

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (US) 150

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
150A	From SH 160-A at the Alamosa/Costilla County Line North To the Great Sand Dunes National Monument

Highway Location:

Counties: Alamosa
Length (Miles): 15.945

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>
5AL.790	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	07/18/2005>4/1993	MAIN PARK ROAD, GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK

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

One site form in Compass, 5AL790, corresponds to a former segment of SH 150 that now serves as the Main Park Road within the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, but is no longer designated as SH 150. This former segment of SH 150 was previously determined not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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 150 is approximately 16 miles long and extends north from U.S. Highway (US) 160 to the southern boundary of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in South-Central Colorado. This road passes through the San Luis Valley along the western edge of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

The earliest transportation corridors in south-central Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans. Settlers from New Mexico moved into the San Luis Valley in the 1850s and established early irrigation and water reclamation systems to facilitate agricultural production. The San Luis Valley developed into a center for agriculture and livestock-raising within the region beginning in the mid-nineteenth century (Carter and Mehls, 1984: 46-48).

Railroad construction began in southern Colorado during the 1860s. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) was organized in 1870 and construction on tracks south of Denver began that same year. The D&RG reached the San Luis Valley by 1877 and expanded throughout the valley over the next several decades connecting communities to larger markets; D&RG tracks reached Alamosa in 1878, a line was constructed from Alamosa to Espanola, New Mexico in 1880 and from Antonito over Cumbres Pass to Chama, New Mexico, in 1880, and tracks connecting Salida and the San Luis Valley were established in 1881. The San Luis Valley Southern Railroad was constructed between Monte Vista and Center in 1913. Railroads served as an important means for distributing livestock and agricultural products throughout the San Luis Valley and beyond (Carter and Mehls 1984: 46-48, 79-81).

The popularity of the automobile increased dramatically 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 (Carter and Mehls 1984: 138-141). By 1928 surveys to convert a wagon road over the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range were underway by state highway engineers. According to a 1928 article in *Colorado Highways*, this highway, named the Mosca Pass Highway at the time, was estimated to cost \$40,000. The route is noted as opening up a scenic part of San Isabel National Forest and enabling easier access to Pueblo, a major population and commercial center, from the San Luis Valley (*Colorado Highways* April 1924: 20). By the 1920s, the Great Sand Dunes was a regional tourist attraction and was designated a National Monument in 1932.

Historic highway maps indicate that the highway over Mosca Pass was designated SH 150 by 1929 and extended due east from Mosca and ended at Gardner and provided direct access to the Great Sand Dunes from larger populations along the front range, including Pueblo. Subsequently, large portions of this original alignment were turned back and are no longer designated a state highway, including the portion over the summit of Mosca Pass. A small segment that now serves as the main access road for the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, extending north from its current junction with Road 6N to its current terminus in the park is all that remains of the 1929 alignment along present-day SH 150. Only this small portion has a direct association with the earlier history related the scenic Mosca Pass Highway and the connections it provided across the Sangre De Cristo Mountains and to the Great Sand Dunes. By 1960 the current alignment south of Road 6N extending to US 160 appears on historic state highway maps.

(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 150 is classified an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. The segment extending north of Road 6N is the only portion that is historically associated with the early history of this route.

Criterion A

Under Transportation, the segment extending north of Road 6N is associated with the early history related to Mosca Pass Highway and the connections it provided to the Great Sand Dunes, the San Luis Valley, including Alamosa, and larger cities along the front range. As such, it appears to be a prominent project by the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and possesses significance at the state level under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation.

The southern portion of SH 150 has no direct historic association with the Mosca Pass Highway. Although the southern portion provides access to the Great Sand Dunes from US 160, the Great Sand Dunes was a long-established tourist attraction prior to the 1960s when this segment was designated a state highway. As such, the southern segment 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 considered to be a prominent project of the CHD. However, the current alignment no longer extends over Mosca Pass and research and literature review yielded no evidence to indicate that extant portions of the route reflect the use of innovative or important engineering design or construction techniques that serve to distinguish this highway from other roads of 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.

