

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 36

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
036A	From U.S. 34A at Deer Ridge in Rocky Mtn Ntl Park East To U.S. 34C in Estes Park west of Bighorn Dr
036B	From U.S. 34-A and U.S. 34-C in Estes Park Southeast via Lyons and Boulder To I 25-A North of Denver
036C	From the South Side Ramps at I-70A near Milepost 292 To SH 79B in Bennett Begin U.S. 36D
036D	From SH 79B in Bennett at (Adams St) east via Dyers, Last Chance, and Idalia To the Kansas State Line
036E	From SH 093A (Braodway) East along Baseline Road (Boulder Spur Connection) To the east side Ramps at U.S. 036A in Boulder
036Z	From U.S. 36-B in Lyons west along Main St To U.S. 36-B

Highway Location:

Counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Larimer, Washington, Yuma
 Length (Miles): 213.44

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
5AM.1760.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>8/2004	U.S. HIGHWAY 36 - SEGMENT, DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE
5AM.1760.2	Field needs data	2/5/1999	DENVER/BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36 BETWEEN DENVER AND BOULDER
5BF.50	Field needs data	2/5/1999	DENVER/BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36 BETWEEN DENVER AND BOULDER
5BF.50	Field needs data	2/5/1999	DENVER/BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36 BETWEEN DENVER AND BOULDER
5BF.50.1	Officially not eligible>Officially not eligible>Field not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>02/18/2003>8/2004>12/23/2002	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36
5BF.50.2	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>8/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (SEGMENT)
5BF.97.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/26/2004>04/14/2004	112TH AVENUE (ABANDONED SEGMENT)
5BL.7529	Field needs data>Officially not eligible	02/05/1999>10/17/2006	DENVER/BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36 BETWEEN DENVER AND BOULDER
5BL.7529	Field needs data>Officially not eligible	02/05/1999>10/17/2006	DENVER/BOULDER TURNPIKE, U.S. HIGHWAY 36 BETWEEN DENVER AND BOULDER
5BL.7529.3	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	10/17/2006>8/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (SEGMENT), U.S. HIGHWAY 36
5BL.7529.3	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	10/17/2006>8/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (SEGMENT), U.S. HIGHWAY 36

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5BL.7529.4	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>7/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (SEGMENT)
5BL.845.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	02/03/2006>01/04/2006	LEFTHAND CANYON WAGON ROAD - SEGMENT
5JF.2243.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	04/27/2004>02/17/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE, US HIGHWAY 36 - SEGMENT
5JF.2243.2	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/17/2006>7/2004	DENVER-BOULDER TURNPIKE (SEGMENT), US HIGHWAY 36
5JF.3751.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	10/26/2004>04/14/2004	112TH AVENUE (ABANDONED SEGMENT)
5LR.10423	106 - Officially eligible>Contrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field eligible	03/05/2002>03/05/2002>02/06/2002	US 36 CAUSEWAY ON LAKE ESTES
5WN.116	Listed on National Register>Field eligible	10/15/2002>01/12/1999	PLUM BUSH CREEK BRIDGE, BRIDGE NO. F-22-F

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. These have been organized into three groups: Denver-Boulder Turnpike, other parts of US 36, and other linear resources that cross US 36.

As noted above, most of the previous site forms are for the Denver-Boulder Turnpike portion of US 36 (5AM1760, 5BF.50, 5BL.7529, 5JF.2243). It was surveyed in 1999, 2004, and 2006 for the US 36 Environmental Impact Statement. There are various determinations on the forms, but in summary, the Denver-Boulder Turnpike has been determined to be officially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) as part of the larger US 36 resource. Segments are typically considered non supporting of the overall eligibility given changes to the highway over time but there were some short segments determined to contribute to the overall eligibility. A full review of forms was not done because some are not available, but they typically did not discuss the turnpike as part of the rest of the highway and focused on the history of the turnpike.

