

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 257

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
257A	From SH 60-B in Milliken North via Windsor To SH 14-C East of Ft Collins in Severance
257B	From A Barricade at SH 257-A South of Windsor East To SH 34-D at (Promontory Circle) at Greeley Bus Rt

Highway Location:

Counties: Weld
Length (Miles): 19.644

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 257 begins at the junction with SH 60 in Milliken in Weld County and travels 18.487 miles north to the junction with SH 14 between Ault and Fort Collins. There is a short spur of SH 257 in Windsor that is approximately a mile long from 10th Street and travels northwest to the junction with SH 257.

SH 257 entered the state highway system by 1939. The current alignment does not follow the historic alignment. The historic alignment included a spur south of SH 60 to Johnston that is no longer part of the current route. In addition, the historic 1939 route traveled from Milliken north to Windsor then west via current SH 392 to U.S. Highway (US) 87 (current Interstate(I)-25). This route was changed to the current alignment by 1954, and SH 257 was signed as SH 259 north of Windsor to SH 14. The entire route was paved by 1954 (Salek). Improvements along the entire route include widening and paving from 1958 to 1966.

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. The transcontinental railroad also followed the river in 1881 when the Union Pacific Railroad 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.

Prior to the homestead era and the arrival of the railroad, the South Platte River valley was prime pastureland and ranchers took full advantage of the ability to run cattle freely for grazing. John Wesley Iliff and others amassed huge herds near the river in the 1860s and 1870s, buying key parcels and leasing state and federal lands in northeastern Colorado. The cattle were trailed to railheads in Cheyenne or Denver before 1881. After 1881, the railroad towns of Brush, Iliff, Sterling, and Julesburg became busy freight shipping points. Farmers formed cooperatives to build major irrigation systems based on priority water rights from the South Platte. Greeley was one center of activity where irrigation canals and storage reservoirs significantly increased the acreage for agriculture. Prior to these systems, crop raising was limited to fields in river and creek bottoms but irrigation made it possible for farmers to plant crops in fields on higher benches further from the river. Fifty miles east of Greeley, Fort Morgan became the center of several irrigation systems that radiated to outlying farms and ranches, as did Sterling, another forty miles downstream (Wyckoff 1999: 164).

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).

SH 257 route was a north-south connection for the agricultural communities of Windsor and Milliken. Windsor first began as a stage stop for the Overland Trail and was platted in 1882 with the building of the Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific Railroad (later Union Pacific Railroad). Situated between larger agricultural markets such as Ft. Collins and Greeley, Windsor became an agricultural processing town in 1903 with the building of the Great Western sugar beet factory (Thomas 2010: 35). The community of Milliken also developed by 1905 with sugar beet farms and cattle feedlots. A 1902 map shows a network of roads between these communities, but not the original alignment of 1939, thus it is assumed the route changed sometime during the 1920s and 1930s. Historic travel maps do not show the route until 1939 when it was designated a state highway.

Located between larger transportation networks, SH 257 is one of many rural regional connector roads developed to access busier routes that connect to urban centers along the Front Range such as US 34, US 85 and I-25. State

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highways, farm-to-market roads, and small local connector roads served to link more remote areas with major regional transportation corridors, towns, and cities; however, research and review of historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided direct access to destinations related to important historic themes such as industry, agriculture, or commerce.

(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 257 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. It is identified as a subtype, Farm to Market Road.

Criterion A

As an Engineered Route, State Highway 257 does not possess significance under Criterion A. Present-day SH 257 is one of many local connector roads in the local area that connects Windsor to other more prominent transportation corridors such as US 34 and I-25. Historically, SH 257 provided typical connections to other state and county roads to common local and rural regional destinations. 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. 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 Colorado Highway Department. 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.

