

# Solar panels are part of Missouri transportation project

July 4 2016, by Nancy Owano

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Credit: solarroadways

Missouri's Route 66 is going to be making its marks in the solar area through a special project. Claire Bernish in the *Free Thought Project* reported that Missouri's Department of Transportation is planning an

innovative reworking of historic Route 66—a section of which will be covered in [solar](#) panels from the Idaho company, Solar Roadways.

Solar Roadways was the topic of a June 5 article in *The Kansas City Star*, which reported that among the Missouri Department of Transportation pilot projects was this one, to use [solar panels](#) at the Historic Route 66 Welcome Center at Conway, Mo.

"We expect them to be in place, I'm hoping, by the end of this year, maybe before snow [flies](#)," Tom Blair, leader of the department's Road to Tomorrow Initiative, said.

Where will you find them? Solar Roadways' website said the panels will be used in "a sidewalk area at a rest stop on the historic Route 66 in Conway, Missouri."

No doubt more than a few people know about the company. A "Solar FREAKIN' Roadways" [video](#) has drawn over 21 million views since it was posted in 2014.

It's all about solar panels, said the video presenter, and not just boring panels but smart, microprocessing interlocking, hexagonal solar units.

Lisa Suhay of *The Christian Science Monitor* said they had tested various textures and panel shapes before deciding on [hexagons](#).

Meanwhile, about those microprocessors: Steve Hanley in *Gas2* talked about how the panels' microprocessors can enable panel to panel communications and communication with a central control [center](#). Also, said Hanley, they can communicate with vehicles driving on them.

Because the panels are modular, roads could easily be repaired without major disruptions of traffic. You can replace a panel at a time, if

damaged or malfunctioning.

The panels are covered with a tempered-glass material. These tempered glass hexagonal panels weigh about 70 pounds, wrote Lisa Suhay in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Each panel has a series of LED lights on the circuit board that can be programmed to make warning signs, landscaping signs, and other types of signs—no need for using paint.

That's not all; the features carry added potential where the "LED light colors can be selected to match [city](#) flags and the colors of events," said the company site.

The panels are also being promoted as beneficial in cold weather conditions, when icy, snowy roads carry risks of accidents and traffic slowdowns. The panels are textured for slip resistance, said Suhay. The panels can warm up to keep roads free of ice and snow.

The makers were awarded a contract from the Federal Highway Administration to build two prototypes, said the video, which are now complete.

The department provided startup funding; the makers turned to an Indiegogo campaign to push the product into independent [production](#).

"We are so grateful to each person who helped us on our way. This funding enabled us to buy a building with both office space and manufacturing space, purchase equipment, hire employees, buy [materials](#), and continue moving forward."

Hanley commented: "It's an interesting idea, and one that deserves to be explored. Eliminating the need to plow roads in winter could certainly

save cities and states huge amounts of money, more than offsetting the cost of solar roads."

What's next: The Solar Roadways team said on their site: "We have completed two funding contracts with the U.S. Department of Transportation, and were just awarded a third contract in November 2015. Then people from all over the world decided to help speed our progress via our Indiegogo Campaign which you can read more about on our Funding page. Our goal is to modernize the infrastructure with modular, intelligent panels, while producing clean renewable energy for homes."

**More information:** [www.solarroadways.com/](http://www.solarroadways.com/)

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