

Operational Services Report to
Infrastructure and Planning Committee
2024 March 13

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
IP2024-0103

Winter Maintenance Policy Update

PURPOSE

Through recent investments made by Council, combined with efficiencies found in operations and extensive public engagement, this report recommends approval of The City of Calgary's next generation Winter Maintenance Policy that will deliver benefits for Calgarians. Administration is proposing updates to the Snow and Ice Control Reserve to align with the policy and to be more responsive to Council and community needs to improve service levels without tax rate impacts. The City is committed to ensuring that Calgarians can travel safely during winter conditions. Winter maintenance services play a crucial role in enhancing public safety, accessibility, quality of life, and are consistently ranked among the most important City services. Through the proposed Winter Maintenance Policy, The City intends to improve safety and accessibility for all modes of travel by maintaining all major routes within 24 hours, more priority bus stops, clearing most of Calgary's busiest pathways, and improving clearing around schools, laneway crossings, and prioritized crosswalks.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Administration was previously directed to present a finalized Snow and Ice Control / Winter Maintenance Policy by the end of Q1 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommends that Council:

1. Approve the Winter Maintenance Policy as presented in Attachment 2;
2. Rescind the Snow and Ice Control Policy CP2021-01 as presented in Attachment 3;
3. Give three readings to the proposed bylaw to amend the Street Bylaw 20M88 per Attachment 4;
4. Approve amendments to the Snow and Ice Control Reserve per Attachment 5; and
5. Direct Administration to implement earlier snow clearing response times on Priority 2 community and transit routes, ensuring they are completed within 24 hours of snowfall stopping.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

General Manager of Operational Services Doug Morgan concurs with this report. Combining additional Council funding, operational efficiencies and managed risk taking have allowed maintenance services to improve while keeping the costs low. The Executive Leadership Team supports the recommendations along with combining the report components to the Infrastructure and Planning Committee.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The new Winter Maintenance Policy (formerly the Snow and Ice Control Policy) will advance service levels and operations while keeping all types of travelers moving safely in winter.
- Updates to the Street Bylaw will encourage better snow clearing compliance and amending the Snow and Ice Control Reserve will support improved winter maintenance service levels without having to increase base budgets.
- Administration recommends moving to a faster 24-hour snow clearing response on community / transit routes to improve safety, increase transit reliability and improve public satisfaction.
- This policy update is a significant accomplishment that highlights how The City has continued to be innovative and deliver value for citizens by combining efficiencies where possible and embedding universal accessibility standards within the proposed policy.

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DISCUSSION

Policy Updates and Evaluation

Administration assessed the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy (CP2021-01) in terms of legislative needs, strategic factors, alignment, best practices and feedback from community members through engagement. A policy update allows Administration to ensure an equity, diversity and inclusion lens is applied to our policies and to remove physical barriers to some of Calgary's most impacted populations during colder months.

What is changing in the policy: Since the Snow and Ice Control Policy was adopted in 2011, there have been several operational changes and investments made to enhance winter maintenance services for Calgarians. The primary updates, changes and amendments include:

- Service level updates to reflect prior Council investments that highlighted the need for faster and more comprehensive clearing on major roads, community / transit routes, trouble spots, major storm response, accessibility and pathway/sidewalk clearing.
- Embedding themes of accessibility, equity, safety, environment and connectivity. This translates to better clearing at crosswalks, walkways wheeling lanes and transition points.
- Amending policy name to the "Winter Maintenance Policy".
- Plain language updates, policy structure and priority system revisions resulting in better understanding of the policy and clearly explaining what The City delivers for Calgarians.

Bylaw Amendments

Administration is proposing bylaw amendments relating to sidewalk clearing and placement of snow to minimize safety impacts and support better compliance. Updates include:

- Establishing a fine (\$150) for placement of snow/ice from private parcels onto public right of way. Though this is already prohibited under the Street Bylaw, no fine currently exists.
- Establishing a bylaw fine (\$150) for placement of snow/ice into protected cycling lanes.

Administration has assessed the assignment of responsibility for sidewalk crossings of laneway/alley exits (Attachment 7). Several options exist to address gaps in clearing but there are no recommended changes to the Street Bylaw. Administration has identified pilot opportunities to clear more of these sidewalk crossings to address this ongoing concern.

