

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 50

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

CDOT Route	Route Description
050A	From SH 70-Z in Grand Junction at (5th St) south via Delta and Montrose and east via Gunnison, Salida, and Canon City To SH 47-A in Pueblo at I-25
050B	From A Direct Connection Flyover from South Bound I 25-A in Pueblo east via Fowler, Rocky Ford, La Junta and Lamar To the Kansas State Line
050C	From SH 96-A (Pueblo Bus Rout) south and east To U.S. 50-B east of Avondale
050D	From U.S. 50-A (Olathe Bus Rt) North of Olathe South To U.S. 50-A South of Olathe at (12 ST)
050Z	From U.S. 50-B in Rocky Ford west along Swink Ave To U.S. 50-B

Highway Location:

Counties: Mesa, Delta, Montrose, Gunnison, Saguache, Chaffee, Fremont, Pueblo, Otero, Bent, Prow
 Length (Miles): 455.117

OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)*:

OAHP Site No.	Assessment	Assessment Date	Site Name
5CF.2697.1	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>04/21/2010	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD
5CF.2697.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>04/21/2010	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD
5CF.2697.3	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>04/17/2010	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD
5CF.325		2/1/1974	MONARCH PASS
5CF.937	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	02/22/1984>10/01/1998	OLD MONARCH PASS ROAD
5CF.937.1	Field not eligible	7/22/1998	OLD MONARCH PASS ROAD SEGMENT
5CF.938.1	Field not eligible	7/22/1998	US HIGHWAY 50 SEGMENT
5CF.938.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5CF.938.3	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	11/26/2010>06/25/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5DT.854.2	Noncontrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field not eligible>Field needs data>Field needs data	11/06/1996>08/31/2000>05/08/1996>08/09/1991	OLD SPANISH TRAIL (NORTH BRANCH), SALT LAKE WAGON ROAD (SEGMENT)
5DT.854.5	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	10/17/2005>08/23/2005	OLD SPANISH TRAIL (NORTH BRANCH), SALT LAKE WAGON ROAD (SEGMENT)
5DT.976.1	Officially not eligible>Field not eligible	08/14/1992>04/29/1992	UNNAMED HISTORIC ROAD (SEGMENT)
5EP.3939.8	Field eligible	6/12/2002	GOLDEN BELT ROUTE, PIKES PEAK OCEAN TO OCEAN HIGHWAY, NATIONAL WHITE WAY, COLORADO STATE HIGHWAY 50
5EP.6017.1	Officially needs data>Field not eligible	07/11/2012>08/12/2008	OLD CANON CITY - PUEBLO ROAD - SEGMENT
5FN.1950.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/18/2004>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)

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Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 50

5FN.1950.10	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	11/30/2010>06/24/2010	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD
5FN.1950.2	106 - Officially eligible>106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible>Field eligible	08/08/2007>03/18/2004>08/06/2007>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.3	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/18/2004>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.4	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/18/2004>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.5	106 - Officially eligible	3/18/2004	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.6	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/18/2004>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.7	106 - Officially eligible>Field eligible	03/18/2004>2003	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.8	106 - Officially eligible	3/19/2004	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD (SEGMENT)
5FN.1950.9	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/30/2010>04/20/2010	CANON CITY - SALIDA ROAD
5FN.2535.1	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.10	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.11	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	12/08/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.12	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	12/08/2010>06/24/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.3	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.4	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.5	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.6	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.7	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.8	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5FN.2535.9	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	11/26/2010>05/16/2010	US HIGHWAY 50
5GN.1353		2/1/1974	MONARCH PASS
5GN.2206.1	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.2206.2	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.2206.3	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.2206.4	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT

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Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 50

