

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 144

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
144A	From I 76-A Frontage Road east of Wiggins northeast via Orchard, Goodrich and Weldona To SH 2-B in Fort Morgan

Highway Location:

Counties: Morgan

Length (Miles): 28.704

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

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Assessment Date</i>	<i>Site Name</i>
5MR.985.1	106 - Field eligible		SH 144

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

5MR.985.1 was recorded in March 2015 for a Section 106 project in Morgan County that realigned a historic section of SH 144 due to flooding that occurred in September 2013. The entire highway was assumed to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places the purposes of Section 106, under Criterion A and the area of Transportation, as an early highway that served as a farm-to-market route between Fort Morgan and smaller communities in the county. The segment supported the eligibility of the overall resource because it conveys significance as a transportation route that connected agricultural communities to the county seat of Fort Morgan.

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*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 144

Historical Data:

SH 144 is a little over 28 miles, entirely within Morgan County, and connects Fort Morgan to the smaller towns of Weldona, Goodrich, and Orchard, that are northwest of Fort Morgan, along a pronounced bend of the South Platte River through several cottonwood groves next to the river. It returns to Interstate(I)-76/U.S. Highway (US) 6 south of Orchard. The western part of the highway crosses the river south of Orchard and heads south to meet I-76/US-6. This southern leg is the only part of the highway that does not parallel the South Platte River. The section west of Goodrich suffered severe flooding in September 2013 and was realigned to avoid a low spot in the highway.

SH 144 became part of the state highway system in the late 1920s. A more direct highway (US 38 -which later became US 34) was located south of SH 144, so the route specifically served the farms and ranches who were near the small towns on the highway.

Northeastern Colorado is within the physiographic province of the Great Plains, and more specifically, the area known as the High Plains. The terrain is relatively flat, with gentle hills and shallow waterways, and the climate is semiarid, with low levels of moisture. There are few trees and the region is known for weather extremes. The South Platte River and its tributaries is the primary source of water and the lifeline for communities in northeastern Colorado. The river has guided travelers for millennia, starting with trails used by Native Americans, trappers, and explorers. Beginning in 1858, after the discovery of gold at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River--today's Denver--the South Platte River Trail guided the majority of travelers to the gold camps and support towns. The trail began at the confluence of the North Platte and South Platte in North Platte, Nebraska, as a branch of the Overland or Oregon Trail. Wagons on the South Platte River Trail turned to the southwest at Fort Morgan (the Fort Morgan "cutoff") when the river bent to the north, away from Denver. The transcontinental railroad also followed the river in 1881 when the Union Pacific built its branch line to Denver. After 1910, with the establishment of the Colorado Highway Commission, the river dictated the paths of the region's first major highways and bridges for river crossings.

The region has always had a relatively sparse population. Larger towns such as Greeley, Fort Morgan and Sterling settled on the river, connected to the smaller towns of Ovid, Sedgwick, Crook, Iliff, Atwood, and Merino. Major irrigated crops included corn and feed crops for animals. Sugar beets became a prominent crop after 1910 in Weld, Morgan, and Logan counties. The Great Western Sugar Company built ten processing factories in the South Platte River valley at Loveland, Greeley, Eaton, Fort Collins, Windsor, Longmont, Sterling, Brush, Fort Morgan, and Ovid. The raising and processing of sugar beets also brought large numbers of field workers from other countries to the region, including Germans from Russia, Japanese, and Mexicans. While irrigated farming is possible near the river and in fields that have water rights to the underground Ogallala aquifer, dryland farming supported farms and ranches north of the river near the small communities of Peetz, Stoneham, Briggsdale and Keota. Major dryland crops include winter wheat, sorghum, milo, alfalfa, and field peas (Webb 1931: 373).

The MPS indicates part of this route is associated with the South Platte River Trail, which followed the South Platte River and was used by Native American tribes, fur trappers, traders, and the majority of travelers to the mining camps after gold was discovered near Denver in the late 1850s. It was also a farm-to-market road for the small farms and ranches northwest of Fort Morgan, near Goodrich, Orchard, Weldona.

(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.)

**Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 144

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)

**Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 144

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 144 is classified as a Cultural and Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

SH 144 is a Cultural Route according to the property types described in the MPS because it is in the same general location as a trail that has followed the South Platte River. As with other Cultural Routes, the earliest form of this road is no longer apparent. The road has been a state highway since the late 1920s but was an early road taken over by the Colorado Highway Department, and the department has improved the road since that time. The road also possesses significance as a farm-to-market road for farms and ranches northwest of Fort Morgan. This highway possesses significance as a Cultural Route under Criterion A in the area of Transportation at the state level as part of the South Platte River Trail and as a Engineered Route under Transportation at the local level for its role in area agricultural development as a farm-to-market road.

