

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 7

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
007A	From SH 36B in Estes Park at Stanley Ave south and east To SH 36B in Lyons North of Milepost 33
007B	From SH 93A at Broadway in Boulder east via Canyon Blvd To SH 36B (28th St) in Boulder
007C	From SH 36B (28th St) and (Arapahoe Ave) in Boulder east To SH 287C northwest of Lafayette
007D	From SH 287-C in Lafayette East via Brighten To U.S. 085C in Brighton
007E	From SH 7A west of Milpost 15 at Allenspark Bus Rt southeast To SH 7-A east of Ferncliff

Highway Location:

Counties: Adams, Boulder, Broomfield, Larimer
 Length (Miles): 59.614

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>
5BL.11936.1	106 Eligible - Segment supports the overall linear resource	2014	State Highway 7
5LR1319.1	106 Eligible - Segment supports the overall linear resource	1/16/2014>12/12/2012	State Highway 7 - Segment

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

Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms (forms) for previously recorded segments of this highway listed above and available in Compass.

5LR.13191.1/5BL.11936.1, SH 7 in Boulder and Larimer counties, was recorded in 2014 by Dawn Bunyak for a highway repair project caused by the flooding in September 2013. Even though the whole highway was not surveyed, it was assumed to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places for the purposes of Section 106, and the segment supported the overall eligibility of the highway. The highway met the criteria of significance under Criterion A because the segment between Lyons and Estes Park is associated with Colorado’s road building era, early automobile tourism, and the establishment of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915. It was also determined to be eligible under Criterion C for its aesthetic design and example of a mountain highway built for automobile touring and access to recreation. According to the site form: “The narrow curving road was designed to slow down auto tourists to provide for a relaxed, scenic journey leading to one of the nation’s premier national parks.”

The highway has not been surveyed in Broomfield and Adams Counties.

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>
5BL.544	Lafayette Historic District	106 - Officially eligible
5LR.3989	Groothuis Residence	Needs Data - Officially
5LR.462	Glacier Lake Pavilion	Listed - National Register

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Historical Data:

Previously recorded forms for this highway were reviewed for this section (see Discussion of Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory Forms above). Additional sources listed in the Bibliography were reviewed to prepare the historic data for this highway and specific sources are cited below.

The highway has five distinct segments that total almost 60 miles. SH 7A is the longest section of 33 miles from Estes Park south and east to U.S. Highway (US) 36 in Lyons. The highway is co-signed with US 36 south to Boulder. In Boulder, 7B is a short segment (less than a mile) that connects Broadway to Canyon Boulevard. 7C is 8 miles between Boulder and Lafayette along Arapahoe Avenue and ends at US 287. 7D is fifteen miles between Lafayette and Brighton, through Boulder, Broomfield, and Adams counties. Finally, 7E is a short 1.5 mile segment that connects the Allenspark business route southeast to the main trunk of SH 7 east of Ferncliff.

The highway between Estes Park, Lyons, Boulder and Lafayette first appeared on state highway maps in 1922 as routes 90, 11S, and 2S. By 1923 the route was renumbered SH 7. In 1934 the section south of Estes Park through the Tahosa Valley was rebuilt in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service (Project #'s 26-F, 26-G, 26-F-1 and 26-G-1) to avoid steep grades and sharp curves. The section between Lafayette and Brighton was added to the highway in 1939 as part of State Highway Engineer Charles Vail's intention to add more miles to the state highway system by adding local roads. The eastern part of the route was added to the state highway system in 1939, but the road was an important local road connection before it became part of the state highway system in Boulder and Adams counties. The highway alignment has remained essentially the same since then except for configuration changes at the intersections of SH 7 at Interstate (I)-76 and I-25.

The highway is associated with the development of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) and Estes Park as a tourist resort in Larimer County, and with the historic themes of coal mining, agriculture, and ranching in Boulder and Adams counties. After the establishment of RMNP in 1915, the Colorado Department of Highways worked with local officials to improve the highways from nearby communities to the park. By the 1920s automobile tourism was an important part of the economy in this part of Larimer County. Coal mining in Boulder County began in the 1860s and lasted until the mid 1930s with several mines clustered near SH 7 (Baseline Road) in Lafayette (Historic Preservation Board City of Lafayette 2004). Coal mining relied extensively on railroads to transport materials to and from the mines located near Lafayette. However, wagon, and later, automobile roads, also provided transportation for the workers and materials to and from the mines. Agriculture is also important to the history of Larimer, Boulder and Adams counties. After the discovery of gold west of Denver and Boulder, newcomers who came to support the growing mining areas established farms and ranches, built irrigation systems, founded communities, and organized communal agricultural societies. These ranches and agricultural communities supplied the mining communities of the gold and coal industry and participated in a thriving agricultural economy for the region (Wolfenbarger 2008: E-1).

SH 7 provided access to RMNP from Front Range cities, and was a farm-to-market road that linked Brighton, Lafayette, and Boulder.