5GN.2206.5	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.2206.6	Field eligible	8/20/1992	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.2206.7	Field eligible>Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource	08/20/1992>02/09/2015	OLD US HIGHWAY 50, SEGMENT
5GN.3860.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field not eligible>Field eligible	08/12/2002>10/23/2003>10/23/2003	US HIGHWAY 50 (SEGMENT), HIGHWAY 50 - SEGMENT
5GN.3860.2	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	12/06/2010>10/15/2010	HIGHWAY 50 - SEGMENT
5GN.3860.3	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	08/18/2010>08/04/2010	US HIGHWAY 50 - SEGMENT
5GN.5950.9	Field not eligible	8/25/2011	OLD SPANISH TRAIL (NORTHERN BRANCH) / LAKE FORK & UNCOMPAHGRE TOLL ROAD / ROUTE OF THE GUNNISON EXPEDITION- SEGMENT
5ME.13044	Field eligible>Field eligible	03/01/2010>02/07/2002	SH 141
5ME.13044.2	Supports eligibility of entire linear resource>Field eligible	01/10/2011>11/03/2010	SH 141 - SEGMENT
5ME.17048.1	Does not support eligibility of entire linear resource>Field not eligible	07/06/2010>03/02/2010	U.S HIGHWAY 50, US 50 FROM 141B INTERSECTION TO NEW SPUR RD
5ME.4926.1	106 - Officially eligible>Field not eligible	12/17/1997>12/1997	ORCHARD MESA CANAL NO. 2, SEGMENT UNDER HIGHWAY 50
5ME.775.1	Noncontrib. to Officially elig. dist.>Field not eligible	02/05/1997>12/16/1996	SPANISH TRAIL (NORTH BRANCH) - SEGMENT
5MN.9742.1	Field not eligible	8/26/2011	OLD SPANISH TRAIL (NORTHERN BRANCH) - SEGMENT / LAKE FORK & UNCOMPAHGRE TOLL ROAD / US HIGHWAY 50
5MN.9742.2	Field eligible	8/20/2011	OLD SPANISH TRAIL (NORTHERN BRANCH) - SEGMENT / LAKE FORK & UNCOMPAHGRE ROAD / ROUTE OF THE GUNNISON EXPEDITION
5PW.171.1	Field not eligible	1/28/2002	STATE HIGHWAY 385 - SEGMENT
5SH.2239.1	Staff - Officially Eligible>Field eligible	11/13/2003>10/23/2003	HIGHWAY 50 - SEGMENT, US HIGHWAY 50

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

Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms (forms) for previously recorded segments of this highway include numerous forms for segments of this highway. Several previous site forms (5MN.9744.2, 5CF.938.5/5GN.3860.4) reference US 50 as significant overall under Criterion A as a cultural route for its association as part of a nationwide, coast-to-coast, highway and with the development of tourism in Colorado. This information and additional research is summarized in the Historical Data section below. Previously identified segments include a mix of eligible and not eligible segments; however, the majority of recent evaluations in 2010 identified segments of US 50 as field eligible.

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

OAHP Site No.	District Name	Assessment (If Applicable)
5BN.544		Staff - Officially Eligible
5FN.560		Field eligible

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5FN.720	Listed on National Register
5PE.551	Officially needs data
5PE.612	Listed on National Register

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Historical Data:

US 50 is a transcontinental route that extends from Ocean City, Maryland to Sacramento, California. Within Colorado, the route is approximately 455 miles long and extends across the southeastern corner of the state from Kansas through Lamar and Pueblo before crossing the mountains via Cañon City and Gunnison, over Monarch Pass, and then down the western slope to Delta and Grand Junction before entering Utah.

