

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 21

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
021A	From SH 16 at Mesa Ridge Parkway South of Colorado Springs North along (Powers Blvd) to Jct US 24 at Fountain Blvd in Colorado Springs
021B	From U.S. 024G at Platte Ave in Colorado Springs North along (Powers Blvd) to Jct SH 083A at the north end of Colorado Springs City Limits

Highway Location:

Counties: El Paso
 Length (Miles): 20.245

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 21, also named Powers Boulevard, serves as one of the eastern beltways of Colorado Springs and is 22.30 miles long. It is located entirely in El Paso County, beginning at the intersection of Powers Boulevard and Mesa Ridge Parkway/SH 16 (MM 131.813) and ending at the intersection of Powers Boulevard and Interquest Parkway/SH83 (MM 154.11). A 2.16 mile long segment, from Milepost 139.58 (Fountain Blvd) to 141.74 (Platte Avenue) it is coincident with U.S. Highway (US) Hwy 24.

The area that contains Colorado Springs and environs is 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 late 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 this area, 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 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. Colorado Springs was developed first in the 1870s as an early tourist destination, with General William Palmer's vision of a resort city acting as a guide. The city became an elite enclave, known for a time as "Little London" for the proliferation of British tourists, many of whom stayed, and Colorado Springs would go on to become home to a high number of millionaires made from the Cripple Creek Gold Rush in the 1890s. With the advent of World War II and the post-World War II period, the Colorado Springs area became home to military installations like Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, and the US Air Force Academy, installations that have impacted the history of infrastructural development in and around the city (Wyckoff 1999:101-103; Ubbelohde 1995:118;334-335).

SH 21's role as one of the eastern beltways of Colorado Springs is a relatively recent development and the route carries little by way of historic significance relative to other state highways in the Colorado Springs area. The route was designated as a state highway in 2007. The road does not appear on historic Colorado highway maps until 1967, when then-named Powers Avenue is shown on the Colorado Springs inset map as defining the town's eastern city limit, and is a mostly graveled county road with a short segment of pavement connecting Highway 24 with Peterson Air Force Base (AFB), which was mainly accessed by Airport Road. SH 21/Powers Blvd now bypasses this segment, a small portion of which remains and runs parallel to Airport Road, just south of the Powers-Highway 24 interchange. Research did not reveal when Powers Avenue was renamed Powers Boulevard, but Colorado highway maps indicate it was renamed by 1987. Although a segment of the original Powers Avenue may have been associated with later development of Peterson AFB, this segment is not part of the current alignment of SH 21/Powers Blvd. The city's eastern area developed throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and Powers Blvd became a major thoroughfare, traversing a corridor of light industry, recent suburban development, and commercial development. The road is currently a 4-lane divided expressway.

Powers Blvd was designated as SH 21 in 2007, when CDOT conducted a swap with the City of Colorado Springs, designating some major roads and turning back others (Salek). A review of sources did not reveal that the current route of SH 21 represents important road engineering achievements, an important road type or subtype identified in the MPS, or that it served to provide an important connection to markets or facilitated development related to military development.

(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 21 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. It does not possess historical significance.

Criterion A

SH 21 does not possess significance under Criterion A. It is not an example of an early or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD), nor was it part of any important federal relief project. This highway does not have a direct and important association with a historical theme important in Colorado history. Although a segment of the original Powers Avenue was associated with the development of Peterson AFB, this segment was not one of the primary connectors with the base, and is not part of the current alignment of SH 21/Powers Blvd. SH 21 was not an early or prominent road construction project of the CHD, nor does it derive significance from any subsequent highway improvements. As such, the highway does not possess significance under Criterion A.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal SH 21 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 21 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 are generally recent, and appear to fall within the established standard practices of state highway design and construction. Therefore, SH 21 does not possess significance under Criterion C.

