



GOVERNANCE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

Title Snow and Ice Control Service Level Change
Implementation – Phase 2 & Windrow Assistance
Service (WAS) Information Update

Meeting Date May 22, 2025

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 proceed with Option 1 on a trial basis for the 2025/2026 winter season, and
2. Direct Administration to report back on the results of the four-year trial of Snow and Ice Control Services Level Changes at a Governance Standing Policy Committee in spring of 2026.

Vote:

In Favour: 4-0 (Unanimous)

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, with the addition of a windrow assistance service (WAS) to support residents with mobility challenges, was implemented in the winter season of 2024/2025. There was only one snow event that warranted a snow route declaration, plowing to the right and windrow opening by contractor resources. As the 2024/25 season concludes, City Administration can better understand the cost implications and feasibility of timelines for windrow assistance services. The overall public feedback of the project indicated:

- The timing of snowfall significantly affects the likelihood that the public will consume or engage with snow-related communications. The Lethbridge Loop App is the preferred notification tool.
- The community's awareness of cost savings (compared to snow removal) increased this season, compared to last season's reported awareness.
- Accessibility and mobility challenges with windrows are mitigated with the WAS. However, many subscribers desire a faster service, and the top issues remain windrows in driveways and parking lanes.
- Enforcement of snow routes has the potential to strengthen compliance with existing community support.

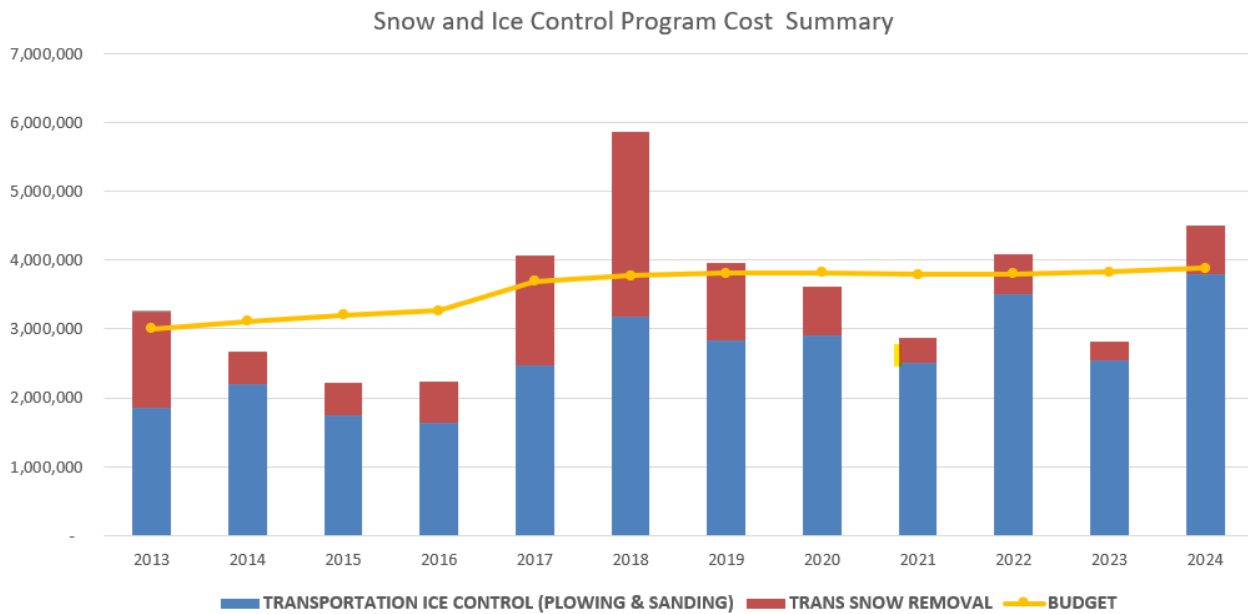
Recommendation(s)

That the Governance Standing Policy Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Direct Administration to implement Option 1 - Continue plowing to the right with a subscription-based windrow assistance service on a trial basis for the 2025/26 winter season, and
2. Report back to City Council in the spring of 2026 with the results of the four-year trial of Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes.

