



Transportation Corridor Development

*A Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunity
Strategy Guide*

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Our 40 years of rural community economic development work in North America is a rich learning experience. At e2, we have worked in nearly every rural region in the continental United States and many of the Canadian provinces. Our [Development Opportunity Profile](#) analysis has surfaced reoccurring likely entrepreneurial development opportunities universally available to most rural communities.

Strategy Defined

Oxford Languages defines strategy as “*a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim...*” Any strategy is a point-in-time plan for action. Just as startup entrepreneurs are encouraged to develop a venture plan, communities exploring entrepreneurial development should do the same. Your community’s development strategy will change and evolve over time as new opportunities, priorities, and challenges emerge.

About our e2 Strategy Papers. At e2, we have been conducting opportunity analysis for rural communities and regions throughout North America for decades. This field-rooted work has identified and led e2 to create our 10 common and [Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities](#), for many rural communities.

This strategy paper focuses on **Transportation Corridor-Related Development**, organized into the following sections:

- e2’s Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities
- One More Pathway to a More Prosperous Rural Community
- Corridors Defined
- Rural Community Roles with Corridors
- Two Illustrations – Gallup, New Mexico and Valentine, Nebraska
- Opportunities and Assets of a Corridor-Based Economic Sector
- Growing a Higher Value Corridor Economy
- Growing a More Resilient Corridor Economy
- Growing Competitive Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Ventures
- Grow a Traveler Development Vision and Game Plan

Remember Regional Development. While regional development is not one of our top 10 likely entrepreneurial development opportunities, we strongly recommend every rural community embrace, with other communities in their region of America, larger-scale regional development. When more communities in a region are thriving, opportunities are created for your community and your entrepreneurs. For more information, check out our paper, ***Regional Development***.¹

Additionally, growing entrepreneurial ecosystems is best done regionally, hopefully with state-level support. We recommend a top-down and bottom-up entrepreneurship strategy as outlined in our paper, ***Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building in Rural America, Four Decades of Learning***.²

¹ Located in our website’s [resource library](#).

² Ibid.

e2's Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities

Too many rural economies and societies are failing because of their narrow economies rooted in one to two changing economic sectors. Our paper, [Economic Crashes, Mini-Case Studies](#), illustrates the consequences of undiversified economies. Conversely, our story, [Ord, Nebraska, An Entrepreneurial Community](#), illustrates when a community diversifies its economy, it drives transformative change. Our likely entrepreneurial development opportunities can create genuine and robust strategies to grow a more diversified economy.

The following table provides brief descriptions of each of the top 10 development opportunities, with links to relevant strategy papers, as available.

	<p>Natural Resources. Much of rural America depends upon single natural resource industry economies (e.g., farming, mining, forestry, energy, etc.). While there are limited entrepreneurial development opportunities related to these international market industries, there are opportunities rooted in diversifying within these sectors and increasing sector related spending capture.</p>
	<p>Transportation Corridors. Urban America is connected by transportation corridors that run through rural America. Services are required to support those traveling these corridors, creating entrepreneurial development opportunities.</p>
	<p>Tourism. While the vast majority of Americans live and work in urban America, rural America provides important places to play. For a wide range of rural communities and regions, tourism represents a way to diversify area economies.</p>
	<p>Retirees. When thinking of new residents, keep in mind the tidal wave of retiring Boomers. This group represents a significant likely entrepreneurial development opportunity for most rural communities, from high amenity places to rural villages adjacent to metro centers.</p>
	<p>Commuters. Upward of 50 percent of rural workers live in one community and work in another community. These outbound commuters have embedded entrepreneurial development opportunities in creating bedroom community-related development and entrepreneurial opportunities when they end their commuting.</p>

	<p>Hub Cities. America’s landscape is still defined by a hierarchy of places based on size. In rural America, there are regional and area hub cities and towns that provide critical services like healthcare, shopping, and entertainment to rural areas. These communities are the “downtowns” of vast rural regions to smaller areas.</p>
	<p>Larger Employer Retention and Expansion. Many rural communities are home to large manufacturing plants, fulfillment centers and institutions including hospitals, regional universities, and parks. Ensuring the future of these larger employers is an entrepreneurial opportunity.</p>
	<p>Growth-Oriented Entrepreneurs. Nearly every rural community has growth-oriented entrepreneurs with the motivation and capacity to reach external markets with their products and services. Electronic commerce empowers this kind of entrepreneurship.</p>
	<p>Area Spending Capture. Competition is intense from box stores, franchise, and electronic commerce, but opportunities exist to increase local venture competitiveness and recapture some of these spending leakages. In doing so, rural communities can empower growth-oriented entrepreneurs.</p>
	<p>New Residents. Since the 1900s, the primary migration pattern has been from rural to urban. Today, there are counter (e.g., urban-to-rural) migration trends among 30-year-olds, retiring Boomers and others. These new residents represent a huge opportunity to energize area entrepreneurial talent.</p>

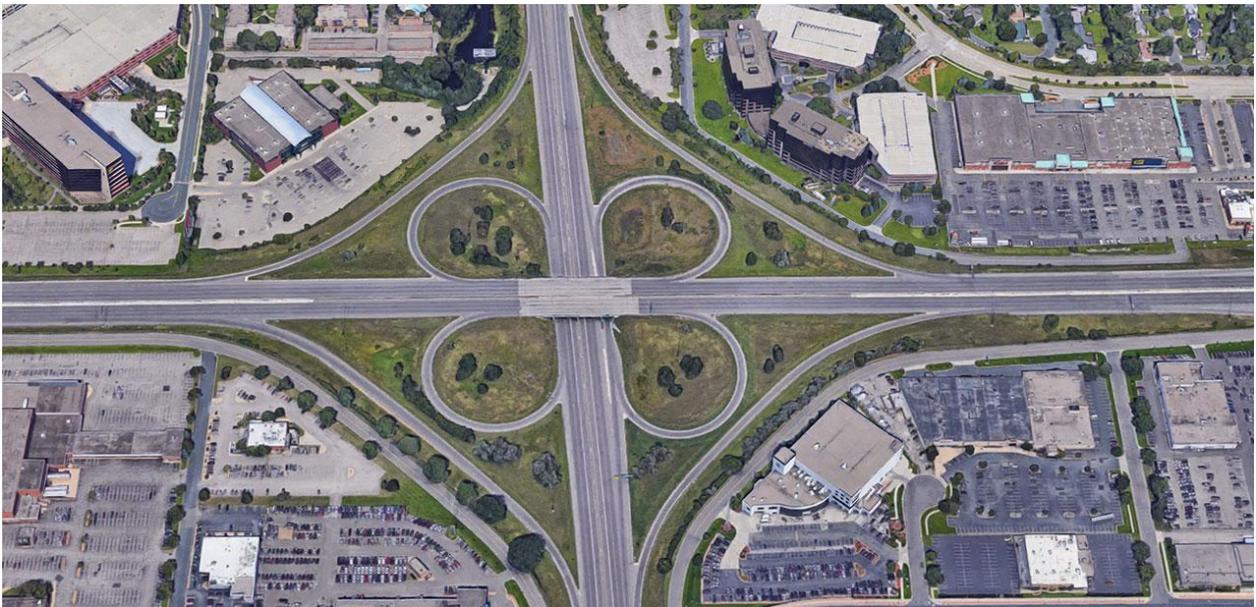
To learn more about these top 10 Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities and our evolving collection of associated strategy papers, please visit our website’s [resource section](#).



