

SEAR (Southern Emergency Access Route) Update – December 2022 FAQs Related to SEAR Concept & Support, SEAR Working Group, & Original Design Concept

In the interest of the widest distribution of information to the Genesee Fire Protection District (GFPD) community and the Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group have compiled the following FAQs pertaining to the potential EAR in the southern area of Genesee. These FAQs are based on questions that have come from residents, the Genesee Fire & Safety Committee (GFSC), the Genesee Foundation Board, and from the community meeting held on December 8, 2022, and the September 27, 2022, meeting, which included a representative from the Jeffco Sheriff's Office. These FAQs are posted on the Genesee Foundation and GFPD websites and will be updated as the project proceeds and more information is available. Additional Community meetings are planned as the project progresses.

FAQs to the Genesee Fire District:

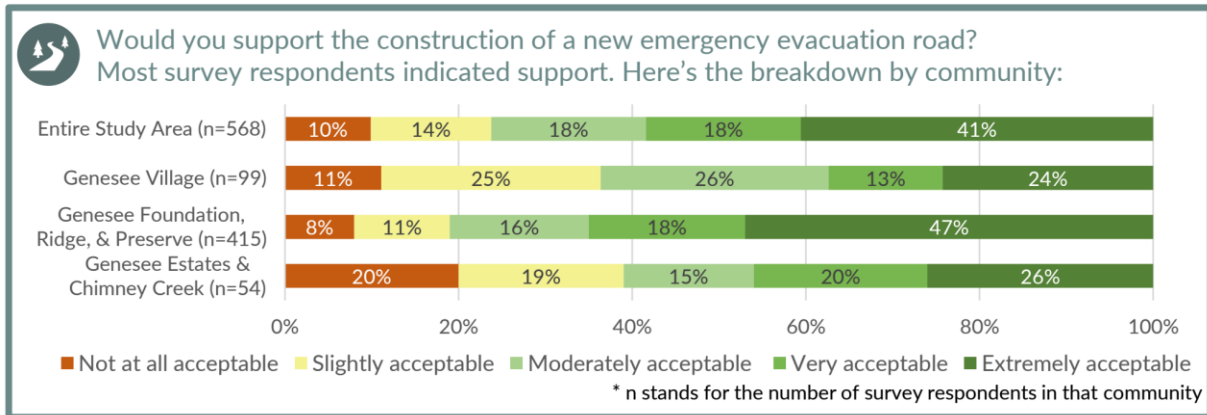
1. Does the fire department support the construction of the proposed emergency access route (EAR)?

Yes. It was recommended in the [Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#) that was developed in 2008 and revised in 2021. The addition of a secondary ingress/egress route is a critical tool that, when coupled with roadway mitigation, increases roadway survivability for both citizens and first responders and provides a secondary means of egress when a primary evacuation route is compromised. The GFPD Board of Directors endorses the Genesee Foundation's current plan to conduct an engineering study that will evaluate the feasibility of and formulate a cost estimate for a purpose-built road in the Southern Corridor of the GFPD.

2. Does the community support the construction of the proposed emergency access route?

In 2021, a household survey was conducted for the GFPD and one of the questions asked was, 'Would you support the construction of a new emergency evacuation road?' Those results are depicted below:

What we might do in the future: Build an emergency road!



3. What would the proposed emergency access route be used for?

The proposed emergency access route would be utilized for official purposes only. This would include periodic training for firefighters and law enforcement personnel, firefighting operations and community and first responder ingress/egress.

4. During the community meeting I heard that the proposed emergency access route would primarily be used for other fire departments to enter Genesee. Is that true?

The proposed emergency access route is a tool that can allow other fire departments to enter Genesee to assist in firefighting operations and/or allow Genesee residents to evacuate. Decisions would be made and implemented on a case-by-case basis. There are an infinite number of emergency scenarios that would each dictate a unique strategy and a set of corresponding tactics but, for the sake of illustration, the following three examples illustrate how the EAR might be utilized during a wildfire:

- A) A wildfire approaching from the south or southwest: residents would be evacuated to the north and the EAR would be utilized for ingress/egress of firefighting resources and potentially as a firebreak. Law enforcement may elect to allow residents to use one or two lanes on Genesee Ridge and Genesee Trail Roads for egress and, if needed, they may shut down I-70 to allow for the high volume of vehicles entering the highway.
- B) A wildfire approaching from the west or east starting at the midpoint of the district and traveling either east or west: a fire here would likely cut the district in half in terms of fire operations and evacuation. As such, residents would evacuate both to the north and to the south on the EAR and first responders would enter both from the north and the south.

