

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 287

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
287A	From the Oklahoma State Line North via Springfield To SH 50-B in Lamar
287B	From SH 50-B west of Lamar north via Bags To SH 40-H east of Kit Carson
287C	From SH 40-C and SH 88-A West Colfax Ave and Federal Blvd in Denver north via Broomfield, Longmont, Loveland and Fort Collins To the Wyoming State Line
287Z	From SH 287-C in Loveland South along Cleveland Ave To SH 287-C South of 5th Street

Highway Location:

Counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Cheyenne, Denver, Elbert, Kiowa, Larimer, Lincoln,
 Length (Miles): 229.674

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>
5AM.1760.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>8/2004	U.S. HIGHWAY 36 - SEGMENT, DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE
5BA.879.1	Field not eligible	1/28/2002	STATE HIGHWAY 385 - SEGMENT
5PW.171.1	Field not eligible	1/28/2002	STATE HIGHWAY 385 - SEGMENT
5PW.171.2	Field not eligible	1/23/2003	STATE HIGHWAY 385 - SEGMENT
5PW.87.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/13/1998>02/06/1998	GRANADA-FORT UNION MILITARY ROAD, GRANADA-SANTA FE TRAIL, FORT UNION MILITARY ROAD, GRANADA-FORT UNION WAGON ROAD, SANTA FE TRAIL (BRANCH)

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

Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway, which include: 5PW.171.2 is a 5.5 mile stretch of US 287 in Prowers County, documented in 2003 for the Colorado Green Energy Project. Although the form acknowledges the significance of the highway as a whole, surveyors did not find that this segment supported the significance and was not eligible.

The following eligible routes intersect US 287:

5PW.87.1: The Granada-Ft. Union Wagon Road. This historic road was determined to be eligible in 1998, when it was recorded by Barbara Norgren. It crosses US 287A at a point north of Springfield, but is not concurrent with the highway at any point.

5DV.5183: The Speer Boulevard Historic Landmark District crosses US 287C at the intersection of Federal Boulevard and Speer Boulevard, in the City and County of Denver.

US 287 provides a boundary for the following National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and/or Denver Landmark Historic Districts:

5LR.462: The Old Town Fort Collins National Register Historic District

5DV.5185: The Witter-Coffield National Register Historic District and Landmark District

5DV.5320: Highland Park

5DV85: Potter Highlands Historic District and Landmark District

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>
5DV.5185	Witter-Cuffiew Landmark District	Local Landmark
5DV.5320	Highland Park	Listed on National Register
5DV.583	Speer Boulevard Historic Landmark District	Local Landmark
5DV.8150	St. Catherine's School	106 - Officially eligible

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5DV.85	Potter Highlands	Listed on National Register
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Historical Data:

US 287 is a 316.05 mile-long highway that begins (287A) at the Oklahoma state line in Baca County, runs 77.638 miles concurrent with US 385 north to Lamar, in Prowers County, where it turns west, concurrent with US 50, for approximately 7.5 miles. At MP 85.188 (US 50 MP 48), US 287(B) leaves US 50 and resumes its northward trajectory, staying in a straight northward alignment one mile east and parallel to the Bent County Line, crossing Kiowa County. It jogs east for about three miles on SH 96, then turns north again and finally meets US 40 in Cheyenne County, at MP 133.239. Turning west, US 287(B) ends at US 40 and is thereafter concurrent with US 40 as it heads northwest through Lincoln, Elbert, and Arapahoe counties and enters the City and County of Denver as East Colfax Avenue. US 287 resumes (as 287C) at where it departs Colfax/US 40 at Federal Boulevard and heads north from MP 282.7 through Denver, Adams, Broomfield, Boulder, and Larimer counties, where it ends at the Wyoming state line at MP 385.222.

The northern segment of US 287 (i.e., 287C) is contained in the Colorado Piedmont, a region defined geographically as the rolling hills and stream-laced valleys that lie to the east of the Front Range. This area contains both the most urbanized corridor in the state and also wide swaths of rural farm and ranchlands, with its history firmly rooted in the events that profoundly changed the region from the 1850s well into the twentieth century. Prehistorically the region was the hunting grounds of the Comanche, who were later pushed south by the Cheyenne and Arapahoe. By the 1850s sparse European-American settlement in the form of scattered farms and trading posts dotted the area around the South Platte River, with trails such as the Cherokee Trail crossing the plains and connecting with California-bound trails to the north. With the Pikes Peak Gold Rush, however, change was fast and intense. The urban core (Denver, Boulder, Golden) that became the metro Denver area sprang from commerce and transportation, i.e., the connection of the gold fields in the Rocky Mountains with the markets and cities to the east. The agricultural zone in the more rural northern area of the Piedmont grew from cultivation made possible by the fertile soils and readily available water in the area, which allowed settlers to feed the hungry markets of the urban core and the mountain mining camps (Wyckoff 1998:101-103).