5LR.10423 is the US 36 causeway on Lake Estes, in Estes Park, and it was determined to be officially eligible in 2002. There was no mention of the larger resource, US 36, in the site form. 5WN.116 is the Plum Bush Creek Bridge, Bridge No. F-22-F, which was listed in the National Register in 2002 and the site form contains helpful information on US 36 on the eastern plains.

5AM.149 is for a former stage road that is not coterminous with US 36. 5BL.845.1 and 5BF.97.1 are abandoned segments of 112th Avenue that crossed US 36 and the BNSF railroad and were closed in 1951 with the construction of the Denver-Boulder Turnpike. 5BL.845.1 is a segment of Left Hand Canyon wagon road that was destroyed near the intersection of US 36. 5JF.4508.1 is a segment of Wadsworth Boulevard determined field eligible in 2008. The site form was not available for review. 5JF.519.5 is a segment of the BNSF (Colorado & Southern) Railway that crosses US 36 near Church Ranch Boulevard and was determined officially eligible in 2011.

5LR.487 is the Rocky Mountain National Park Utility Area Historic District, including several areas in the park that are south of US 36. It was listed in the National Register in 1982 and re-evaluated in 2005 by the NPS.

5BL.10330 is the Lyons Sandstone Buildings Historic District, listed in 1978. US 36 runs diagonally through the district and the main street of Lyons.

Historic Districts located within 250 feet of highway (OAHP Site Number and Name)*:

OAHP Site No.	District Name	Assessment (If Applicable)
5BL.10330	Lyons Sandstone Buildings	Listed on National Register
5LR.487		Listed - National Register

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Historical Data:

US 36 is divided into four primary segments and two smaller segments. The total mileage of the highway is 213 miles in Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Larimer, Washington, and Yuma counties.

US 36A begins in Rocky Mountain National Park and US 34 at Deer Ridge in Rocky Mountain National Park, and continues through Estes Park as North St. Vrain Avenue. US 36B continues southeast of Estes Park to Lyons and Boulder and continues southeast to meet Interstate(I)-25 in Denver. US 36 runs coterminous with I-270 between I-25 and I-70, and also coterminous with I-70 between mileposts 279 and 292. At milepost 292, US 36C leaves the I-70 alignment and heads northeast through Watkins to Bennett. US 36D begins in Bennett east to Byers, and continues generally in an eastern/slightly southeastern direction through Last Chance, Cope, Joes, and Idalia. East of Idalia, US 36 heads north on the same alignment as US 385 for three miles, then turns east to the Kansas line. Two short segments are also included in the route designation: US 36E is located in Boulder between State Highway (SH) 93 along Baseline to US 36A in Boulder. US 36Z is located from US 36 B in Lyons along Main Street.

The route that became US 36 on the eastern plains was on Colorado state highway maps as early as 1921, as Primary Route 102. It became US 36 in 1930 and was one of the national east-west routes designed for automobile tourism. In Colorado, the original alignment on the east side of the state has not changed much and the highway connects a series of small communities before crossing into Kansas. The town of Last Chance in western Washington County was founded in 1926 by two entrepreneurs who set up a gas station on US 36 between Brush, Strasburg, and Limon. The name came from their sign advertising their station as the last chance to buy gas. The highway was extended along US 40 to Denver in 1937 and upgraded from a dirt road to a graded highway in 1938. The improvements were part of Federal Aid Project 351, (despite the name and date of the project, this designation was not a federal work programs), and included the construction of the Plum Bush Creek Bridge, a concrete rigid frame span with concrete abutments, deck and curbs (Fraserdesign, 5WN.116). Salek noted that the highway was realigned in 1955 near Byers to turn south on Main Street before continuing west to Strasburg. In 1967 US 36 was extended to include the Denver Boulder Turnpike, which had recently become a free highway, and continued through Boulder to Estes Park. In 1976 the location of US 36 changed in Denver from Colfax to run coterminous with I-270/I-70, and in 1978, US 36 was extended to Deer Ridge Junction in Estes Park to meet US 34 (Salek).