A number of our likely e2 entrepreneurial development opportunities for rural communities in America are nontraditional and often represent significant new pathways to greater economic diversity and community prosperity. Corridor-led development is one of those non-traditional opportunities. When we think economic development, images of manufacturing, main street and natural resource industries like agriculture come to mind. But economic development related to corridor goods and services provision is important for many rural communities, both large and small.

One More Pathway to a More Prosperous Rural Community

The picture below is a typical U.S. Interstate Highway interchange. There are the on and off ramps and the clusters of traveler goods and service offerings, from lodging to food to gasoline, truck stops and other retail and service ventures that now cluster around these interchanges. Box stores, healthcare and office complexes are locating near these interchanges, creating a new version of an American Main Street. These interchanges provide entrepreneurial opportunities, employment, and area tax base enhancements.



Use of the Term “Pit Stops.” In auto racing, the pit stop is the location where drivers and the racing vehicles stop to refuel, grab some water, and replace tires during a race. In our strategy paper on transportation corridor-related development, we employ the term **pit stops** as shorthand for those communities where travelers and truckers can obtain goods and services as they travel through the county.

Our next step is to define this development opportunity or what we mean by **corridors**.

The vast majority of Americans live in metropolitan areas. Connecting these urban centers are a complex mix of corridors, through which goods and services are transported. From massive shipping containers on our railroads to travelers getting from Chicago to L.A. on our Interstate Highway System, activities associated with these corridors generate significant economic activity and entrepreneurial development opportunities in rural America.

Corridors Defined

Figure 1 provides a typology relevant to rural community corridor-related entrepreneurial development.

Figure 1 – Corridor Typology

<p style="text-align: center;">Highways</p> <p>Possibly the most obvious example of a corridor are America’s highways. These highways allow Americans to travel between destinations and reach tourism locations rooted in rural areas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Railroads</p> <p>Before there were highways and motor vehicles, America was connected by railroads. While railroads are now primary carriers of freight, they still generate employment and economic activity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Power Lines</p> <p>Electricity is an essential for life and commerce. America is interconnected with area, regional and national power grids. Servicing these power grids and their transmission lines creates jobs and economic activity.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Pipelines</p> <p>Petroleum and natural gas are still foundational in our nation’s energy system. As a result, rural America is home to pipelines that move all sorts of petroleum and natural gas from areas of production to processing to consumers.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Telecommunications</p> <p>America has come a long way since the day of “Ma Bell” telephone companies. Telecommunications ranging from cell towers to fiber optic networks are increasingly important, connecting America with an expanding range of services.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Regional Airports</p> <p>Passenger and freight air service is increasingly important in our modern society. While someone flying from New York to Seattle will not be using rural community services, regional rural airports provide important hubs.</p>

Without these corridors, America would not function or be connected. They are foundational, with rural America as home to both regional and national corridors moving people, freight, energy, and communications. When the Oregon trail was the major connector from the Missouri River to the Oregon Territory, the average wagon train trip took four to five months. Today, in an automobile traveling America’s highways, the trip will take about 18 hours. If one flies, it will take more time checking in and out of the airport than airtime from Omaha to Portland. All of these corridors generate economic activity, entrepreneurial opportunity, employment, and area taxes. In this strategy paper, we primarily focus on highway-related corridor development. Compared to the other five corridor types, highways, and their associated trucker and personal motor vehicle traffic, generate the greatest potential for corridor-related entrepreneurial development.

We continue our journey with exploration of rural communities’ roles in support of corridors.



Following World War II, with returning GIs and a hunger to get back to regular life and increasing access to private motor vehicles, Americans began traveling highways and byways in record numbers. Travel growth has remained strong for the past 70 years. Hundreds, if not thousands, of rural communities became pit stops, providing essential and desired traveler services. Entirely new venture models emerged, illustrated by the rise of Holiday Inns and Howard Johnson's. For rural communities, serving as traveler pit stops has become big business.



Rural Community Roles with Corridors

Figure 2 provides a quick summary of the rural community roles in providing goods and services to supporting corridor activities. Later in this strategy paper, we share some other considerations with respect to your community's positioning as a service hub or pit stop for travelers and truckers.

Figure 2 – Rural Community Roles with Corridors

Homes for Corridor Workers	Traveler Services	Home to Corridor Companies
<p>Corridor activities, whether serving long-haul truckers or maintaining cell towers, requires workers. Some corridor activities are more job intensive than others, such as highways compared to automated pipelines. Periodically, these various forms of infrastructure need to be built or rebuilt, requiring more workers.</p>	<p>The greatest opportunity for economic development is associated with providing traveler services rooted in America's highways. The provision of truck stops, gasoline stations, convenience stores, cafés, coffee shops, broadband hot spots, lodging and the list goes on are never ending.</p>	<p>Larger rural communities are often home to corporate headquarters and regional facilities servicing various corridor related infrastructure. Whether a state highway maintenance shop or a regional telco headquarters, these activities generate important and higher value economic activity and a wider range of jobs/careers.</p>



On the next page, Figure 3 provides a summary of the primary and secondary goods and services associated with highway related travelers. Remember, there are two basic types of motor vehicles employing America's highway system: commercial trucking and personal motor vehicles. There are also bikers with special needs, from mechanics to the more normal traveler services like lodging, and cafés that provide special, secure, and safe parking for motorcycles.



Figure 3 – Traveler Goods and Service Needs and Wants

<p>Core Traveler Hospitality Goods and Services</p> <p>Core goods and services are those that nearly every traveler needs and are universal to a well-developed traveler and trucker service hub.</p>		
<p>Lodging</p> <p>A range of lodging offerings from boutique hotels to franchise motels to Airbnbs is foundational. Travelers need places to sleep.</p>	<p>RV Parks</p> <p>Many travelers have a home on wheels and are looking for affordable RV parks with the right kinds of amenities.</p>	<p>Food Service</p> <p>Travelers have to eat. A range of dining options, from quick to healthier foods, including vegetarian and vegan offerings, are all important.</p>
<p>Recreation Space and Clean Restrooms</p> <p>If you are travelling long distances, you have need for two basic health and wellbeing amenities: reliably clean restrooms, and recreation spaces where travelers can take that walk or quick run, including dog parks.</p>		
<p>Gasoline and Garages</p> <p>Travelers need a place to eat and sleep, and their motor vehicles need fuel and sometimes repairs. Honest and affordable fuel and vehicle repair services are key. *</p>	<p>Truck Stops</p> <p>Today’s modern truck stops have become one-stop places for truckers and their rigs. High-quality, affordable trucker services are key to attracting and re-attracting long-haul truckers. Remember, many truckers travel similar routes.</p>	<p>Information</p> <p>Travelers may have need for specialized information from route planning and local attractions to finding dentists, to a place to repair a broken pair of eyeglasses. Info kiosks to hospitality training can fill these value-added needs.</p>
<p>Allied Traveler Hospitality Service Needs and Wants</p> <p>In addition to core trucker and traveler needs and wants that are more universal, there are allied hospitality services that are also important and can create entrepreneurial development opportunities.</p>		
<p>Healthcare</p> <p>Travelers get sick and may need access to urgent care or even specialized services. Medical services in your community can fit these emergencies.</p>	<p>Pharmacy</p> <p>Travelers also need pharmacy services, from over-the-counter products to prescription drugs. A good pharmacy is an asset.</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <p>We are now used to having 24-7 access to broadband and cellular phone services. While open spaces between rural towns may lack coverage, having good service in town is foundational.</p>
<p>Entertainment</p> <p>After a long trip, travelers may want a drink or a public pool where their kids can burn off some energy. Entertainment amenity information with good directions and hours can enhance that afternoon stop or encourage an evening stay-over.</p>	<p>Pet Goods & Services</p> <p>We love our pets! On the next page, see ideas for the millions of Americans travelling with pets. Access to pet goods and services, like veterinarians or a dog park, is important, and may determine where a traveler spends the night.</p>	<p>Basic Shopping</p> <p>Basic shopping services include everything from groceries to a store where a lost pair of winter gloves can be replaced. Good information on such basic shopping services - with good directions and hours of operation – is important.</p>

