

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 72

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
072A	From I 70-A in Wheat Ridge north on Ward Road and northwest via Pinecliffe To SH 119-A south of Nederland
072B	From SH 119-A in Nederland north To SH 7-A north of Raymond

Highway Location:

Counties: Boulder, Gilpin, Jefferson
 Length (Miles): 51.006

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 72 has two segments as identified by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Segment 72A begins at I-70 in Wheat Ridge at Ward Road and travels northwest through Coal Creek Canyon via Pinecliffe to the junction of SH 119 just south of Nederland. Segment 72B travels from the junction of SH 119 in Nederland north through Ward to SH 7 just north of Raymond in Boulder County. The entire route is 51.006 miles and crosses through Boulder, Gilpin and Jefferson Counties.

The 1919 state highway map shows the general alignment of SH 72 from the Denver area near Arvada to Nederland. By the 1930s, this segment began in Denver at Federal Blvd and 46th Avenue and went west via city streets to travel up Coal Creek Canyon to the junction of SH 119 (Salek). By 1936, the eastern portion of this segment had been shortened, starting at Sheridan and ending at SH 58. In 1939, a new segment in the metro area was added that went along Smith Road east from Colfax to just west of Watkins. By 1946, the two disjointed segments were connected within the metro area and the route was also paved (Salek). The 1960s brought changes to the alignment within the metro area as Interstate(I)-70 and I-25 were built. The alignment of SH 72 along 46th and 48th Avenues became the I-70 alignment (Salek). In 1965, CDOT also added a spur connection along Tower Road between Smith Road and Colfax Ave. By 1966 the eastern segment of SH 72 ran concurrently with the I-70 freeway from Sheridan east to Peoria St, where the freeway ended and SH 72 went south to Smith Road. In 1968, CDOT consolidated highway numbers and changes to SH 72 included:

- SH 72 from Ward Rd to Wadsworth was rerouted off of Ralston Rd and instead turned south on Ward to I-70.
- The carrier route portion along I-70 from Wadsworth to east Colfax was eliminated.
- The spur connection along Tower was renumbered to SH 32. (Salek)

The historic themes for Boulder County include coal and mineral mining, agriculture and ranching. Gold was first discovered in the mountains west of Boulder in 1859. Coal mining began in the 1860s and lasted until the mid 1930s. Gold and coal mining industries relied extensively on railroads to transport materials to and from the mines. However, wagon, and later, automobile roads, also provided transportation of the workers and materials to the mining fields and to the towns where the workers lived. Shortly after the arrival of prospectors, settlers established farms and ranches, organized and built irrigation systems, founded communities, and organized communal agricultural societies. These ranches and agricultural communities helped supply the mining communities of the gold and coal industry and continued to provide important agricultural industries and economies for the region (Wolfenbarger 2008: E-1). In addition to mining and agriculture, tourism is also a historic theme. With the decline of mining and the rise of the late 19th century tourist travel, many former mining towns relied on tourism for their livelihood. By the 1920s the growth of automobile tourism was an important contribution to the economy in these communities. The improvement of roads for the purpose of tourism was successful in attracting new visitors to the region and provided a new industry for the towns that otherwise would have disappeared (Abele 1998: E-7).

SH 72 travels through west Denver city streets to enter a mountain canyon with vacation retreats and homes for Front Range residents. The Denver and Salt Lake Railroad (aka Moffat Road) brought tourists and vacationers to mountain summer resorts such as Pinecliffe, Miramonte, and Lincoln Hills. Automobile access to the canyon previously had been via a gravel wagon road. In the 1920s, residents of the Pinecliffe community petitioned the State Highway Department to improve the highway (Thomas and Standish 2010: 16). The site for Wondervu was chosen due to its close proximity to the route of SH 72. Wondervu, platted in the late 1920 and the early 1930s, was home to middle class seasonal visitors and later, year round residents who sought mountain living in the Coal Creek Canyon area (Thomas and Standish 2010:16-18). The improvement of SH 72 in the 1920s allowed better access to the communities that were previously inaccessible.

The northern segment of SH 72 also travels through the historic mining communities of Nederland and Ward. Both towns were home to early 1860s gold strikes and later mining booms of the 1870s and 1880s. After 1945, more tourists and seasonal residents settled in the mountains seeking respite from the urban communities of the front range. As automobile highways improved, more visitors remained and the towns such as Nederland developed into more year-round communities. (Fell and Twitty 2008: E-65-68; Abele 1988: E6-8).

A portion of SH 72 (72B) is also designated as part of the Peak to Peak Scenic Byway (from SH 119 to SH 7) for its mining heritage and scenic drives from Estes Park to Black Hawk.

(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

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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 72 possesses significance under Criterion A as an Engineered Route for Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation under the registration requirements in the MPS.

