

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 69

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
069A	From SH 25-C Walsenburg Bus Rt northwest via Gardner and Westcliffe To U.S. 50-A at Texas Creek

Highway Location:

Counties: Fremont, Custer, Huerfano

Length (Miles): 82.196

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>
5FN.2682.1	Not eligible		SAN JUAN AND CANON CITY ROAD
5FN.842	No assessment given on form	4/26/1987	ROAD GULCH STAGE ROAD

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

Two Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms (forms) for previously recorded segments of this highway were identified in Compass, 5FN2682.1 and 5FN.842. San Juan and Canon City Road (5FN2682.1) intersects with SH 69 but did not historically coincide with the route of SH 69 based on the previously recorded site form. San Juan and Canon City Road was previously determined not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Road Gulch Stage Road (5FN.842) consists of ruts located to the west of SH 69 and south of Road Gulch and does not appear to historically coincide with the route of current SH 69. The site form indicates that the construction of SH 69 resulted in the obliteration of a portion of ruts. There is no indication in research or previous site forms that SH 69 is historically associated with Road Gulch State Road. No National Register assessment was provided for Road Gulch Stage Road.

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 69 is approximately 82 miles long and extends northwest from Interstate (I)-25 at Farista , near Walsenburg, to U.S. Highway (US) 50 at Texas Creek. The highway travels through a sparsely-populated high desert region of the state within the Huerfano River Valley, between the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the Wet Mountains. The highway extends through Huerfano, Custer, and Fremont Counties and provided access between US 50 and the small communities of Gardner and Westcliffe/Silvercliff and Walsenburg.

Historically, the trails, highways, and rural roads that made up the transportation network in this area facilitated travel and also made possible the transfer and distribution of goods to remote communities. This area was first traversed by the Ute, Comanche, and Apache tribes as well as Spanish explorers and fur trappers. An important and early trade route in the region was the Trapper's Trail, which extended north from Taos over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, north through the San Luis Valley to Fort Garland. The trail has no direct association to SH 69 because present-day SH 159 generally follows the route of the Trapper's Trail. Settlement in the area that SH 69 passes and connects occurred beginning in the late 1800s. Walsenburg, established in 1873 and located along the eastern slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Huerfano County, was one of Colorado's primary sources for coal after the 1880s. By the 1940s, the agricultural areas surrounding Walsenburg produced large crops of beans, wheat, hay, and corn and sustained herds of cattle and sheep. Walsenburg served as important trade center as well as shipping center for these agricultural and industrial products. The community of Westcliffe was established in the 1880s after the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was extended to the area and the community of Gardner was established along a stage road between Walsenburg and Westcliffe and Silver Cliff. The route of the stage road generally followed a similar corridor as present-day SH 69 (Noel et al 1994: 25, 29; Wyckoff 1999: 167-170; Colorado State Planning Commission 1941: 306, 374; untitled page at sangres.com).

Historic state highway maps indicate that SH 69 was designated by 1916 and extended between Walsenburg and Westcliffe/Silvercliff and continued northwest to current US 50 travelling along the same general alignment of the present-day highway. By 1939 historic highway maps show a short spur of SH 69 extending south of Walsenburg. By 1954 a large portion in the middle of the route, extending for approximately 13 miles south of Westcliffe, was turned back and the spur south of Walsenburg was no longer designated SH 69. The gap was designated SH 69 again in 1977. State highways, farm-to-market roads, and small local connector roads served to link major regional transportation corridors, towns, and cities. While SH 69 served to provide access the communities of Westcliffe and Gardner from Walsenburg and served to connect to another larger transportation corridor, US 50, research and review of historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided direct access to destinations related to important historic themes. Other roads, such as SH 12, served a more direct and important role in the mining activities near Walsenburg and roads providing direct and point-to-point access to regional markets from important agricultural areas, such as SH 10, US 160 and US 85 between Trinidad/Pueblo and the San Luis Valley which possess significance with these themes.

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

Criterion A

This highway was constructed by 1916, just six years after the establishment of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD). Although its construction coincides with the early period of highway projects designed and implemented by the CHD, research does not indicate that it was constructed to provide an important connection between important destinations or was related to important commercial or industrial development patterns or other historical trends in an important way. Research and review of historic mapping shows that SH 69 developed and provided the types of connections to communities and larger transportation corridors common to this property type and was not distinguishable during the historic period. No evidence indicates that it was built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal relief program or that it served an important farm-to-market road. As such this 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

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.