*Unfortunately, some travel services view these customers as “one and done.” They are tempted to exploit travelers with scams, including posted low fuel prices at just one pump to charging outlandish prices for repairs for travelers who are broken down.



Other considerations:

Highway Traffic Trends. America continues to grow, and this growth is increasing highway traffic throughout rural America. Additionally, as more and more Americans are living and working in cities, they seek the tourism and recreational assets rooted in rural America, generating more traffic. While air travel impacts road travel, it cannot replace the role of freight trucking or the flexibility and cost of motor vehicle traffic. Bottom line, what this means is that the typically built-out interstate highway interchange, for example, is likely to experience sustained growth over time. With growth in traffic and travelers, there are venture development opportunities. Additionally, America is in the midst of the largest generational retirements in our history, with retiring Boomers. The more active Boomers are hitting the road and exploring America. They are more likely to get off the Interstate Highway System and use federal and state highways to reach desired sites and experience more of America.

Remember the Pets - Is Your Community Pet-Friendly? According to www.iii.org, 67percent of all American households have pets - that translates to 85 million of them. In fact, there are more pets than children in America (i.e., 74.2 million children according to www.aecf.org). We love our pets, and, in many cases, our pets are hitting the road with us when we travel. For those traveling with pets, whether it is a companion dog with a long-haul trucker, or a retired couple in their RV with a couple of loved cats, our communities must recognize that our pets have wants and needs from pet-friendly lodging, exercise areas, safe places to water a dog during a pit stop at a convenience store, or access to veterinary services. By and large, we have just scratched the surface of entrepreneurial development meeting the travelling pet market in America.

Highway Construction Projects. Corridor infrastructure has a lifespan based on weather, wear, and tear. Additionally, the standards for infrastructure continue to change to improve safety and efficiency. What this means is America is constantly in the process of building new, rebuilding existing, and repairing transportation corridor-related infrastructure. For example, when a typical two-lane federal or state highway is rebuilt, it brings significant new business to town with demands for lodging, food service, and repair of construction equipment. While construction is not everlasting, it can generate significant point-in-time economic impact and opportunities for rural communities in the construction zone.

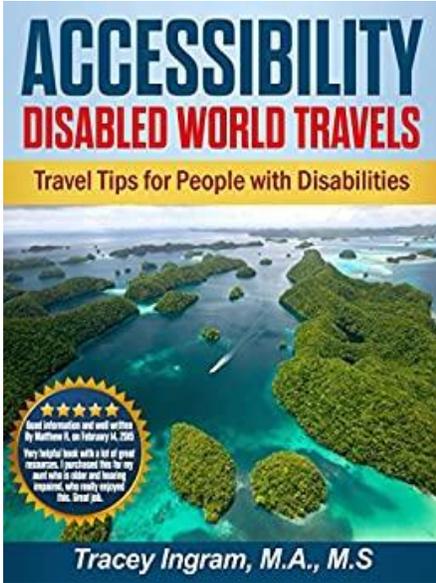
Get Ready for Electric-Powered Vehicles. Electric-powered motor vehicles are becoming more widespread. Given battery capabilities, these vehicles are now penetrating urban markets; in time, they will hit the open road. Whether a hybrid or pure electric vehicles, there will be entirely new infrastructure, including fueling stations and garages able to undertake repairs. Communities thinking ahead should be tracking electric vehicle trends and begin positioning themselves as an electric vehicle-friendly pit stop.



E-80 Fueling. Ethanol-based fuels have been around for a number of years, mixed with traditional petroleum-based fuels. E-80 (e.g., higher concentration of ethanol in the mixture with petroleum) require special fueling pumps and infrastructure. For travelers with E-80 vehicles, knowing where fueling and repairs services are available can determine where to stop.

Travelers with Disabilities. According to www.cdc.gov there are 61 million Americans living, traveling, and playing with a disability, representing 26 percent or one in four American adults. This is a huge market.

Persons with disabilities are active and desire to travel. They embrace adaptive technologies making road travel possible. Communities with pit stop development opportunities should explore the needs and wants of travelers with disabilities. Becoming a welcoming community with the right stuff for these travelers can make your community a “must-stop.”



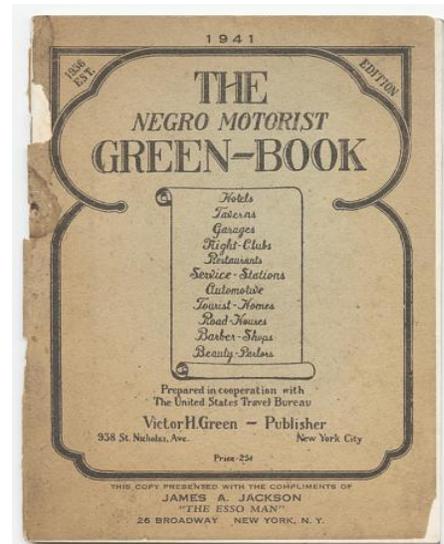
International Travelers. While the worldwide COVID-19 health pandemic has dramatically reduced international visitation to the USA, as it becomes safe to travel again, international travelers are likely to return, as the U.S. continues to be a favorite international visitation destination. For many international travelers (e.g., Japan, China, and Europe), the ability to rent a car and hit the open road to visit destinations from Las Vegas to America’s remarkable collection of national parks is a bucket list priority. Is your community prepared to meet the unique needs and wants of a diversity of international travelers?

An excellent shopping center developer knows their customers and attracts retailers, services, and entertainment to provide a catch-all experience. The same is true for travelers. Consider your collection of core and allied hospitality offerings part of a comprehensive mix that makes your community’s stop the best stop, given all the choices a traveler or trucker has.

Hospitality and Welcoming Communities

Chances are good that the travelling public will be much more diverse (e.g., ethnic background, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) than the residents of most rural communities. The picture to the right is from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. It is the cover of what is called the “Green-Book.” The Green Book was an African American guide to Black-friendly traveler services during Jim Crow America. While Jim Crow America is fading, it is not gone.

There are other forms of hostile-to-diversity behavior. A few years ago, I visited a sporting goods store and, while checking out, the teenage clerk commented that gays were hated by God. I was stunned, as we have family members who are gay and are loved and welcome in our family. To this day, I have never patronized this business again. Hospitality training is fundamental to create welcoming communities for travelers and their business. Strong traveler/trucker hospitality is welcoming to our full range of diversity. Foundational to optimal hospitality is understanding diversity, realized through strong diversity training as part of hospitality training.



