

Emergency Access Route FAQs

The Genesee Fire Protection District (GFPD) has been at the forefront of fire mitigation efforts and those efforts have won accolades from WiRê (The Wildfire Research Team) as they continue to push forward innovative ways to keep the district safe. An important approach that the GFPD has been pursuing is to build an emergency access route on the south side of Genesee to assist firefighters facing a wildfire, and to give residents the ability to evacuate out to Hwy 74, in the event access to I-70 is blocked or severely impeded.

In 2024 alone, Genesee firefighters responded to over 60 calls for fires, smoke investigations, fire alarms, etc. GFPD fought over 15 live fires, including open space wildfires, home fires, and I-70 car and truck fires. If weather conditions had been worse (dry, high winds, etc.), these fire incidents could have had catastrophic consequences. Our wildfire risk has continued to increase as is true for much of the Western U.S. - four of the five largest wildfires in Colorado's history have occurred in the past six years (Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control).

The alternative access plan that GFPD has been pursuing consists of a two-lane emergency access route that gives Genesee residents another way to evacuate and offers quick access for firefighters and emergency personnel from neighboring districts to assist our community.

Outlined below are the most frequently asked questions and answers about the route:

- **Why is an Emergency Access Route being proposed?** A 2008 Community Wildfire Protection Plan, updated in 2021 (CWPP) recognized a “viable emergency secondary access” as a high priority. According to the CWPP, if access to I-70 is blocked and Genesee residents are forced to shelter in place, survivability is highly uncertain.
- **Where would the Emergency Access Route be built?** The route will be built between Bitterroot and Daisy Lane leading down to Highway 74 (see picture below). Work to date has identified the best general location of the road on land owned by Genesee Foundation and Genesee Water and Sanitation District. Both the Genesee Foundation and Genesee Water and Sanitation District have already granted easements at no cost to the GFPD – making this route significantly less expensive than other routes explored.
- **Why was this location selected over others?** The Genesee Foundation Fire & Safety committee worked with an expert panel of fire professionals, including representatives from Genesee Fire Protection District, West Metro Fire Rescue, Evergreen Fire, and Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control to evaluate seven emergency access route corridors on three factors: (1) Value as a Resident Evacuation Route (2) Value of Fire Protection Benefits, and (3) Probability of Success. The expert panel concluded that the best alternative exit corridor was in the area bounded by Bitterroot, Daisy Lane, Montane Drive and Highway 74. A full analysis can be found here: https://www.geneseefire.org/files/3ca14a228/Analysis+of+EAR+Matrix_09_2022.pdf
- **What road surface will the Emergency Access Route have?** The Emergency Access Route will be an unpaved, natural surface road that is aesthetically compatible with our mountain community. Additionally, the road will be built to Fire District specifications to allow access by heavy fire equipment.
- **How will the road be maintained?** As done on the many unpaved roads throughout Jefferson County, management will include routine grading and compacting.
- **How will this road be used?** The Emergency Access Route will be built, owned, and maintained by Genesee Fire Protection District and be used for emergency purposes only. The Emergency

Access Route will be access-controlled with appropriate gates and security, as well as appropriate signage, locks, and monitoring. The gates at either end of the route will be controlled by the Genesee Fire Protection District and the Jefferson County Sheriff Department. In the event of an emergency, the Jeffco Sheriff would control usage and the exit to Highway 74.

- **Does developing this route have support of government entities?** GFPD has obtained letters of support from: Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Evergreen Fire and Rescue, Highland Rescue Team, and State of Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control.
- **How much will the route cost?** The estimated cost to construct the emergency route is ~\$7.5M which will be raised by issuing a long-term bond to spread the cost over 30 years. The bond will be paid for by taxes through a mill levy increase. The amount of the mill levy increase will be based on the value of one's home. The ~\$7.5M bond translates to ~ a \$26 per month tax increase for a \$1M home, ensuring that current and future GFPD residents share some of the costs for this life safety project. The entire Genesee Fire Protection District will be responsible for paying for the mill levy, this includes the Genesee Foundation, the Village, Chimney Creek, and Genesee Estates.
- **What are the next steps?** In terms of immediate next steps, two Genesee residents (Will Quinby and Gary Anderson) have been requested by GFPD to explore government grants to reduce the tax burden on GFPD constituents. Subject to confirming the terms of the ballot issue, GFPD will hold a special election in May 2025 to bring this issue to the voters. Voters will have the opportunity to vote in favor of building the emergency access route. A "no" vote will mean that all work will stop on creating an emergency access route and the easement agreements will expire soon after.

As you can see, years of planning and consideration have gone into this recommendation. This has not been an impulsive or quick decision. For several years, many Genesee community leaders and residents, along with fire mitigation experts, have spent significant amounts of time, research, effort, and resources to guide decision-making. For more details, please visit the GFPD website for more information and an extensive list of FAQs. <https://www.geneseefire.org/emergency-access-route-info>

If you are interested in learning more about the route or becoming an Ambassador to help spread the word on the importance of building the Emergency Access Route, contact emergencyaccessroute@googlegroups.com. An Emergency Access Route Ambassador will receive more regular information and communication so that they can feel informed on the issue in discussion with friends and neighbors. There will be no other obligation for Ambassadors to support the initiative, unless they have time and would like to help!

Emergency Access Route Working Group

