

STATUS OF SNOWBOWL ROAD

Official name; USFS Rd #516

May 2020

Snowbowl Road (USFS #516) is a seven mile paved road providing access to the western side of the San Francisco Peaks northwest of Flagstaff, AZ. Snowbowl Rd is used by tens of thousands of hikers, bicyclists, campers, leaf lookers, and tourists in addition to visitors to the Snowbowl ski area. Popular Forest Service hiking trails, including the Humphreys Peak Trail and Kachina Trail, originate from the ski area parking lots. Snowbowl Road is the only access to the higher elevation recreational sites on the Peaks making the condition of road critical for fire prevention and fuel reduction projects, fire suppression, evacuation route for forest users, tribal religious visits and plant gathering, first responder and overall travel safety.

Snowbowl Road has been showing signs of deteriorating conditions for several years and now is at a critical stage as it is rapidly falling apart, creating challenges to drivers and bicyclists, and becoming a safety hazard.

Snowbowl Road was constructed in the mid 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps and paved its full length in 1990 by the USFS. After twenty-nine years the road surface has exceeded its useful life and is in dire need of re-paving. Working with the Coconino National Forest, Regional offices in Albuquerque, and Chief's Office in D.C. seeking funding sources, the agency's budget has no funding allocated to this road.

Since 1992 Arizona Snowbowl has been issued a Road Maintenance Permit for plowing snow and performing some maintenance work on the road at a cost of over \$250,000 annually. The permit fee currently is \$36,000 per year and is matched with USFS operating funds used for periodic annual road projects like guard rail repair, striping, replacing signs, crack sealing and drainage work. The funds for annual maintenance do not cover any major repairs or including re-paving.

In May 2017, the CNF and the Federal Highway Administration conducted a Road Safety Audit. The conclusion of the audit noted the need for a major reconstruction and paving of the Snowbowl Road.

A 2019 independent engineer's evaluation of the road was commissioned. Included were several short term band aid alternatives and recommendation to re-pave the entire length with an estimated cost of \$9 Million.

Arizona Snowbowl provides an annual economic impact of approximately \$58M to the local economy, over 600 jobs, over 300,000 paid visitors, and another 200,000 forest users driving the road, it is now critical that funding for the road improvement be sought and secured. The road is the only access for the community, residents of Arizona, and visitors from around the world for access to the San Francisco Peaks, Kachina Peaks Wilderness Area, popular USFS hiking trails, and the Arizona Snowbowl.

The City of Flagstaff, recipient of much of the annual economic impact of the ski area, Coconino County and the State of Arizona have no interest in participating with funding due to lack of funds and liability.

The CNF has stated that they will not entertain a toll or fee for vehicle use. This leaves Snowbowl to seek Federal funding for re-paving the Snowbowl Rd.

EXISTING CONDITION

The existing pavement has ½" to 6" wide transverse cracks throughout its length. There is pavement distress that is indicative of subgrade failure in the area of drainage problems. Potholes are becoming prevalent the entire length. The roadway pavement edge is exhibiting alligator cracking which migrates towards the middle of the road, breaking off in large chunks of asphalt.

PROPOSED ACTION

The goal is to rehabilitate this roadway to a 20 year design life with minimal maintenance to the new pavement structure. The vertical and horizontal alignments are acceptable and should not be modified. Some drainage will need to be modified including cut ditches, shoulder drop offs, and replacing some pipe culverts. Guard rail will be reconstructed and set to proper heights. Design includes the removal of the existing AC pavement by milling and possibly using in new asphalt mix. The subgrade will be rehabilitated or replaced and overlaid with 4" AC (new asphalt paving) and then sealed with chip seal. Estimated total project cost; \$9,000,000.



