

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 65

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
065A	From SH 92-A east of Delta north via Cedaredge and Grand Mesa To North Side Ramps a I-70A Northeast of Palisade

Highway Location:

Counties: Mesa, Delta
Length (Miles): 61.17

OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)*:

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 65 begins at the junction of SH 92 in Delta County, east of Delta and travels north through the town of Cedaredge ascending the Grand Mesa, before descending into the Plateau Valley in Mesa County and traveling through the town of Mesa, then heading west to the junction of Interstate(I)-70 near Plateau Creek. The entire distance is 61.37 miles.

SH 65 appears on the 1916 state travel map as State Primary Route No. 65 with the route extending from Cedaredge to Collbran, however, not on the current alignment. The segment of the route from Mesa towards Plateau Creek was designated State Primary Route No. 11. This portion of the route was built with convict labor in beginning in 1914 (Colorado Biennial 1914: 13) . In 1921 the Highway Department approved money to improve and widen the route from Delta to Alexander Lakes on top of the Grand Mesa. The entire route to Mesa was completed in 1926 (Colorado Highways March 1926: 6). Starting in 1930, state travel maps show the current alignment with the route ending in Mesa, west of Collbran and then traveling west through the Plateau Valley to US 24/6 (current I-70). The segment of SH 65 from Collbran to Mesa was signed as SH 65 until 1939 when it was numbered SH 330. CDOT records show improvements were made to the route including widening and new drainage in the mid 1950s and paving was completed by the mid 1960s (Salek). The route was designated a State Scenic and Historic Byway in 1991.

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 US 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 Piceance 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 65 crosses the Grand Mesa and Grand Mesa National Forest. When SH 65 was first proposed, the magazine *Colorado Highways* touted the connections to other scenic drives in the area such as the Ocean to Ocean route and Rainbow Route as well as opening access to the recreational opportunities on the Grand Mesa. Tourists, hunters and fisherman use the area for recreation (*Colorado Highways* March 1926). Research indicates this route was constructed to provide access to recreation and scenic views on Grand Mesa, the highest landform in the Grand Junction-Delta region. The road also opened previously inaccessible areas of the state and provided connectivity for ranching and farming communities to larger transportation corridors.

(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 65 is classified as an Aesthetic Route the classification system in the MPS and has significance in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Transportation under Criterion A.

Criterion A

SH 65 is a Aesthetic Route that accesses Grand Mesa, providing access to recreational opportunities and scenic views. The route was built in 1926 to access lakes and recreation opportunities on the Grand Mesa National Forest and connect to other scenic routes in the area. As such, the route is significant under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation at the local level. In addition, the route connected communities of Delta, Cedaredge to the Plateau Valley communities of Collbran and Molina, providing transportation access across a previously inaccessible area. Therefore, SH 65 also possesses significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation 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

SH 65 is not considered to be an early or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department. 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.

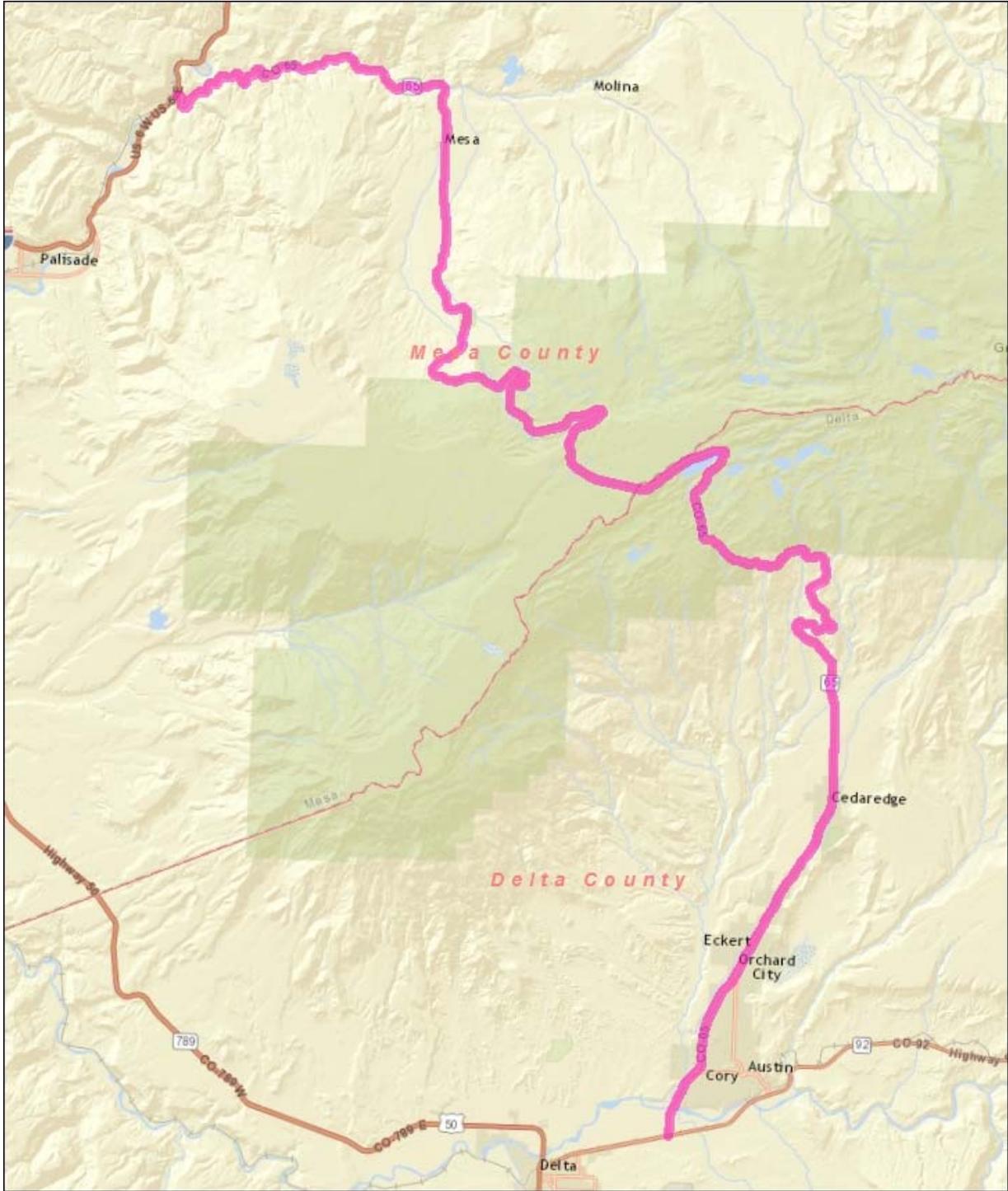
Criterion D

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 65
- County Boundary



SH 65



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