Is your rural community a traveler pit stop?

One way to measure the strength of your pit stop status is total employment in lodging, auto services, and eating and drinking establishments as a percentage of total employment. If the share of these three activities is more than 15 percent, chances are good you have pit-stop play.

Considerations: “Travelling Through” Visitors and Area Taxes

“Travelling Through” Visitors: Unlike destination visitors, “travelling through” traffic includes long-haul truckers and personal motor vehicle travelers seeking the fastest way from point A to point B. For these transcontinental travelers, the Interstate Highway System generally offers the safest and quickest routes. Communities like Gallup provide critical goods and services for these travelers, ranging from diesel mechanics to a place to eat or sleep before moving on. These highway pit stops also provide connectivity to cell phone and internet services in more rural regions.

Enhanced Area Taxes. Most rural communities are largely dependent on area residents and businesses for generating the taxes needed to support education, public safety, and other governmental functions. Unlike agriculture, energy, and even manufacturing, transportation corridor-related economic activities are less impacted by economic crashes and business cycle recessions. While weaker economic times may moderate traffic, cross-country traffic continues, ensuring greater stability for hospitality-related ventures, employment, and area tax revenues. The additional commercial real estate associated with truck stops, hotels and motels, food and drink establishments, other ventures, and national box stores like Walmart, etc., often locate in larger rural communities on major highways. This reality can moderately to significantly ease tax burdens for area residents and businesses, providing a much more diversified and stable tax base and associated revenues.

Two Illustrations: Gallup, NM and Valentine, NE

Possibly the best way we can illustrate the entrepreneurial development opportunities associated with transportation corridor development is to provide two illustrations focusing on the role of rural communities functioning as goods and service hubs to motor vehicle traffic associated with transcontinental highways. We begin with Gallup, New Mexico, and its long-term role as a hub along the historic Route 66.

Route 66, sometimes known as the Will Rogers Highway, the Main Street of America or The Mother Road, initially connected Chicago, Illinois with Los Angeles, terminating at the Santa Monica Pier and the Pacific Ocean. Stretching for nearly 2,500 miles, Route 66 has been largely replaced by the Interstate Highway System, including Interstate 40, running through Gallup. Whether truckers travelling through traffic, or historical junkies, traffic volume is large and is growing on I-40 through Gallup.

The picture to the right is of the historic Route 66 and Gallup’s strip of lodging, cafés, gas stations and other traveler services. Many of these services are now



concentrated around the Interstate 40 interchanges. Communities like Gallup in New Mexico and Valentine, Nebraska, benefit from additional taxpayers associated with highway-corridor economic activities, including a larger commercial property tax base, and increased sales and lodging taxes.

Gallup, New Mexico Profiled

Gallup is located in northwest New Mexico. It is a service hub situated along east-west Interstate Highway 40 connecting Albuquerque with southern California and Los Angeles. Gallup is part of the historical Route 66. It has also been a railroad hub. Often major highways followed the corridors of railroads when most travelers moved across the country by passenger train versus motor vehicle.

Gallup is the county seat of McKinley County and a hub city in this part of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona. In 2019, Gallup posted a population of 21,493 residents, qualifying it as a “micropolitan area,” according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As a micropolitan community, Gallup offers a wide range of services from healthcare to shopping to traveler services.

Gallup’s hospitality sector, defined as lodging, auto services, and eating and drinking establishments, supports 211 ventures (17.0 percent of all Gallup ventures) and generates 3,419 jobs (20.2 percent of all Gallup jobs).

Hospitality Sector	Ventures	Jobs
Lodging	41	496
Auto Services	54	780
Eating and Drinking	116	2,143
Total	211	3,419

Source: ESRI – March 2020 data.

Note on the data: The above ESRI data is a surrogate for the hospitality sector. These same goods and services also meet area consumers’ needs and wants. But any community economic sector that accounts for 15 to 25 percent of area jobs is important.

The picture below is of Valentine and businesses located along one of its intersecting highways. Highway traffic (e.g., trucks, passenger vehicles and motorbikes related to the Sturgis Road Rally in the Black Hills of South Dakota each summer) passing through generates serious business for this rural community.



Valentine is more remote than Gallup, with less traffic on the highways intersecting in the community. But, for its size, it is a highway goods and services hub meeting the needs of truckers, passing-through traffic, and area residents. This corridor-led economic sector not only diversifies Valentine’s economy but supports a largely summer tourism sector and enhances the hospitality amenities for area residents and the large ranching community that depends on Valentine for goods and services.

Valentine, Nebraska Profiled

Valentine is a rural hub community anchoring a vast frontier rural region in north-central Nebraska and south-central South Dakota. Valentine is the county seat for Cherry County, which is home to a vast ranching region. It has been a ranching goods and service center since its founding in 1883, when the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad reached this part of northern Nebraska. Valentine is a summer recreational tourism site associated with its unique landscapes and the Niobrara Scenic River. Valentine is also a highway service and goods center related to east-west U.S. Highway 20 connecting Sioux City, Iowa, and Chadron, Nebraska – a gateway to both the Black Hills of South Dakota and Yellowstone in Wyoming. North-south U.S. Highway 83 and Nebraska 12 are also part of this highway-related transportation hub rooted in Valentine. Valentine is a community with 2,706 residents in 2019 and located in a vast frontier rural region. It hosts all the basic traveler services, plus a critical access hospital with emergency medical services. Valentine is a service center to the large Rosebud Indian Reservation and its Tribal population, located just to the north in Todd County (population of 10,195 in 2019).

Valentine’s hospitality sector - defined as lodging, auto services, and eating and drinking establishments - supports 30 ventures (11.8 percent of all Valentine ventures) and generates 336 jobs (18.4 percent of all Valentine jobs).

Hospitality Sector	Ventures	Jobs
Lodging	7	67
Auto Services	12	83
Eating and Drinking	11	186
Total	30	336

Source: ESRI – March 2020 data.

Note on the data: The above ESRI data is a surrogate for the hospitality sector. These same goods and services also meet area consumers’ needs and wants. But any community economic sector that accounts for 15 to 25 percent of area jobs is important.

Clusters and Micro-Clusters

Wikipedia shares the following definition of a cluster, “The term business cluster, also known as an industry cluster, competitive cluster, or Porterian cluster, was introduced and popularized by Michael Porter in *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* (1990). Porter argues that economic activities are embedded in social activities; that 'social glue binds clusters together'.”

Cluster theory is foundational in understanding economies. However, it is less helpful in developing local and regional economies. At e2, we employ the concept of micro-clusters, which often organically organize around key area economic activities like a healthcare system, regional university, and ethanol plant or a



heritage tourism attraction. Developing optimized micro-clusters, can increase the value of your community's pit stop where more goods and services are offered, based on the wants and needs of travelers and truckers, increasing economic development.

Under-Developed Micro-Clusters. Too many rural community pit-stop clusters develop organically, as economic development tends to evolve organically. Consider an interstate highway interchange service micro-cluster. It develops without benefit of a strategic plan rooted in clear market research and consumer marketing support. The failure by communities to intentionally develop corridor-related micro-clusters underutilizes these development opportunities. Intentional development includes such tactics as offer more services, aesthetics management, customer service training, signage, marketing, and strategic venture development to build out the micro-cluster.

