

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

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 348

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

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
348A	From SH 50-A in Delta (6th Street) South via Pea Green Corner South and East To SH 50-A in East of Olathe

**Highway Location:**

Counties: Montrose, Delta  
Length (Miles): 17.053

**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 348 is located in the Uncompahgre Valley in the central region of Colorado's Western Slope. It is 17.059 miles in length, beginning in Delta at the junction of U.S. Highway (US) 50, and following section lines, south and east, until it ends at the junction of US 50 on the east side of Olathe. It is contained in Delta and Montrose counties, and runs through the tiny hamlet of Pea Green Corner, just south of the Montrose County line. The route begins in Delta at the intersection of US 50 and West 6th Street. It follows W. 6th west to Silver St., where it turns south as Silver and Bridge Streets, exiting Delta and following section lines south (with a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile westward jog at Mesa Road) to Dalia Road, then east, jogging south 1 mile at 5500 Rd, through Olathe, where it ends at US 50.

SH 348 serves the farms of the irrigated farmland of the northern Uncompahgre Valley. It was named a state highway in 1939, when it was co-signed with SH 65 along its current route, but extended through Olathe, looping back to connect with US 50 from the east instead of the west, as it does today. By the early 1950s, it had been partially paved, and in or around 1953, the loop segment east of Olathe was turned back, leaving its current route. Historic highway maps show it paved in its entirety by 1963.

The Uncompahgre Valley is contained in the Colorado Plateau, which dominates the westernmost third of Colorado and stretches from western Colorado into eastern Utah, northern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico. The Colorado Plateau is a high desert with scattered forests and mesas (or tablelands), including the forested Flat Tops and Grand Mesa, the desert buttes of the Bookcliffs and Roan Plateau, and the juniper studded canyons and red sandstone formations that include Colorado National Monument. Before the establishment of Colorado Territory in 1861, the Western Slope was part of Utah Territory (1854). The Colorado River and its major tributaries, including the Colorado (Grand), Uncompahgre, and Gunnison are the major sources water. After the Utes were removed in 1880 to reservations in Utah (leaving only two small Ute reservations in the extreme southwest corner of Colorado), the railroads quickly mobilized to provide transportation and economic opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and other businesses. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad built the first lines into the San Juan, Gunnison, Uncompahgre, and Colorado (Grand) River valleys between 1881 to 1883 and helped develop the towns of Grand Junction, Montrose, and Delta, among others.

Agriculture in the Grand and Gunnison river valleys started with experimentation on the best crops suited for the environment. Farmers in the early 1880s discovered the river valleys ideal for fruit growing due to the lower elevations, long growing seasons, and potential for large irrigation systems such as the Grand Valley Canal on the north side of the Colorado in the 1890s. The fruit growing region stretched from Fruita, Grand Junction, and Palisade along the Colorado River to Delta, Hotchkiss, and Paonia on the North Fork of the Gunnison. Peaches thrived near Palisade, while apples and pears did well near Cedaredge and areas of Hotchkiss and Paonia. Farmers also had success with sugar beets, corn, wheat, barley, millets, and potatoes (Wyckoff 1999: 227-231). Settlements clustered near river bottoms at Parachute, Rifle, Meeker, Steamboat Springs, and Craig, where large ranches grazed cattle and sheep on higher benches above the river bottoms, much of it leased from the federal government for grazing. Brown's Hole, in the far northwest corner of the state, shared borders with Utah and Wyoming and was known as a good winter range for large cattle herds from Wyoming (Wyckoff 1999: 244).

SH 348 was not an early project of the Colorado Highway Department, but was constructed to serve the farms that developed with the intensification of irrigated farm settlement in the Uncompahgre Valley. Although it connects to US 50 on both ends, it is not the most direct route to local market centers for many of the farms in the northern part of the valley. Sources did not indicate that this road represents important engineering achievements, or that it meets other criteria for significance.

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

#### *Criterion A*

SH 348 was not found in the course of research to meet criteria for significance. It is not an early or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and research did not reveal it to be an important example of a road built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal work relief project. Although it provided connectivity to Delta and Olathe as a farm-to-market route, it was not significant in the early agricultural development of the Valley to a greater degree than any other section road. As such, the highway 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 CHD. 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.

