

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 291

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
291A	From SH 50-A in Salida Northwest To SH 285-C northwest of Salida

Highway Location:

Counties: Chaffee
Length (Miles): 8.951

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*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 291

Historical Data:

SH 291 is approximately nine miles long and located in the south-central region of Colorado. The highway extends north from U.S. Highway (US) 50 in Salida and ends at US 285 at a point located between Poncha Springs and Nathrop.

The earliest transportation corridors in South-Central Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans. Settlers from New Mexico moved north into the region in the 1850s and established early irrigation and water reclamation systems to facilitate agricultural production, especially in the San Luis Valley located south of SH 291. 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. The D&RG established Salida in 1880, which is located north of the San Luis Valley and at the western end of the Upper Arkansas River Valley. Salida became a center for mining and agricultural activities within the region. The town also served as a major center of activity for the D&RG with extensive facilities for shipping to and receiving goods from the San Luis Valley and larger markets and centers to the east. 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; City of Salida)

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. Smaller communities increasingly saw the benefits of highway access, which led to further highway construction along less traveled routes in the 1920s and 1930s. A historic state highway map from 1916 indicates that SH 291 was originally part of SH 17, which extended from La Jara north through the San Luis Valley, over Poncha Pass, through Salida to Buena Vista. The highway extended through one of the most productive agricultural regions of the state and served as a direct and important connection between the San Luis Valley and markets located both north and south, including Salida, Canon City, and Colorado Springs. SH 291 subsequently followed a short segment of the once extensive SH 15 (which replaced SH 17 in the mid-1920s) and has a direct association with the history and development of that earlier route, which is historically significant as an important farm-to-market road. This route provided a direct connection for conveying agricultural goods to market centers and prominent transportation corridors within the region and state. SH 15 was subsequently renumbered US 650 by 1928 and US 285 in 1935. Historic state highway maps indicate that the current segment north of Salida was designated SH 291 in 1942.

(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) 291

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) 291

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

Criterion A

Research did not indicate that this highway was built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal work relief project. The highway segment now designated as SH 291 is located along a corridor that was established by 1916 and represents an early project by the Colorado Highway Department. Historically the highway was part of other state highway designations, during which time it served as an important regional connector between communities and areas within the region, including the San Luis Valley, Salida, and Buena Vista. Although now a relatively short highway segment, SH 291 has an association with the early history and development of SH 15, which was an important north-south route in this region of the state for conveying agricultural goods from the San Luis Valley and for travel in the south-central part of the state as a farm-to-market road. As such, SH 291 possesses significance in the areas of Transportation under Criterion A at the local level for its role in agricultural development.

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 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.

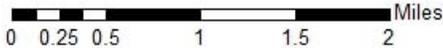
**Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 291



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



- SH 291
- County Boundary

SH 291



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