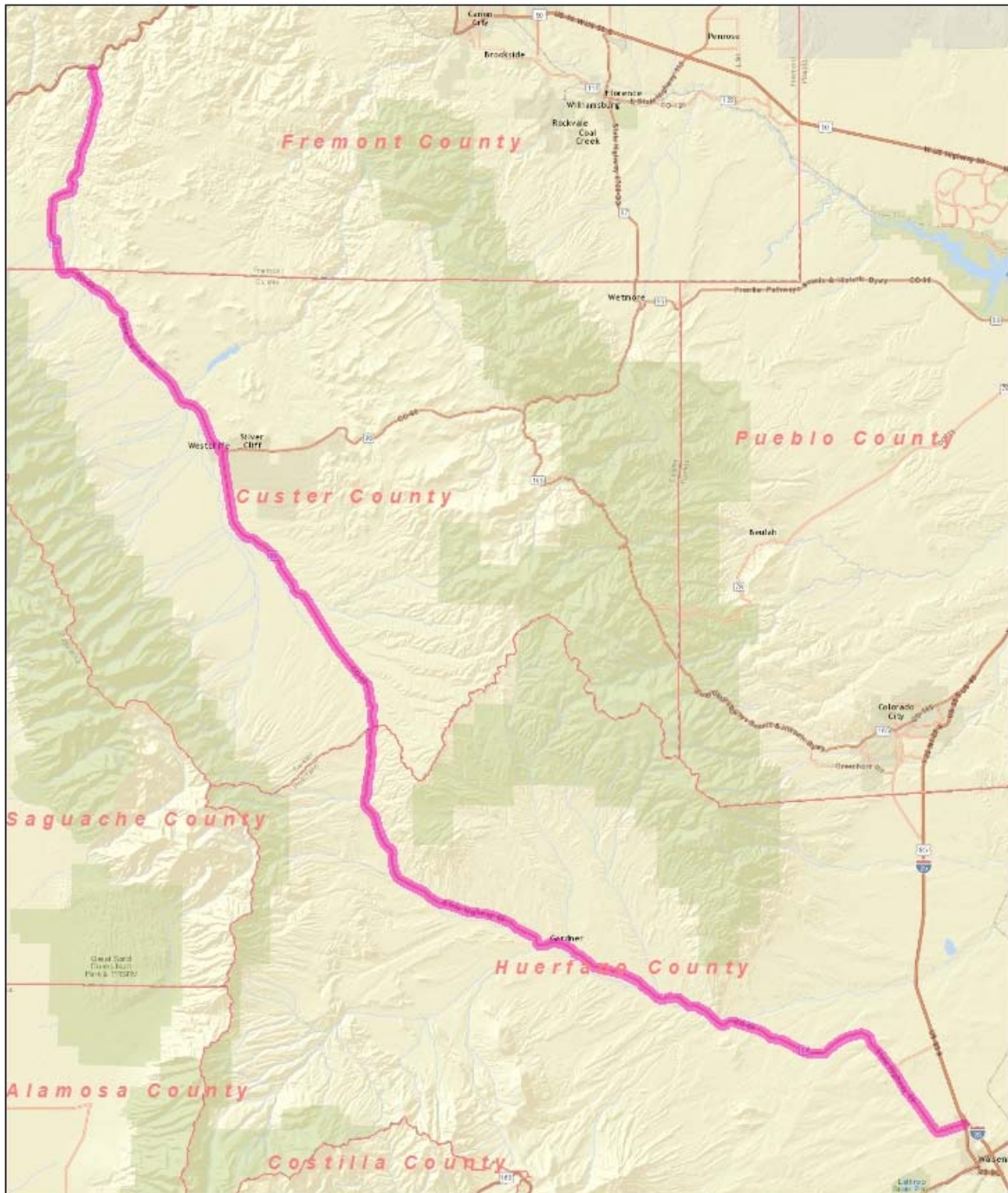
Criterion D

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.

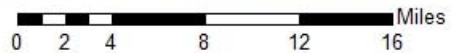
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- SH 69
- County Boundary

SH 69



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