Snow and Ice Control Reserve Amendments

In 2012, Council directed Administration to establish a Snow and Ice Control Reserve used by Mobility, Parks and Open Spaces, and Calgary Transit, to supplement annual budgets to deliver the winter maintenance program. Administration recommends updating the reserve maximum to \$22 million (previously \$15 million) along with renaming the reserve. Revisions to the reserve conditions will promote investments towards enhanced winter services while balancing efforts to take more risks to meet community needs (Attachment 5). Historically, financial reserve amendments would be presented to Executive Committee but for efficiency purposes, these amendments are combined within the report recommendations with the support of the Executive Leadership Team.

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Service Levels and Budgets for Winter Maintenance Services

A majority of Calgarians would like The City to invest more in winter maintenance and it has been identified as a primary opportunity through past citizen satisfaction surveys. Service improvements that can be achieved within existing budgets will continue to be implemented. Administration is proposing a faster 24-hour snow clearing response on community and transit routes that would result in Calgary's high priority routes being maintained within a single day, leading to better wintertime transit reliability, safer travel routes within communities, quicker responses to accessibility issues and improved citizen satisfaction. We are willing to accept a greater, but reasonable, financial risk by committing to these higher service levels. To deliver on that commitment, setting up a larger contingency in the reserve is needed and we will carefully monitor this risk over the balance for the four-year budget to evaluate the funding needs and risk.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> Public communication or engagement was not required |

An Engage process was used for the Snow and Ice Control Policy project. Public input was received through an online survey to measure public satisfaction, priorities, impacts, accessibility and citizen expectations around snow and ice control. A What We Heard Report was developed and made available publicly in November 2022 (engage.calgary.ca/snow).

The primary engagement themes were assessed and incorporated into the proposed policy. The following five areas were the most frequent themes identified in the engagement: accessibility, assistance, equity, enhanced service levels, safety and wellbeing.

Multiple engagement sessions and workshops were completed with various groups representing the accessibility and cycling community (Older Adult Advisory Table, Accessibility Committee on Design, Alberta Ability Network: Accessible and Affordable Transportation Table, Bike Calgary). Meetings with all Councillors and the Mayor's Office were completed in May/June 2023 and again in January 2024. Feedback from these engagements was incorporated into the final policy.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The Winter Maintenance Policy will support social resilience and the Social Well-Being Policy principle of providing equitable service delivery by removing barriers to access by establishing clear and tangible operational response levels for accessible snow clearing.

Environmental

A changing climate will require The City to respond to increasingly variable weather events such as freezing rain and heavier snow events. Administration is introducing a policy that aligns with best practices and incorporates innovations to minimize the impact on the natural environment along with climate adaptation components and financial reserve amendments to respond.

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Economic

Updating the policy will contribute to multiple economic strategy pillars to make Calgary a better place to live. High-quality winter maintenance services contribute to reliable goods movement, a business-friendly environment, and advances opportunities for Calgarians to make a living and achieve their pursuits safely.

Service and Financial Implications

Other:

Administration recommends pursuing a strategy to improve winter maintenance service levels without tax rate impacts. A higher level of risk is acceptable given past budget performance and using the Snow and Ice Control Reserve when needed will mitigate risk impact. This approach was successfully used previously to expand trouble spot snow clearing response. The winter operations base operating budget of \$55M will continue to fund service levels. Changes to the reserve conditions will have a budget impact as fewer surplus funds will be contributed to the Fiscal Stability Reserve (FSR) in future years. In 2023, \$9 million was contributed to the FSR.

RISK

Updates to the Winter Maintenance Policy will garner public attention due to the high level of importance winter maintenance services have in the daily lives of Calgarians. Meeting public expectations and ensuring the needs of Calgarians are met through an equitable lens and comprehensive policy are important to encourage acceptance of the new policy. Prior successful use of the Snow and Ice Control Reserve shows a higher likelihood of success to support proposed service levels when snowfall varies year to year. There are no alternative recommendations from this report as the policy is recommended for approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Winter Maintenance Policy – For Approval
3. Snow and Ice Control Policy – To Be Rescinded
4. Proposed Amendments to Street Bylaw 20M88
5. Snow and Ice Control Reserve Proposed Amendments
6. Winter Maintenance Benchmarking Summary
7. Sidewalk Crossings of Laneways Overview
8. Letter of Support from Age-Friendly Steering Committee
9. Winter Maintenance Policy Update Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Approve
Carla Male	Corporate Planning & Financial Services	Approve
Troy McLeod	Mobility	Approve
Jill Floen	Law, Legislative Services & Security	Inform