

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 119

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

CDOT Route	Route Description
119A	From SH 6-G in Clear Creek Canvon Northwest via Black Hawk and Nederland and East To SH 7-B at Braodway and H 93-A in Boulder
119B	From SH 36-B in Boulder northeast To SH 119C at IRON HORSE in Longmont
119C	From SH 119B at Iron Horse in Longmont east to To I-25A in Longmont

Highway Location:

Counties: Gilpin, Boulder, Weld
 Length (Miles): 60.473

OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)*:

OAHP Site No.	Assessment	Assessment Date	Site Name
5BL.12038	Officially eligible	2013	BOULDER CREEK BRIDGE-LOWER CASTLE ROCK BRIDGE
5BL.12039	Offiically eligible	2013	BOULDER CREEK BRIDGE-UPPER CASTLE ROCK BRIDGE
5BL.12624	Field eligible	2013	BOULDER CANYON BRIDGE
5BL.622	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	08/09/1996>06/06/1977	STATE HIGHWAY 119 / BOULDER CANYON DRIVE
5BL.7902	Listed on National Register	3/11/2003	BOULDER CREEK BRIDGE
5BL.906	Officially not eligible	08/30/1985	BOULDER CANYON MASONRY BARRIER
5CC.1185.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	04/22/2002>11/07/2001	U.S. HIGHWAY 119 TUNNEL
5GL.1381.1	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Officially needs data>No assessment given on form	12/10/2004>04/22/2002>09/30/2004	US HIGHWAY 119 - SEGMENT
5GL.1381.3	Within NR district>Officially not eligible>Field not eligible>Field Assess.: Non-contributing to District	07/17/1991>02/13/2008>01/10/2008>01/10/2008	STATE HIGHWAY 119 (SEGMENT)
5GL.1381.4	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	10/21/2009>08/06/2009	US HIGHWAY 119
5GL.260.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible>Field not eligible	09/04/1992>07/14/1992>12/01/1982	GOLDEN GATE TOLL ROAD
5GL.266	Field not eligible>Field not eligible	06/28/1996>12/01/1982	BLACK HAWK-GOLDEN ROAD, SMITH HILL ROAD
5JF.2661	Officially needs data>Field needs data>Officially not eligible	04/22/2002>11/07/2001>12/10/2004	STATE HIGHWAY 119

Discussion of Site Forms (for previously recorded segments, if applicable):

Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway listed above and available in Compass

-5BL.622.1 is a recording of the wagon road next to SH 119 between mileposts 31.8 and 32.5 in 1996. The road was determined eligible and the segment contributed to the overall resource.

-5BL.622.3 recorded the segment between Boulder and Nederland in 2015 for permanent repairs to the highway

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caused by the flooding in September 2013. A draft of this form is included in the research folder for SH 119. The site form found the entire resource (SH 119) eligible, and that the segment contributes to the eligibility of the overall road.

-5BL.906 is a recording of the Boulder Canyon masonry barrier in 1985 for a replacement project that took the old barrier out and installed new guardrail. It was determined to be officially not eligible.

-5BL.7902 is a site form for the Boulder Creek Bridge (D-15-AK), which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) in 2002.

-5CC.1185.1 is for the tunnel on SH 119 and was determined to be officially eligible in 2002.

-5GL1381.1,.3, and .4 are in Gilpin County and were recorded by Jennifer (Ohlander) Wahlers at Colorado Department of Transportation (5GL.1381.2 is for tunnel No. 4 [F-15-K], and is officially eligible). The site forms for .3 and .4 are in the research folder for the highway. These segments, recorded in 2008 and 2009, were determined non-contributing of the overall resource, which was considered eligible. The segments had been subject to maintenance and improvements that changed the original appearance of the highway. The site form for .4 also stated that .1 was officially determined to not support the integrity of the entire linear resource in 2004.

-Site form for 5GL260.1, Golden Gate Toll Road, was not available. The segment is listed as officially not eligible (1992) in Compass

-5GL.266 was a recording of the Black Hawk/Golden Stage Road in Gilpin Road in 1982 that is not the current highway.

Site form for 5JF.2661.1, SH 119, was not available. The segment is listed as officially not eligible (2004) in Compass.

-5BL.12038, 5BL.12039, 5BL.12624 are three bridges on the old highway built in 1915 and later bypassed by a new alignment of the highway in 1953. They were recorded by Clay Fraser for Boulder County Parks Department in 2013.

