

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 172

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
172A	From the New Mexico State Line North via Ignacio To SH 160-A Southeast of Durango

Highway Location:

Counties: La Plata
Length (Miles): 24.489

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>
None	No previously recorded segments are found on or adjacent to this highway		

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 172 is approximately 25 miles long and extends between the New Mexico state line and the junction with U.S. Highway (US) 160 just east of Durango. Southwestern Colorado is a generally mountainous region that owes much of its history to mining. The earliest transportation corridors in southwest Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans, explorers, fur trappers, and traders; however, the early history of this highway is not associated with a known trail or a subsequent important wagon route. The Colorado Gold Rush of 1859 brought an influx of people to Colorado's southwestern region in search of fortune and led to the establishment of mining camps through the area to supply activities at the mines and those working in the mines. Most mining areas are located to the north of SH 172 where early roads in the region were often built to serve and connect mining camps with nearby mining districts and to provide local access between communities for the movement of people and the transfer of commercial and agricultural goods (Ubbelohde et al 2006; 175-177; Wyckoff 1999; 53, Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 423-425).

The southern border of Colorado surrounding SH 172 is characterized by arid sage- and grass-covered hills used for grazing livestock. The area also features mesas, canyons, and foothills. The Ute Mountain Reservation and Southern Ute Reservation are also located in this area. These reservations are comprised of approximately 16,000 acres of farmland and grazing land. SH 172 passes through Ignacio, which was historically a center for trade for the surrounding farming community. The western terminus for the route is near Durango, which was established in 1880 after the Rio Grande Railroad extended its line through the area. Surrounded by coal and agricultural land, Durango became a major supply center within the area. (Carter and Mehls 1984: 138-141; Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 358-361). The Good Roads Movement and founding of the Colorado Highway Department 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; Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 358-361).

Historic state highway maps indicate that SH 172 was established in 1934 and extended southeasterly from US 160 through Ignacio and then followed a stair-step pattern to Arboles that generally follows its current alignment. According to Salek, SH 172 was paved southeast to Ignacio by 1954 and the entire route was paved by 1960. SH 172 was rerouted by 1972 so that south from Ignacio it extended directly to the New Mexico border.

Research, literature review, and historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided direct access to destinations related to important historic themes. Instead, this is served as a local connector road to link major regional transportation corridors and facilitate the transfer of goods as well as travel within the overall region. As such, SH 172 functioned as one component of the overall regional transportation network to provide connections to other roads and local destinations.

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

Criterion A

SH 172 was established in the mid-1930s, after the establishment and formative years of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and does not represent an early or prominent project completed by the CHD that possesses significance. Research did not indicate the road was built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal relief program. Although SH 172 passes through grazing land used for livestock raising and its alignment was once stair-stepped like so many farm-to-market roads, no evidence suggests that it served as an important farm-to-market road or was pivotal in the transfer of agricultural goods or livestock within the region. As such, this road 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

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 within the mountainous southwest region and it 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.

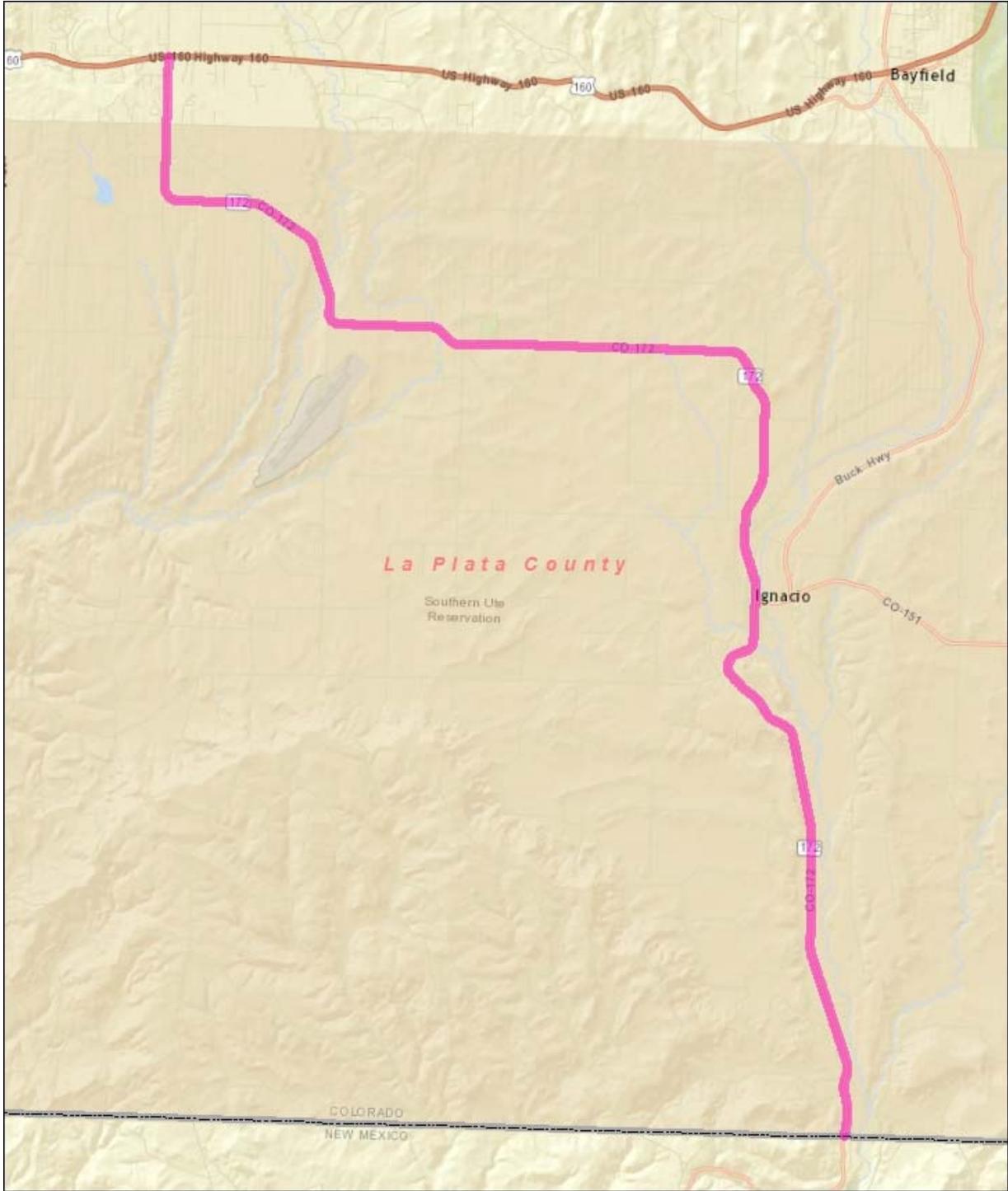
Criterion D

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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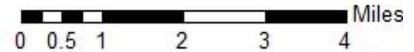
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-  SH 172
-  State Boundary
-  County Boundary



SH 172



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