



GOVERNANCE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

Title Snow and Ice Control Service Level Change
Implementation – Phase 2 Information Update

Meeting Date June 27, 2024

Submitted By Councillor Crowson, Chair, Governance Standing Policy Committee

Recommendation from Governance Standing Policy Committee:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT City Council:

1. direct administration to implement Option 1 – plowing to the right with windrow subscription openings on a trial basis for the 2024/25 winter season; and
2. direct administration to report back to City Council in the spring of 2025 with the results of the three-year trial of Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes.

Vote:

Absent: 1

In Favour: 3-0

Public Speakers at the Meeting: None

Public Submissions: None

Submitted By Juliane Ruck, Transportation Operations Manager

Presented By Juliane Ruck, Transportation Operations Manager
Darwin Juell, General Manager, Transportation

Summary

Phase 2 of the Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes were implemented in the winter season of 2023/2024. The overall feedback of the project indicated good communication and realized operational efficiencies.

The following project goals were achieved:

- Administration gained a better understanding about the cost difference between plowing and removal. Implementing the Phase 2 changes showed for every snow event it is 25 times cheaper to plow snow to the right than to remove it.
- Snow routes were activated five times due to a significant snow event during the season.
- The proactive messaging through various media was successful. Courtesy reminders were distributed for awareness.
- Adjustments were made to operations and communication thanks to resident and stakeholder feedback.
- Feedback also showed that windrows along driveways and curbs are still considered a key issue for residents living on snow routes. The main challenges cited were manual shoveling, access to driveways and parking lane accessibility.
- Feedback from the school authorities, school busing authority, Fire & EMS, Lethbridge Police Service and Transit continues to be incorporated into operations.
- To mitigate the key issues and challenges raised by residents and stakeholders, Administration is providing supplementary program options for Council's review and discussion.

Recommendation(s)

That the Governance Standing Policy Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Direct Administration to implement Option 1 – plowing to the right with windrow subscription openings on a trial basis for the 2024/25 winter season.
2. Report back to City Council in the spring of 2025 with the results of the three-year trial of Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes.

Financial

The existing operating budget for Snow and Ice Control is being utilized. In 2023, the program budget of \$4.62 million was shared by Transportation, Parks, and Transit, with Transportation utilizing the majority of operating dollars spent. Surpluses or deficits from the program go into or get transferred out of the Municipal Revenue Stabilization Reserve (MRSR). The current variance is \$5.34 million. The 2024 event costs show that snow plowing is ~25 times cheaper than snow removal.

Background and Prior Decisions

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

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 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. Administration provided an update and a "What We Heard Report" about outcomes of Phase 1 October 2023. Phase 2 commenced November 2023 and covered changes in plowing practices along 81 km of road network. Key stakeholders were informed and residents along those routes were notified about the changes.

As part of this change in service level and to operations there may be changes to the City's liability exposure. This may or may not result in an increase in claims. Administration will monitor this through the trial and the results will form part of the report back to Council in the spring of 2026.

Engagement

During Phase 1 and 2, the City identified different target audiences and stakeholders to understand their needs, preferences, and feedback on the project. Engagement opportunities offered in Phase 2 include:

- In-person public engagements; Community Conversations events on October 23, 2023 and April 25, 2024, the LSCO Lethbridge Loop education booth on November 9, 2023 and the LSCO Survey and Mighty Neighbour campaign promotion and discussion on April 17, 2024;
- key stakeholder engagement via direct email, phone calls, presentations and one-on-one meetings;
- ongoing short survey/open comment form for resident feedback collection;
- an end-of-season resident and stakeholder online survey which ran from March 18-April 28, 2024.

General information about the project was promoted and available to the public through all standard City communication channels, during both phases. Affected residents received

custom, targeted information to inform them of the changes, including outlining ways to stay informed and give feedback, in addition to notifications when snow routes were activated.

Communication materials and tactics in Phase 2 included:

- prior to first snowfall, ~6,000 residents and businesses along snow routes received an informational postcard or letter;
- Snow route signage with parking restriction information installed along Phase 2 routes;
- project-specific webpage and public engagement website page;
- interactive map and live snowplow tracker;
- courtesy reminders instead of parking tickets to help transition parking enforcement;
- 311 customer service;
- one-on-one phone discussions with residents to understand complex challenges;
- media events to launch the phase 2 program with news releases;
- every time snow routes were activated a public service announcement (with accompanying media interviews), website banner alert, social media posts, Lethbridge Loop alert and roadside digital signage were sent out;
- a wider public advertising campaign was delivered through radio advertising, broadcast television commercials, local newspaper, printed and digital billboards, transit vehicle signage, google ads, and social media advertising; and
- centralized web location for all tools and links developed in Phase 1: lethbridge.ca/snow.

Results are presented in more detail ["What we heard report"](#) .

In summary, the impact of the significant snowfall and new plowing practices caught some community members off-guard. As with any change, most people don't notice or pay attention until the change is happening. Concerns included difficulties shoveling snow from end of driveways, difficulties parking and navigating windrows at the curb, pedestrian safety at crosswalks, stormwater drainage, and side street/alley access. Community members concerns about access for emergency services and overall mobility were issues that became prominent during Phase 2. Addressing these concerns involved monitoring and mitigating through operations and communication or through direct coordination with key stakeholders. Supplementary options and program extensions were researched for consideration.

Recommendation and Option(s) Analysis

Research of other communities has shown there are a variety of approaches for mitigating the windrows along curbs and driveways. Some communities make the windrow clearing the full responsibility of the homeowner, others provide a service to all impacted households opening the windrows once resources allow, and others provide a subscription service. There, residents can subscribe before the winter season starts so resources are allocated to create access along driveways when a pre-defined size of windrow is created by plow operations.

The following table provides an overview of additional program options for snow route plowing services and how they would impact the budget and the community in 2024/2025:

Options	Current service level – plow to the right	Option 1 – plow to the right with subscription openings	Option 2 – plow to the right with opening all 3,165 driveways
Service Level	- Plowing: 205 km - Plowing snow routes: 81 km Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km	- Plowing: 205 km - Plowing snow routes: 81 km - Access point opening: ~1,500 HH - Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km	- Plowing: 205 km - Plowing snow routes: 81 km - Windrow opening: ~3,165 households - Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km
Financial considerations	- Small \$ variability - Average cost per winter lower	- Small to medium \$ variability - Average cost per winter lower with added cost of windrow program - Estimated cost per household for windrow opening \$50-\$70 (will need to be tendered)	- Medium \$ variability - Average cost per winter lower with added cost of windrow program - Estimated cost per household for windrow opening \$40-\$60 (will need to be tendered)
People considerations	- Windrows along the curb and driveways to be managed by resident - Parking ban in place for ~1.5 days - More residential roads are plowed	- Provides help for residents that cannot clear windrows - Parking ban in place for ~3 days - Managing service level expectations - More residential roads are plowed	- Provides services for all households with driveways along snow routes - Parking ban in place for ~3 days - Managing service level expectations - More residential roads are plowed

Attachment(s)

- Phase 2 Snow and Ice Control - Information Update
- Snow and Ice Control Changes Request for Decision Graphic
- Snow and Ice Control Project Roadmap Graphic
- Phase 2 Information Update - Presentation

Link(s)

None

Approvals

Department Director: Joel Sanchez

City Manager: Lloyd Brierley