

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 120

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
120A	From SH 115-A east of Florence east via Portland To SH 50-A west of the Fremont/Pueblo County Line

Highway Location:

Counties: Fremont
Length (Miles): 7.114

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

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

No Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway were identified in Compass.

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>
None	No historic districts are found on or adjacent to this highway	

*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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Historical Data:

SH 120 is approximately seven miles long and extends east from SH 115 in Florence to U.S. Highway (US) 50 near Penrose and the Fremont/Pueblo County line in south-central Colorado. The earliest transportation corridors in South-Central Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans. The area west of Pueblo was settled in the mid-nineteenth century. Small farms, ranches, and towns were established in the area and served as supply centers for those traveling along stagecoach routes through the area from Colorado Springs and Pueblo and to provide access to area mining activities. Residents and those engaged in mining activities further into the mountains also frequented the small towns. Canon City was organized in 1860 at which time a series of mining activities were underway in the area including coal, iron, gypsum, marble, and granite. The settlement that eventually developed into Penrose was established in the 1860s as a stop along a stagecoach route with a restaurant and hotel. By the 1870s the area was served by railroads and the first territorial prison was established in Canon City, which eventually became the Colorado State Prison. Early railroads that operated near Florence hauled coal from Rockvale and Coal Creek. Coal fields were also located near Canon City and together with the discovery of oil in the early 1880s, industrial development spurred further growth and settlement in the area. The town of Florence incorporated in 1887 and by 1890, had 50 oil wells, 60 new homes, and numerous businesses. (Johns 2014; Canon City Chamber of Commerce 2015; Florence Chamber of Commerce 2015)

The popularity of the automobile increased dramatically throughout the state between 1910 and 1920. The Good Roads Movement and establishment of the Colorado Highway Commission in the first decades of the twentieth century led to the establishment of a highway network throughout the region and state. Smaller communities increasingly saw the benefits of highway access, which led to further highway construction along less traveled routes and alignments in the 1920s and 1930s. The route that eventually developed into US 50 was historically the major east-west transportation corridor through south-central Colorado. The other large and important transportation corridor in the region was comprised of several state highways, most notably SH 115, a prominent north-south route, that along with smaller state highways and local connector roads that together formed the regional transportation network. (Carter and Mehls 1984: 138-141)

Historic state highway maps indicate that SH 120 was designated by 1929 and extended east from Cañon City to a road that corresponds to present-day SH 115. By 1931 the highway extended past the intersection with SH 115 and connected to Penrose. By 1950, US 50 was rerouted to bypass Florence and SH 120 was shifted to the old alignment of US 50 from SH 115 eastward. Subsequent realignments in the 1950s at the east end resulted in the current alignment.

State highways, farm-to-market roads, and small local connector roads like SH 120 typically served to link remote areas and smaller towns with major regional transportation corridors. Research and review of historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided important nor direct access to destinations related to important historic themes such as industry, agriculture, or commerce. SH 120 was one of several connector roads that comprised the regional transportation network within the region.

(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 120 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

Research did not indicate that this highway is an example of an early or prominent project by the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) or was built or improved as part of a federal relief project. SH 120 served as a short local connector road in the area for other state roads, county roads, local and regional destinations, and more prominent transportation corridors like US 50 and SH 115. The highway did not function as a main transportation route for providing direct connectivity as a farm-to-market road between an important agricultural region and its market nor did it play an important role in facilitating the transport of industrial products. As such, it does not possess significance under Criterion A.

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

This highway is not considered to be an early or prominent project of the CHD. Research and literature review yielded no evidence to indicate the use of innovative or important engineering design or construction techniques that serve to distinguish this highway from other roads and does not appear to exhibit important engineering innovations or important later modifications. The highway's design and construction appear to fall within the established standard practices of state highway design and construction of the time and the highway does not possess significance under Criterion C.