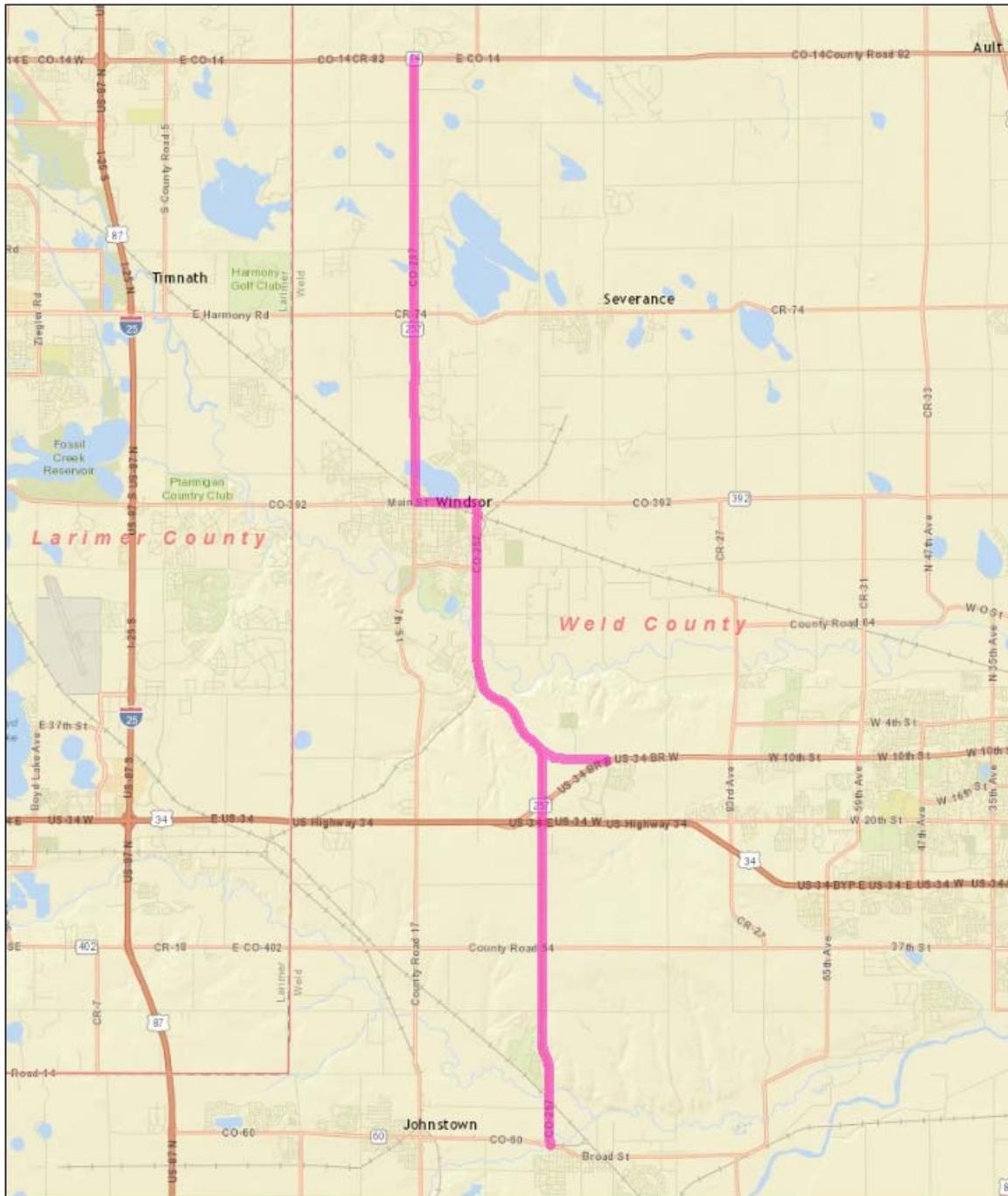
Criterion D

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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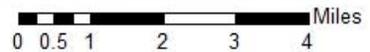
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- SH 257
- County Boundary



SH 257



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