Where US 287 runs through southeastern Colorado, historically the trails, highways, and rural roads that made up the transportation network facilitated travel through this sparsely-populated region and also made possible the transfer and distribution of the region's agricultural products. The Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail was the earliest major east-west route through this region. Following the Arkansas and Purgatoire rivers, the Santa Fe Trail was the first commerce-based road to facilitate non-indigenous settlement in Colorado. In 1878, when the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad was constructed through the region, it followed the Santa Fe Trail.

Southeastern Colorado boasted the largest cattle industry in the state during the late nineteenth century. The arid climate was a barrier to widespread agricultural settlement until the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Stock Raising Act of 1916, both of which allowed homesteaders to claim sufficient lands to raise livestock. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, irrigation projects like the Fort Lyon Canal facilitated crop agriculture, which included wheat, hay, oats, corn, sugar beets, watermelon, cantaloupe, and other crops. Railroad towns like La Junta, Las Animas, Lamar, Granada, and Holly prospered by providing a direct link for conveying commercial and agricultural goods between towns and larger markets. During the early twentieth century, farm-to-market roads were constructed to link these rural areas with regional market centers (Noel, Mahoney, and Stevens, 1994: 25, 29; Wyckoff, 1999: 167-170).

US 287 was originally US 285 from the Wyoming state line south to Fort Collins, but was re-designated US 287 in 1935. By 1940, it was extended south, following the alignment of US 87, and southeast the full length of its present route (including portions concurrent with US 40 and Interstate (I)-70) south to the Oklahoma border. In Denver, it followed Federal Boulevard, one of the streets first designated as a City Beautiful Parkway and now a border of four National Register and Denver Landmark Historic Districts (Noel and Norgren 1987: 17). By 1946 it was entirely paved (Salek). The northern segment of the highway, from LaPorte to the Wyoming Border, follows the Overland Trail. Beginning as a route used by trappers and traders in the 1820s, the Overland was a stagecoach route well into the 1860s, conveying mail from Atchison, Kansas, to Salt Lake City until the Union Pacific Railroad made the stagecoach mail service obsolete.

The segments of US 287 that lie in Southeastern Colorado generally follow the straight north-south alignment dictated by the Public Lands Survey System, indicating that they were first used as automobile roads during the period that the region was undergoing more intensified homestead settlement. In 1912, the segment from Lamar south to Springfield was designated as state road 34 and was graded. This designation is visible on a state highway map for 1916. As a farm-to-market route, it connected livestock ranchers and crop farmers alike to railheads at

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Lamar, Eads, and Kit Carson. Partially concurrent with what is today US 385, the segment of US 287 that connects Springfield to Lamar was part of a longer alignment that was re-numbered as State Highway 21 in the 1920s. After the full length of US 287 was designated in 1940, 287A was concurrent with State Highway (SH) 21 until US 385 was designated in 1957, at which time 287A shared a route with US 385 from Lamar to Springfield. Today, US 287 (A and B) is an important corridor for commercial truck travel from the ports of south Texas to the urban center of Denver, although from Denver to Wyoming truckers prefer to use I-25.

US 287's long, north-south reach covers not only a long stretch of Colorado's geographic terrain, but also a wide stretch of the state's history. Following a segment of the Overland Trail, it can speak to the earliest non-indigenous use of the state's resources by fur traders and explorers in the 1820s and can be considered to be a cultural route. As a route used by ranchers and farmers in the southeastern plains to convey their goods to railheads and subsequent markets, it is a still-used reminder of the history of homesteading on the high plains desert. It clearly conveys the characteristics of a farm-to-market subtype outlined in the MPS, Colorado State Roads and Highways. Additionally, it was a designated state route in 1912, and should be understood to be an early project of the Colorado Highway Department.

(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:

US 287 is classified as an Cultural Route and Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. It is significant as a farm-to-market route and as an early and/or important project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD).