Every industry has its strengths and threats. In an entrepreneurial world, being adaptive to both opportunities and challenges provides for a higher-value, competitive and more resilient economy. Again, having a diverse economy and society is the best insurance for weathering events from natural disasters to economic downturns.

Next, look at five of the more fundamental opportunities and assets inherent in this kind of development.

Each year, millions of Americans and international travelers hit the roads – interstate, federal, and state highways, and county roads. Following World War II, America abandoned rail (except for urban metro) and committed to motor vehicles and air travel to get around. While America’s road infrastructure critically needs investment, it remains a marvel, given its scope, safety, and ease of use.

Opportunities and Assets of a Corridor-Based Economic Sector

Every economic sector offers unique development opportunities and assets. Corridor-related development is no different. Consider some of these opportunities and assets, focusing on the following top five from our list at e2:

1. Local Venture Development
2. Job Creation
3. Area Tax Base Expansion
4. Identity
5. Amenities for Locals

Incremental Growth and Rural Communities

Most rural communities, particularly smaller rural communities, have more limited capacity to support development and growth when compared to urban and metro communities. Even a little growth can stress housing, schools, infrastructure, workforce, and other key development assets. Fortunately, most entrepreneur-based development is more organic and incremental. Instead of an industry coming to town requiring 250 workers, housing, and associated other services, growth comes steadily in smaller increments, allowing the community to develop its hosting capacity with the pace of growth generated by area entrepreneurs. This is true for corridor-led development rooted with strong local ownership and control.

Local Venture Development. While corridor economic activity can be rooted in large scale, corporate-owned and external investor-rooted development. Much of traveler activity and the services required are provided by smaller and often locally owned and operated ventures including for-profit businesses, and possibly some nonprofits (e.g., traveler information) and governmental enterprises (e.g., healthcare, and public safety). While traffic on America’s highways is seasonal, with typically more personal travelers in the summer months, truck traffic is consistent, meeting the freight logistics needs of a nation. Compared to say, destination tourism, employment may be a bit stronger during heavy traffic times such as the summer and holidays like Thanksgiving, but generally it is year-around and more full-time.

Job Creation. As our two transportation service hub examples of Gallup, New Mexico and Valentine, Nebraska demonstrate, up to a quarter of a community’s ventures and employment can be linked to serving the travelers’ and truckers’ needs and wants. Jobs range from mechanics, business operators, accounting, managers, maintenance, clerks, waitstaff, and those who keep our lodging rooms clean.

Area Tax Base Expansion. As already noted in this strategy paper, traveler-related economic activity broadens and deepens rural community’s tax bases. All those goods and service providers are situated in significant real estate, creating a larger commercial real estate tax base and associated tax revenues. For

those communities with sales taxes, there are expanded sales tax receipts. Finally, many communities have lodging taxes that support tourism-related marketing and development activities. All those motel rooms generate lodging taxes. For rural communities, there are costs in hosting travel hubs such as those organized around a fairly built-out interchange (e.g., roads, utilities, public safety, etc.). But for larger service hubs, typically tax revenues paid by non-resident travelers far exceeds these costs, providing revenue for resident community needs from schools to parks.

Identity. My home state of Nebraska, with Interstate 80, is known as a flyover state. It also has a reputation as a state that takes **FOREVER** to get across, given its length. From Omaha to Cheyenne, Wyoming on I-80, one will travel nearly 500 miles, requiring nearly eight hours. For those crossing Nebraska or any state, the rural community-hosted pit stops develop reputations. Communities like Kearney (mid-state I-80, Nebraska) has a strong reputation for a diverse and robust micro-cluster of traveler services. Travelers may not know that Kearney is home to a branch of the University of Nebraska and some remarkable entrepreneurial ventures, but it has a national identity as a preferred pit stop along I-80 for both travelers and truckers.

Poor Pit-Stop Design

By and large, rural communities have done a very poor job with urban planning and design relative to interchanges along major highways and the built-up commercial and industrial corridors that link the community to the highway. As opportunities present themselves, communities should commit to stronger urban planning and design, including the ability of truckers and travelers to navigate safely and easily among services, improved aesthetics, and enhanced amenities including great signage, design standards, areas that provide for exercise and walking, dog parks, informational hot spots, free broadband service, and information on the community. Remember, this is a chance to introduce your community to all these passing-through visitors, who may be on the lookout for a new personal or commercial home.

Amenities for Locals. With larger consumer markets due to travelers, rural communities can support a wider range and higher quality of amenity ventures, from coffee shops and a wider range of eating establishments to better motels/hotels and gathering places that contribute to the quality of life for its area residents.

Our next step in transportation corridor-led development focuses on strategies and tactics for growing a higher-value corridor economy.

Energizing your community's entrepreneurial talent can empower a higher value and more resilient corridor economy. This is what great entrepreneurial talent does- it creates value and wealth. Additionally, when various assets within your community's corridor micro-cluster begin to work together, even greater value, impact, and resilience can evolve.

Growing a Higher Value Corridor Economy

Chances are good that for most rural communities and their development groups, corridor development is not supported by a strategic development focus, as might be the case with tourism or manufacturing. Given the 24/7/365 forever traveler and trucker market, for those communities with this kind of opportunity, investing in intentional corridor development makes huge sense. Bottom line, for rural America and, particularly distressed rural communities, it is a "all hands-on deck" situation. Every likely development opportunity should be actively explored and pursued if it has viability and meets the development goals of a community. When this occurs at scale, every corridor-related venture and sector - from the chain truck stop to the locally owned motel - can become more competitive, profitable, and resilient.

We first focus on strategies and tactics to grow a higher value pit stop economy.

Increasing the Economic Value of Your Community's Corridor Sector

We have curated what we believe to be the top five strategies and tactics for increasing the economic value of a rural community's corridor sector as follows:

1. Enhanced Goods and Services Offerings
2. Enhanced Amenities Differentiating Your Community from Other Communities
3. Micro-Cluster and Value Chain Development
4. High-Quality Hospitality
5. Venture Development

Before we go deeper into these topics, we explore some considerations with respect to increasing the economic value of transportation-led corridor development.

Defining Economic Value

There are a number of ways we can define **economic value**, but perhaps the most accepted and powerful definition relates to the kinds of ventures and jobs a sector generates. First, we start with ventures. Higher-value venture development includes stable and long-lasting ventures that create **good jobs** and expand the commercial and industrial taxes bases of a community. By "good" jobs, we mean above-average living wage jobs that offer predictable and stable full-time and part-time work with the potential for career tracking. A central part of good jobs includes good employer-supported benefits like leave and healthcare. Finally, while a Fortune 1,000 branch plant most often creates great employment opportunities benefiting a community and can be a positive corporate citizen, locally owned and operated ventures tend to be more engaged in the community. They give more to charity, provide more elected and volunteer leadership, and encourage their employees to be engaged community members.

Enhanced Goods and Services Offerings. There are an increasing variety of travelers and truckers representing the fullest diversity in America and with our international travelers. Through a community's micro-cluster approach, fund a robust and smart market research program to learn more about the travelers/truckers stopping in your community. This research can inform your investors, developers, builders, and entrepreneurs as to what kinds of goods, services and amenities are needed.