- C) A wildfire approaching from the west, northwest, north, northeast or east in the upper portion of the district: residents would evacuate to the south on the proposed EAR. First responders would enter the community from the north.

Again, there are numerous scenarios but, when possible, residents would be routed to the north. The reason for this is that during high stress/low visibility situations, following a familiar path is safer and much more likely to get residents out of harm's way in the most efficient manner.

5. Why not just shelter in place? I've mitigated around my home.

Based on our analysis, there are currently no areas within the GFPD that could serve as a fully safe, designated area for wildfire evacuation emergencies under conditions of 10-20 mph winds and especially winds greater than 20 mph due to steep slopes and heavy fuel loads. (2021 CWPP 3F, page 59). Survivability is highly uncertain if you elect to shelter in place or delay your evacuation.

FAQs to the Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group:

6. What is the Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group?

The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group was created by the Genesee Foundation Board in early 2022 to explore the development of an EAR in the southern area of Genesee. They began working with representatives of the boards of GFPD and Genesee Water & Sanitation District (GWSD) and this three-group combination was named the Tri-Board Working Group. This group has since compiled a summary of objectives and key parameters necessary for any purpose-built road. It has currently paused its meetings and activities while an engineering study is completed. If one or more proposed evacuation routes crosses GWSD property, the Tri-Board Working Group will be positioned to address land rights and agreements necessary to move the project forward.

7. What is the purpose of the southern EAR project?

To explore the design and construction of an emergency access route within the corridor generally bounded by Montane Drive, Bitterroot Lane, Daisy Lane and CO Highway 74. The EAR is to be designed and constructed to be safely navigated by passenger vehicles, law enforcement vehicles and fire apparatus during an emergency. The EAR will not be used for public transportation, recreational or other day-to-day use by any person or entity and is intended to be used only for emergency ingress and egress, maintenance/mitigation and training. The EAR will be access-controlled with gates and other security measures, including appropriate signage, locks and monitoring. It is anticipated that ownership, maintenance and

use of the EAR will be governed by an operating agreement entered into between the GFPD and owners of property crossed by the EAR.

8. Has the Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group made use of the Genesee Fire & Safety Committee's EAR and Risk/Priority Matrices?

The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group has made use of both the EAR and CWPP Risk/Priority Matrices developed by the Genesee Fire & Safety Committee (GFSC). GFSC undertook two major projects in 2021-2022 following publication of the CWPP. The first was an evaluation of additional potential egress routes; the second was development of a risk/priority matrix based on the risks identified in the CWPP and the possible mitigation strategies for each. The EAR Matrix compiled and evaluated possible evacuation routes in addition to current egress routes (i.e., Genesee Ridge, Vista, and Trail Roads). The southern EAR was deemed to have the highest evacuation value, the highest fire protection value and the highest chance of success. Other possible EARs were identified in the western, eastern and southern directions. The alternate routes remain under consideration and may be pursued in the future.

The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group has also adopted the top three mitigation priorities identified by the GFSC using the CWPP Risk/Priority Matrix they developed. They are: 1) improve survivability along existing egress routes through fuel reduction; 2) pursue additional access routes; and 3) reach out to local law enforcement to understand evacuation procedures. The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group will continue to build on the GFSC's work and draw on resident, community and committee expertise.

The EAR and CWPP Risk/Priority Matrices may be found using the Emergency Access Route tab on the opening page of the Genesee Foundation website (geneseefoundation.org). Also, see the article in the December 2022 issue of The Genesee by Dan Krygowski, a GFSC member, on the CWPP Risk/Priority Matrix and how you can use it to identify and communicate your priorities.

9. Who will be able to use the EAR? What would be the balance between ingress and egress?

As currently envisioned, the Southern EAR would be a two-lane road, allowing access to emergency vehicles for the purpose of emergency response into the community (e.g., for wildfire containment) and evacuation of residents from the community. Both ingress and egress would be on an as-needed emergency basis, as determined by law enforcement and firefighters. (Also see FAQ #4.)

10. Will this be a public road?

The southern EAR is presently conceived of as a private road and would only be used for emergency vehicle ingress and community evacuation. The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group and the Board fully agree with the community that any use of the EAR would be for emergency purposes and periodic fire department and law enforcement training only.

11. What are the potential funding options?

The Genesee Foundation EAR Working Group is pursuing multiple funding options that may include partnership with the GFPD that would explore a possible TABOR election to allow the District stakeholders to vote on a taxpayer funding option; use of Genesee Foundation reserve funds in conjunction with other funding sources; and/or a public-private partnership with county, state and federal grants. Issuance of bonds or any other funding from the GFPD that results in a mil levy increase will require a vote of GFPD residents. The funding plan is in its early stages of development and will continue to be explored as we learn more through the ongoing engineering study.

