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MUSA Capstone

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Brainstorming

**Idea 1**

Topic: Transportation economies – Last April I biked from Chicago to Los Angeles along the historic Route 66. On the journey I passed through many small American towns that were once industrial hubs due to their connection to the country through the Route. Other towns’ entire economies were built from the service and hospitality of the route. Since the interstate highway system has taken over cross-country transit, along with air travel, many of these towns have crumbled and are now in total disrepair. Poverty enveloped these areas once industry and opportunity left. This is not dissimilar to the deindustrialization of the rust belt and there are some potentially interesting parallels to draw. Where else in the US or abroad has an economy flashed so brightly then burnt out quickly due to transit?

Question: How have technological advancements in transit developed and destroyed the economies of way-point towns? This could also relate to COVID – once ridership of mass transit evaporates, what happens to these way-point businesses?

Relevant Data: I suppose census data and satellite imagery of these towns over a large time-period would be especially relevant. What other data sets could explain this story? Is this Route 66 too old for accurate data via the census and satellites?

Format: A report? Maybe a website that visualizes how these areas grew and shrank over time.

Other notes: In addition to my bike trip, this project is inspired by MASS Design Group’s [Fringe City](https://massdesigngroup.org/work/design/fringe-cities) project.

**Other areas of interest:**

* Demographic Targeting website – for a course this fall I supported a familiar business to better understand where in the US their products are selling best using a penetration index and demographic trends on a county level. This allowed me to identify the counties that have great sales potential due to demographics but have not yet been penetrated. Could this be reproduced into a website where businesses input their data and are given areas of future expansion with the most promise?
* Walmart locations – I’m fascinated with how Walmart has expanded and where they’ve located stores
* Farming and agriculture – tracing the lifecycle of plants in the US
* Bike-ability – how bike friendly is a town, city, state, ect.
  + Could pull bike crash data, bike store locations, etc.