

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 8

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
008A	From From SH 285-D south of Morrison north To Morrison and east to SH 121-A in Lakewood

Highway Location:

Counties: Jefferson
Length (Miles): 9.06

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>
5JF.176	Morrison Historic District	Listed on National Register
5JF.442	Red Rocks Historic District	Listed on National Register

*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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Historical Data:

SH 8 is a 9-mile-long highway that connects Wadsworth Boulevard (on the western side of the Denver metropolitan area), the town of Morrison, and U.S. Highway (US) 285 in Turkey Creek Canyon. The relevant major themes for this highway include transportation via wagons, railroads, and automobiles between Denver and South Park; and the development of the Denver Mountain Parks System for recreation and tourism. SH 8 skirts part of the Hogback, a long narrow ridge of red sandstone, limestone, and other quarry stones just west of the Denver metropolitan area. The Hogback features a number of recreational sites, including Red Rocks Amphitheater Historic District (5JF.442, located north of Morrison and accessible from county road 93 and SH 74 and a National Historic Landmark). SH 8 also runs through the historic district boundaries of the Town of Morrison (5JF.176).

SH 8 is part of the Denver-Morrison Road, a route established before the Colorado Highway Commission began designating roads in 1910. As one of the original state highways, SH 8 used to be a much longer route that connected Antero Junction (the junction of US 285 and US 24) to Fairplay, Jefferson, Conifer, Morrison (along US 285) and Denver. It continued east from Denver along Colfax Avenue through Bennett, Deertrail, Limon (this part of the route is now I 70), then southeast to Hugo, Kit Carson, Cheyenne Wells, to Kansas to Limon (current path of US 40).

Various reconfigurations occurred through the years, until the highway was truncated to its present 9.06 miles in 1968. Discontinuous sections of the old road, still named Morrison Road, are present in Denver, providing glimpses of the path of the former state highway. A small 700-foot section starts at the 2700 block of West Colfax, just south of Sports Authority Field at Mile High and east of Federal Boulevard, between Decatur Street and old West Colfax Avenue. The second extant section is a diagonal road located between Sheridan Boulevard and West Alameda (Goodstein 1994: 29, 75).

Prominent features of the highway include the Hogback between US 285 and Morrison, the narrow Bear Creek Canyon east of Morrison, a wide curve around Soda Lakes and Bear Creek Lake, and the terminus of the highway at the Green Gables Country Club on Wadsworth Boulevard.

Beginning in 1914, the portion of the highway from Morrison to Denver became the southern connection for the Lariat Trail, the first scenic drive connecting the Denver Mountain Parks between Golden, Lookout Mountain, Evergreen, Bear Creek Canyon, Morrison, and Denver. More about the significance of the Denver Mountain Parks scenic drives can be found on the site form for SH 74 (5JF.2733) and in the Denver Mountain Parks Multiple Property Documentation Form (Moss 1988: E-14, F-14).

The Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and Jefferson County paved a muddy stretch of the highway near Sheridan Boulevard in 1915, which was recognized in 1923 as the first stretch of concrete paved roadway in Colorado. From 1920-1924, the Highway Department rebuilt and realigned 10 miles of the roadway east of Morrison. The work included eliminating curves and tight turns, paving with concrete, and updating to current standards. Most of the original alignment in Jefferson County was abandoned. Other improvements included diverting Bear Creek into a new channel east of Morrison, blasting rock east of Morrison to make the corridor wider, constructing a long fill to eliminate a sharp curve, and planting trees every fifty feet in partnership with the Denver Motor Club, which had a clubhouse in Bear Creek Canyon (Colorado Highways April 1923: 13; and November 1924: 3, 15; FAP 135, ROW plans on OTIS).

The CHD realigned the section around Bear Creek Lake and Dam in 1978 (CC 11-0008-27, ROW plans on OTIS). The US Army Corps of Engineers completed Bear Creek Dam in 1982, the last of three dams (the others were Chatfield Dam and Cherry Creek Dam) that reduced the risk of flooding in the Denver area (US Army Corps of Engineers: Tri Lakes Projects). The original alignment remains where the highway turns south in Morrison for a distance of 2 miles to its connection with US 285 in Turkey Creek Canyon.

Summary: The segment of SH 8 between Denver and Morrison has significance as part of the first scenic drive in the Denver Mountain Parks when the southern access to the Lariat Trail via Denver and Morrison opened in 1914. The Denver Mountain Parks MPDF indicates this highway was an integral part of the system, which emphasized a first class road system with access to the best mountain scenery and the cooperation of state and county road authorities (Moss 1988, E-9). Changes to the highway alignment in the early 1920s improved the road, which was a very popular route for day trips into the mountains.

(Unless otherwise indicated, sources used in the preparation of this section included state highway maps, the

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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 8 is classified as an Aesthetic Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

SH 8 possesses significance under Criterion A for its association with efforts to create a chain of mountain parks west of Denver and its role in the City Beautiful Movement in the areas of Transportation and Community Planning and Development at the local level of significance. The City Beautiful Movement in Denver is reflected in the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and the development of the Denver Mountain Park System. Olmsted, a nationally recognized master landscape architect, promoted the use of public parks for the health of individuals and the need to preserve open spaces. Olmsted identified the scenic drives in the park system and recommended the Denver-Morrison Road as part of the system in the 1914 plans. The plans for the park set aside public lands and protected them from the encroachment of the growing city. SH 8 provided primary access to Red Rocks within Denver Mountain Park System, Bear Creek Canyon (SH 74), and scenic areas outside of Denver. The overall highway length was diminished in 1968. Most of the original 1924 alignment connecting Morrison and Denver, and the original connection between Morrison and US 285, is extant.