One of the faster growing faith communities in America are Muslims. Twenty-four percent of the world's population belongs to various Muslim faiths. Islam is the third-largest religion in the United States, with an estimated 3.45 million Muslims. Pew Research estimates that by 2040 Islam will become America's second-largest faith community after Christianity. Enhanced amenities could include appropriate places to pray, offering of faith-based foods, and most importantly (e.g., given American's hostility to Muslims) sensitivity training through your hospitality training program.

Collaborative Marketing and Concierge Services

Travelers and truckers have choices as to where they stop to meet their needs and wants. Competition is intense. By evolving a micro-cluster involving not only businesses serving the traveling public and truckers, but including your community's chamber of commerce, tourism board, development corporation, city, and county, you can more effectively compete for traveler and truckers through collaborative marketing and even offering concierge services. Most important is having a well-designed and robust website that surfaces early in user searches. Make sure this website is very functional and offers unique amenities like dog parks, walking trails, access to free high-speed broadband, and the range of traveler/trucker services offered. Website links to concierge services could include unique inquiries of needs that may tip the scale of stopping in your community versus another. For example, a trucker may be developing tooth pain and needs to see a dentist. The ability to learn that there are dentists in your community that will take patients after hours becomes valuable traveler enhancements.

Enhanced Amenities Differentiating Your Community from Other Communities. Regular and robust market research of the travelers/truckers stopping in your community will yield insights on the kinds of enhanced amenities that can differentiate your community from other competing communities. Consider America's Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964. There are an estimated 70 million Boomers, now beginning to retire. By and large they are active, healthy, and wanting to experience America. They are all-season travelers and much more likely to use both interstate highways and two-lane federal and state highways to visit the sites they have planned. These Boomers are a diverse group. But consider some of their universal needs and wants:



- They are getting older and do not sleep as soundly as younger folks. They want lodging away from the noise of traffic.
- They want to exercise while on the road. Parks close to their lodging with walking paths or information on one-time visits to the local YMCA can be important.
- While on the road, Boomers want a chicken fried steak dinner every so often, yet they also want to eat better, so offering genuine unique and healthy foods is a plus.

- Information on healthcare services - from repairing a hearing aid to getting a quick check-up at an urgent care center - can be important.
- Boomers are enjoying retirement and may want a chilled white wine or good scotch at the end of the day. Can they find these within your micro-cluster of businesses?
- Many of these Boomers are traveling with pets and want pet-friendly lodging and safe places to water and exercise their pets.

This list of special amenities, rooted in wants and needs, can help your traveler-related cluster become more accommodating and competitive at the same time. Remember, this is just one of hundreds of potential market segments within our traveler and trucker world. By offering these value-added goods and services, your community can be known as the “go-to” community for traveling Boomers. Finally, remember to advertise your community as a Boomer-friendly community.

Micro-Cluster and Value-Chain Development. The two largest expenses in corridor service hubs are real estate and employees. Providing services to travelers and truckers is an inherently physical experience. We sleep in lodging, eat in cafés and fuel at truck stops. Corridor-related development, as noted earlier, creates a lot of jobs. The status quo is each venture working on its own to find and sustain success. Consider forming a partnership or association that includes public and private traveler and trucker service provision. Through collaboration, optimization of your pit stop opportunities can be realized. Shared market research, marketing, and the provision of desirable free and low-cost services and amenities (e.g., universal broadband hot spots, recreational trails, parks, etc.) become possible through joint efforts. Additionally, there is potential in growing micro-cluster and value-chains, where all goods and service providers are viewed as a package, meeting more of the traveler/trucker needs and wants.

High-Quality Hospitality. There are many kinds of travelers. Some are budget-minded who look for value in low-cost lodging, experiences, and food. Others have the capacity and desire for higher-quality amenities. Regardless, strong hospitality training, whether it is the part-time clerk working the counter in the convenience store/gas stations on the highway or the waitstaff at an interstate highway truck stop café, can provide your pit stop a competitive advantage. Appropriately trained employees and owners sensitive to value-added and high-quality hospitality translates to greater sales and, potentially, willingness to pay higher prices and the likelihood of positive reviews and repeat business (e.g., particularly with truckers and other regular travelers on specific routes).

Venture Development. Many locally owned and operated transportation corridor-related businesses spend most of their time *operating* their ventures and too little time *working on* their ventures. Whether the focus is how to operate a better venture, or ways to grow or become more resilient, focusing time and energy on venture development is key. Every venture has opportunities to become a better venture for the owners and workers, enhancing the community. There are two foundational elements to venture development in this context:

1. Market and Customer Discovery
2. Empowered Employees

Market and Customer Discovery. Every successful entrepreneur appreciates the power of **market and customer discovery**. Being intentional in exploring other customers, including offering new goods and services, can fuel growth and ensure competitiveness in the marketplace. Offering enhanced goods and services matching evolving travel/trucker wants and needs can not only generate more business but positions a venture or a community as a desirable pit stop along America’s highways. Some of these services should be offered free (e.g., appropriate spaces for Muslim travelers to pray), priced to cover costs (e.g., a dog run) and monetized (e.g., fueling stations and mechanics supporting electric vehicles) to add to sales and profits. Market and customer discovery can be supported by the community, in partnership with expertise from a private consultant or an area university, making it easier for entrepreneurs to consider how to test emerging market opportunities and grow both their competitiveness and bottom line.



Empowered Employees. As noted, a few paragraphs earlier, this sector creates a lot of jobs, as the two largest expenses in visitor/trucker service hubs are real estate and employees. Inherently physical experiences, we sleep in lodging, eat in cafés, and need repairs on our vehicles, making sound customer service increasingly important, with cost and ease of access. For owner/operators of traveler/trucker service ventures, moving from treating employees as a cost to be managed to foundational assets is important. We are not suggesting that controlling personnel costs is not important, as it clearly is. But treating employees as key assets will generate more revenue and profits.

We recommend Zeynep Ton’s 2014 book – *The Good Jobs Strategy, How the Smartest Companies Invest in Employees to Lower Costs and Boost Profits* (MIT Sloan School of Management) as an excellent read specific to our point of **empowering employees as assets**.

For many corridor-related ventures, we know the customers we know. Our ventures can be relatively passive in serving who comes through the door, with little thought given to potential customers and markets. Successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial communities are always spending time tracking trends and looking ahead. Moving from responsive to strategic development can ensure a competitive edge and reputation that makes your venture and/or community a must-stop for travelers and truckers.

Next, we consider the all-important aspect of increasing corridor sector resiliency.

In our e2 prosperity model we focus on emerging area entrepreneurs to generate a more competitive, higher value, diverse, resilient, and prosperous economy. Resilience is the key to a more sustainable, prosperous community that is capable of better-weathering shocks (e.g., both economic and natural) and recover more completely following the shock. Thriving in the dynamics of an internationalizing economy, worldwide health pandemics and wicked weather, intentionally fostering resilience within entrepreneurs, their ventures, and a community’s entrepreneurial ecosystem is paramount.

Growing More Resilient Corridor Economies in Rural America

Before we begin our exploration of the all-important topic of growing a more resilient venture and transportation corridor economic sector, let’s be more specific about our targets for resiliency building. Figure 4 provides a quick oversight.

Figure 4 – Targets that Build Resilience

Ecosystem	Sector	Ventures	Entrepreneurs
Target #1 to build resiliency is to grow a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem capable of responding to both opportunity and crisis.	The second target is the sector cluster. Closely linked to a focused ecosystem is the sector resilient and ready for challenges.	Ventures must have resiliency plans that empower them to survive and thrive through challenges and embrace opportunities.	Challenges create stress for entrepreneurs. Building support networks to help them survive and thrive through crisis is important.

