



# Genesee

## FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

### Why is the fire district reaching out to you?

The Genesee Fire Protection District (GFPD) has long sought to identify a viable secondary access route in the event of an emergency and for the first time we have one. GFPD anticipates participating in the coordinated county election on November 5<sup>th</sup> empowering you to decide if we build it.

It is the intent of the GFPD to provide the information necessary to make an informed decision. Specifically, a detailed understanding of the proposed access route, what the impact would be on you, and what the fire district is asking of you.

In 2008, the GFPD collaborated with the community, mitigation experts, emergency management, the sheriff's office, and other partners to build a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). One of the findings stated "...the entire southern and central Genesee population has to utilize essentially a single egress. Should this critical junction in the Genesee Ridge Road/Genesee Vista Road area become impassible, an entrapment situation is likely for the remaining residents. Enhancing the safety of this existing evacuation route and establishing a viable secondary emergency access..." Existing routes were moderately mitigated as land ownership and resources allowed but a viable secondary egress/access route was never identified.

In 2021, the GFPD updated the CWPP with a third-party vendor, Ember Alliance. Collaborating again with the community, the county and key partners to create a progressive and actionable CWPP. The resulting document has been used as a tool to turn recommendations into action. Those recommendations encompassed the broad needs of the district as well as the targeted needs of individual plan-units. The broad needs of the district include both new recommendations and familiar recommendations including the need to mitigate our existing evacuation routes and to identify a viable secondary access route.

One of the new tools that was created with the updated CWPP was a district map that rated roadway survivability. Simply put, it is a map that provides an indication of survivability for occupants in a passenger vehicle along our roadways in the event of a large wildfire. That tool sparked a tremendous amount of roadway mitigation that is continuing into the new year and beyond. Continuing these efforts will improve roadway survivability which we expect to



*Referenced material and additional information at [www.geneseefire.org](http://www.geneseefire.org)*

objectively capture when we update our CWPP in 2025 but, as important, a viable secondary access route was also identified as a broad community need.

A conceptual study was conducted in 2021 to evaluate the possibility of a secondary access route in the area of Bitterroot Lane. This effort was followed by a thorough exam of “every possible route” out of the fire district. Each route was scored for its technicality, feasibility to complete, and benefit to firefighting efforts. The highest score was an access route on the south side of the district connecting to Hwy 74. As a follow up, a feasibility study was conducted in 2022 to assess the feasibility of building a route in a southern corridor between Stone Crop Way and Bitterroot Lane. The findings confirmed that it is viable to build a secondary access route in that corridor. As such, easements were executed between landowners and the fire district.

As of today, a preliminary engineering study is underway. The deliverables from this study will provide the necessary engineering and design data to finalize the access route and to provide the community with a reliable engineering cost estimate. To validate and add credence to that engineering cost estimate, a contract with the construction company that is currently expanding the reservoir on Bitterroot Lane, Zak Dirt, has also been executed. This phase is expected to be completed in Q1 of this year.

### **What is the impact on you?**

The access route would have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts are improved life-safety for citizens and first responders by improving evacuation times, improving first responder access, and having a secondary access route in the event primary access routes are compromised. A few examples are as follows:

- A vehicle blocking the road (e.g. vehicle accident or stalled vehicle) or a fire in the area of the Genesee exit or the Lookout Mountain exit on I-70 would force traffic back through the fire district to the other exit, increasing evacuation times for all residents. A secondary access route could offload a large portion of the district to the south, improving evacuation times for everyone in the district.
- If accessible, it would be preferred to evacuate citizens to I-70 using familiar travel routes. However, evacuation would be limited to a single lane so that responders could enter the district using opposing lanes. A southern access route would permit first responders to enter from the south and allow both lanes of Genesee Trail Road and Genesee Ridge Road to be utilized, improving evacuation times for everyone and aiding fire suppression efforts.
- A vehicle blocking the road or a fire in the area of Genesee Vista Road and Genesee Trail Road would trap citizens and first responders south of that intersection forcing them to shelter in place unless a secondary access route was available.
- If I-70 becomes inaccessible due to a fire, a hazmat incident, or another type of emergency the entire district could be evacuated to the south. For example, a grass fire with winds out of the west starting in the area of the Town Center or Genesee Mountain Parks would carry along Genesee Trail Road, through Genesee Village, and on toward

Genesee Ridge Road blocking evacuation for the entire district unless a secondary access route was available.

- After residents are evacuated from the community first responders would then be likely to engage in structure protection and fire suppression efforts but only if they have a safe escape route. If a fire is within the district or coming from the west, east, or north it may block their escape route. If that were the case, then we would not put firefighters in harms way. A secondary access route may enable them to safely engage in fire suppression efforts in that scenario.
- A small fire starting along Hwy 74 could impact Genesee homes in less than 10 minutes on a dry day due to slope, grassy fuels, and southern aspect. Firefighters generally do not fight wildfires from the top down but rather anchor near the bottom and work up. This is a life-safety issue. To accomplish this today would require a response from partner agencies and an extended response time for Genesee Fire personnel to respond over the Grapevine or through Morrison. Having a secondary access route would improve response times and potentially lessen or avoid the impact of the fire.

The primary negative impacts are aesthetics and cost. A tremendous effort was made to minimize the aesthetic impact but at the end of the day what we are discussing is a new dirt road with secured gates at the top and at the bottom. Thoughtful consideration continues with emphasis on the starting location, the ending location, the location of the route itself, the surface material, and the appearance of the gates. The gates will be used to control and limit access to only the fire department and law enforcement personnel.

The fiscal impact cannot be reliability determined as final cost estimates are not yet available. However, we expect cost estimates to be available in Q1 of this year and we will share that information with the community when we receive it.

### **What is your role?**

We ask for your engagement in this community initiative. Attend community meetings, review reports on our website, and participate in discussions to understand the benefits and costs of establishing a secondary access route.

We would encourage you to use the QR code above or to navigate directly to the Southern Emergency Access Route (S.E.A.R.) page on the Genesee Fire Rescue website, [www.geneseefire.org](http://www.geneseefire.org). A route map is posted with a project description along with FAQ's, reports and studies, and the audio and video of previous community meetings.

## Community Engagement Timeline

Key dates for the 2024 S.E.A.R. initiative and election milestones:

- Virtual Community Meetings: February 12<sup>th</sup>, April 8<sup>th</sup>, June 10<sup>th</sup>, and August 12<sup>th</sup>
- GFPD Board of Directors Meeting (Go/No-Go Decision) on May 15<sup>th</sup>
- GFPD Board of Directors Meeting (Election Resolution) on July 17<sup>th</sup>
- Election Day November 5<sup>th</sup>

Use the QR Code above or navigate directly to the Southern Access Emergency Route (S.E.A.R.) page on our website, [www.geneseefire.org](http://www.geneseefire.org) to learn more and for community meeting details.

Your participation matters. Ask questions, challenge ideas, and engage in dialogue on the cost-benefits of analysis of a secondary access route.

Your involvement is vital to our community. For inquiries, email us at [info@geneseefire.org](mailto:info@geneseefire.org). We appreciate your participation.

Best regards,



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Fire Chief