

Management of Unsealed Roads

2023/4



Background

Noosa Council is responsible for 187km of unsealed gravel roads. As an integral part of our road network, they are managed and maintained through our grading program.

Unsealed roads present unique challenges as they are highly dynamic assets. The condition of these roads can rapidly change due to factors such as traffic movement, weather conditions, and variations in terrain.

Maintenance of unsealed roads

Dedicated grader crews work to improve the overall condition of our unsealed road network and enhance drivability. The grading program includes activities such as filling potholes, removing corrugations, and redistributing loose gravel.

Frequency of grading

Grading activities are conducted based on traffic volume, road condition and environmental features, some roads can be maintained up to twice a year. Maintenance activities are condition based and not always to a timed schedule.

Our financial commitment

The grading program, which includes routine maintenance, gravel resheeting and inspections, is about \$1.8m per year.

Common concerns

Speed limits and driving to conditions

Unlike sealed roads, regulatory speed limit signs are not used on unsealed roads. This is because the condition of these roads is constantly changing due to traffic and weather conditions, where an indicated speed limit cannot be guaranteed. It is essential motorists drive to the prevailing road conditions.

Rough and loose surfaces

Gravel roads can cause safety concerns for users due to their rough and loose surfaces. Challenges involving increased braking distances, reduce visibility, flying gravel and skidding can be easily avoided by adjusting driving techniques and maintaining cautious speeds.

Dust impacts

We strive to minimise dust through regular grading and dust suppression techniques, which help to reduce the amount of loose gravel. While we aim to manage dust as effectively as possible, it is important to understand that eliminating dust entirely on unsealed roads is not achievable.

Tips for residents to reduce dust impacts

- Planting low and mid-storey vegetative screens within your property boundary can help filter dust and improve air quality.
- Utilise water filters to remove pollutants from collected roof water.
- When building new houses or extensions, consider locating them away from areas prone to dust nuisance.

Sealing gravel roads

We understand that some in our community may wonder why all roads in the network can't be sealed. The decision to have unsealed roads is based on several factors that we consider when managing our road infrastructure.

Sealing considerations:

- **Cost**

Sealing roads involves significant expense in terms of materials, construction, and ongoing maintenance. Allocating resources to seal all roads would be financially prohibitive and divert funds from other essential community projects and services.

- **Traffic volume**

Unsealed roads are typically found in rural areas with lower traffic volumes. These roads often have low housing density and significantly longer roads to serve that density than in urban areas.

Prioritising sealing based on traffic volume helps ensure that resources are allocated where they can benefit the greatest number of community members.

- **Safety**

Unsealed roads naturally limit vehicle speeds, providing a safer option in some areas.

- **Environmental**

Whilst erosion and sediment control require careful management to prevent pollution to waterways, unsealed roads provide a lower ecological footprint and therefore preferable in remote or ecologically sensitive areas.

Priority planning and funding

Council has implemented a priority planning program for sealing roads, with a strong focus on safety and high-traffic roads. The cost of sealing one kilometre of unsealed roads exceeds \$1 million. As a result, budgets for road sealing projects are planned carefully against strict criteria, often relying on state funding.

Unfortunately due to the scale of the flooding and natural disasters in 2022, priority funding for 2023 and 2024 has been directed to repair of existing road infrastructure, rather than advancement of the sealed roads program.

Nevertheless, as we rebuild, we remain committed to our vision of a well-connected Noosa Shire, and selected roads will be included in our resealing program for the future.



For more information:

Scan the QR code below to learn more, or visit www.noosa.qld.gov.au