5BL.12038 and 5BL.12039 were both determined officially eligible in 2013, 5BL.12624 is field eligible.

Historic Districts located within 250 feet of highway (OAHP Site Number and Name)*:

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>District Name</i>	<i>Assessment (If Applicable)</i>
5BL.1159	East Side Historic District, Longmont	Listed - National Register
5BL.1209	West Side Historic District, Longmont	Listed - National Register
5BL.752	Boulder Hydroelectric System	Eligible
5GL.7	Central City-Blackhawk Historic District	Listed on National Register
5LR.2164	Stanley Power Plant, Fall River Hydroelectricity Plant	Listed - National Register

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Historical Data:

The highway has three distinct segments that total 60.473 miles. SH 119A is the longest section, from U.S. Highway (US) 6 in Clear Creek Canyon northwest to Black Hawk and north to Nederland then east through Boulder Canyon to Boulder, where it terminates at milepost 41.981. SH 119B starts at milepost 44.237 at US 36 and is known as the Diagonal Highway to Longmont, ending at milepost 59.088. SH 119C is from Longmont to Interstate(I)-25 near milepost 240, where it terminates.

The highway is associated with the development of mining between Idaho Springs, Black Hawk, Nederland, and Boulder and with agriculture between Boulder and Longmont. It was built as a toll road between Boulder and the mountain mining camps to the west in 1864, and was completed between Boulder and Nederland in 1871. It is also associated with the history of automobile tourism in Boulder Canyon, a popular location for recreation. For a detailed chronology of the section between Boulder and Nederland, please refer to 5BL.622.3.

In 1915, the State Highway Commission added State Primary Road 54, linking Lafayette, Boulder, Nederland, Rollinsville, Central City, Black Hawk, and Idaho Springs to its primary system of roads. Boulder County and the Highway Commission constructed improvements to this part of the road from 1915-1917 and used convict labor from the State Penitentiary, setting up camps near the highway. By 1919, the railroad line between Boulder and Sunset via Four Mile Canyon through the lower part of Boulder Canyon had been abandoned, as had many of the original mining roads, because the mines had closed. It was renumbered SH 119 in 1923. Between 1937 and 1938, the segment of the road between Idaho Springs and Black Hawk through Virginia Canyon became a county road, and the highway moved a few miles to the east to meet US 6, traveling instead up an easier stretch of road through North Clear Creek Canyon, reaching Black Hawk before Central City. In 1998, the triangle intersection between US 6 and SH 119 was redesigned and a short portion of the road was abandoned, including Tunnel #4 on the west spur of 119. In 1939, the road was extended from Boulder to Longmont, incorporating a local road that had already been established as a farm-to-market road within the state highway system. The road followed section and quarter section lines in a stair step pattern to connect the larger towns with the smaller town of Niwot. Longmont was a center for agriculture with a sugar beet refinery operated by Great Western and the Kuner Empson Cannery, both of which utilized the highway. The stair step alignment was abandoned when this part of the highway was straightened by 1960, and the highway was extended to I-25 east of Longmont in 1963. The route between Boulder and Longmont became an expressway to I-25 in 1975.

The Colorado Highway Department constructed another major upgrade to SH 119A (the mountain portion) between 1946 and 1953. This work demolished a number of older structures and sections of the original highway throughout the canyon, and required moving the channel of the creek in many locations. The footprint of the new road was 26' from shoulder to shoulder. The road was upgraded to improve its use for recreational purposes only, which allowed the roadway widths and speed limits to be lower than other state highways. The 1953 upgrades included the construction of new concrete rigid frame and concrete arched deck girder bridges over Boulder Creek. These were the earliest concrete arched deck girders built in Colorado, though this structural type was heavily used during the 1950s-1970s interstate bridge construction. The bridges are relatively short (less than 115 feet in length), and featured concrete abutments, wingwalls, and spill-through piers with steel baluster guardrails. The project also included two tunnels built of native red gneiss. One bypassed a tight turn near the Boulder Hydroelectric Facility about four miles west of Boulder, and another was located on the west leg of the T-intersection between US 6 and SH 119. This tunnel and the roadway were abandoned on the west side of the intersection when the connection between the two highways was redesigned in 1998.

