

Belt Announces Grant Funding for Tourism in the Metro East

by Matt Marshall, State Sen. Belt Communications
October 6 2026 9:45 AM



SWANSEA – State Senator Christopher Belt announced nearly \$430,000 in grant funding is being awarded to the Metro East to attract visitors and support tourism in the region. The awards includes funds to support projects along Route 66 and in St. Clair County.

“The Metro East has a significant footprint in the automotive and motorsport industries,” said Belt (D-Swansea). “With the World Wide Technology Raceway and Belle-Clair Fairgrounds Speedway, the 57th District is in a unique position to bring in a lot more visitors in the years to come.”?

On Route 66, \$354,000 will be used for a comprehensive capital improvement and visitor experience enhancement project for the World Wide Technology Raceway located in Madison. Key project components include the installation of electric vehicle charging stations, Route 66-themed wayfinding and interpretive signage, modernization of drag strip scoreboards, redevelopment of the interstate-facing drag tower into a landmark Route 66 feature, and creation of highly visible visitor engagement and photo opportunity areas.

St. Clair County was awarded \$75,000 for a strategic, high-impact marketing initiative to position the county as a premier Midwest destination for automotive and motorsports tourism. Leveraging world-class venues such as World Wide Technology Raceway and Belle-Clair Fairgrounds Speedway, this project will promote nationally recognized racing series, expand Route 66-themed tourism and recruit new automotive events that drive visitation from outside a 90-mile radius. Grant funds will be used for digital and billboard advertising, grassroots promotions and regional advertising.

The Route 66 Grant Program supports projects that promote, develop and preserve destinations along the Illinois Route 66 corridor during the highway's centennial year. The full list of this round's grant recipients can be found [here](#). ?

Through the Tourism Marketing Partnership Grant Program, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity will provide matching grants to assist in the promotion of tourism attractions, destinations and events in Illinois. Grant funding will help tourism partners market their attractions and events to increase visitation by both business and leisure travelers in order to increase overnight stays in Illinois. The full list of this round's grant recipients can be found [here](#).