Criterion A

SH 72 was a necessary transportation corridor for the communities of the Coal Creek Canyon to develop in response to tourism and recreation (second home ownership). The Coal Creek Canyon portion of SH 72 was not previously accessible by automobiles until the improvements of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) in 1920s. The summer resort community of Wondervu was settled due to the improvements of SH 72. In addition, SH 72 linked historic mining communities and allowed for tourism into these previous mining towns, providing access for the development of a tourism and a scenic drive. SH 72 possesses significance under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation 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, SH 72 does not possess significance under Criterion B.

Criterion C

As a representative example, a state highway that exhibits physical features indicative of an important type or subtype identified in the MPS reflecting its original design or important variation may possess significance. A state highway may also possess significance for particularly important engineering achievements.

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.

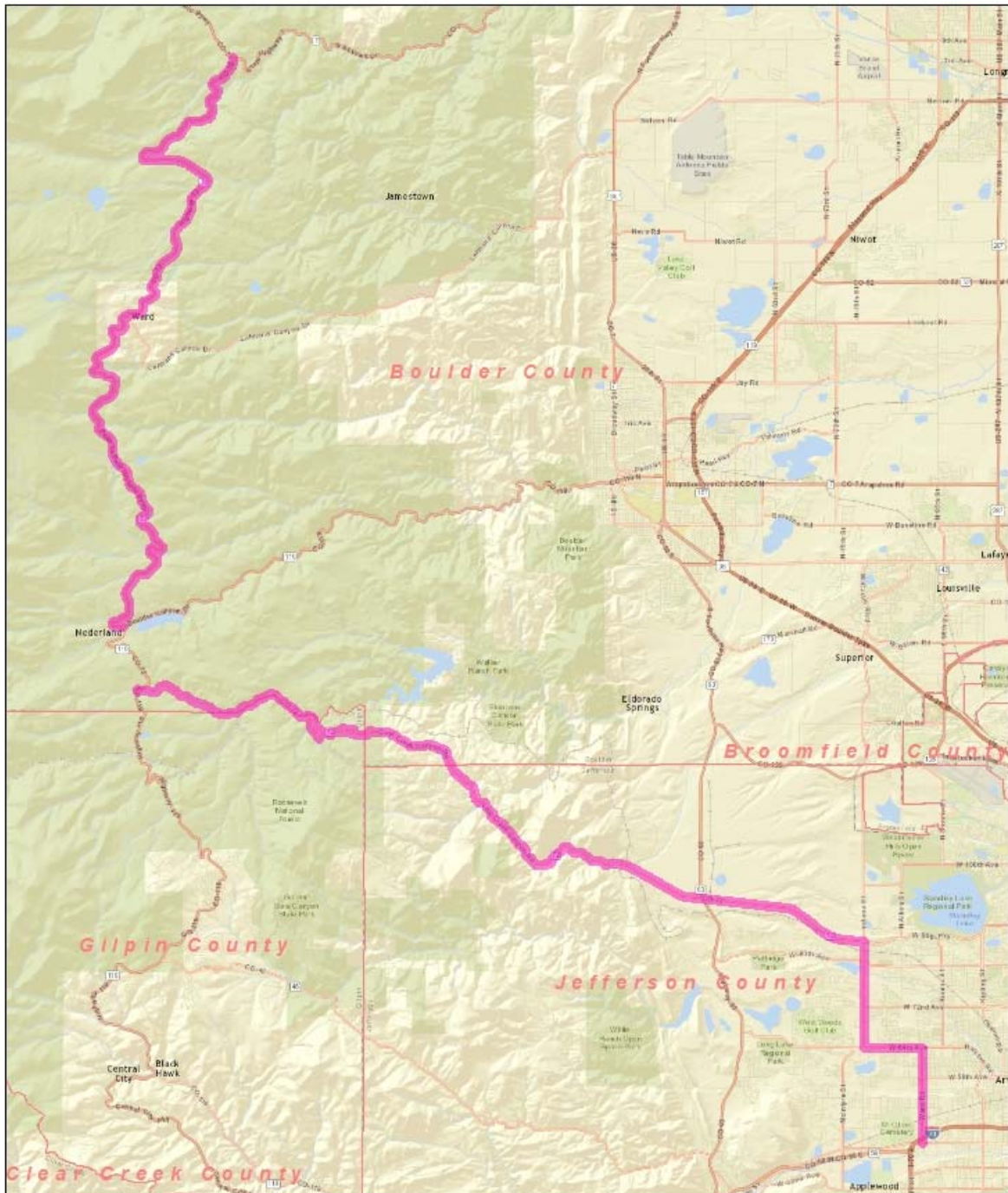
Criterion D

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.

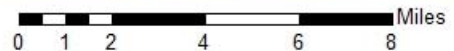
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- SH 72
- County Boundary

SH 72



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