The historic themes for Boulder County include coal and mineral mining, agriculture and ranching. Gold was first discovered in the mountains west of Boulder in 1859. Coal mining began in the 1860s and lasted until the mid 1930s. Gold and coal mining industries relied extensively on railroads to transport materials to and from the mines. However, wagon, and later, automobile roads, also provided transportation of the workers and materials to the mining fields and to the towns where the workers lived. Shortly after the arrival of prospectors, settlers established farms and ranches, organized and built irrigation systems, founded communities, and organized communal agricultural societies. These ranches and agricultural communities helped supply the mining communities of the gold and coal industry and continued to provide important agricultural industries and economies for the region (Wolfenbarger 2008: E-1). In addition to mining and agriculture, tourism is also a historic theme. With the decline of mining and the rise of the late 19th century tourist travel, many former mining towns relied on tourism for their livelihood. By the 1920s the growth of automobile tourism was an important contribution to the economy in these communities. The improvement of roads for the purpose of tourism was successful in attracting new visitors to the region and provided a new industry for the towns that otherwise would have disappeared (Abele 1998: E-7).

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Research indicates that part of this route was initially constructed to provide access to mining camps between Boulder and Idaho Springs and that it was one of the original highways of the state system. The mountain section evolved into a automobile tourism route, and a forest highway designed in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Public Roads. The portion between Boulder and Longmont was added to the state highway network in 1939, but it had been a local farm to market road for many years.

In summary, research indicates this route has a number of historic associations. These include:

- Wagon transportation to and from mines between Boulder, Nederland, and Black Hawk, in the 1860s
- Automobile tourism in Boulder, Gilpin counties
- Agriculture in Boulder County

(Unless otherwise indicated, sources used in the preparation of this section included state highway maps, the Highways of Colorado by Matthew Salek, Highways to the Sky: A Context and History of Colorado's Highway System, Colorado State Roads and Highways, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, plans in the Online Transportation Information System (OTIS), and site forms for previously surveyed resources in Compass when available.)

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Not Significant - No historical significance identified

Significant - Historical significance identified (see details below)

Property Type and Areas of Significance:

A detailed explanation why this highway possesses historical significance is provided in the Significance Statement below.

Cultural:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)

Engineering:

Subtypes

- Farm-to-Market Road
- Limited Access, Multiple-Lane, Divided Highway/Freeway
- Highway Bypass

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)

Aesthetic:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)
- Landscape architecture (Landscape Architecture)

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Historic periods of highway construction:

- Pre-territorial (pre-1861)
- Territorial and pre-automobile state roads (1861-1890)
- Automobile age (1890-1930)
- Depression and World War II (1930-1945)
- Postwar Interstate Era (1945-1973)
- Completion and Augmentation of Interstate System (1973-2000)

Level of Significance:

- Local
- State
- National

Significance Statement:

SH 119 is classified as an Aesthetic Route between Boulder, Nederland, and Black Hawk, and an Engineered Route between Boulder, Longmont, and I-25 under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

SH 119 provided transportation to and from the mountain mining camps between Boulder and Idaho Springs, as well as ranches and farms east of Boulder. The two distinct parts of SH 119 (east and west of Boulder) have different histories, but both are significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Transportation. The portion between Idaho Springs and Boulder provided access to mines and early mining in Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Boulder counties and became a popular automobile tourism route in the late 1920s. The segment east of Boulder became a state highway by 1939. Prior to that date and until 1960 when the highway was realigned, the road was a farm-to-market route that transported products between Longmont and Boulder. In summary, under Criterion A, this highway possesses significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation, Industry, and Entertainment/Recreation at the local level.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal this highway to be directly associated with the events or work of a person important in history, nor does research indicate the highway represents the efforts of a specific individual to secure construction of this highway for the economic development of a community or area of the state. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion B.

Criterion C

In 1953, SH 119A between Black Hawk and Boulder was improved as a forest highway according to forest standards for recreational highways. Upgrades were made to straighten curves, reduce steep grades, and provide access to numerous trailheads and picnic areas in the Roosevelt National Forest with pull-offs and scenic viewpoints. As a forest highway, the route could have narrower lanes, lower travel speeds, and did not have to meet certain engineering standards. Distinctive characteristics that convey this significance as a 1953 highway are some of the first concrete arched deck girder bridges built in the state, rubble masonry blocks for guardrails, and two tunnels constructed of native red gneiss (one is on an abandoned segment of the highway near the junction of US 6; the other bypassed a tight turn four miles west of Boulder). As such, SH 119A west of Boulder represents a 1953 forest highway designed as an aesthetic route, and is significant under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. More work needs to be done on SH119B and SH119C to determine whether Criterion C applies to these segments, however the realignment of SH119C into the Diagonal Highway abandoned the historic stair-step configuration of the older highway.

