

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 82

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
082A	From I 70-A in Glenwood Spgs southeast via Aspen and Independence Pass To U.S. 24-A east of Twin Lakes

Highway Location:

Counties: Garfield, Eagle, Pitkin, Lake

Length (Miles): 84.489

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>
5LK.128	Field needs data	10/1/1975	
5LK.487	No assessment given on form	1976	INDEPENDENCE PASS TOLL ROAD
5PT.505	106 - Officially eligible>106 - Officially eligible	07/18/2008>07/17/1987	INDEPENDENCE PASS ROAD
5PT.505.1	Contrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field eligible	11/29/1995>11/1995	INDEPENDENCE PASS ROAD (PAVED ROAD)
5PT.505.11	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL ROAD - SEGMENT
5PT.505.14	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL ROAD - SEGMENT
5PT.505.16	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL ROAD - SEGMENT
5PT.505.2	Contrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field eligible	11/29/1995>11/1995	INDEPENDENCE PASS ROAD (PAVED ROAD)
5PT.505.3	Contrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field eligible	11/29/1995>11/1995	INDEPENDENCE PASS ROAD (PAVED ROAD)
5PT.505.4	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL ROAD - SEGMENT
5PT.505.5	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL ROAD - SEGMENT
5PT.505.8	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	07/18/2008>06/27/2008	INDEPENDENCE, TWIN LAKES, ROARING FORK TOLL 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 are listed above. There are three forms for the paved portion of Independence Pass Road prepared by the Colorado Department of Transportation (Pearce) in 1995, and these contain numerous historic articles and an excellent summary of the road’s history, as well as information on realignment of the road near the Weller Lake Campground . The other point numbers from 5PT.505.4-5PT.505.16 appear to be associated with unpaved segments of the Independence-Twin Lakes-Roaring Fork Toll Road and are not associated with the current alignment of SH 82. 5PT.606.1 and 5PT.606.2 are also associated with unpaved segments of the older road known as Independence Pass Toll Road.

The highway has also been recorded as 5LK.128 in 1975 and 5LK.487 in 1976, but these recordings are early and do not provide helpful historical information. In addition, the road passes near or through numerous listed and eligible

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National Register of Historic Places historic districts: 5GF.1050 Hot Springs District (Glenwood Springs); 5PT.113, Aspen Commercial District; 5PT.114 Aspen Main Street Historic District; 5PT.18, Independence Townsite and Mill; 5PT.539, Holden Mining District (Aspen); 5PT.323 Emma Historic District (near Basalt) and 5LK.41 Twin Lakes Historic District.

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>
5GF.1050	Hot Springs Historic District	106 - Officially eligible
5LK.41	Twin Lakes Historic District	Listed on National Register
5PT.113	Aspen Commercial Historic District	NPS Certified District
5PT.114	Aspen Main Street Historic District	106 - Officially eligible
5PT.18	Independence Townsite and Mill Site	Listed on National Register
5PT.323	Emma Historic District	106 - Officially eligible
5PT.539	Holden Mining and Smelting Company	Listed on National Register

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Historical Data:

SH 82 connects the communities of Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt and Aspen west of the Continental Divide with the small village of Twin Lakes and U.S. Highway (US) Highway 24 on the east side of the Continental Divide. The highway length is approximately 84 miles between Interstate(I)-70 A in Glenwood Springs to US 24 in the counties of Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, and Lake. Bridges listed or eligible for the National Register on SH 82 include Maroon Creek Viaduct (5PT136), which was originally a bridge on the Midland Railroad, and the Glenwood Springs Viaduct, also known as the Grand Avenue Viaduct (5GF2717), which will be demolished as part of the realignment of SH 82 in Glenwood Springs.

A portion of the highway provides the only year-round state highway access to Aspen via Glenwood Springs, while the portion of the route over Independence Pass between Aspen and Twin Lakes/US 24 is open seasonally from Memorial Day through early November depending on snow. The high point of the highway, Independence Pass at 12,096 feet, is about twenty miles east of Aspen. Between Aspen and Independence Pass the highway climbs a total of 4,200 feet in elevation and has steep grades and several tight switchbacks west of the pass. The elevation change between Independence Pass and Twin Lakes on the east side of the pass is only about 1,000 feet and is easier to navigate than the highway west of Independence Pass (Salek).