The highway was one of the first routes into Estes Park, following trails used by native people and fur traders along the North St. Vrain rivers, in the early 1840s and miners after 1859. While prospectors created mining districts in areas around Estes Park, the valley itself did not have an active mineral belt. Estes Park prospered by mining a different commodity—tourists—beginning in the 1870s, when the outside world started coming to enjoy the scenery and recreation of the valley. The proximity of Estes Park to the Front Range made it relatively easy for early travelers to visit the mountain valley, but the mountains still presented obstacles for road builders. Before automobiles, Front Range travelers wanting to reach Estes Park used wagon roads from Longmont and Lyons (today via SH 66), or from Boulder (via US 36). The first wagon road between Estes and Lyons was Alexander MacGregor's toll road, which ran along the North St. Vrain River and Little Thompson River from Lyons to Estes Park through Pinewood Springs (today the path of US 36). Built in 1875, the toll road brought the some of the first tourists to the area in stagecoaches and wagons.

The creation of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915 was an enormous draw for visitors to Estes Park and Colorado. Building fast and safe automobile routes to reach Rocky Mountain National Park was a challenge that vexed road builders for decades. The early roads were circuitous, narrow, and dangerous, but were the only options as the grades were too steep for railroads. Lyons capitalized on being a stopover for Estes Park and became known as the Double Gateway to the Rockies, because the town sat at a junction of two routes to Rocky Mountain National Park: SH 7, which follows the South St. Vrain, and US 36 along the North St. Vrain. The Colorado State Highway map of 1916 shows this same route leading into Estes Park, signed as SH 66 until the late 1960s when it became US 36.

On the eastern plains, US 36 was a minor east-west route when compared to other more popular interstate automobile tourism routes such as the Lincoln Highway, Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway, Midland Trail, Ocean to Ocean, and Old Trails Highway. US 36 did not have a name associated with it (Colorado state travel map, 1919). The route is associated with themes of agriculture and transportation on the eastern plains. Northeastern Colorado is within the physiographic province of the Great Plains, and more specifically, the area known as the High Plains. The terrain is relatively flat, with gentle hills and shallow waterways, and the climate is semiarid, with low levels of moisture. There are few trees and the region is known for weather extremes. US 36 is south of the South Platte River, but tributaries include the Arikaree River north of US 36 and Plum Bush Creek. The farms and ranches

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surrounding Anton and Lindon rely on dryland farming for subsistence, while irrigated fields are clustered near Cope, Joes, and Idalia.

The highway has two significant associations that predate the state highway's designation as US 36 in 1967--the section that provides access to Rocky Mountain National Park between Lyons and Estes Park and the section that was the Denver - Boulder Turnpike. The route followed by US 36 is associated with the development of Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park as a tourist resort. The section between Boulder and Denver is the Colorado Highway Department's first public toll road, which opened in 1952 and reverted to a free highway in 1967. It also has an association as an east-west connection through the eastern plains of Colorado that continues through northern Kansas and St. Joseph, Missouri, but this route was not as popular as the other named automobile routes due to the remote location.

(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)

**Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

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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:

US 36 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. The highway has significance in the areas of Transportation and Entertainment/Recreation for its role in tourism and the development of Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park.

Criterion A

US 36 is associated with auto tourism to Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. It became designated US 36 in 1967, but was the path of SH 66 between Boulder and Estes Park prior to this time. Between 1951 and 1967, the section between Boulder and Denver was the first public toll road of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD). Both the segment to RMNP and the turnpike are considered prominent projects of the CHD. It has secondary significance as one of the east-west routes that connected Colorado to eastern states, particularly northern Kansas and St. Joseph, Missouri. This highway possesses significance under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation at the state level and Entertainment/Recreation 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 a representative example, a state highway that exhibits physical features indicative of an important type or subtype identified in the MPS reflecting its original design or important variation may possess significance. A state highway may also possess significance for particularly important engineering achievements.

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.