Historically, the trails, highways, and rural roads that made up the transportation network in southern Colorado facilitated travel through this sparsely-populated region and also made possible the transfer and distribution of the region's agricultural and industrial products. The Santa Fe Trail was the earliest major east-west route through southeastern Colorado and followed the general alignment of present-day US 50 in that part of the state. An 1866 map of Colorado Territorial Roads shows the Santa Fe Trail extending from the Kansas border and a continuous road going all the way to Pueblo. The transportation corridor for present-day US 50 west of Pueblo originally followed a state coach route to Cañon City and then wagon and toll roads through the mountains and westward to Utah. A toll road over Monarch Pass was constructed by 1880. Otto Mears is an important figure in the history of road-building in southern Colorado. Mears had constructed a series of early toll roads and in the early 1900s was reportedly involved in plans to construct a "Rainbow Route" between Pueblo and Montrose, which was envisioned as a continuation of the old Santa Fe Trail. Historic state highway maps indicate that the Rainbow Route was established by 1916 and followed the general alignment of present-day US 50 in the central and western portions of the route in Colorado. Between 1919 and 1922, the Highway Commission conducted its first major post-World War I mountain road construction project over Monarch Pass, an elevation of 11,400 feet. The 27.5-mile long Monarch Pass was carved out of the mountains using mostly hand labor (picks, shovels, horses and wagons). The steep and narrow conditions of the project, included with dangerous curves and proved challenging for workers to complete. Upon completion it was considered an engineering triumph. By 1938 the Colorado Highway Department cleared a new Monarch Pass route less than a mile southeast of the original route. The new route was designed to have more maneuverable curves and an improved alignment, reaching 11,312 feet in elevation (Colorado Highways April 1922: 8; Autobee and Dobson-Brown 2003: E-31; Highways to the Sky: A Context and History of Colorado's Highway System: 5-27).

The route was designated US 50 by 1926. The highway has been rerouted in several places throughout its history, including Cañon City and Salida in 1934. Several segments of the highway were improved as part of federal relief projects during the 1930s, which included United States Public Works National Recovery Highway (N.R.H.) projects 113-B (1934), 113-D (1935), and 259-E (1938). A 1940 guidebook by the Writer's Program of the Works Projects Administration (WPA) provides detailed directions for traveling along US 50 as a scenic route noting numerous tourist attractions and accommodations. (Edlund 1999; Ubbelohde et al 2006; 175-177; Wyckoff 1999; 53, Colorado State Planning Commission 1941; 423-425).

(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:

US 50 is classified as a Cultural Route and Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

As a Cultural Route, the portion of US 50 in southeastern Colorado possesses significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation at the state level for its early history and association with the Santa Fe Trail. As an Engineered Route, the highway was established by 1916 and represents an early and prominent project by the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) under Transportation at the state level of significance. The portion of US 50 west of Pueblo possess significance under Criterion A for an association with the development of Rainbow Route, a named highway in Colorado during the automobile age which was an early transcontinental highway that extended from Maryland to California. With the introduction of the automobile, the highway became an early and recognized tourist route across the state as evidenced in a Works Projects Administration guide book; therefore, it possesses significance in the area of Entertainment/Recreation at the local level. In addition, portions of US 50 that were improved as part of Depression-era federal work relief projects and possess significance under Criterion A in the areas of Politics/Government at the state 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. Although the route has an association with Otto Mears, the Rainbow Route does not best represent his contributions to road building in Colorado, which is better represented by US 550. As such, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion B.

Criterion C

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 within the mountainous regions of the state. The portion of US 50 that crosses Monarch Pass in the south-central part of the state is the second iteration of this mountain pass and does not represent the engineering achievement of the earlier road carved from the mountains using hand labor. However, the subsequent construction of Monarch Pass does represent later modifications that occurred in 1938 that included the design and construction of more maneuverable curves and improved alignment to reach an altitude of 11,312 feet. As such, US 50 possesses significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as a representative example of bold engineering achievements of the CHD to cross mountains along this route at the state level.

