

NM FLAP 159(1) Catwalk Access Road Project Newsletter

May 2023

Project Background

This project originated through NMODT's 2015 application for Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funds to explore providing safe, reliable, and resilient access to the Catwalk Trail. Money was awarded through a combination of FLAP funds and NMDOT funds for the design and construction of proposed improvements to NM 174, the Catwalk Access Road. The NEPA compliance process was initiated in 2016 and culminated with the preparation of a Final Categorical Exclusion in 2019, which found the proposed project to have either no effect or insignificant effects on all analyzed environmental categories. Preliminary and final design, acquisition of rights of way and easements, and US Army Corps of Engineers permitting, and contractual funding revisions occurred from 2019 through 2022.

Project Design

The project design includes the following elements on NM 174:

- Replacement of 4.8 miles of asphalt surfacing;
- Minor widening, beginning near Milepost 1.0, to provide consistent roadway width (10-foot-wide lanes with 1-foot-wide shoulder);
- Replacement of 2 existing, in-stream, concrete, low water crossings of Whitewater Creek
- Construction of 6 concrete, low water crossings on tributary drainages;
- Minor grade raise of sections of roadway historically prone to flooding;
- and, replacement of major drainage culverts.

Anticipated Project Schedule

Spring 2023

- Project Advertisement
- Construction Contract Award

Summer 2023

- **Construction Start** (anticipated August 2023)
- Embankment construction
- Culvert replacements

Fall/Winter 2023/2024

- Concrete, low water crossing construction

Spring/Summer 2024

- Paving operations
- **Project Completion** (anticipated September 2024)

Traffic Impacts

Major construction activities will take place during non-peak visitation months, October 2023 to May 2024. One lane of alternating traffic will generally be provided throughout construction, with up to 30 minute delays. The contractor can implement up to 30 full closure days during the non-peak visitation months. During these full closures, the road will be closed from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM with a 30 minute opening at noon. Access to emergency vehicles and local residents is to be provided at all times. Traffic impacts will be minimized as much as practical. Further refinement of the traffic control plan will be developed by the contractor in the coming months and shared with the public, well in advance of the implementation of closures.



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Frequently Asked Questions

May 2023

Q: Why is the project necessary?

A: The 2012 Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire burned 25,000 acres of the Whitewater Creek watershed. In September 2013, the Glenwood area received 17 inches of rain in under two weeks, which resulted in a significant amount of roadway damage and debris flows in drainages along NM 174. The roadway was maintained closed until 2014, when it could be cleared of debris and repaired. During this time, no access to the Catwalk was allowed. This project is intended to increase the resiliency of the roadway during flood events, and provide safe and reliable access to the Catwalk Trail. Furthermore, the project intends to improve the safety of the route, by providing lane widths that can be more easily negotiated by recreational vehicles and trucks that use the route..

Q: What impacts will I experience if I am a resident along NM 174?

A: Residents will experience delays in accessing their residences. While up to 30 minute delays are allowed in the contract, the contractor will be expected to keep alternating traffic moving through work zones, so actual delays should be far less than 30 minutes. More specific information about delay times will be determined once the project begins. The contractor and field staff will work individually with residents to best accommodate their access needs.

Q: How far in advance will we know about road closures?

A: The contractor is required to provide three weeks notice of scheduled road closures.

Q: When will the work take place?

A: Major construction activities will occur during non-peak visitation months, October 2023 to May 2024. General working hours will likely be 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Monday through Saturday. Schedules are subject to change based on weather and available resources.

Q: Will access to the Catwalk Trail be maintained during construction?

A: Access to the Catwalk Trail will be maintained during the peak visitation months, May to September. Those visiting the trail during that time may experience some delays along NM 174 during construction.

Q: How will emergency response vehicles get through the project when the road is closed?

A: Access for emergency response vehicles will be maintained by the contractor throughout construction.

Q: How will the project communicate with residents, businesses, and the traveling public during construction?

A: The project team will use various communication methods to keep the public updated during construction. This will include sharing information through normal communication channels, including sending out email message updates, and the project website. In addition, electronic message boards will be placed along Highway 180 to notify the public of any delays or closures during construction. A public meeting will also be scheduled prior to construction starting.

Q: What environmental impacts will there be as a result of this project?

A: There are requirements in the construction contract to limit disturbance to aquatic organisms and migratory birds in the area. In addition, there will be some tree removal associated with the project, but efforts have been made to preserve prominent trees along the route.

Q: How can I get project updates?

A: The project website will be updated with the most recent information. The project website is <https://highways.dot.gov/design-visualization/projects/nm/catwalk-access-road>.

Q: Who can I contact to get my questions answered about this project?

A: You can email the team at catwalkproject@dot.gov.