Criterion A

US 287 should be considered significant in the area of Transportation as a Cultural Route for its earliest use of what is now US 287 was as the Overland Trail, used by indigenous groups, European and European-American explorers, emigrants and later stagecoach lines in the early and mid 19th century. As an Engineered Route, the highway went on to be an early project of the CHD, which improved segments of the route for automobile travel as early as 1912. Additionally, it served as an important connector between farms and ranches in the High Plains Desert of southeastern Colorado and markets and railheads, in particular Kit Carson, Eads, and Lamar, and is significant in the area of Transportation as a farm-to-market route at the local level.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal US 287 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 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.

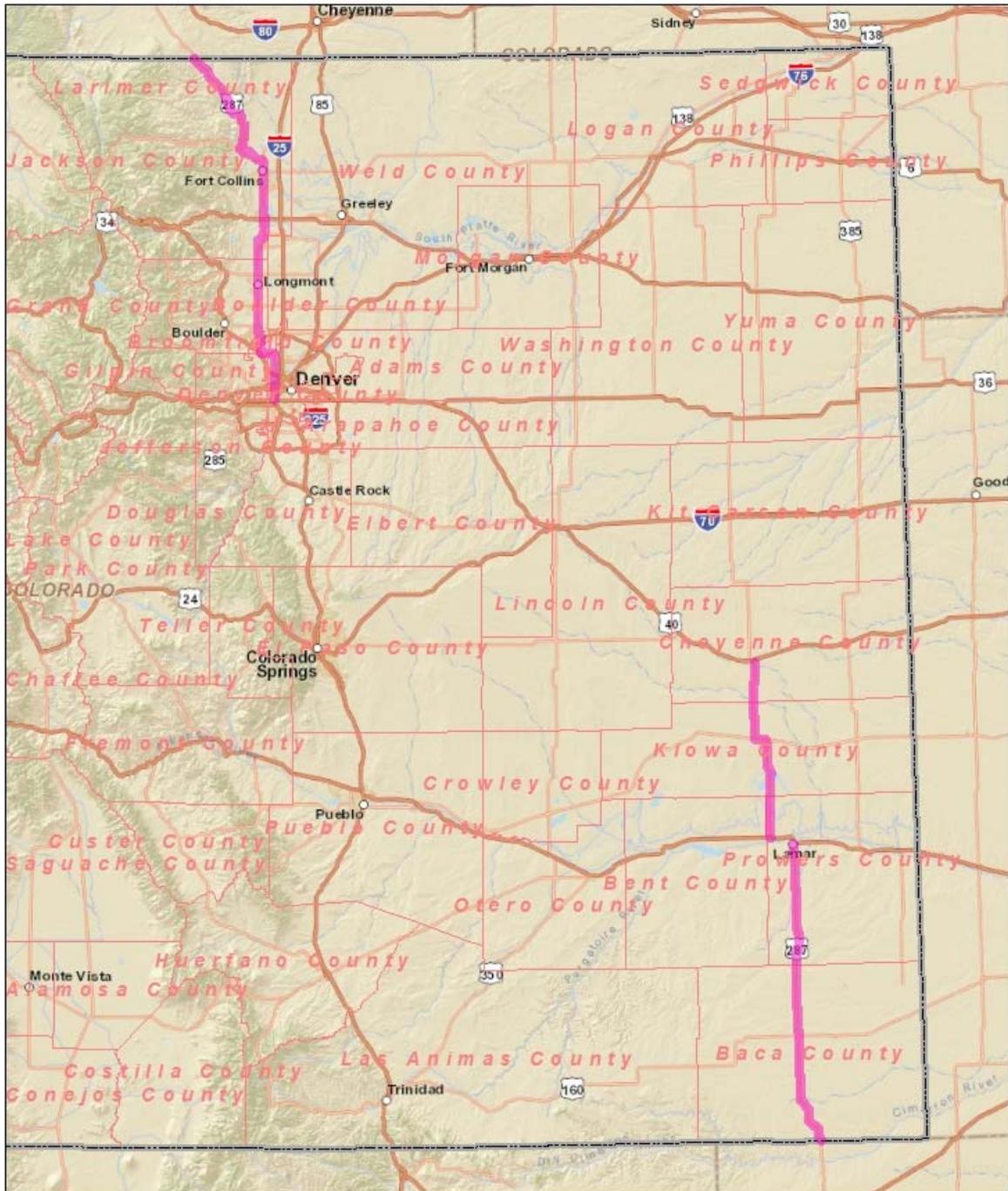
Criterion D

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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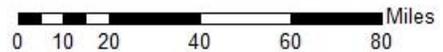
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- US 287
- State Boundary
- County Boundary



US 287



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

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