

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

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 371

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

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
371A	From SH 15-B east of Capulin north To SH 368-A on the Conejos/Alamosa County Line

**Highway Location:**

Counties: Conejos  
Length (Miles): 6.055

**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 371 is approximately six miles long and located southwest of Alamosa and west of La Jara in the San Luis Valley, in the south-central region of the state. The highway's southern terminus corresponds to its junction with SH 15, east of Capulin, and its northern terminus is SH 368 at the border of Alamosa and Conejos Counties.

The earliest transportation corridors in South-Central Colorado were wagon roads that often followed trails established by Native Americans. Settlers from New Mexico moved into the San Luis Valley in the 1850s and established early irrigation and water reclamation systems that led to the development of area agriculture and animal husbandry 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 providing connections between the region and larger markets; tracks reached Alamosa in 1878 and a line was constructed from Alamosa to Espanola, New Mexico in 1880. The San Luis Valley Southern Railroad was constructed from Blanca to Jaroso in 1910 and between Monte Vista and Center in 1913. Railroads served as an important means for distributing livestock and agricultural products produced in the San Luis Valley. (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. Smaller communities increasingly saw the benefits of highway access, which led to further highway construction along less traveled routes in the 1920s and 1930s. US 160 became the major east-west route through the San Luis Valley in the 1930s, with connections to SH 17, US 285, and many smaller and less prominent north-south routes. (Carter and Mehls 1984: 138-141)

SH 371 was designated a state highway in 1939. It was not comprised of earlier roads as its route was not included on state highway maps until 1939. The entire route was paved by 1958. The highway was one of many short area roads that formed the area transportation network between La Jara, Monte Vista, and Alamosa.

State 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 historic themes such as industry or agriculture in an important way. SH 371 served as a minor connector road and functioned as one of many highways that comprise the local and regional transportation network.

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

#### *Criterion A*

SH 371 was constructed relatively late within the context of highway development and is not an example of an early or prominent project by the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) nor was it built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal work relief project. Historically, SH 371 served to provide typical connections to other state roads 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 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.

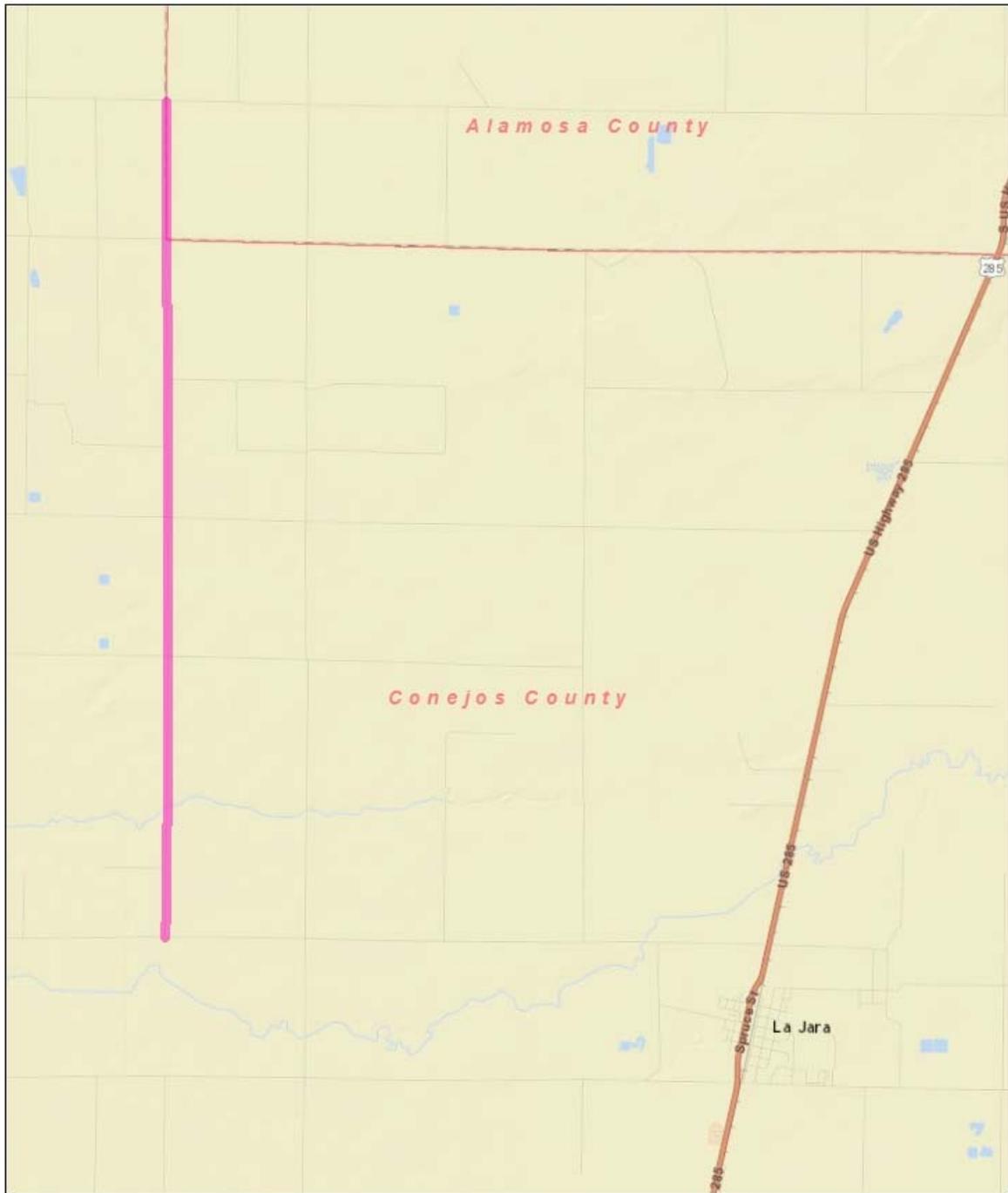
#### *Criterion D*

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.

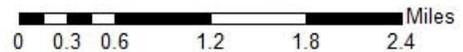
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- SH 371
- County Boundary

SH 371

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