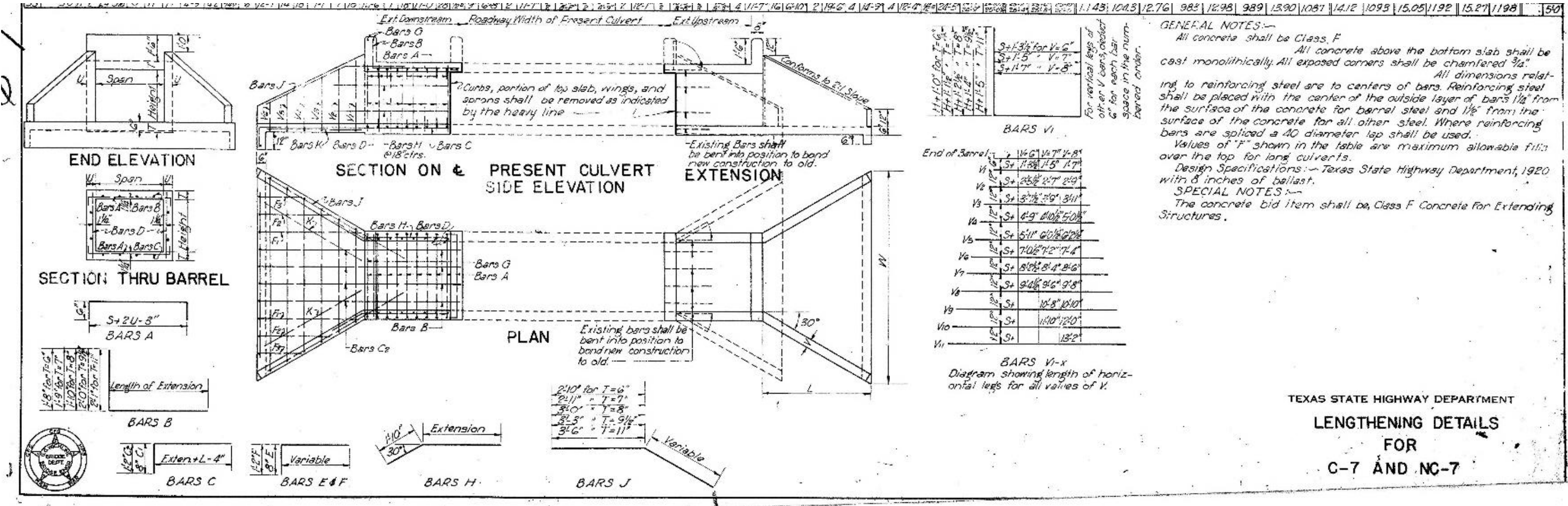




Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Lengthening Details for C-7 and NC-7 culverts, Plans of Proposed State Highway Improvement, Wheeler County, Route 66, From Shamrock, East to Oklahoma State Line, 1940.

Culverts were extended to provide width for adding shoulders on both side of existing road. The culvert barrels (the part that goes under the road) were not removed; the culvert ends (the visible part) were removed, extended barrels added with culvert ends. Drawing indicates that the culvert design did not change in profile or plan.



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Typical Cross-Sections, Plans for Proposed State Highway Improvement, Wheeler County, US Hwy 66, From Shamrock, East to Oklahoma State Line, Flexible Base & Asphalt Surface on Shoulders, CSJ #0275-13-008, 1941.  
Adding shoulders to existing 18'-0" concrete pavement: 3'-0" wide of asphaltic concrete surface on top of 8'-0" two-course flexible base.