Criterion D

For a property to possess significance for information potential, the information yielded by the property must answer specific important research questions that cannot be otherwise answered. The technology of highway construction is well understood and documented. As such, SH 119 is unlikely to yield important information that cannot be discerned from archived plans and other records. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance

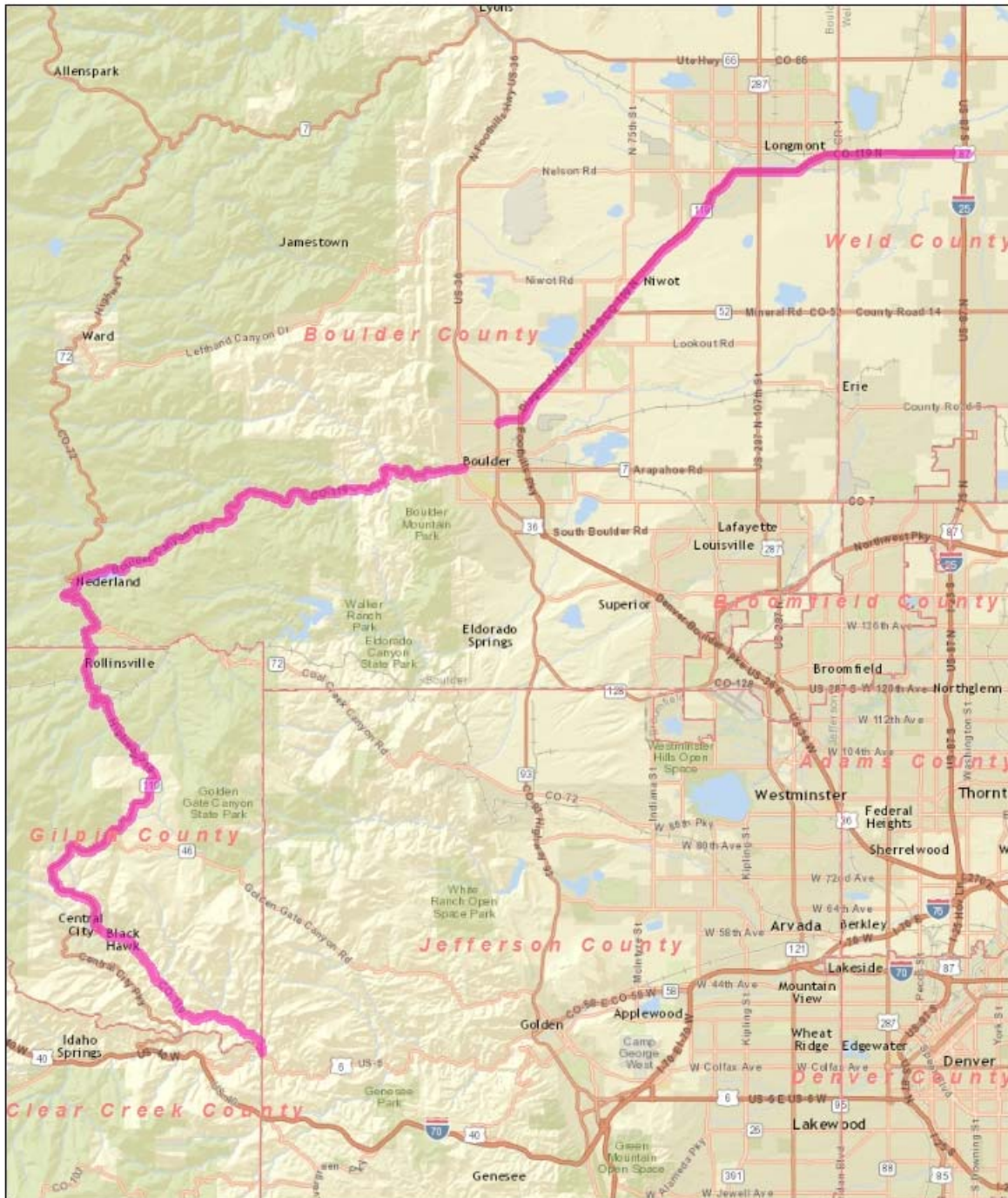
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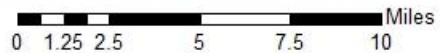
Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 119
under Criterion D.

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- SH 119
- County Boundary

SH 119



Map indicates the extent of the highway based on CDOT GIS data; portions co-signed with other highways may not be indicated.