Beginning with the early gold rush that began in 1859, Colorado's mining industry was a significant contributor to the state's economic, political, and social development. This trend continued as the industry expanded with the discovery of silver, copper, lead and zinc in the central mountain region and resulted in population explosions in mining camps and nearby supply centers. Technological advances such as smelting allowed these ores to be more successfully processed and contributed to the increase in mine production. Wagon roads and railroads were essential to the transportation needs of the mining industries and the communities that surrounded them. At times, wagon roads were the only access to in the narrow and steep mountain canyons. Some of these wagon roads and railroad grades later became part of the state highway system. Towns such as Aspen became supply, processing, and transportation hubs for the mining industries in the Central Mountain region.

The road over Independence Pass has been an important link in the state's transportation network since 1879 when Aspen became the center of a silver mining boom. The route provides a direct connection between Aspen and Leadville, which are 59 miles apart via Independence Pass (as compared to 139 miles via Tennessee Pass and Glenwood Springs). A toll road built between 1879 and 1882 by Aspen citizens provided access to and from the mines east of Aspen. After the construction of the toll road, Pitkin County purchased the portion of the road within its boundaries. In 1887, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad and the Colorado Midland Railroad entered Aspen from the north via Glenwood Springs, providing a more reliable method to transport the ores mined near Aspen to larger markets.

After railroad service arrived in Aspen, use of the toll road waned. The road only connected Aspen with the mines to the east, and when these mines closed in the 1890s, the road became practically abandoned and impassable. In 1911, after the formation of the Colorado Highway Commission, Aspen citizens paid to have a survey conducted by the new highway commissioners for an automobile road between Aspen via Independence Pass to Twin Lakes. Between 1912 and 1916, the highway department, U.S. Forest Service, Pitkin County, and Aspen citizens contributed funds and labor to improve short segments of the impassable road. Surveys for the improvement of the road in Lake County began in 1916 and construction took place on the east side of the pass between 1916 and 1923. The improved automobile road deviated from the original toll road, which was characterized as being very narrow with sharp and dangerous curves and grades as steep as 12 and 14 percent. Curves and steep grades had to be rebuilt for automobiles and the state did this in sections. The first motorized vehicles traveled over the pass in 1924. This improved road served the development of industry when mining revived between Leadville and Aspen in the early 1920s. The highway was also known as the Roaring Fork Route on early tourist maps and brochures and the first federal aid system in 1923 included the route as No. 82. The last section built, known as the Weller Grade, had a maximum grade of 6.6 percent and a width up to 17 feet, including cement rubble masonry headwalls, rustic log guard rails, and cement rubble masonry retaining and guard rails in the Weller Grade section. A local firm in Aspen, Tagert, McDonald and McSkimming, built this section (Colorado Highways May 1925: 4-6).

Part of the highway between Aspen and Glenwood Springs is located on the former Colorado Midland Railroad grade next to the Roaring Fork River. The highway department returned many of these former rail routes to the counties in the 1950s, but retained SH 82 (Wiley: 28). CDOT widened the highway between Glenwood Springs and Aspen due to population growth in the Roaring Fork Valley that began in the 1980s. Environmental sensitivity required a unique design, and the preferred alternative featured a divided expressway with a design similar to the stacked viaduct of

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I-70 in Glenwood Canyon. The highway also had managed High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes between Basalt and Aspen that CDOT has said are the first rural HOV lanes in the country (Salek).

In summary, archival sources indicate this route was constructed for automobile access and provided important access that facilitated the development of tourism and mining between Aspen and Twin Lakes, by providing seasonal access to a previously inaccessible area of the state over Independence Pass.

(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:

The highway is significant as an Aesthetic Route under the classification system in the MPS at the local level, corresponding to the National Register themes of Entertainment/Recreation, Transportation, Industry, and Engineering.

Built as an automobile road between 1912 and 1924, the road provided important access for automobile tourists and supported mining activities. Realignment of steep and curvy sections have occurred through the decades resulting in innovative engineering to address challenging site conditions. There are also segments of an earlier toll road near SH 82, which predate the 1920s highway and should be considered as separate resources from the current alignment of SH 82.

Criterion A

SH 82 is an important example of an early and prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) under Criterion A because it has a direct and important association with the development of automobile tourism and recreational pursuits into the high country. The state highway also supported the mineral extraction industry by providing access to area mines that revived east of Aspen in the 1920s. As such it possesses significance in the areas of Transportation, Entertainment/Recreation, and Industry under Criterion A 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

As an aesthetic Route, SH 82 also possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering at the local level of significance. Beginning in 1924 automobiles began to access the highway that had been specifically redesigned and improved to address challenging site conditions in stages with the cooperation of local citizens, the CHD, and the U.S. Forest Service. Structures such as the Maroon Creek Viaduct and Glenwood Springs/Grand Avenue Viaduct and the design of the highway over Independence Pass exemplify bold engineering solutions by the CHD to address the extreme challenges associated with constructing highways over mountain passes and in challenging terrain.