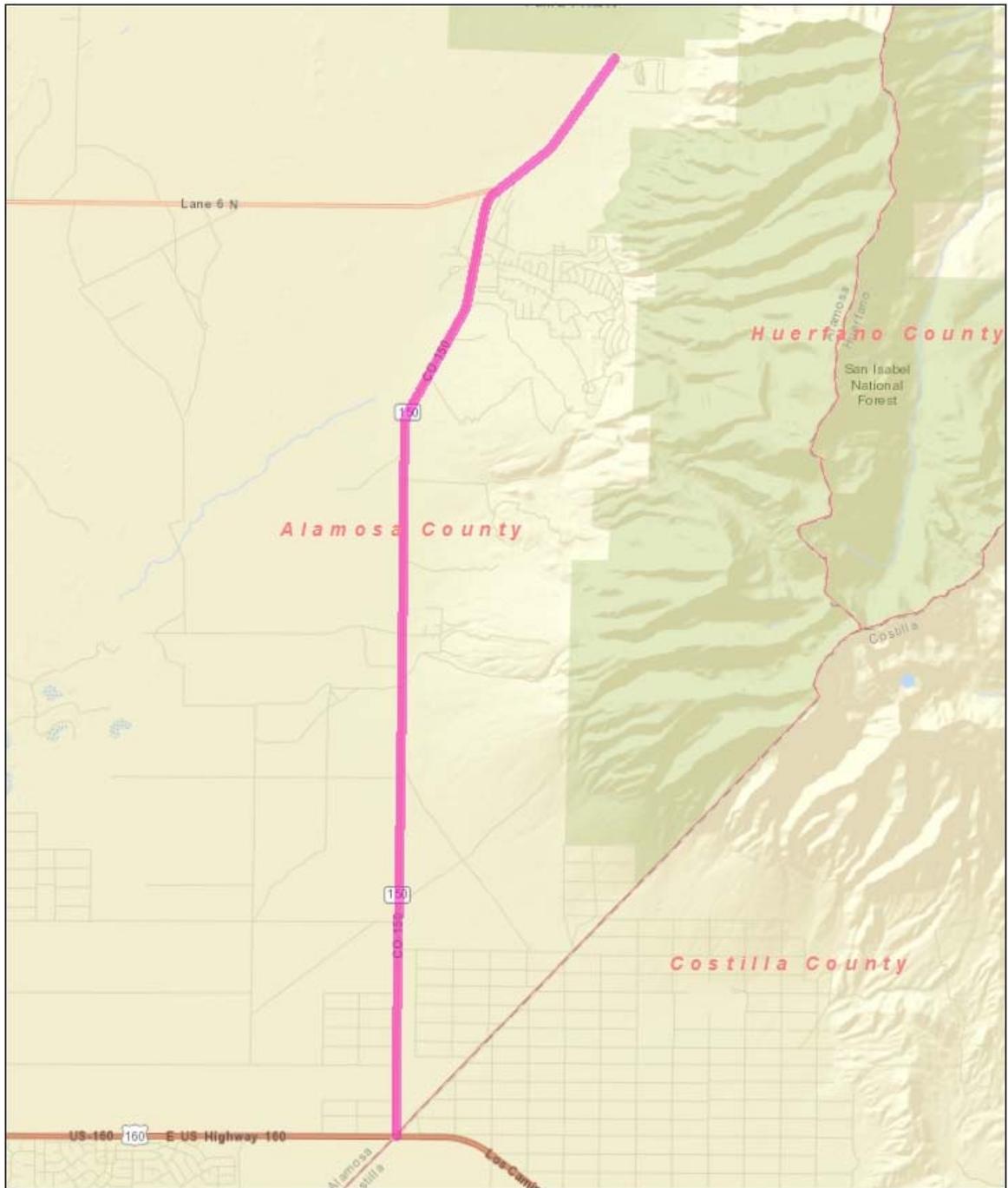
Criterion D

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.

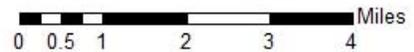
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- SH 150
- County Boundary

SH 150



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