

MP 244 – 245: The Narrows

This section of U. S. Highway 40 includes CDOT's *The Narrows* and also a view of the back side of The Stanley. (Refer to MP 243-244)

Route	Mile Marker	X	Y	Longitude	Latitude
¹ U. S. Highway 40	244	432793.96	4404774.17	-105.784926	39.790268
	245	432479.42	4404308.42	-105.788552	39.786048

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has named this section of road, “The Narrows”. The Narrows was part of the original auto road design. Construction of the road was started in 1920. In a February 1, 1925 Denver Post article, it states that “cars from every state in the union traveled over Berthoud Pass in 1924”. In 1930, the road was widened and paved. In 1931, the road was opened year round. In 1938, a parade was held from Denver to Berthoud Pass to celebrate the completion of Highway 40, the first paved east – west connection in the United States.



The photo above is an old US Forest Service Aerial photograph with tags added by the author. The arrow in the photo points to The Narrows.

¹ Taken from the Colorado Department of Transportation's website:
<http://apps.coloradodot.info/dataaccess/Highways/index.cfm?fuseaction=HighwaysMain>

The photo below was taken about 1932 by T. S. Lovering of the U. S. Geological Survey of Berthoud Pass. The red line marks the location of “The Narrows”. The black line is the location of the wagon road as it comes up the mountain. The auto road today, U. S. Highway 40, is about 13 miles long if you measure from the Empire Tollgate which is close to mileage post #256 up to the Summit of the Pass or mileage post 243. The wagon road was approximately 9 miles from the Empire Tollgate to the Summit Tollgate. There is only one tight curve or switchback on the wagon road, and that was at Maxwell’s Big Bend. (See additional information for MP 247-248)

Several new construction techniques were used in the last widening project of Berthoud Pass (1999-2006) for the safety of the traveling public as well as to help protect the environment of the Pass. These will be discussed throughout this Auto Tour.



“Aerial view looking northeast across Berthoud Pass, from an altitude of 16, 200 feet, the position of the Berthoud Pass fault, which is responsible for the heavy ground in the Moffat tunnel 6 miles to the north is shown. Two cirques of Wisconsin age, which are cut into the Flattop peneplain at an altitude of slightly more than 12,000 feet, appear in the foreground and middle distance. Grand County, Colorado. Circa 1932.”

The above quote is the description of the photo found on the USGS website.

Photo taken by T. S. Lovering of the U. S. Geological Survey.

In the photo below you can see why CDOT calls this section of road is *the Narrows*. You can also see one of the roadside sediment basins that were added during the Berthoud Pass Mountain Access Project started in 1999 and completed in 2006. The basin is in the tight curve on the upper side.

Colorado Department of Transportation, J. F. Sato and Associates and Mike Crouse of Clear Creek Consultants have provided photos and drawings of the sediment basins found along U. S. Highway 40 over Berthoud Pass.



The Narrows under construction
Date: 2007
Photo provided by and used with permission from
Gregg Gargan: Colorado Department of Transportation Photographer

The purpose of a sediment basin is to catch the sand mixture that is put on the highway to provide better traction for motorists. These basins recapture 60 – 70 percent of the sand, preventing it from flowing into the streams and wetlands on the Pass. There are a total of 12 sediment basins on the east side of the Pass and three on the west side. Some are perpendicular to the roadway, as the one above. Others are parallel, and one on the west side is referred to as the “tub” which is round. Each can hold about 1,300 cubic yards of sand. The design of the basins was changed and improved during the second phase of construction. During the first phase, heavy equipment was used to drive into the basin, pick up the sand and then back out with only a few inches of room on either side of the 9-foot wide loaders. Maintenance people asked for the basins to be a little wider and later designs accommodated this request.

