

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 64

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
064A	From U.S. 40-A in Dinosaur Southeast via Rangely To SH 13-A southwest of Meeker

Highway Location:

Counties: Moffat, Rio Blanco
 Length (Miles): 73.135

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>
5RB.3077.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible>Field needs data	10/17/1990>8/2000>08/21/1990	OLD STAGE ROAD, OLD BERTHOUD ROAD
5RB.3077.4	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	10/15/2012>07/24/2012	OLD STAGE ROAD - OLD BERTHOUD ROAD, RANGELY TO MEEKER ROAD - SEGMENT
5RB.3077.5	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	03/29/2013>12/02/2012	OLD STAGE ROAD - OLD BERTHOUD ROAD - RANGELY TO MEEKER ROAD - HIGHWAY 64 - SEGMENT
5RB.5151.2	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	10/15/2012>07/24/2012	YELLOW CREEK ROAD - SEGMENT

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

Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms (forms) for previously recorded segments of this highway listed above and available in Compass include the discussion of the Old Stage Road-Rangely to Meeker Road that pre-dated an automobile highway in the general area of SH 64. All three segments listed above as 5RB.3077 support the eligibility of the entire resource and provide good historical background on the historic wagon route.

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	

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Historical Data:

SH 64 currently travels from the town of Dinosaur, Colorado at the junction with U.S. Highway (US) 40 and travels southeast to the town of Rangely. From Rangely, SH 64 travels east to the junction of SH 13 just west of the town of Meeker, in Rio Blanco County. The length of the entire route is 73.7 miles.

The Old Stage Road-Rangely to Meeker Road pre-dated the current alignment of SH 64. Although SH 64 was not built directly on the previous road, the highway developed along the general alignment of the historic stage route. It is assumed that this trail and historic stage route followed earlier Native American trails since the area was occupied by the Ute Indians before white settlement in the 1860s (Athearn, 1982: 3). According to site form 5RB.3077.4, the stage road existed as early as 1884 on GLO maps as a "trail" following the White River from Meeker to Rangely. By 1908, historic BLM maps show the route as the "Rangely to Meeker Road". On the 1916 state highway map, the route is signed as State Primary Road No 42. By 1924, the route is designated as SH 64, extending from Meeker to Rangely and then northwest to Utah. The western end of the route did not end at US 40 at Dinosaur until 1942. There was a small spur added southeast of Meeker in 1939, however, this spur did not remain as part of the highway and disappears from maps after 1954 (Salek). The route between Rangely and Meeker was paved between 1947 and 1948. According to a review of ROW plans for this highway in OTIS, no work relief programs were associated with the road in the 1930s or 1940s. The entire route was paved by 1955.

The westernmost third of Colorado is dominated by the Colorado Plateau, which 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. The region is also characterized by broad swaths of federally-owned land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service (Routt National Forest, Flat Tops Wilderness, and Grand Mesa National Forest), with lesser amounts belonging to the National Park Service (Colorado National Monument and Dinosaur National Monument).

Before the establishment of Colorado Territory in 1861, this area was part of Utah Territory (1854), reinforcing the physical connection between western Colorado and eastern Utah. Similarly, the land in the northwestern part of Colorado resembles southwestern Wyoming and there are strong economic and social connections as ranchers from southern Wyoming often owned land in northern Colorado, and vice versa. The Colorado River and its major tributaries, including the Colorado (Grand), Uncompahgre, and Gunnison are the major sources of water. Up north, the Yampa and White rivers feed into the Green River before it joins the Colorado in Utah and are the lifelines of the region. As with other parts of the arid state, the rivers dictated the location of settlements, railroads, agriculture, and the state's roads.

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, and Colorado (Grand) River valleys between 1881 to 1883 and helped develop the towns of Grand Junction, Montrose, and Delta, among others. The railroad to Steamboat Springs and Craig was slower to develop, however, given the isolation of the area and issues with winter travel. David Moffat's Denver, Northwestern & Pacific Railroad entered Steamboat in 1909. After Moffat's death in 1911, the railroad was bought by the Denver and Salt Lake, and it continued to its termination point to Craig in 1913. The railroad stimulated the development of coal mining in the Yampa River Valley which required a reliable source of freight transportation.

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).

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In northwest Colorado, energy-related resources such as coal, oil shale, oil, and natural gas have been important to the economy of the region since the late 1880s although the industry was slow to develop along the Yampa until railroad lines provided transportation after 1909. Coal deposits are located in the Yampa Valley west and south of Steamboat Springs, the Danforth Hills northwest of Meeker, and the Grand Hogback (near New Castle) north of Glenwood Springs. Oil and gas are found near Rangely and Craig, and oil shale has been a boom and bust commodity in the Pieance Basin, northeast of Grand Junction, since the turn of the twentieth century. While trains are still used to haul coal through the area, trucks became increasingly more important to the industry after World War II and the improvement of the area's highways.

SH 64 connects the towns of Rangely and Meeker to US 40. The route follows the White River between the towns and has been associated with farms and ranches. First inhabited by the Ute Indians, the area was settled by white settlers after the Brunot Treaty in 1873, which established the Ute Reservation on the White River near Meeker, Colorado. In 1879 the Ute Indians rebelled against agent Nathan C. Meeker's efforts to "civilize" them, killing eleven residents, including Meeker. By 1881, the Utes were subsequently removed from Colorado and the town of Meeker was founded in 1885 (form 5RB.3077.4). The town of Meeker is known for ranching and open range land and its access to hunting and recreational activities (Meeker Chamber website). Rangely was founded after the removal of the Ute Indians in the early 1880s. Rangely is best known for its oil explorations. Early oil discoveries in 1902 produced a short boom until the 1920s, but post World War II demand for oil drove the development and settlement of the area (Rangely Chamber; Athearn 1982: 104). Dinosaur was first named Sand Springs and then Artesia when it incorporated in 1947. It changed its name to Dinosaur in 1966 in connection with Dinosaur National Monument located nearby. Dinosaur National Monument was established in 1915 after the discovery of dinosaur fossils and to protect the surrounding canyons.