In summary, research indicates this route has a number of historic associations. These include:

- Establishment of RMNP in Larimer County in 1915
- Automobile tourism in Larimer and Boulder counties
- Coal mining in Lafayette, Boulder County
- Agriculture in Larimer, Boulder and Adams counties

(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 7 between Estes Park and Lyons is classified as an Aesthetic Route and as an Engineered Route between Boulder and Brighton under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

As an Aesthetic Route, SH 7 was an automobile tourism route and is significant under Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation. Part of the route travels through the Roosevelt National Forest and passes through a short section of Rocky Mountain National Park (established in 1915) south of Estes Park. East of Boulder, the highway is significant as an Engineered Route under the area of Transportation and Industry for its role in providing important and direct access to the development of coal mines near Lafayette and as a local collector for farms and ranches between Lafayette and Brighton before being added to the state system in 1939. The level of significance for all areas is 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

A recording of the highway in 2014 found SH 7 significant under Criterion C for its association with early Colorado road building in the mountains and for its aesthetic design: "The narrow, curving road was designed to slow down auto tourists to provide for a relaxed, scenic journey leading to one of the nation's premier national parks." Distinctive characteristics that display this significance include two narrow travel lanes (22 feet total), minimal shoulders to minimize the width of the highway, frequent scenic pull-offs, and lower speed limits because of the road's location in a heavily forested environment. This highway possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering at the local level as an Aesthetic Route.

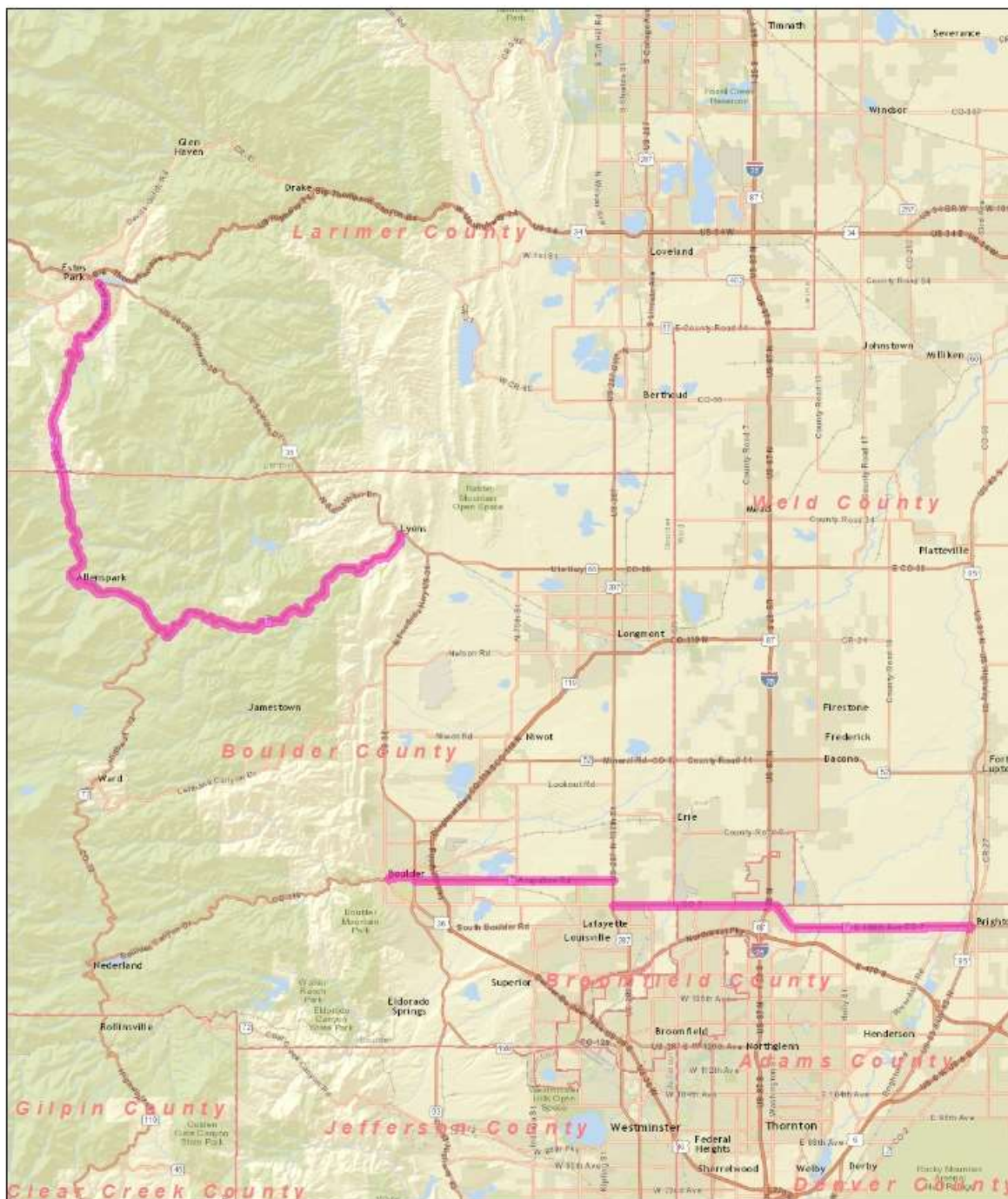
Criterion D

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 7 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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Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, P.C. NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013



- SH 7
- County Boundary

SH 7

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



*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF