



# Alton-Area Tourism Updates Announced

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau President and CEO Cory Jobe gave Alton residents an update on the organization's future tourism plans for the Riverbend, stressing the importance of the area's riverfront to seize tourism opportunities from incoming cruise ships.

"American Queen Voyages this year decided to pull all of their 2022 scheduled boats out of downtown St. Louis to more small, rural communities up and down the river, and we're taking on about 95 percent of those cruise stops here in Alton and Grafton," Jobe said. "We are welcoming over 60 cruise ships this summer alone to the Riverbend area."

Jobe continued with "some other good news," highlighting a \$10 million grant to improve different tourism experiences around the area.

“We were recently awarded a \$10 million capital grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity through Governor J.B. Pritzker,” Jobe said. “\$8.25 million of that is going to be focused on projects in the Alton area - the other \$1.75 million will be focused on the American Bottoms Lewis & Clark experience around the Hartford area, including the Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, the interpretive center and some partnerships with the Village of Hartford and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”

Between an influx of new cruise ship passengers and the \$10 million grant, Jobe said local organizations are working together to figure out the best way to use these funds to drive local tourism.

“How do we safely dock boats and get those passengers off the boats and into our downtown area to shop and spend money?” Jobe said. “We’re going to be working with the Alton Riverfront Commission ... and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and partners on our riverfront.”

Jobe said about \$3.75 million will go towards funding this riverfront development project, which he hopes includes more consistent docking solutions for incoming cruise ships.

An additional \$2.8-3 million has been allocated for a new Biway Outfitter Activation Center, Jobe said. According to a recent flood-plain analysis, Jobe said the current Alton Visitors Center - located at 200 Piasa Street - may have to be relocated. These funds would go towards constructing a new center, and Jobe said they are collaborating with designers and engineers on the best location and use for this facility.

Jobe also said new maps of downtown Alton have been printed to help visitors navigate their way around downtown. Thousands of these maps are now available, and Jobe asked for the help of business owners and the general public in giving them to visitors.

“We have 12,000 of these maps that we want to get into visitors’ hands,” Jobe said. “Please, please call our Visitors Center and we’ll make sure we get you a supply.”

Jobe closed out his remarks by highlighting a few other things the Tourism Bureau has been working on, including their upcoming “Go Guide” which features local events, and a recent economic impact report on the cruising industry for the Riverbend area.

“Those boats have over a \$6 million economic impact on Alton’s community each year - \$6 million,” Jobe said. “That’s pretty remarkable, to get economic impact from those visitors - thousands of visitors ... we sell over 3,000 hotel room nights in Alton alone, just for American Cruise Lines.”

Jobe said there would be “more to come over the next few months.” For more information, call Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau at (618) 465-6676 or visit their [website](#).