

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:****Katharyn DeVille****Visit Shreveport-Bossier****Vice President of Marketing & Communications****kdeville@visitshreveportbossier.org****Office: 318-222-9391 ext. 116****Mobile: 214-986-4155****April 22, 2024****Jefferson Highway Association Celebrates Historic Byway and Tourism Boost in Shreveport-Bossier**

Shreveport-Bossier, LA – Today, the Jefferson Highway Association (JHA), in partnership with Visit Shreveport-Bossier, convened at the American Rose Center to host a press conference and sign unveiling. The event highlighted the national significance of the Jefferson Highway, its relevance to tourism in the Shreveport-Bossier area and marked the start of the JHA's multi-day pilgrimage along the historic route to their annual conference in Alexandria.

The press conference, attended by approximately 25 esteemed members of the JHA and Shreveport-Bossier tourism industry, served as a platform to discuss the rich history and cultural importance of the Jefferson Highway. Originating from the early 20th century, this iconic highway has been a vital artery connecting communities from Winnipeg, Canada, all the way to New Orleans, La. Its legacy lives on, resonating with travelers seeking to explore America's heartland and discover its hidden gems.

"Visit Shreveport-Bossier is thrilled to welcome travelers to experience the charm and history of the Jefferson Highway as it winds through our vibrant city," said Stacy Brown, executive director of Visit Shreveport-Bossier. "Shreveport's significance as one of the original 'Cardinal Points' on this iconic route speaks to our rich heritage and enduring allure. By exploring the Jefferson Highway, visitors have the opportunity to discover the diverse cultural tapestry of Shreveport-Bossier and immerse themselves in our unique blend of southern hospitality, culinary delights, and captivating attractions. A little bit of this, a little bit of that - and you'll find a whole lotta yourself in Shreveport-Bossier. We welcome our guests to a place with enough flavor, style, and soul for two cities - Shreveport-Bossier, Louisiana."

Roger Bell, president of the JHA, expressed gratitude for the warm reception in Shreveport-Bossier and emphasized the significance of the Sociability Caravan, reminiscent of a bygone era when caravans traversed the Jefferson Highway, fostering camaraderie and exploration.

"We are extremely excited to start our 2024 Sociability Caravan in Shreveport-Bossier," said Roger Bell, president of the JHA. "Shreveport has always been an important place on the Jefferson Highway since its beginnings in 1915. At the origination of the highway, Shreveport was designated as one of the nine original 'Cardinal Points' or places that the route was to be routed through. We look forward to working

with local leaders to make Shreveport an important stop again for a new era of Jefferson Highway travelers on this great heritage route across the middle of America.”

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One of the highlights of the event was the unveiling of Shreveport-Bossier's Jefferson Highway sign, a symbol of the city's proud heritage and its role in fostering tourism along this historic route. This initiative not only celebrates the past but also paves the way for future generations to experience the charm and allure of the Jefferson Highway.

Bell shared that during JHA research, they discovered a significant person in the association's development was Shreveport-Bossier's Ada Kimbell. Kimbell was the first woman elected to a director position of a highway association in the history of the United States. This was even before women had the right to vote. She assumed the position of 2nd Vice President of the Jefferson Highway Association at the annual convention in 1916.

"Her story is inspiring, and we are so pleased to be able to dedicate one of our historic markers in her honor in Shreveport," said Bell.

Following the press conference, members of the JHA embarked on a tour of the Shreveport-Bossier area, immersing themselves in its unique blend of history, culture, and hospitality. The journey continues with stops in Mansfield and Natchitoches before culminating in Alexandria for the annual conference.

As the JHA pilgrimage unfolds, it serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of adventure and camaraderie that defines the Jefferson Highway. Through initiatives like the Sociability Caravan and collaborative efforts with local partners, the JHA aims to preserve this historic byway and inspire future generations to embark on their own journey of discovery.

For more information about the Jefferson Highway Association and upcoming events, please visit jeffersonhighway.org and visitshreveportbossier.org.

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About Jefferson Highway Association:

The Jefferson Highway Association is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the historic Jefferson Highway, promoting tourism, and fostering community along its route. With members spanning across the United States and Canada, the JHA continues to celebrate the rich history and cultural significance of this iconic byway.

About Visit Shreveport Bossier:

Visit Shreveport-Bossier is the official destination marketing organization for the Shreveport-Bossier area, dedicated to showcasing the region's attractions, events, and unique cultural experiences. Through collaborative partnerships and innovative initiatives, Visit Shreveport-Bossier strives to promote tourism and economic development in the community.