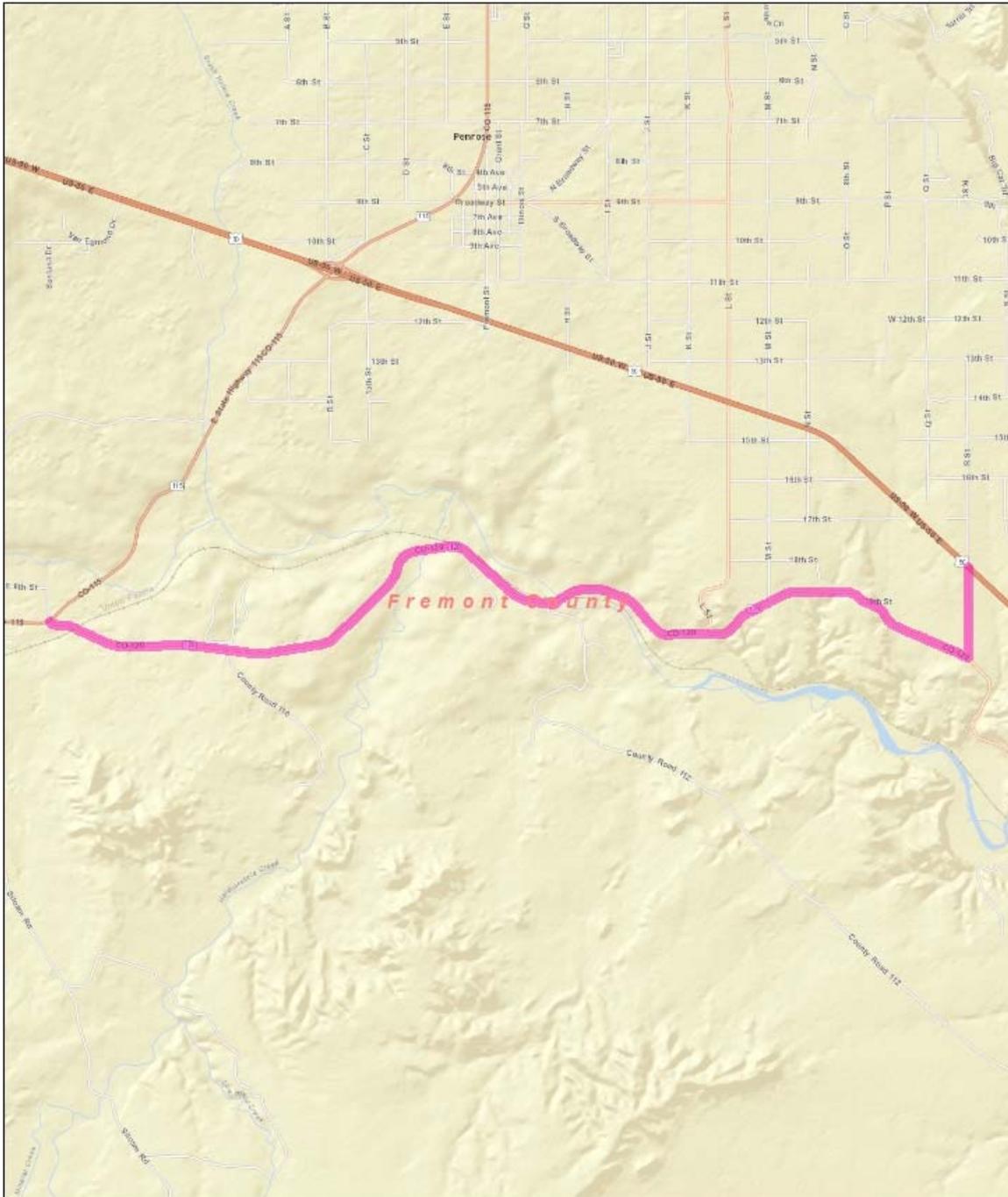
Criterion D

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, this highway is unlikely to yield important information that cannot be discerned from archived plans and other records. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion D.

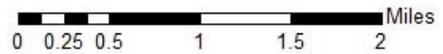
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- SH 120
- County Boundary

SH 120



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