Financial

The existing operating budget for Snow and Ice Control is being utilized. Expenditures vary depending on weather; some years there is a surplus, and some years there is a deficit due to extreme weather events. In 2024, the program budget of \$4.68 million was shared by Transportation, Parks, and Transit, with Transportation utilizing the majority of operating dollars spent (\$3.88 million budgeted). In 2024, the budget experienced a \$500,000 deficit due to higher resource needs, resulting from three significant snow events over the last two seasons, with one event having over 40 cm of snow accumulation (material, labour, equipment, contractor work). Surpluses or deficits from the program go into or get transferred out of the Municipal Revenue Stabilization Reserve (MRSR). The current variance is \$5.8 million (\$5.1 Million Transportation).



It is important to remember that budget expenditures depend on winter weather events and can impact resource needs significantly.

After the last two seasons, all the financial information has demonstrated that snow plowing to the right in residential areas is per kilometre ~\$260 while snow removal is ~\$6,800 per kilometer of road. Snow plowing is approximately 25 times more cost-effective than snow removal.

Background and Prior Decisions

In 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 recommendations for service level modifications to the 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 the 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.

The 2022 Citizen Satisfaction survey indicates that snow removal is considered one of the most critical City programs, satisfaction is rated at 75%, and it identifies it as a primary area for improvement.

The recommendations were 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 in November 2023 and covered changes in plowing practices along 81 km of the road network. Key stakeholders were informed, and residents along those routes were notified about the changes.

In June 2024, Administration provided a report to Council about the [Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes](#) that were implemented in the winter season of 2023/2024. The overall feedback of the project indicated good communication and realized operational efficiencies. Feedback showed that windrows along driveways and curbs were considered a key issue for residents living on snow routes. The main challenges cited were manual shoveling, access to driveways and parking lane accessibility.

To mitigate the key issues and challenges raised by residents and stakeholders, Administration provided supplementary program options for Council's review and discussion. Council directed Administration to implement Option 1 – plowing to the right with a subscription-based windrow assistance service on a trial basis for the 2024/25 winter season and to report back to City Council in the spring of 2025 with the results.

Additionally, City Council adopted in principle the [Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan](#) in July 2024. The plan identifies "heavy snow events" as a high risk for Lethbridge. The related [community risk assessment](#) shows that climate parameters for the Lethbridge area indicate that heavy snow/winter precipitation will increase and that associated costs to anticipate are additional snow clearing requirements and tax increases to cover rising maintenance costs.

Overview of 2024/25 Snow Season

Administration advertised the WAS program in September 2024. The program was targeting residents with mobility challenges. The City established clear cutoff dates for registration to assign the appropriate resources. Contractor resources were procured and orientated. The first and only event where snow routes were declared and windrows opened was November 22-26, 2024. All contractors that bid on the project were utilized to expedite the windrow removal. Driveways and curb accesses were opened for 475 households within less than 24 hours after completion of plowing. The first WAS and snow event triggered an additional 78 households to call 311 and ask to be added to the subscription. The total number of households subscribed for the WAS program for the 2024/24 season was 553.

The following table provides an overview of the 2024/25 snow events and related 311 inquiries, complaints and WAS subscription data.

Phase 2 – 2024 Snow Events	Nov 22-26	Jan 4-5	Feb 4-5	Feb 15-17
Snow accumulation in cm	12.2	7.5	5	5
Temp. (Mean of Min/Max)/average	-9	-14	-25	-15
Snow Routes Declared (Y/N)	Y			
Snow Removal Priority 1 (18 km)				
Snow Removal Priority 2 (10 km)				
Parking ban in effect (hours)	55			
Courtesy Parking tickets distributed	448			
WAS subscriptions	475	553		
311 complaints recorded	57			
Council complaints recorded	0			
311 complaints requesting action	5			
WAS process complaints recorded	9			
WAS process – complaints follow-up	7			

Legal Implications

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 Phases 1 and 2, the City identified different target audiences and stakeholders to understand their needs, preferences, and feedback on the project. The Windrow Assistance Service (WAS) was introduced to affected residents, service subscribers, and the overall community as follows:

Affected residents:

- All 6,000 households along snow routes received direct drop-off information postcards, had notifications throughout the winter via Loop subscriptions, PSAs and social media,

signage along the roadways, [online information](#) and have access to an open feedback form. There was the opportunity for one-on-one conversations at the January Community Conversations event, and more feedback was solicited in the season-end survey. The survey received 693 responses, of which 75 were WAS subscribers.

- All 553 households that had signed up for the windrow assistance service received a welcome package with additional information about the service.