12. What will be the cost to Genesee residents?

The cost to Genesee residents will depend upon the project costs and the funding option(s) chosen. Currently, it is not possible to estimate the cost to residents. As the project develops, residents will be kept informed of evolving cost information. (Also see FAQ #11.)

13. What is the timing to build a Southern EAR?

If a feasible and cost-effective route is identified, construction could commence after the necessary funding is obtained and a full design is approved, most likely in 2024.

14. Why aren't we spending our money to increase mitigation of our current egress routes (Genesee Ridge, Vista, and Trail Roads) instead of or in addition to an EAR?

We are. The Open Space budget has been increased from \$55k in 2022 to \$96k in 2023, a 75% increase. The contractor budget has been increased from \$1k to \$50k to employ more seasonal help. The bulk of these increases will be dedicated to mitigation in Genesee Open Space along our current egress roads. The challenges here are paying a competitive wage to seasonal workers and finding contractors in a competitive business environment. Additionally, approximately 25% of the high-priority evacuation routes that need mitigation (as identified in the CWPP) abut private property and would require the agreement of the owners to allow roadside

mitigation on their property. We are doing roadside thinning on Open Space and encourage every resident to complete defensible space on their own property, which should include removing trees along their personal evacuation route which, in turn, would increase the efficacy of our efforts.

This effort to mitigate along current evacuation routes is not a substitute for providing an alternative route for emergency vehicles to access the community, to reduce evacuation time for residents of the greater Genesee area, or to provide alternative egress if access to I-70 is compromised during an emergency.

15. Why was the conceptual Baseline study conducted in the first place and how much did it cost?

The 2021 Baseline conceptual study was intended to answer one question: Is it possible to build a road from Genesee to Highway 74? To answer that question five deliverables were agreed upon: Site Visit, Preliminary Roadway Alignment and Grading, Roadway Section Detail, Construction Cost Estimate, Written Narrative of Findings, Assumptions, and Observations. The total cost to the community for this conceptual study was \$6,500, split between the Genesee Fire Protection District and the Genesee Foundation, each paying \$3,250. Baseline Engineering's 2021 study included the agreed upon deliverables, which are typical of a conceptual road study.

16. What did we learn from the conceptual Baseline study?

The concept of building an emergency access road has been discussed for decades without any meaningful progress. The 2021 Baseline conceptual study was an important first step to move the process forward. It provided an answer to the question of whether it was possible to build an emergency road, but it was also limited in terms of scope. Baseline Engineering was given a starting point, an ending point, and a general outline of the route rather than being provided with a wider geographic area to explore as does the current project. Since the 2021 Baseline study, the project has proceeded, albeit slowly until recently. Some assumptions that were thought to be operative when the 2021 study was performed have changed, and conditions have also evolved. For example, the Marshall Fire of December 2021 heightened awareness of our vulnerability to wildfires. In addition, in 2022 the Genesee Water and Sanitation District reached the decision to proceed with their Reservoir #1 in the middle of the study area. We now understand that the road may connect to Highway 74 at locations other than the access to GWSD's Reservoir #2, giving us additional flexibility. Conditions are now right to proceed with this project, which is so essential to Genesee residents' survivability in the event of a major fire event.

17. Why are we doing another engineering study when we already have the Baseline Engineering Study?

The 2021 Baseline Engineering Study was a limited conceptual study that was restricted to assessing the feasibility of building an emergency evacuation route to CO Highway 74 over property owned by the Genesee Foundation and GWSD. A full engineering study exploring various other potential routes within the Southern Corridor is needed to adequately assess the viability of building an evacuation route. The more detailed study will address a broader range of issues, including geologic hazards, drainage issues, potential ingress/egress volume and speed, and protection of GWSD facilities. Baseline Engineering, with the advantage of their previous work, responded to our October 2022 Request for Proposal with a comprehensive and cost-effective proposal for an engineering study to identify a viable emergency access route or routes within the Southern Corridor. This detailed study will also include an estimated project timeline, cost estimate and risk matrix for each identified option of sufficient quality to support financing and construction decisions.

Links to Additional Information:

Where I can I find more information about the CWPP?

<https://geneseefpd.colorado.gov/community-wildfire-protection-plan>

Where can I find more information about preparing for a wildfire?

<https://geneseefpd.colorado.gov/wildfire-info>

Where can I find more information about the Emergency Access Route (EAR), and the EAR and Risk/Priority Matrices?

<https://geneseefpd.colorado.gov/emergency-access-route-info>

How can I get more involved with wildfire preparedness?

<https://geneseefpd.colorado.gov/ambassador-hub>

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