

Beckham County Historical Milestones

Elk City

East of the bypass, 66 originally followed today's north I-40 service road, which became W/B 66 in 1956, with E/B traffic at that time on the completed lanes of E/B I-40. W/B I-40 was finished in 1958, at which time the historic alignment became a service road. Between 1956 and 1958, 4-lane 66 at the east end of town linked to today's E/B I-40 on-ramp (Exit 41). From 1958 until the bypass opened in 1970, this connection was made using both I-40 ramps at Exit 41.

By 1958, Route 66 was 4-laned from Exit 32 to Sayre, using the 1st paved 2-lane (W/B) and the E/B lanes of emerging I-40. By 1961 the 4-lane had been extended back eastward into Elk City along future Bus. 40. W/B I-40 toward Sayre was completed in 1966. At that time, the 1st paved 2-lane west of Exit 32 became a service road. Though the bypass opened in 1970, the route through town remained US 66 until it was decertified in 1985 and became Bus. 40.

Routings through Elk City

1926 - North I-40 Service Rd. - Bus. 40 - Van Buren - 3rd St. - Washington - 7th St. - Randall

1929 - North I-40 Service Rd. - Bus. 40 - Van Buren - 3rd St.

Sayre

Just before the interstate crossover 1 mile east of Exit 26, the 1st paved 2-lane curved sharply, angling across today's I-40 to the steel truss bridge on Timber Creek before swinging back to the north side to continue on the path of today's service road. Between those two points, both halves of I-40 were completed in 1958. Westward from Exit 26, 2-lane and 4-lane 66 each returned to the same path they had followed coming into the I-40 crossover east of Timber Creek.

Approaching Sayre the 1st paved alignment followed the north service road. In 1958, the E/B lanes of future I-40 were completed from the 1958 I-40 project near Timber Creek to Exit 25, and 66 thus became a 4-lane road as it entered town. W/B I-40 was completed between the same two points in 1970, coinciding with the opening of the Sayre I-40 bypass. The 1st paved 2-lane at that time became a service road. At the time of decertification in 1965, Route 66 through town was redesignated Bus. 40.

North Fork of the Red River

When Route 66 was designated in 1926, the existing river bridge was one built entirely of timber, having been erected in 1924 as part of SH 3. In 1933, it was upgraded with steel beams and a concrete deck and sidewalls and widened from 20 to 22 feet, all of it on top of the original timber piers. This followed the paving of the route in 1929. Its replacement, the Carmichael Bridge on the current alignment, was completed in 1958 as part of the 4-lane upgrade route. The remains of the earlier bridge are now on private property.

The 1st paved 2-lane leaving Sayre (1929) followed the curve, then continued westward toward Erick. In 1955-1956, the route was 4-laned all the way from the site of the new Carmichael Bridge to the state line at Texola. In 1970, with the opening of the bypass, the interstate west of Exit 20 for approximately 4 miles was also completed, consuming the E/B lanes of 4-lane 66. I-40 from the end

of that project to the state line did not open until 1975, making it the last section of I-40 to be completed in Oklahoma. When Route 66 traffic was moved onto I-40 in September of 1975, the 4-lane route from Exit 11 to Exit 5 was initially designated Bus. 30 in 1967, based on traffic data, it was redesignated Bus. 40.

The historic route from Texola into Texas followed the section line road due west where the 4-lane curves sharply at the edge of town. From there it turned north on the state line, then doglegged twice into Texas and headed westward to Shamrock along today's south I-40 service road. The additional 90-degree turns were safety measures of the era, eliminating two railroad crossings.

Postal Route

The old Postal Route and 1923 Auto Bluebook "Preferred Route" was used from 1926 to 1928 and not paved while 66. This route ran from Elk City, south past Lake Elk City then west through the town of Doxey to Sayre, then south following US283 then west through Delhi, along the south edge of Erick and into Texola to the state line. The 1st paved alignment from Sayre to Texola was cut as a graded dirt road in 1928 and paved between 1929 and 1931. It is likely that the traffic was relocated from the Postal Route prior to paving, but is unverified. Part of this route, from Exit 11 to Exit 5, followed SH-30 through Erick.