Diversity Empowers Resiliency

There are many attributes to resiliency. But none are more important than diversity. Diversity is like insurance as it provides a powerful mechanism to survive better in crisis and renew following crisis. Whether in nature or our economies, sustaining and increasing diversification to enhance resiliency is foundational.

Resilience is the ability of a person, organization, community, or even nation to manage crisis and rebuild stronger following the crisis. From healthy bodies to environmental ecosystems, there is embedded resiliency that fosters survival and renewal during and following a crisis. We live in a time when resiliency is ever more important. The following are some lessons of learning and considerations for growing a more diversified and resilient transportation corridor economy:

1. Diversify Beyond Your Corridor Sector
2. Diversify Within Your Corridor Sector
3. Grow a Strong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
4. Grow More Entrepreneurial Ventures
5. Grow More Resilient Ventures



Diversify Beyond Your Corridor Sector. Narrow-based economies are always a risk and fundamentally less resilient. For rural communities overly dependent on their pit stop economy, diversifying beyond this sector is strongly recommended. While most rural communities and areas cannot enable the socioeconomic diversity of larger and more dynamic metropolitan areas, these communities can add one or two additional areas of economic diversity to reduce the threat of economic failure or the damage from boom-and-bust cycles.

Ogallala, Nebraska

I graduated from high school in Ogallala, located in western Nebraska, where Nebraska connects to Colorado. Ogallala has been a pit stop community for decades, rooted as part of the historic U.S. Highway 30 route, with destination visitors to Lake McConaughy and Interstate 80 as it moved across America. When I-80 reached Ogallala, traveler and trucker services migrated from Highway 30 running through town to the I-80 interchange. Offering a strong collection of traveler/trucker services and amenities, Ogallala is a competitive stop along I-80.



Diversify Within Your Corridor Sector. Within this strategy paper we have noted a number of niche markets (e.g., travelers with pets, disabled persons, international travelers, etc.). Conducting niche market analysis through a collective community effort can help your community and pit stop ventures diversify within the transportation corridor sector economy. Like nearly everything else in America, those traveling our highways are as diverse as our world. Growing new market niches, creating small and larger profit centers, is smart business.

Grow a Strong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. The picture to the left is the Interstate 29 interchange near Nebraska City, Nebraska. Much of this interchange was submerged in flood waters, impacting this pit stop economy. In 2019 the Missouri River experienced massive flooding, shutting down I-29 from South Dakota to Kansas City. Connector highways and bridges were also closed, impacting an entire region and its economy rooted in I-29 travelers and truckers. These kinds of wicked storms appear to be more common with the longer-term trend of climate change.



Increasing resiliency is essential to manage through these disruptions and ensure recovery following them. Having a robust regional entrepreneurial ecosystem is foundational. When communities, regions and states have strong entrepreneurial ecosystems, they can respond quickly, efficiently, and effectively during times of crisis and empower more rapid recovery. The value of well-designed and operated entrepreneurial ecosystems has been demonstrated by NetWork Kansas during the COVID-19 pandemic recession. Network Kansas empowering a high-capacity way to attract and deploy capital has made a difference in Kansas.

NetWork Kansas

In our opinion, NetWork Kansas (www.networkkansas.com) has one of the most developed capital attraction, management, and deployment infrastructures in rural America today. Not since our earlier case study work with the Kentucky Highlands Investment Company (www.khic.org) in Appalachia, Kentucky, have we documented a comparable capital access system across rural America. You can learn about it in our paper, [*The NetWork Kansas Financial Capital System*](#). This capital access system is proving invaluable during the COVID-19 Pandemic Recession as it is being employed to distribute capital to small businesses throughout Kansas rooted in its relationship-based distributive network. One of NetWork Kansas' first COVID-19 related capital distributions was the deployment of Kansas Department of Commerce funds (e.g., \$5 million) to small businesses in the hospitality industry. You can learn about this initiative in our case study, [*Spotlight on the Hospitality Industry Relief Emergency \(HIRE\) Fund in Kansas*](#).

Grow More Entrepreneurial Ventures. By experience, successful entrepreneurs are resilient. They have the ability to energize teams, create collaborations, mobilize resources, and do the kinds of things to ensure not only survival in crisis, but the ability to recover better following the crisis. A key lesson derived from the pandemic business aid, is those ventures with strong banking relationships were better positioned to obtain CARES Act financing. Those without these banking relationships were left out in the cold. Banks prioritized long-term and well-known customers versus new customers. Smart entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ventures have robust relationships and strategies. Having these in place before a crisis or opportunity emerges is foundational, as responding quickly is often fundamental.

Grow More Resilient Ventures. The primary building blocks of a resilient economy are venture owners and operators. Developing a resilient mindset and intentional strategy of growing a resilient venture must begin before there is a crisis. Once the crisis hits, it is so much harder to rebuild while entrepreneurs and their ventures are struggling to simply survive. An intentional development of entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial teams empowers not only the stability of each venture, but also directly enhances community resilience. Every entrepreneurial venture – for-profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governmental enterprises – must have a robust resilience game plan in today's environment.

Now on to **Growing Competitive Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Ventures.**

Entrepreneurs, including for-profit, nonprofit, and governmental enterprises, are foundational in growing a more competitive and higher-value pit-stop sector rooted in your community's genuine opportunities and assets. Like a shopping center, consider the pit stop as an integrated collection of travelers' and trucker-related goods and services. Commit to evolving corridor-led development as a value chain to optimize economic and community impacts.

Growing Competitive Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Ventures

We will not spend a lot of time on growing competitive entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ventures in this paper. We recommend communities consider our [Working with Entrepreneurs Guide](#) for more information. In this section of our strategy paper, we focus on the following four areas of entrepreneur development and support. Figures 5 and 6 are worth repeating from earlier pages for ease of reading.

1. Understand the Needs and Wants of Your Traveler/Trucker Market Segments
2. Build Out Your Unique Pit Stop Value Chains
3. Ensure Second-to-None Hospitality
4. Embrace Collaborative Opportunities

Understand the Needs and Wants of Your Traveler/Trucker Market Segments. Every successful entrepreneur knows who their existing customers are and are exploring how to connect to other consumers who could benefit from the goods and services offered (or could be offered) by the venture. The same is true for corridor-related development. Figure 1 on page 6 in this strategy paper provides a quick typology of all corridor-related economic activities. The first step is for your community and/or region to identify which of these activities are at work in your part of rural America, then to analyze what goods and services are needed for travelers within each segment (Figure 6, next page). When you put all of these goods and services together, you have a traveler/trucker market-specific value chain, our next topic.

Build Out Your Unique Pit Stop Value Chains. We do want to introduce more deeply the concept of **value chains** or **micro-clusters**. Consider the following illustration. A strong value chain, rooted in specific kinds of travelers (e.g., a retired Boomer with a dog) has a collection of interrelated goods, services, needs, and wants. We suggest a simple exercise, based on your targeted visitor market segments, to explore strengths and gap opportunities in your specific pit stops value chains:

- What are the amenities desired by this particular traveler cohort?
- What goods and services does or could your particular venture offer?
- Who in your micro-cluster has or could offer these amenities?
- How might you collectively market your pit stop as a preferred stop for these travelers?

