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Mysterious Creatures Arrive Along the MCT Trails

New public art experience and Creature Quest Atlas celebrate 100 years of Route 66

MADISON COUNTY, IL - August 27, 2026 – Something mysterious has arrived along the MCT Trails thanks to a partnership and the generosity of Agency for Community Transit (ACT), the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, and Enjoy Illinois.

Six new metal sculptures, known as the Mysterious Creatures, have been installed at secret locations throughout the MCT Trails system where the trails intersect with, cross, or run alongside historic Route 66.

The installations are part of the MCT Trails *Creature Quest – Celebrating 100 Years of Route 66*, a new public art and trail exploration experience created in recognition of the Route 66 Centennial. Rather than publishing the identities or exact locations of the six creatures, Madison County Transit (MCT) is inviting trail users to discover them for themselves with the *Creature Quest Atlas*.

The field-guide-style Atlas leads explorers throughout the MCT Trails in search of the six Mysterious Creatures. Along the way, participants will encounter clues, discover pieces of Route 66 history, and learn something new at each stop. Each sculpture is accompanied by a specially designed plaque and unique poem that becomes part of the experience and helps guide explorers farther along their journey.

The placement of the sculptures was intentionally tied to the relationship between the two transportation corridors. At each of the six locations, the MCT Trails and historic Route 66 come together – crossing, intersecting, or traveling alongside one another.

“Route 66 and the MCT Trails are both beloved corridors that wind through Madison County and offer history and enjoyment for residents and visitors,” said SJ Morrison, Managing Director of MCT. “The Creature Quest gave us an opportunity to celebrate the places where those two corridors come together while giving families, visitors, and longtime trail users a completely new reason to explore the MCT Trails.”

Route 66 was established in 1926 and celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2026. As the historic Mother Road travels through Madison County, it repeatedly intersects with and runs alongside portions of the MCT Trails. The search for the Mysterious Creatures uses those points of connection to celebrate the history of Route 66 while highlighting a modern trail system that continues to connect communities throughout Madison County.

Art, History, and a Little Mystery

The six Mysterious Creatures were created by metal artist Jackson Williams, whose work brings animals to life through carefully bent and shaped steel rods. Originally from Essex, Massachusetts, Williams learned the craft alongside his father, sculptor Chris Williams. He now works full-time as a sculptor from his studio in Asheville, North Carolina.

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MCT TRAILS CREATURE QUEST FIRST & FINAL ADD

Each Creature Quest stop combines Williams' artwork with storytelling inspired by Route 66. The Atlas gives explorers space to document what they see and learn, sketch their discoveries, and record their experience along the way. Those who find all six creatures will discover that each encounter provides another piece of a larger puzzle. What happens when all six pieces come together is something MCT is leaving for explorers to discover themselves.

"Because these sculptures depict woodland creatures on Route 66, I affectionately refer to them as our 'Mother Road-ents' much to my staff's chagrin!" said Morrison. "In addition to thanking the ACT and MCT Boards, I want to extend my appreciation to Cory Jobe and the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau for the grant that helped make this possible. But I also want to acknowledge ACT Graphic Artist Kelly Brasel for the beautiful design work on the Creature Quest Atlases and the Plaques, the Marketing & Planning team at ACT led by Amanda Viliocco Smith for all of their efforts and creativity, as well as the Facilities Team led by Rob Schmidt for all of the site work. This really has been a tremendous team effort."

Start Your Creature Quest

Free printed copies of the *Creature Quest Atlas* will be available at the following locations, beginning Monday, August 31:

- **MCT Base of Operations** - 1 Transit Way, Pontoon Beach, IL 62040
- **West End Service Station** - 620 St. Louis Street, Edwardsville, IL 62025
- **Edwardsville Library** - 112 S. Kansas Street, Edwardsville, IL 62025
- **Metro East Park & Recreation District** - 104 United Drive, Collinsville, IL 62234
- **Alton Visitors Center** - 200 Piasa Street, Alton, IL 62002
- **Granite City Park District** - 2900 Benton Street, Granite City, IL 62040

Trail users can also request a copy to be mailed via USPS by emailing trails@mct.org, or download the digital Atlas at [MCTtrails.org/downloads](https://mcttrails.org/downloads) to begin exploring right away.

Learn More

To learn about artist Jackson Williams and view more of his original metal sculpture work, visit williamssculpture.com. For more information about the MCT Trails, the Mysterious Creatures and the *Creature Quest Atlas* visit **MCTtrails.org** or contact MCT at trails@mct.org.

The Creature Quest was made possible through the generous support of the Agency for Community Transit, Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, and Enjoy Illinois. Their contribution helped bring art, imagination, and a sense of discovery to the MCT Trails.

Madison County Transit (MCT) provides multi-modal transportation services for Madison County, Illinois. MCT operates a fixed-route bus service, connecting to MetroLink; express weekday commuter service directly to and from downtown St. Louis; and seasonal express service to the Muny. For elderly and disabled residents who are unable to use the fixed-route buses, MCT provides complementary door to door service. MCT is also responsible for the construction and maintenance of more than 138 miles of bikeways that comprise the MCT Trails system, as well as overseeing RideFinders, the St. Louis region's FREE carpooling and vanpooling program.

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