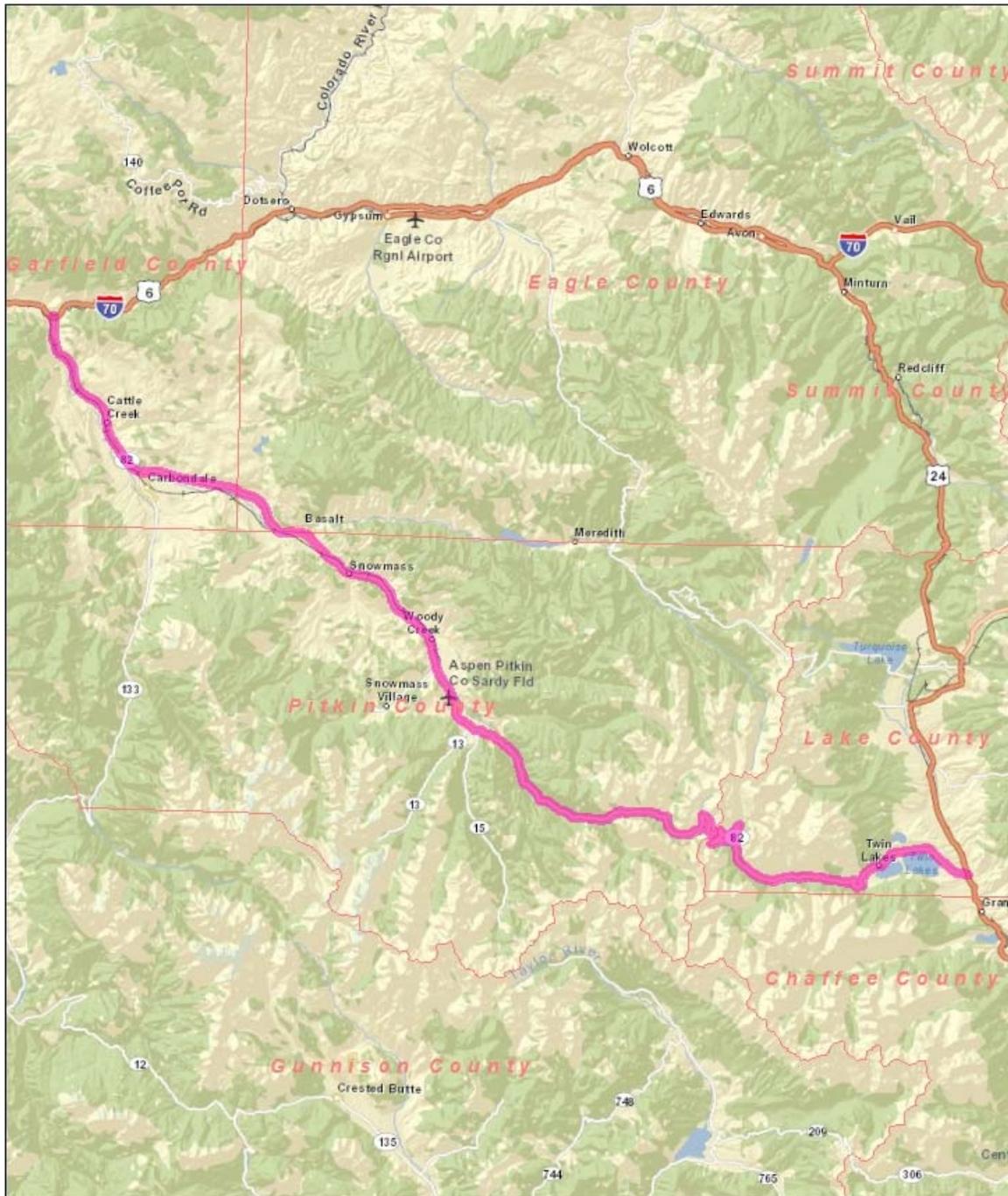
Criterion D

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.

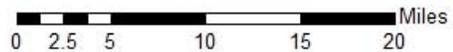
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- SH 82
- County Boundary

SH 82



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

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