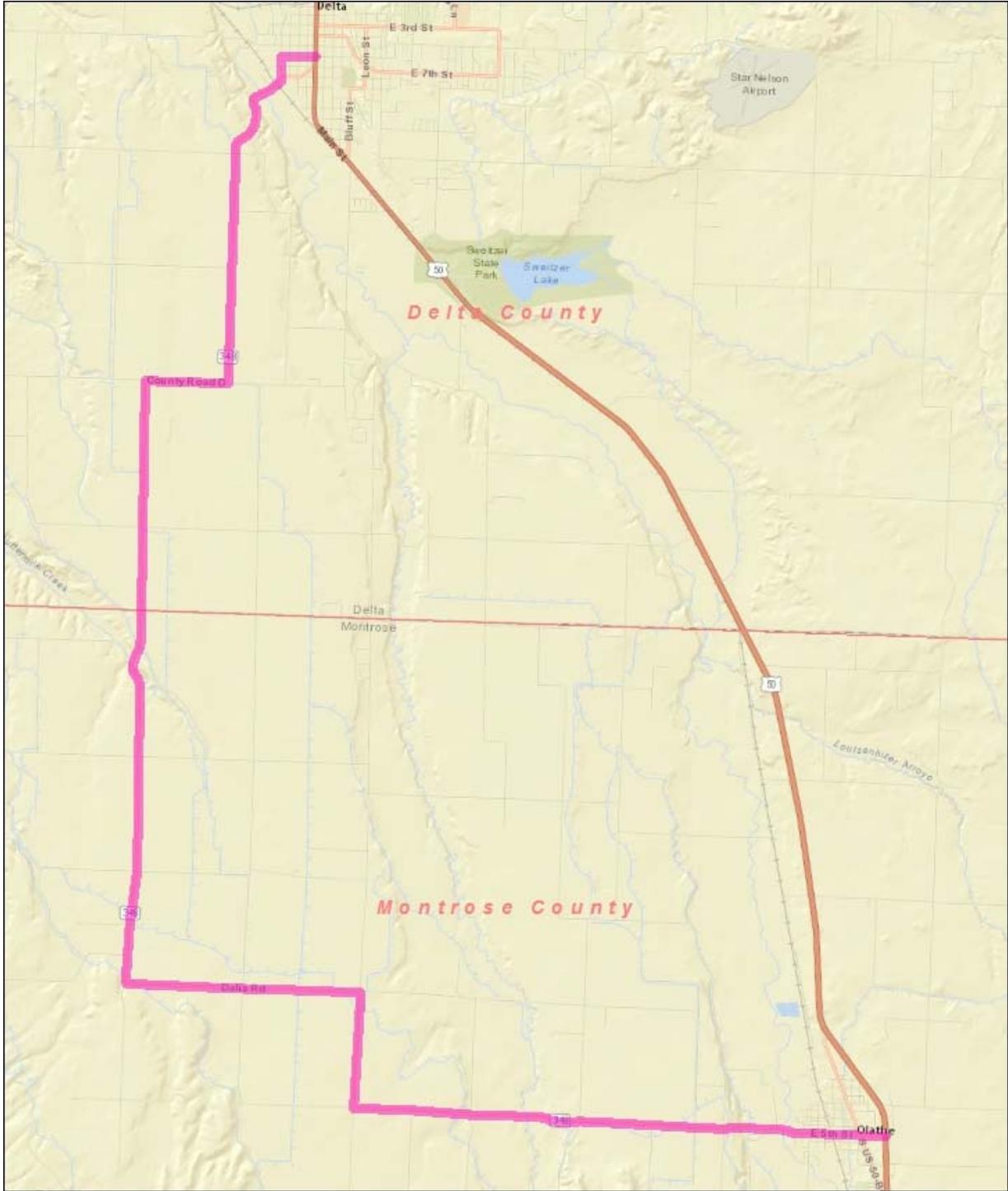
#### *Criterion D*

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.

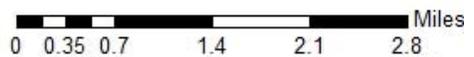
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- SH 348
- County Boundary

SH 348



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