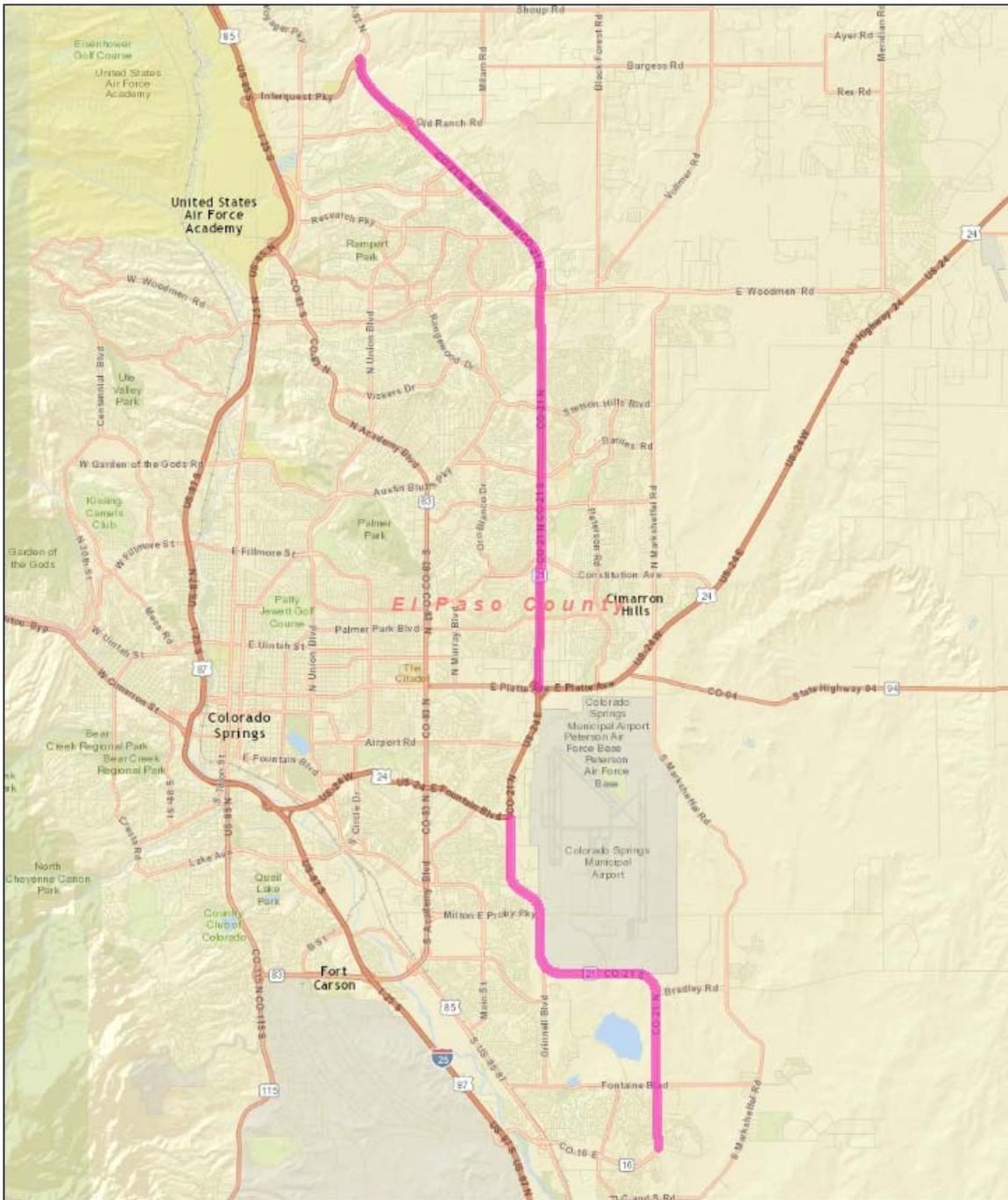
Criterion D

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, SH 21 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.

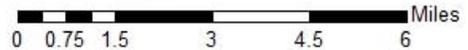
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- SH 21
- County Boundary

SH 21



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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