Your community can find resources to help your entrepreneurs discover and explore various likely and targeted traveler market segments and their needs and wants. Remember, this is a huge potential for existing businesses that can add products and services specific to this market research. In doing so, these ventures will generate sales and increased profits, which mean more jobs, better jobs, and stronger tax bases for your community.

Figure 5 – Traveler Goods and Service Needs and Wants

Core Traveler Hospitality Goods and Services		
Core goods and services are those that nearly every traveler needs and are universal to a well-developed traveler and trucker service hub.		
<p>Lodging</p> <p>A range of lodging offerings from boutique hotels to franchise motels to Airbnbs is foundational. Travelers need places to sleep.</p>	<p>RV Parks</p> <p>Many travelers have a home on wheels and are looking for affordable RV parks with the right kinds of amenities.</p>	<p>Food Service</p> <p>Travelers have to eat. A range of dining options, from quick to healthier foods, including vegetarian and vegan offerings, are all important.</p>
Recreation Space and Clean Restrooms		
If you are travelling long distances, you have need for two basic health and wellbeing amenities: reliably clean restrooms and recreation spaces where travelers can take that walk or quick run, including dog parks.		
<p>Gasoline and Garages</p> <p>Travelers need a place to eat and sleep, and their motor vehicles need fuel and sometimes repairs. Honest and affordable fuel and vehicle repair services are key. *</p>	<p>Truck Stops</p> <p>Today’s modern truck stops have become one-stop places for truckers and their rigs. High-quality, affordable trucker services are key to attracting and re-attracting long-haul truckers. Remember, many truckers travel similar routes.</p>	<p>Information</p> <p>Travelers may have need for specialized information from route planning and local attractions to finding dentists, to a place to repair a broken pair of eyeglasses. Info kiosks to hospitality training can fill these value-added needs.</p>
Allied Traveler Hospitality Service Needs and Wants		
In addition to core trucker and traveler needs and wants that are more universal, there are allied hospitality services that are also important and can create entrepreneurial development opportunities.		
<p>Healthcare</p> <p>Travelers get sick and may need access to urgent care or even specialized services. Medical services in your community can fit these emergencies.</p>	<p>Pharmacy</p> <p>Travelers also need pharmacy services, from over-the-counter products to prescription drugs. A good pharmacy is an asset.</p>	<p>Connectivity</p> <p>We are now used to having 24-7 access to broadband and cellular phone services. While open spaces between rural towns may lack coverage, having good service in town is foundational.</p>
<p>Entertainment</p> <p>After a long trip, travelers may want a drink or a public pool where their kids can burn off some energy. Entertainment amenity information with good directions and hours can enhance that afternoon stop or encourage an evening stay-over.</p>	<p>Pet Goods & Services</p> <p>We love our pets! On the next page, see ideas for the millions of Americans travelling with pets. Access to pet goods and services, like veterinarians or a dog park, is important, and may determine where a traveler spends the night.</p>	<p>Basic Shopping</p> <p>Basic shopping services include everything from groceries to a store where a lost pair of winter gloves can be replaced. Good information on such basic shopping services - with good directions and hours of operation – is important.</p>

*Unfortunately, some travel services view these customers as “one and done.” They are tempted to exploit travelers with scams, including posted low fuel prices at just one pump to charging outlandish prices for repairs for travelers who are broken down.



Ensure Second-to-None Hospitality. Visitors want to feel welcome. Chances are good that travelers employing your community’s services will include a much more diverse (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, gender orientation, politics, faith, etc.) group of people when compared to the permanent residents of your community. Strong hospitality training is recommended, including cultural sensitivity training. Whether it is the local police officer, convenience store clerk, or mechanic, appropriate hospitality is essential to an optimal traveler experience. Working with your entrepreneurial ventures, your community can support regular, robust, and sophisticated hospitality training, creating positive experiences for every traveler, every day. Consider reaching out to resources at your university or state tourism agency for curriculum help and instructors.

Embrace Collaborative Opportunities. Various entrepreneurs collaborating within a value chain or micro-cluster have a wide range of opportunities to work together. Collectively, a community in partnership with interested entrepreneurs can undertake the following value-adding, cost-cutting, and cost-sharing activities:

- Traveler Market Segment Research and Analysis
- Marketing – Robust Social Media
- Informational Website
- Universal Concierge Services
- Strong Cross-referrals
- Hospitality Training and Support

It is time to wrap up our strategy exploration related to transportation corridor entrepreneurial development.

High-tech entrepreneurship is exciting and reaps the headlines in entrepreneurship articles, films, and social media. Transportation corridor-related entrepreneurship development is not as sexy. But for many rural communities, lacking high-tech entrepreneurial talent, developing this part of your community’s talent and economy makes practical sense. Always remember that optimal development emerges when we focus on our genuine assets and opportunities.

Grow a Traveler Development Vision and Game Plan

Figure 6 provides the typical development approach for most rural communities:

Figure 6 – Development Approaches Continuum

Reactive	Responsive	Strategic
<p>Many communities lacking a strong development vision and game plan are reactive to both crisis and opportunities. Being in a reactive position undermines potential desired development.</p>	<p>Many rural communities are very responsive to development opportunities and challenges. Being responsive is better than being reactive, but it weakens a community’s ability to identify emerging trends.</p>	<p>Optimal development occurs when a community is strategic, focusing on its genuine opportunities and assets. Strategic development is also proactive, looking ahead and preparing for emerging trends.</p>

Employing e2’s **Likely Entrepreneurial Development Opportunities** strategies can help your community focus on your optimal development opportunities that can maximize the impact of your economic development investments.

If you have traveler-related entrepreneurial development opportunities, we encourage you to be strategic and intentional. Organic development will come, but with a strong vision and game plan, you can optimize your opportunities and ensure your pit stop in rural America always thrives.



How e2 Can Help



e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems helps communities increase prosperity through entrepreneur-focused economic development and ecosystem building. Led by [Don Macke](#), e2 has a national team of practitioners who bring research, coaching, incubation, market intelligence and other expertise to this work.

What We Do

- **Mentoring.** We mentor and coach new practitioners seeking to pursue entrepreneur-led development. We provide advice and support for building eEcosystem strategies that work.
- **Analytics Support.** e2 helps communities and regions understand their entrepreneurial potential through research and data. Explore some of our research tools and reports [here](#).
- **e2 University (e2U)** is our platform for sharing more than 1,000 guides, papers, stories, tools, and resources with communities wanting a deep dive into eEcosystem building. Don Macke leads the e2U team with analytics support from **Cathy Kottwitz** and report preparation from **Ann Chaffin**. Special recognition for their e2U legacy contributions goes to **Dana Williams** and **Deb Markley**, LOCUS Impacting Investing.
- **Fostering the eMovement.** We support the national entrepreneurship movement along with our partners including the **Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City**, **SourceLink**, **Edward Lowe Foundation**, **Kauffman Foundation**, and **NetWork Kansas**. We are a founding member of [Start Us Up: America's New Business Plan](#), a coalition dedicated to strengthening entrepreneurship across America. Together, we continue to advance the foundational ideas of building entrepreneurial ecosystems and entrepreneurship-led economic development.

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[NetWork Kansas](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kansas, is the home for e2 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. NetWork Kansas connects aspiring entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, to a deep network of business building resource organizations across the state.

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