

# Cruise Port Development & High-Speed Rail Needed in Southwest Illinois

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ALTON - Cruise port development and high-speed rail are critical to the success of tourism and community development in southwest Illinois, Cory Jobe, President/CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau told an Illinois Senate Committee Thursday.

“Both represent massive infrastructure opportunities to move *people* to destinations -- not just commodities and freight,” Jobe told the Senate Tourism and Hospitality Committee during testimony on Thursday, March 10. “We must quit thinking of our waterways as only highways for commodities and freight. The cruise ship industry is poised and ready to ramp up cruise experiences on Illinois Waterways.”

Development of outdoor recreational opportunities goes hand-in-hand with attracting travelers to southwest Illinois, Jobe pointed out. The bureau is working with key

partners and service providers to activate a plan for a regional approach to better utilize the natural resources, open spaces and byways in the region. Building the visitor experience can also build better communities. The overall effort needs to be bent toward expanded livability. Jobe noted in this way, the region will grow the hospitality and tourism sector; the GDP, and will produce preferred relocation destinations that can attract and retain young families, retirees, displaced workers, and start-ups...laying the foundation for future growth in southwest Illinois communities.

“These changes will then put the region in a tremendous position for future, beneficial development,” Jobe noted.

Southwest Illinois is home to key tourism drivers that can’t be replicated anywhere else, Jobe said. It is home to the confluence of the nation’s three great rivers – the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri. It is also home to two national byways – The Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway and Illinois Route 66. All are key draws for increased tourism in southwest Illinois.

The Tourism Bureau has created two impact reports highlighting the cruise industry and development of the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway. Both reports show the importance of the leisure Mississippi River cruises on Alton and the impact of recreational byway development along the 33-mile byway corridor.

“Becoming a gateway and regional hub for outdoor recreation is key to Alton’s continued growth and economic health - I am excited to work with mayors along the byway to embrace transformational change for our region and State of Illinois,” Alton Mayor David Goins noted.

Jobe, who has been appointed by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker to head the Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission, also pointed out the need to continue to revitalize and prioritize Route 66 in Illinois leading up the centennial anniversary of the road in 2026.

“Sustaining a commitment of funds for preservation, development, and marketing of Route 66 from Chicago to the Chain of Rocks Bridge is critical in telling our story and capturing international and domestic leisure travelers to Illinois,” Jobe pointed out.

For more information:

[Cruise Industry Economic Impact](#)

[Outdoor Recreation](#)

*The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau is a certified Destination Marketing Organization serving Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Macoupin, Montgomery and Greene counties. The bureau is dedicated to educating visitors about the region by providing information regarding the area's history, unique landmarks, recreational opportunities, leisure attractions, special events and scenic marvels.*