Criterion B

While the route of SH 8 is associated with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., a master landscape architect, the road itself does not express a particular phase in the development of the career of Olmsted or an important aspect of his work. Research did not reveal SH 8 to be directly associated with other persons 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

SH 74 might have additional significance under Criterion C as an Aesthetic Route, but this association is not readily known without additional research. There are no known sections associated with a Depression-era federal work relief program or project, and there are no indications that SH 8 represents a distinctive period and type of road construction because of significant alignment changes in 1924 and 1978. The paving of this highway in 1915, noted in *Colorado Highways* as the first paved section of highway in Colorado, is an interesting fact that indicates the importance of the road to early automobilists, but the highway no longer can convey this significance due to numerous pavement changes and updates to the road over time. The highway's current 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

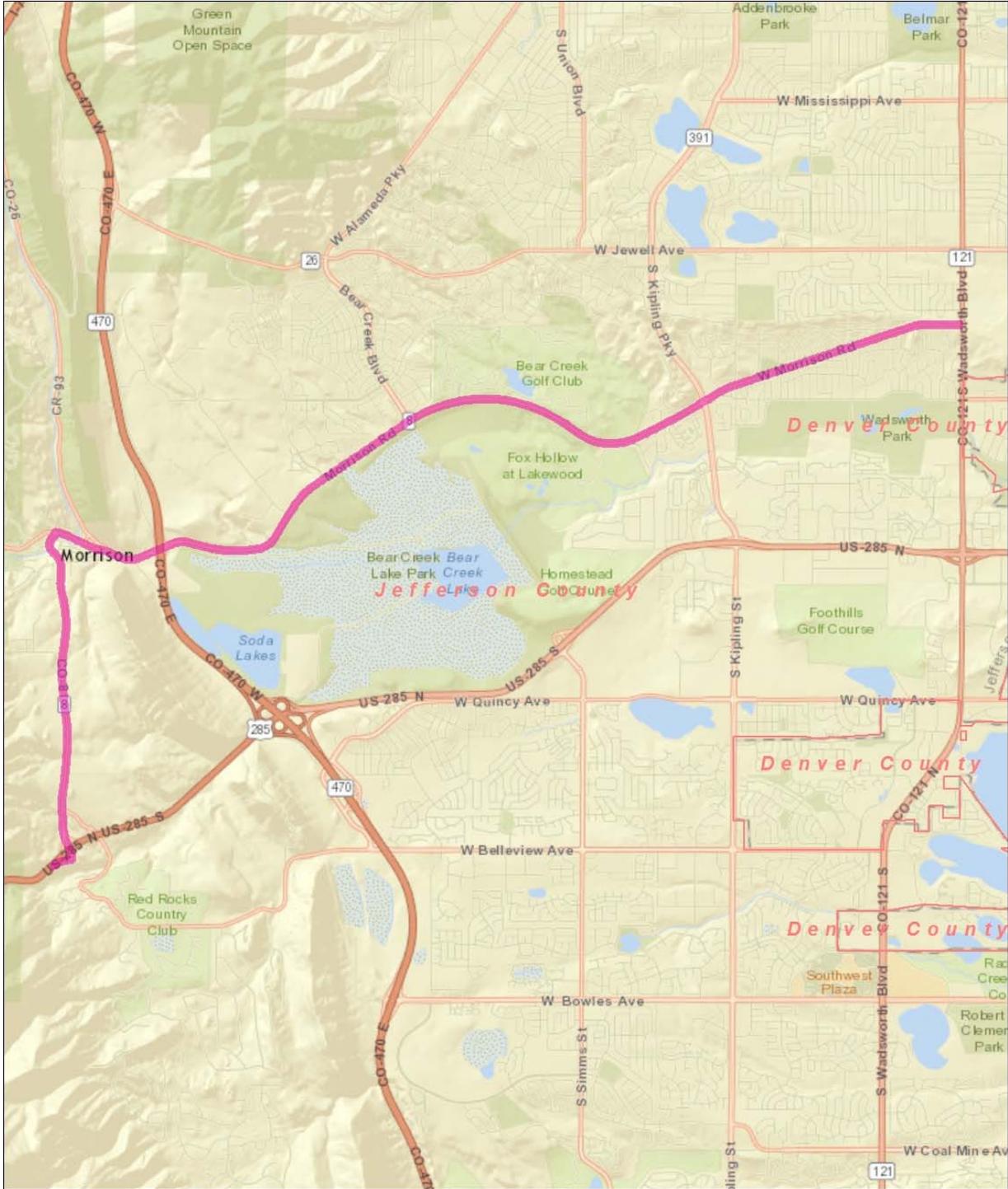
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significance under Criterion D.

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- SH 8
- County Boundary

SH 8



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