

**Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance**

**Highway Name:** U.S. Highway (US) 285

**CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:**

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
285A	From the New Mexico State Line north via Antonito and La Jara To SH 160-A in Alamosa
285B	From SH 160-A and SH 15-A in Monte Vista north via Saguache and Poncha Pass To SH 50-A in Poncha Spgs
285C	From SH 50-A in Poncha Spgs North To SH 24-A at Johnson Village
285D	From SH 24-A at Antero Junction northeast via Fairplay, Kenosha Pass and Bailey To SH 30-A in Denver

**Highway Location:**

Counties: Arapahoe, Denver, Jefferson, Park, Chaffee, Saguache, Rio Grande  
 Length (Miles): 232.116

**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>
5CF.338	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible>No assessment given on form	02/14/2003>10/22/2002>02/08/1974	PONCHA PASS~MEARS OTTO TOLL ROAD
5JF.3546.1	Officially not eligible>No assessment given on form	02/19/2004>10/10/2003	HIGHWAY 285 - SEGMENT
5PA.1638.1	No assessment given on form	Jul-01	OLD HIGHWAY 285-SEGMENT
5PA.1638.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	04/11/2012>03/01/2012	OLD HIGHWAY 285 - SEGMENT
5PA.2456.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	02/19/2004>10/10/2003	HIGHWAY 285 - SEGMENT
5PA.2456.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource	4/11/2012	HIGHWAY 285 - SEGMENT
5PA.389		1/1/1976	KENOSHA PASS
5PA.419.3	Field not eligible	9/17/1985	SOUTH PLATTE STAGE ROAD
5RN.753	Field eligible	1/29/2002	STATE HIGHWAY 112
5SH.1908	Officially needs data>Field needs data>Field needs data	08/29/2002>04/23/2002>11/2000	COCHETOPA STOCK DRIVEWAY
5SH.1963	Field eligible	1/29/2002	STATE HIGHWAY 112

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

There are numerous Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway, which include: One previous site form (5CF.2931.1) references US 285 as significant overall under Criterion A as a cultural route for its association with the development of tourism in Colorado and as a primary transportation route through the mountain region and under Criterion C as a good example of early highway construction. Several other segments were previously evaluated as supporting the eligibility of the entire route. This information and additional research is summarized in the Historical Data section below. Previously identified segments include a mix of eligible and not eligible segments but the most recent evaluations completed in 2012 indicate that the identified segments of US 285 support the eligibility of the entire linear resource.

This transportation corridor also passes through or near two non-road historic resources, including the National Register of Historic Places (National Register)-listed Midway House (5JF303) near Conifer and the National Register-listed Shawnee Historic District (5PA.4177).

**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>
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\*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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5JF.303	Listed on National Register
5PA.4177	Listed on National Register

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**Highway Name:** U.S. Highway (US) 285

### Historical Data:

US 285 includes approximately 835 miles nationally and extends from US 90 in Sanderson, Texas, to Interstate(I)-25 at Hampden Avenue in Denver. Within Colorado, the route extends for approximately 232 miles from the New Mexico state line north through the San Luis Valley, over Poncha Pass, passes just west of Salida, and through the central mountains before turning northwest and terminating in Denver. Relatively short gaps exist between Alamosa and Monte Vista and just east of Buena Vista.

The earliest transportation corridors in the region were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans. Settlers from New Mexico moved north 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; 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.

Historic state highway maps indicate that road segments along the general alignment of present-day US 285 were in place by 1916. By 1926 US 285 was a designated state highway route and extended between the Wyoming state line, south of Laramie, and Denver (this segment of US 285 is no longer included as part of the present highway). Based on historic state highway maps, the route south of Denver through Fairplay, Saguache, Monte Vista, and Alamosa to the New Mexico state line was not designated US 285 until 1936, at which time the segment north from Denver to the Wyoming state line was eliminated. In 1937 Public Works Administration (PWA) Project No. 300 2-B was completed between Saguache and Center based on Control, Section, Job logs from the Colorado Department of Transportation. US 285 has undergone some alignment changes within Denver and along other segments since 1936. According to Salek, the north end of US 285 in Denver was originally at the US 85 junction near Broadway and Alameda; the route followed a series of local roads on its path southwest of the city. North of Aspen Park US 285 originally followed South Turkey Creek Road through Fenders and Tiny Town. The route also had a different alignment along Antero Reservoir and between Poncha Springs and Buena Vista, where it originally extended through Salida. At the southern end of the route the original alignment stretched southwest from Antonito via Cumbres Pass to New Mexico. A 1940s guidebook sponsored by the Colorado State Planning Commission and compiled by the Writer's Program of the World Projects Administration features US 285 as a suggested tour route. The guidebook notes: "The northern section of this tour leads through rugged, thinly populated country roughly paralleling the Continental Divide, a popular recreational area, with many camp sites and streams well-stocked with trout." The description also notes accommodations along the route as well as paved, oiled, and graveled sections for traveler's information. US 285 provided direct access between Denver and the central mountain region and also provided direct connection to major east-west routes in the southern part of the state, including US 160 and US 50, which led to further development of tourism and recreational activities.

