

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 79

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
079A	From South Side Frontage Road at I 70 A To JCT U.S. 36 C in Bennett
079B	From Adams St and JCT U.S. 36 D in Bennett To SH 52-A in Prospect Valley

Highway Location:

Counties: Weld, Adams, Arapahoe
 Length (Miles): 23.868

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>
5AM.149	Field not eligible	Oct-82	BOX ELDER-LIVING SPRINGS ROAD

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

5AM.149.d pertains to the remains of the Box Elder-Living Springs road, a historic stagecoach route that probably crossed the current alignment of SH 79 a few miles north of Bennett. The exact trajectory of the historic road is not certain, so the point at which it crossed the highway cannot be identified. Although this was a significant stage road in the early years of settlement in northeast and central Colorado, the site form contains little history of the area and the stagecoach route is not part of SH 79.

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 79 is a north-south highway that connects Interstate(I)-70 with SH 52 on the plains east of the Front Range. The highway is 23.89 miles in length, and begins at exit 304 on I-70 at the Arapahoe/Adams County line. It heads north 1.24 miles to Bennett. Jogging east for about 1/3 mi. on SH 36 (E. Colfax Ave.), it resumes northward from Bennett for 22.312 miles as part of the Kiowa-Bennett Road, traversing Adams County and entering Weld County, where it follows the alignment of CR 69, meeting SH 52 about 9 miles east of Hudson. It traverses an area of the eastern plains that is generally devoted to irrigated or dryland farming.

SH 79 is contained in the Colorado Piedmont, a region defined geographically as the rolling hills and stream-laced valleys that lie to the east of the Front Range. This area contains both the most urbanized corridor in the state and also wide swaths of rural farm and ranchlands, with its history firmly rooted in the events that profoundly changed the region from the 1850s well into the twentieth century. Prehistorically the region was the hunting grounds of the Comanche, who were later pushed south by the Cheyenne and Arapahoe. By the 1850s sparse European-American settlement in the form of scattered farms and trading posts dotted the area around the South Platte River, with trails such as the Cherokee Trail crossing the plains and connecting with California-bound trails to the north. With the Pikes Peak Gold Rush, however, change was fast and intense. The urban core (Denver, Boulder, Golden) that became the metro Denver area sprang from commerce and transportation, i.e., the connection of the gold fields in the Rocky Mountains with the markets and cities to the east. The agricultural zone in the more rural northern area of the Piedmont grew from cultivation made possible by the fertile soils and readily available water in the area, which allowed settlers to readily feed the hungry markets of the urban core and the mountain mining camps (Wyckoff 1998:101-103).

SH 79 was designated as a state highway in the 1920s. Prior to that, a road is visible on a 1916 state highways map as a northeast-trending route roughly following Kiowa Creek north from Bennett. Research did not reveal if the route is associated with the Box Elder-Living Springs Stage Road. By 1922, the Kiowa-Bennett Road was realigned to the west, following a straight north-south trajectory from Bennett north along the section line, and was soon after designated as SH 79. A 1930 Colorado state highway map shows it paved in its entirety.

With the construction of I-70, it became necessary to connect the town of Bennett to the interstate, and a connector (79A) was constructed south from Bennett to the interstate in 1963 (Salek).

Although SH 79 was constructed to link farming communities in the area, it was one of many rural roads in the region and does not itself provide connections to regional markets to function as an important farm-to-market route. A review of sources did not reveal that SH 79 represents important road engineering achievements, or that it is otherwise an important road type or subtype identified in the MPS.

(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:

State Highway 79 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. It does not possess historical significance.

Criterion A

State Highway 79 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. Research failed to indicate this highway has a direct association with a historical theme important in Colorado history, or that it represents an early or prominent road construction project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD), or the connections it provides from any subsequent highway improvements were directly related to destinations associated with historically important themes. As such, the highway does not possess significance under Criterion A.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal SH 79 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

State Highway 79 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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