SH 64 provides a connection to US 40. Although this connection occurred after 1942, it provided ranchers and residents with direct access to a wider transportation network. Before SH 64, stage routes provided the only transportation for settlers, ranchers and explorers (Athearn 1982: 107). The construction of SH 64 opened up previously inaccessible area in northwestern Colorado and provided a direct connection between the communities of Rangely and Meeker, connecting them to Utah and eventually, US 40.

(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 64 is classified as a Cultural and Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS and has significance in the area of transportation.

Criterion A

SH 64 was a Cultural Route according to the property types in the MPS because it is in the same general location as a trail that was used by Native Americans and was an early stage route before becoming a state highway. As an Engineered Route, SH 64 is an early project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and helped open up previously inaccessible areas of northwestern Colorado and provided a direct connection for the towns of Rangely and Meeker to a larger transportation corridor of US 40. SH 64 provided cattle ranchers and the oil and gas industry direct access to markets. As such, SH 64 possesses significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation as both a Cultural Route and Engineered Route 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

Although State Highway 64 is an early 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.

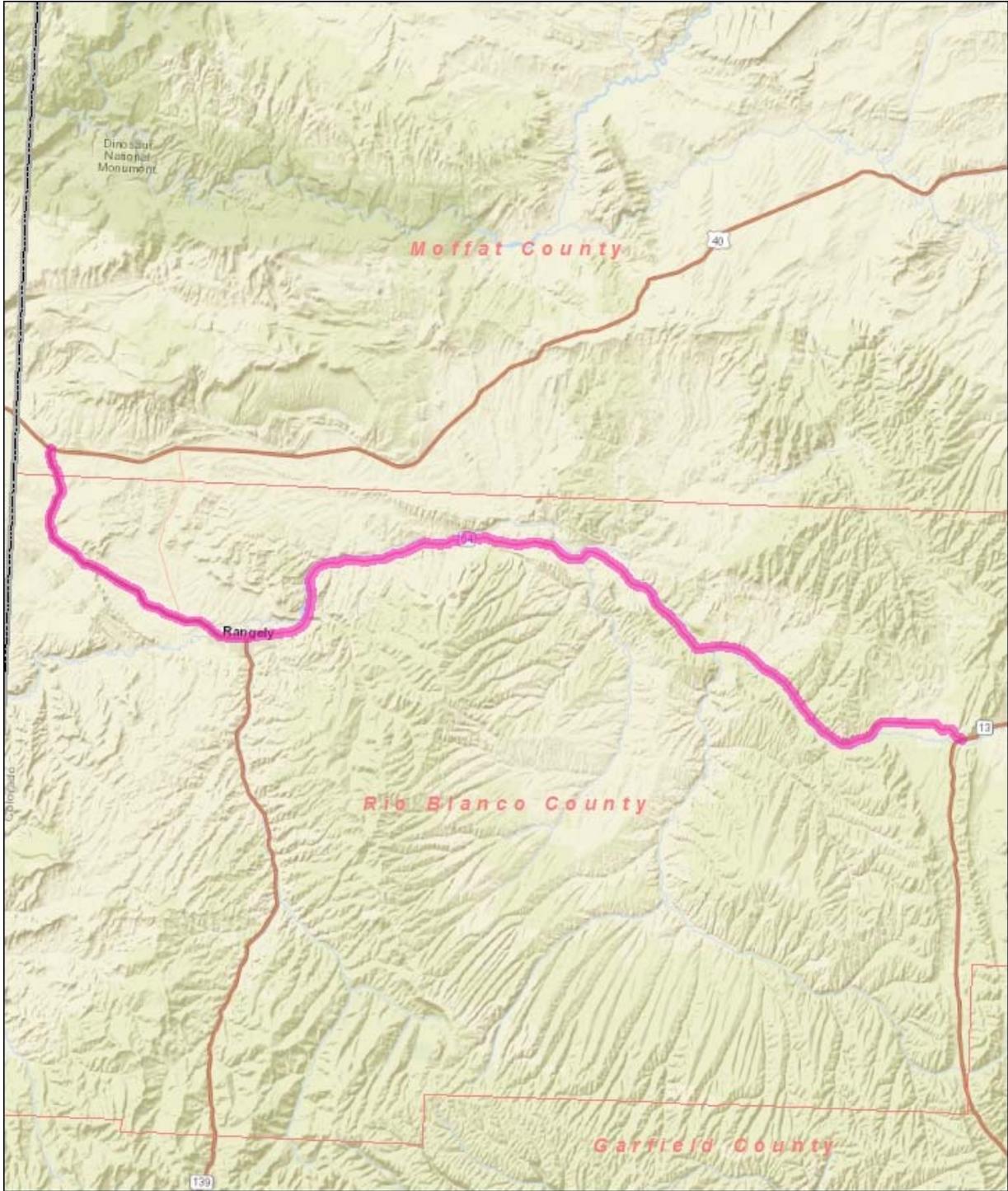
Criterion D

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.

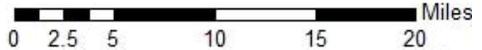
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- SH 64
- State Boundary
- County Boundary

SH 64



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