(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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## Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

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

#### *Criterion A*

US 285 is a cross-state route that historically provided direct access between Denver, the state's largest population and commercial center, and the central and south-central mountain region. US 285 provided a direct link between Denver and the San Luis Valley, a major agricultural region in south-central Colorado, and was an important region farm-to-market road. The route also provided direct access to the central mountain region and major east-west routes through the southern part of the state, including US 160 and US 50, which led to further development of tourism and recreational activities, and its route is specifically mentioned in the 1940s WPA guidebook. The route of the highway was also established by 1916 and represents an early project by the Colorado Highway Department. For these reasons, US 285 possesses significance under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation at the state level. In addition, a segment north of Center in the San Luis Valley was improved as part of a PWA federal relief project in 1937 and this portion possesses significance under Criterion A in the areas of Politics/Government at the local level.

#### *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 regions 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.

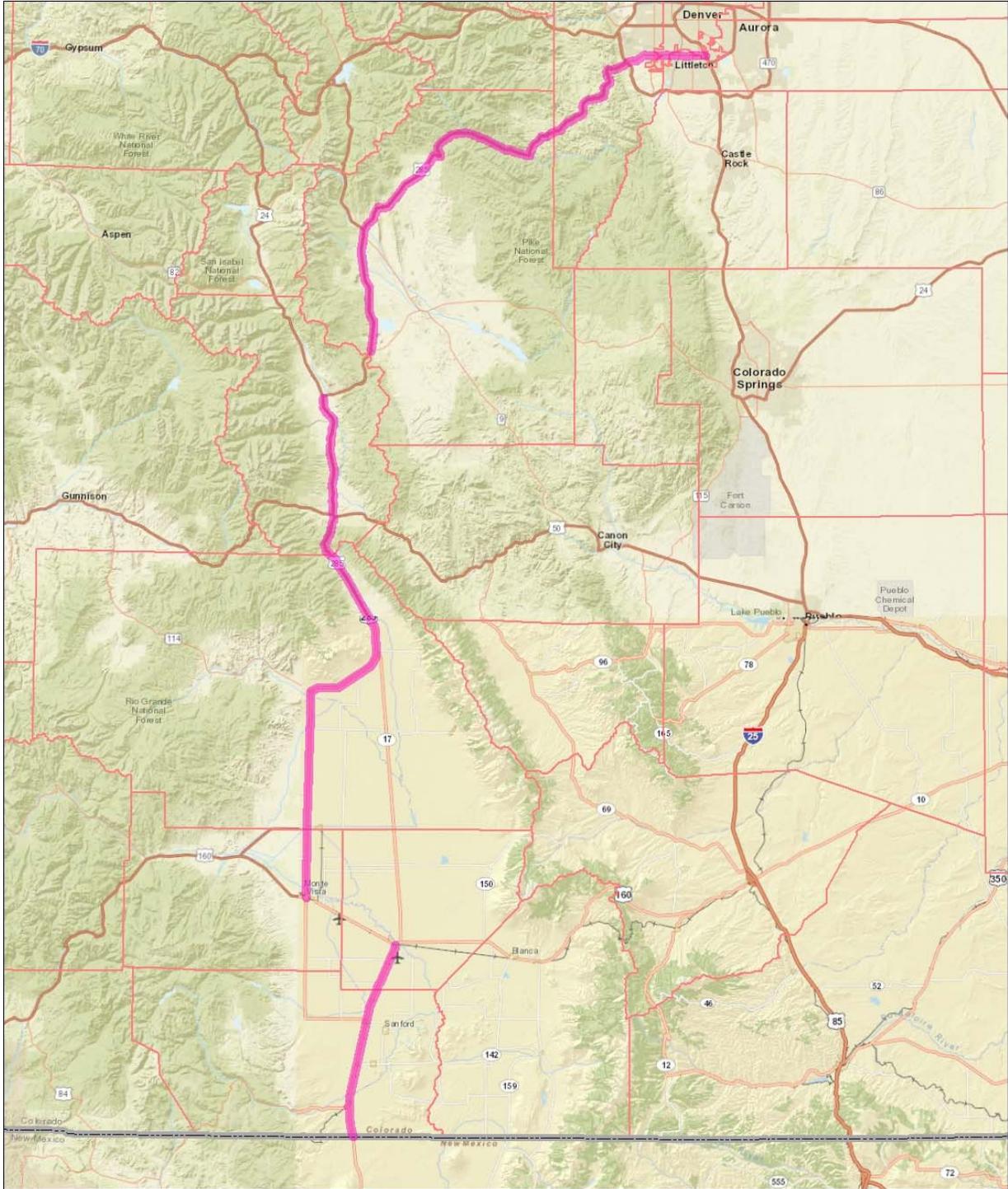
#### *Criterion D*

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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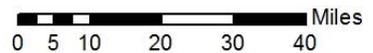
Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 285



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- SH 285
- State Boundary
- County Boundary



**SH 285**



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