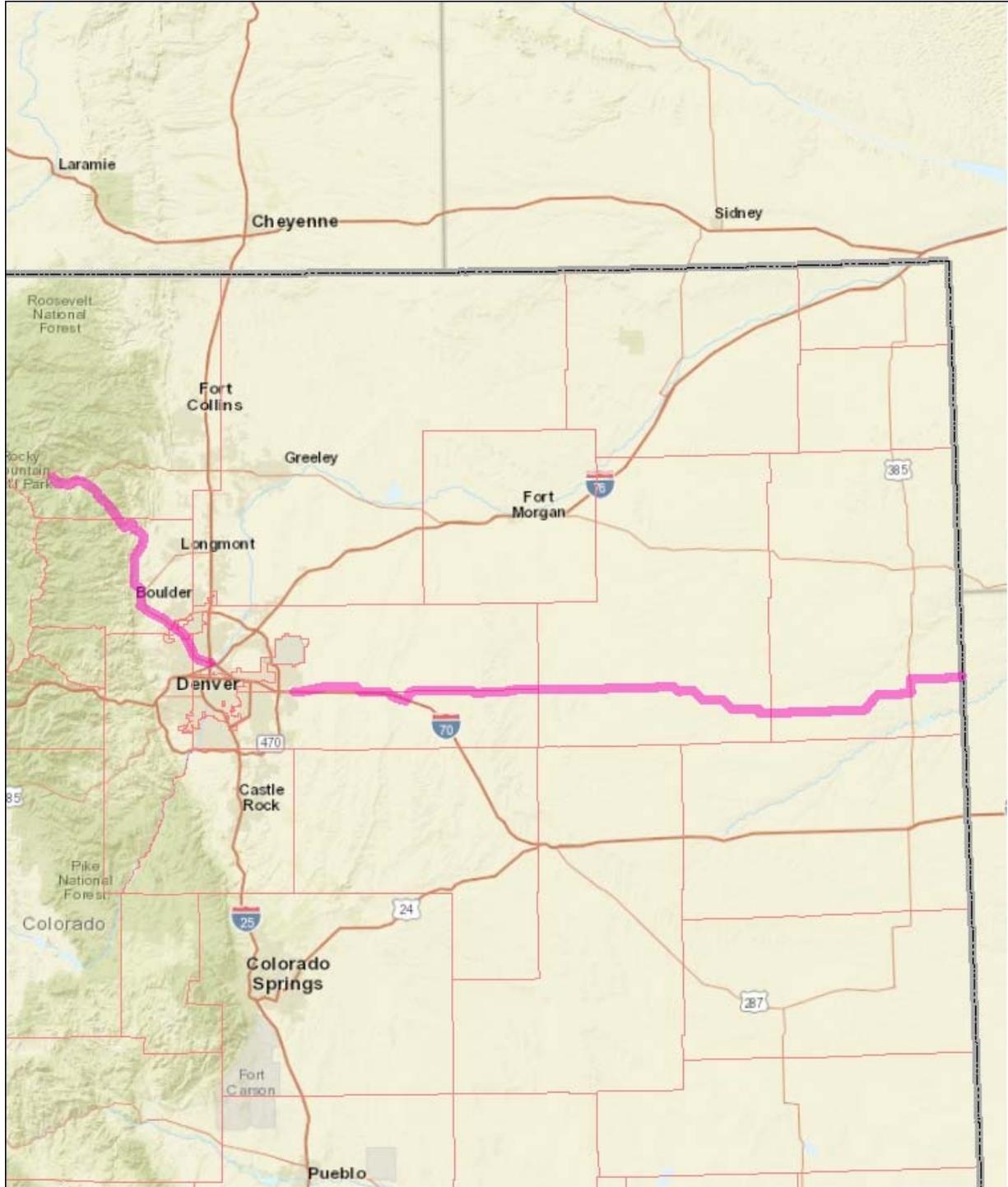
Criterion D

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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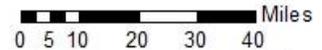
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- SH 36
- State Boundary
- County Boundary



SH 36



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