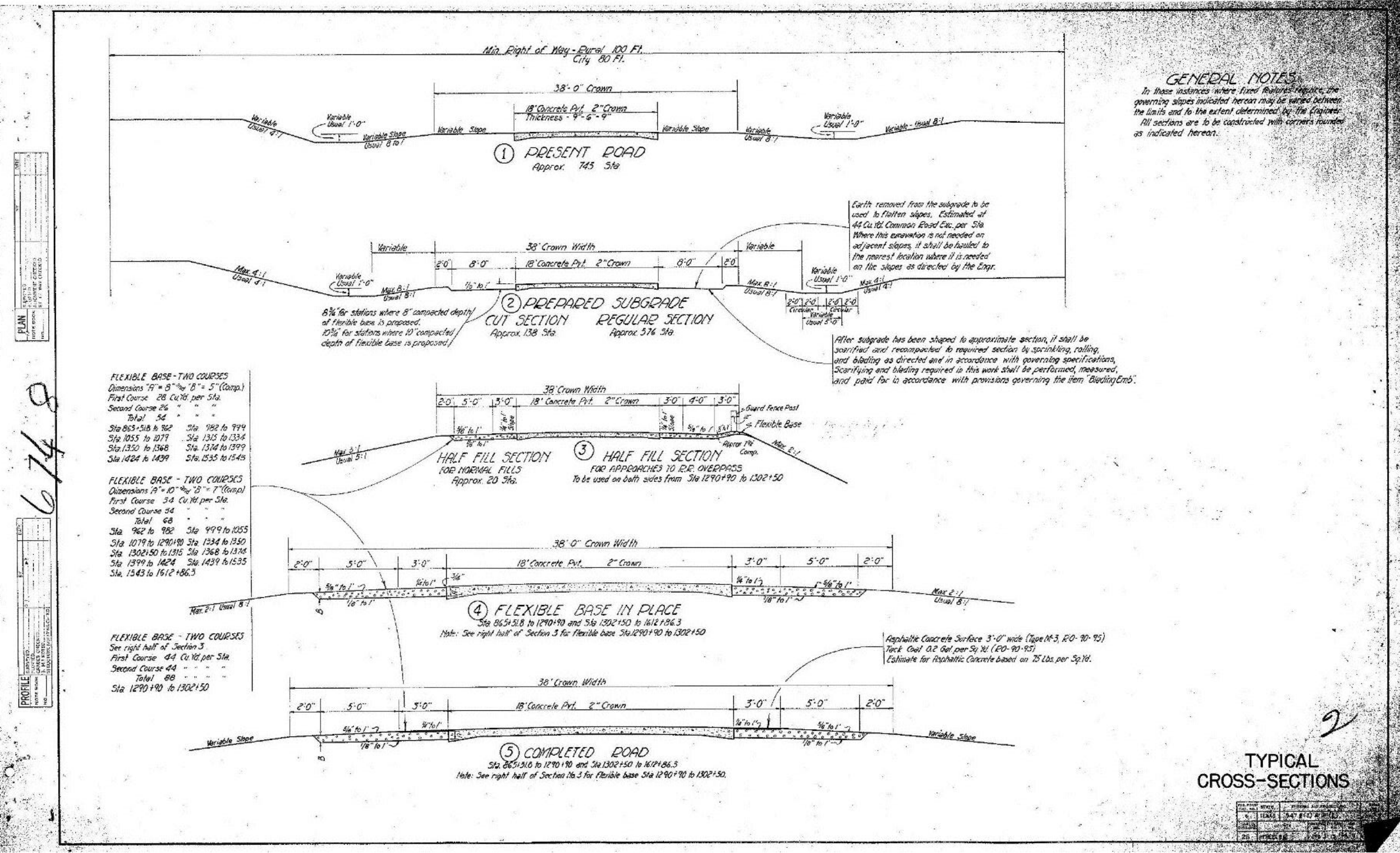
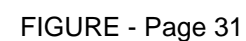


FIGURE - Page 30



Adding a lane to the north of the existing Route 66: Existing 18'-0" concrete pavement widened to 24'-0" with 3'-0" of flexible base and asphaltic concrete pavement, each side of existing concrete pavement. (Existing pavement on right side, new lane on left side)



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

Typical Sections, Plans of Proposed State Highway Improvement, Wheeler County, Interstate Highway 40, 1.0 Mile East of Shamrock to the Oklahoma State Line, CSJ #0275-13-024, 1968.  
See lower right corner for South Frontage Road: Existing East Bound Lane to be Converted into South Frontage Road.

