

# Why would we block the tennis court path to motorized vehicles?

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*John Doty 12/18/23 with updates in Jan. 2024*



Just a few years back the tennis court path, which at that time was about six years old, still looked good. It had no significant obvious decline happening. The life expectancy of that path paving is 20 years assuming, of course, that it was the same quality payment as the roads that were done at the exact same time.

Today the path is declining significantly. It is nine years old, less than half its typical life. We have to assume that something is accelerating this decline.

The most significant change has happened in the last 3–4 years. Some Sugarhill owners have now acquired UTVs (utility terrain vehicle's) also known as side-by-sides. These are bigger than a golf cart generally, four-wheel-drive, and have very knobby tires. They also will seat more and tend to weigh more.

The use of the path by these vehicles has become significant. It has become the UTV playground for driving these vehicles up and down even into the night and as late as 12am, a big annoyance to the adjoining property owners.

The width of the typical UTV is usually wider than golf carts and with the fast driving with knobby wide tires we think this is why we are seeing so much edge cracking and break-off.

There is another significantly hazardous problem with the path that could not only get someone injured but could cost the association a very big amount of money. Near the end of the path near the tennis court is a bridge that moves water back-and-forth from the two lakes. Our guess is that it is 40 year old. It is a very rusty culvert pipe with a five foot diameter. One thing is for sure, it was never intended to have motorized traffic other than a lawn mower once a week.

The cost of repaving the walkway considering the going rate of \$5-\$6 per square feet with a 3500 sq ft path could run \$17,500-\$21,000. Then to consider a complete re-do of the culvert. We have no idea what that cost could be and it would need to be done before the path. This leaves us with little options other than to stop the needless damage.



These pictures show the rusty culvert that connects the two lakes.

When the work was done on the tennis court resurfacing, the workers had to put down 2 layers of 3/4" plywood to safely cross over.

Walking over and 1 mower crossing per week isn't going to cause damage.

These photos were taken in the dry season.





The photos on this page show a small sampling of the demise of the path.

Finally there is one more significant problem that blocking the path has eliminated.

We have had a sign up at the entrance, requesting people with these types of vehicles to not drive on the grass around the tennis court. This has been systematically ignored.

I would get a call from concerned owners that these vehicles were driving around the tennis court and cutting circles, etc. When I investigated the site the next morning, the damage was clear. Sending information to the owners fell on deaf ears.

So what's wrong with a bunch of kids tearing up the lawn around the tennis court? Simple the lawn barely survives and is the main method of keeping the tennis court from eroding out. Why does the lawn barely survive? This is a significant problem since there is no ability to irrigate that lawn. There is no sprinkler system, well, or electricity. Electricity would have to be brought in from M Carie almost 500 feet away.

The cost of tying into an electrical transformer, then burring a line 500 feet, then putting in another electrical transformer, then using that electricity to either pump the lakes for irrigating the lawn or drilling a well and using it to irrigate the lawn would be incredibly expensive.

The worst part of damaging the sod around the tennis courts is done by knobby tired UTVs. We are already seeing areas of the lawn being destroyed and erosion under the cement edges of the tennis court.

Once we had finished blocking the path, I got a text from an owner of a UTV who made the statement. "Do you really think this is the best way to spend our money?" Well, let me ask all of you reading this article the same question do you think blocking the path is the best way to spend our money? I know it is. Blocking the path to motorized vehicles has cost \$600.00.



These photos show some of the erosion happening due to weakened sod not being able to recover from tire damage.