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

There is evidence that SH 144 represents a 1920s-era farm-to-market highway as an Engineered Route, and possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering at the local level of significance. For the most part, the highway is still in its original alignment because the highway still follows a stair step pattern in some locations. There are small sections that have been improved and realigned but no major widening has occurred and major modifications have not been made, beyond the continual maintenance required for a highway. For these reasons, this highway possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering at the local level as a representative example of roadway construction.

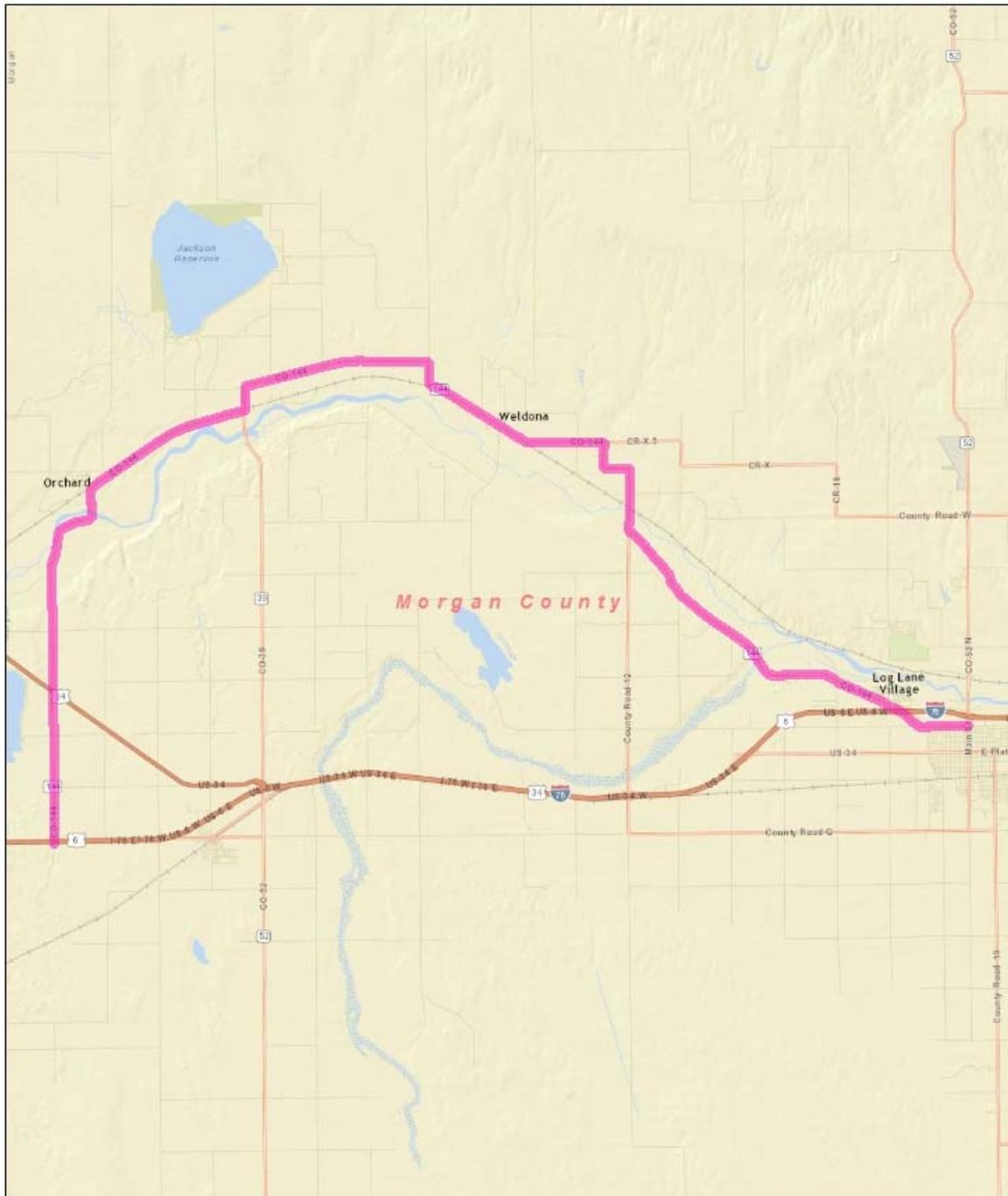
Criterion D

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.

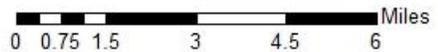
**Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 144



Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, P.C., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013



- SH 144
- County Boundary

SH 144



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