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

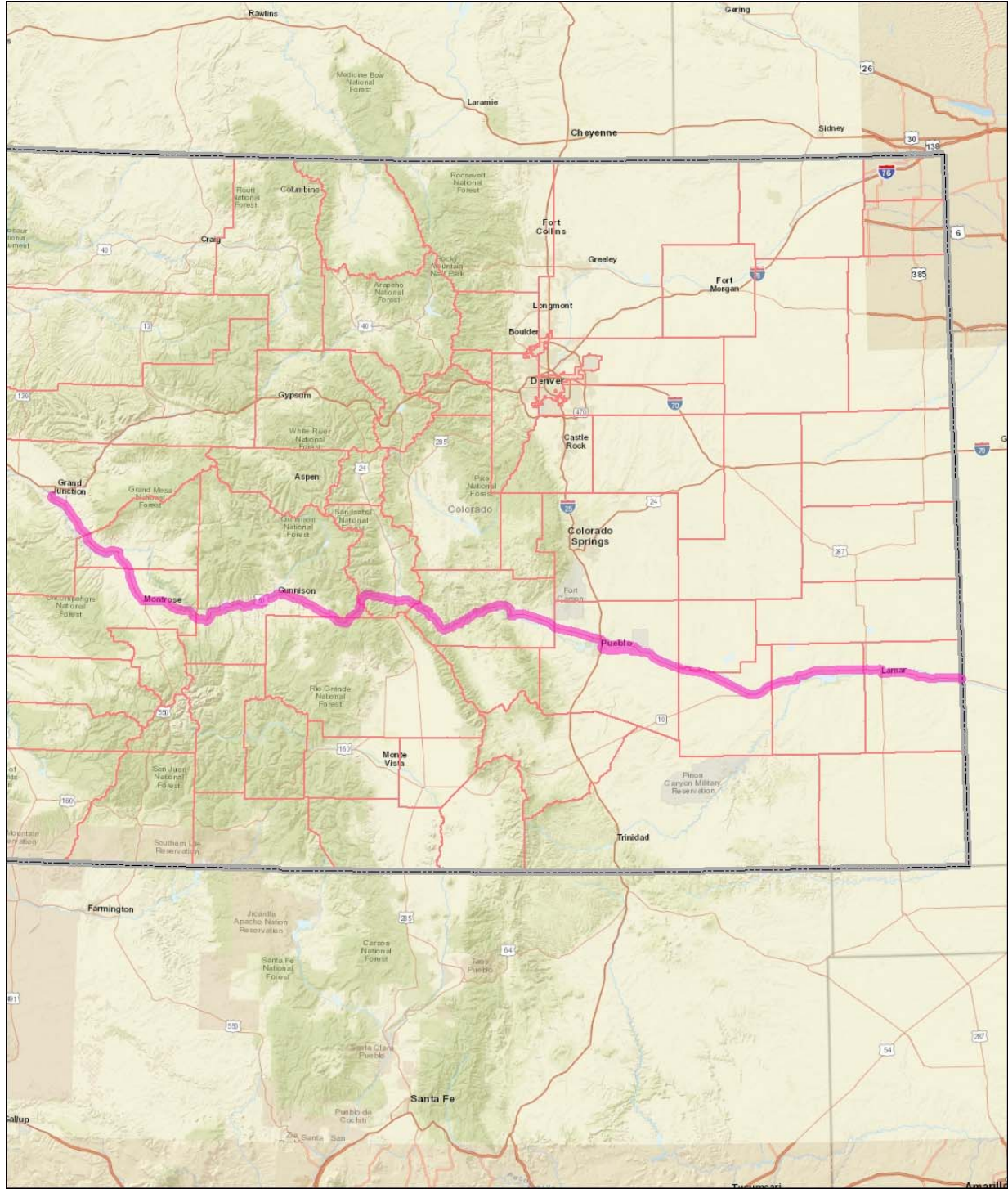
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Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 50
significance under Criterion D.

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

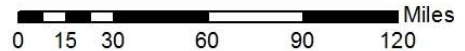
Highway Name: U.S. Highway (US) 50



Source: Mapbox, OpenStreetMap, Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, IPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013



- SH 50
- State Boundary
- County Boundary



SH 50



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