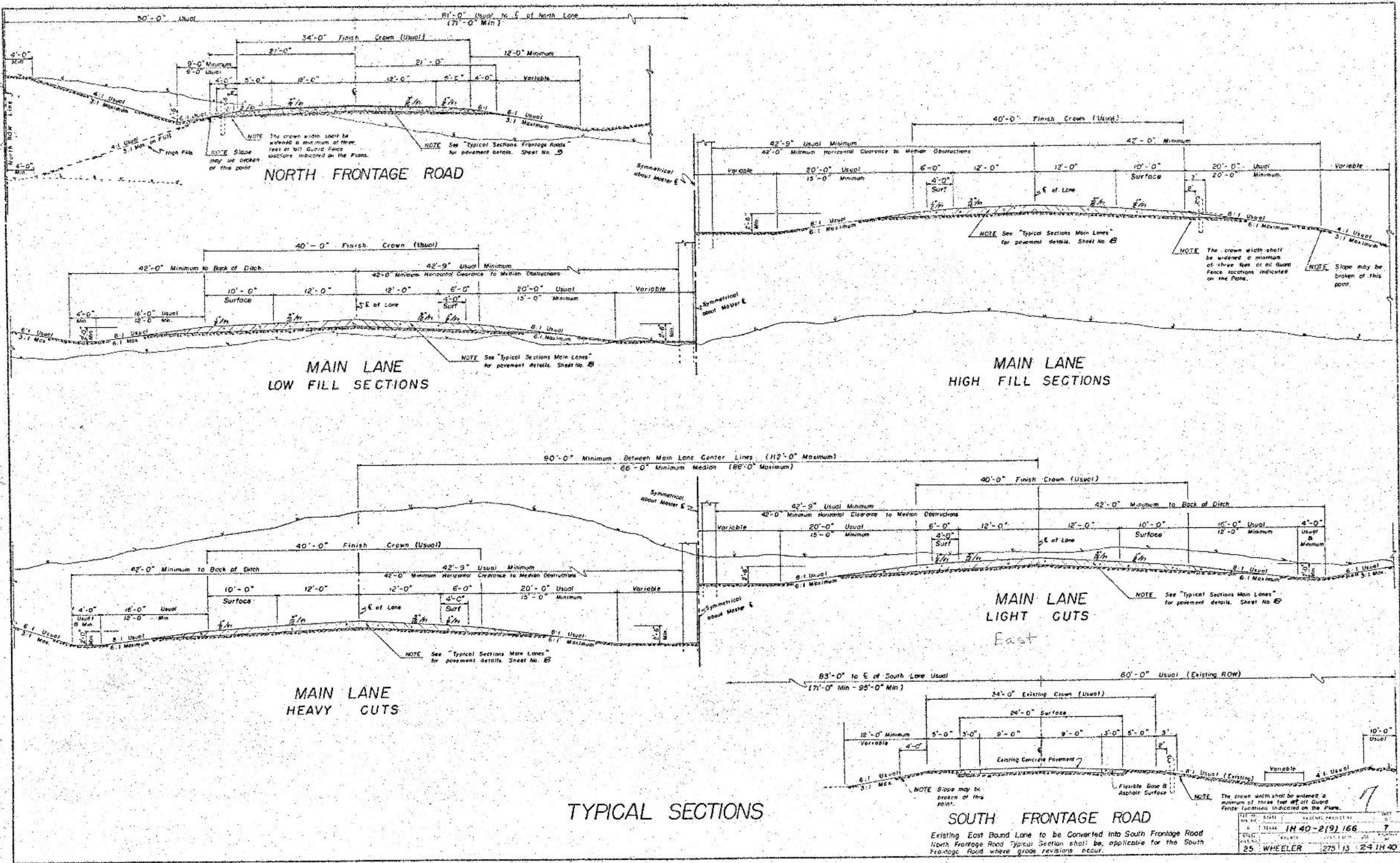


FIGURE - Page 32



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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2019 Photos by Leslie Wolfenden (Texas Historical Commission)

Photo 1: Segment A, West End



Photo 2: Segment A, East End



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 3: Segment A, Concrete Box Culvert (south side) TxDOT 73-00 NC-7



Photo 4: View at culvert looking east





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 5: Segment B, West End



Photo 6: Section B at Culvert B-07, Looking West



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 7: Section B at Culvert B-07, Looking East



Photo 8: Segment C, West End





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 9: View on a rise looking east between Culverts C-02 and C-03.



Photo 10: Segment D, West End



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 11: View at Culvert D-03 looking south.



Photo 12: Segment E, West End





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 13: Segment E, East End, facing west



Photo 14: View at Culvert E-02 looking east



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 15: Segment F, West end



Photo 16: View at Culvert F-02 looking west





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 17: Segment G, East End



Photo 18: View from top of rise looking west



Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 19: Segment H, West End



Photo 20: Segment H, East End





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 21: Feature No. H-02 Concrete Pipe Culvert (south side)



Photo 22: Feature No. H-02 Concrete Pipe Culvert with inlet drain (north side), looking west





Route 66 in Wheeler County, Shamrock vicinity, Wheeler County, Texas

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Photo 23: View at Culvert H-04 looking west



Photo 24: View at Culvert H-04 southwest at shelterbelt, looking southwest



- end -