



CIVIC WORKS STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

Title Snow and Ice Control Service Level Change Implementation – Phase 1 Completion Status, Stakeholder Feedback and Phase 2 Outlook

Meeting Date October 5, 2023

Submitted By Councillor Crowson, Chair - Civic Works Standing Policy Committee

Recommendation from Civic Works Standing Policy Committee:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Civic Works Standing Policy Committee recommends Council direct Administration to continue with the implementation of Phase 2 as described in the Progress Report - Attachment 1 and report back to a Standing Policy Committee in the spring of 2025 on operating budget and resource impacts.

Vote:
In Favour: 4-0

Public Speakers at the Meeting: None

Public Submissions: None

Submitted By Juliane Ruck, Operations Manager, Transportation

Presented By Juliane Ruck, Operations Manager, Transportation
Darwin Juell, General Manager, Transportation
Heather Gowland, Transportation Comms. Coord., Transportation

Summary

Phase 1 of the Snow and Ice Changes were implemented in the winter season of 2022/2023. The overall feedback of the project showed good communication and realized operational efficiencies. The project goals were achieved as follows:

- Transportation Operations implemented plowing to the right in Phase 1 areas. Historically, Phase 1 areas received snow removal services. The snow was graded into the middle, loaded up and trucked away. The new changes meant that snow is plowed to the side of the curb which is faster, less cost intensive and happens more frequently. Learnings shared by the school bussing authority and Transit will be incorporated into Phase 2. The operational approach will also assess the full compliment of resources required for the Phase 2 network.
- The City activated snow routes six times when a significant snow event was triggered. The proactive messaging through various media was successful. Plowing commenced quickly once snow routes were active and parking bans were lifted shortly after. Parking bans were enforced, first with courtesy tickets and later with parking tickets.
- The collected feedback from residents and stakeholders during Phase 1 will inform the design and approach for Phase 2. Specifically, the City will focus on offering a variety of tools to stay informed, seek project feedback in the spring of 2024, and educate residents about the City's snow and ice control service levels more in depth.

Recommendation(s)

That the Civic Works Standing Policy Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Direct Administration to continue with the implementation of Phase 2 as described in the Progress Report - Attachment 1 and report back to Civic Works Standing Policy Committee in the spring of 2025 on operating budget and resource impacts.

Financial

The existing operating budget for Snow and Ice Control is being utilized. The 2023 Snow and Ice control budget is 3.8 Mil \$. Surpluses or deficits from the program go into or get transferred out of the Municipal Revenue Stabilization Reserve (MRSR).

Background and Prior Decisions

2007 and 2009 the Snow Removal and Ice Control Policy of Council, CC34 was approved by City Council.

Every four years subsequently, the Snow and Ice control budget is approved by Council as part of the operating budget review. The Service levels have not been adjusted since and operating budgets follow the existing defined service levels within the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy.

In 2020, the Fiscal and Operational Performance Review recommended the City explore increasing snow plowing activities and decreasing snow removal activities. Following this recommendation, in March 2021, Lethbridge City Council directed City Administration to obtain public feedback on possible service level modifications.

In 2021, Argyle Consulting was hired to collect community feedback on selected service level options. This feedback was incorporated to provide a recommendation of service level modifications to Council in June 2022. The community engagement identified the following preferences for snow and ice control service level options:

- Respondents support more residential and school zone plowing, with snow removal only in downtown and hospital area.
- Respondents support increased enforcement by ticketing when cars are parked on snow routes.

Due to the high safety considerations in school zones and after collecting input from key stakeholders, City Administration recommended implementing more plowing and enforcement along snow routes but continue snow removal practices in school zones, downtown and around the hospital.

This recommendation was reflected in City Council's approval of the snow and ice service level modifications in a phased approach. Phase 1 commenced November 1, 2022, with changes to plowing practices along approximately 25 km of road network. Key stakeholders were informed and residents along those routes were notified about the changes. Feedback from Phase 1 will be considered when identifying snow routes, snow clearing practices, and the development of communication tools for Phase 2 impacting a larger network of snow routes.

Engagement

The City identified different target audiences and stakeholders and applied varying engagement strategies to understand their needs, preferences and feedback on the project.

Businesses and residents along snow routes – received an informational postcard and had several feedback opportunities throughout the project:

- Online open survey during the winter season
- In-person public engagement during the Community Conversation event on January 18, 2023
- Other tools to keep residents informed included:
 - project-specific webpage;
 - interactive map;
 - courtesy parking enforcement reminders;
 - snow flake signs along Phase 1 routes;
 - media events;
 - public service announcements;
 - social media posts;
 - wider public advertising was not used during this phase as they may have caused confusion within the community due to the fact the changes only applied to a small number of residents and stakeholders.
- An end-of-season resident and stakeholder online survey ran from May 23 – June 9.

Other stakeholders the City communicated with via email, phone and direct conversation included:

Post-Secondary, School busing provider, Alberta Health Services Volunteer Lethbridge Downtown BRZ and Internal City departments.

Recommendation and Option(s) Analysis

Phase 1 is completed. Phase 2 is a broader network of roads and impacting a total of ~ 5,700 households in 23/24 and 24/25. A progress report, Appendix A and a 'What We Heard Report' Appendix B from residents during Phase 1 and how Transportation used this information to inform Phase 2 is attached. Key leanings from Phase 1 will be implemented in Phase 2, including:

- Update snow route signage along all Phase 2 routes (underway);
- Directly communicate with all residents along all snow clearing and snow routes before the first significant snowfall. Assure impacted residents understand the extensive communication is only for the 2023/24 season and other communication tools will be used for future seasons;
- Optimize operational approaches further and assess full need for resources;
- Monitor snow route activation practices and parking enforcement;
- Collect and analyze feedback from affected residents in winter 2023/24 (from existing communication lines: 311, social media, interactions, surveys);
- Conduct stakeholder engagement activities in Spring of 2024 to investigate awareness and knowledge of snow route parking restrictions and the benefits of the change, within residents of snow routes and the community;
- Confirm and identify motivators/barriers to support for the program; and
- Develop a variety of communication materials to educate residents about snow and ice service levels.

Attachment(s)

1. Attachment 1 – Phase 1 Progress Report with Appendix
2. Attachment 2 – Phase 1 Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes Update Presentation
3. Attachment 3 – What We Heard Report and Appendices

Link(s)

n/a

<u>Approvals</u>
Department Director: Joel Sanchez
City Manager: Lloyd Brierley