

Farm Access: Field Driveways & Your Farm

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Safe and effective field access can be a common aspect of the farming operation overlooked by a non-farming landowner. When evaluating field driveways, landowners and farm operators should ask two questions:

1. Does the existing driveway provide convenient entry and exit from the farm field?
2. Is the existing driveway safe for both the people entering/exiting the farm as well as traveling on the adjoining public road?

Many field driveways have not been improved in the last 30 to 50 years, while equipment traveling through the passages has nearly quadrupled in size. Undersized driveways can lead to damaged equipment, limited field access, and create a safety hazard for roadway traffic if equipment operators have a limited field of view when using the drive.



Above: A forty-foot field drive being installed on a Peoples Company managed farm to increase field access and safety for the operator.

When evaluating whether a field driveway should be repaired or replaced, landowners should seek input from the current farm operator and consider long-term functionality of the property:

- Will the farm continue to be farmed?
- Any future building sites on the property?
- Will the farm operator upgrade equipment soon?

These are quick and simple indicators to help plan an approach.

Once a plan is devised, landowners should contact the governing body regarding the public right-of-way. This is typically the County, Department of secondary roads, or the township. They will send an application for the work to be done and provide a plan to ensure everything is to grade and will not reduce the flow of water. Cost of the project will depend on farm location; some counties will pay for the culvert, in other counties the landowner pays for all the work. The county will also provide a list of contractors or allow you to select your own to follow their plan. The process can range from 1-3 weeks and cost depends heavily on the county or state in which the work takes place.



Above: This image was taken on a managed farm in Guthrie County, IA. The previous field driveway was 20-foot wide, on a sharp curve along a paved road. To increase safety, a new 60-foot field drive was installed to allow the farm operator easier and quicker access to the field, posing less of a threat to commuters.

Peoples Company Land Managers evaluate physical factors including field driveways on a consistent basis to ensure landowner risk is carefully considered. Improved accessibility and general farmability play an important role in bringing a premium when farms are rented. Before planting and after harvest are ideal times to assess opportunities for improvement.

Peoples Company Land Managers are available on a consulting basis or full management to help meet landowner goals for farm use and productivity. To learn more, email LandManagement@PeoplesCompany.com or call 855.800.5263 (LAND).