General community outreach:

- The City conducted an extensive and targeted outreach campaign to inform eligible residents by distributing information to key businesses and service providers and visiting community centers. PSA and media events were used to inform the overall community about snow route parking restrictions and the subscription-based windrow assistance service.

This season's "What we heard report" identified the following themes and learnings from all public participation activities during the 2024/2025 implementation of snow and ice control changes:

- The timing of snowfall greatly affects the likelihood the public will consume or engage with snow-related communications.
- Accessibility and mobility challenges with windrows are mitigated with the WAS, however many subscribers desire a faster service (less than 24 hours).
- Lethbridge Loop notifications are the most used and preferred communication tool for snow route alerts.
- The community's awareness of cost savings (compared to snow removal) increased this season, compared to last season's reported awareness.
- Enforcement of snow routes has the potential to strengthen compliance with existing community support.
- Despite the creation of the WAS, the top issues remain windrows in driveways and parking lanes.
- With only one snow route event this season, some respondents noted that answering the questions was difficult.

Recommendation and Option(s) Analysis

The following table compares the 2024/25 service level to an advanced service level with opening all driveways along the snow routes or a service level where priority 2 snow removal is provided along those roads.

Option Analysis

Options	Option 1 - Current service level (Trial) – plow to the right with WAS subscription openings	Option 2 – plow to the right with opening all 3,165 driveways within 24 hours of plowing to the right completed	Option 3 – Snow removal priority 2 along an additional 81 km
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Service Level	Plowing: 205 km Plowing snow routes: 81 km Access point opening: ~ 570 HH (as of Jan 2, 2025) Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km (schools) Total: 28 km	Plowing: 205 km Plowing snow routes: 81 km Windrow opening: ~ 3,165 HH Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km (schools) Total: 28 km	Plowing: 205 km Significant event snow removal: Priority 1: 18 km Priority 2: 10 km (schools) Priority 2: 81 km snow routes Total: 109 km
Financial considerations	Small to medium \$ budget expenditures Average cost per winter lower with added cost of access point opening Cost per household varies depending on tender Estimated cost for 5 events plowing and windrow opening: Total: \$195,700	Medium \$ budget expenditures Average cost per winter lower with added cost of driveway windrow opening Cost per household varies depending on tender Estimated cost for 5 events plowing and windrow opening: Total: \$704,500	High \$ budget expenditures Average cost per winter high (approximately 6x higher than current plow to the right) Estimated cost for 5 events where 2 events will require snow removal priority 2 for an additional 81 km: Total: \$1.1 Mil
People considerations	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 service for all households with driveways along snow routes Parking ban in place for up to ~ 5 days Managing service level expectations More residential roads are plowed and all driveways are opened	Provides a higher service level than what residents got historically Managing service level expectation Complaints about congestion and windrows

Recommended Option: Option 1

To mitigate the key issues and challenges raised by residents and stakeholders, Administration provided supplementary program options for Council’s review and discussion in 2024. Administration

recommends continuing with the subscription-based program for the 2025/26 winter season because of the limited number of WAS related snow events in the last season. Collecting 2025/26 season feedback data will allow Council to make an informed decision about next steps for snow and ice control service level changes in the spring of 2026. Another trial year will allow Administration to test if the support with windrow management outweighs the inconvenience of longer parking bans and if residents' expectations for the service level can be met.

Therefore, Administration recommends Council to select Option 1 - Continue plowing to the right with a subscription-based windrow assistance service on a trial basis for the 2025/26 winter season and to report back to City Council in the spring of 2026.

Attachment(s)

1. Attachment 1 – Council Snow and Ice Control Update 2025 Presentation
2. Attachment 2 – Phase 2 Snow and Ice Control Service Level Changes 2024/25: What We Heard Report
 - a. Appendix A Snow Route Communications 2025
 - b. Appendix B 311 Complain Heat Map 2024 2025
 - c. Appendix C Snow Route Survey 2025 Get Involved Lethbridge Report

Link(s)

1. July 9, 2024 City Council meeting ([City Council - 7/9/2024 12:30:00 PM - OnBase Agenda Online](#))
2. October 17, 2023 City Council meeting ([City Council - 10/17/2023 1:30:00 PM - OnBase Agenda Online](#))
3. June 21, 2022 City Council Meeting ([City Council Meeting - 6/21/2022 1:30:00 PM - OnBase Agenda Online](#))

Approvals

Department Director: Joel Sanchez

City Manager: Lloyd Brierley