

Winter Maintenance of Active Transportation Infrastructure

Summary of Public Discussion at The Forks Food Court

12 to 1 p.m., Thursday, January 21, 2016

Hosted by Councillor Janice Lukes, South Winnipeg-St. Norbert Ward
Chair of Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works

NOTE: This summary was taken 'live time' and may not reflect the exact level of detail in the conversations.

- Councillors Gilroy and Sharma, Stephanie Whitehouse (City of Wpg Active Transportation Coordinator) and Bev Sawchuk (C.Lukes' Operations Manager for South Winnipeg-St Norbert Ward) were introduced.
- Approximately 50-60 members of the public attended. People came and went throughout the event.
- Councillor Lukes provided an introduction of the issue:
 - Current policy of cleaning sidewalks is tied to priority of streets
 - Because people don't move in the same way as vehicles, this sometimes creates challenges.
 - When a snow event ends, the City's policy states 36 hours to clean PI&PII's
 - The City's snow removal policy was passed in 1993, and it is 2016. If we had millions of dollars, everything would be cleared. But we need to prioritize our efforts.
 - NOTE: There was strong interest from the group in having the Public Works department provide a public information session on a Saturday morning on the Snow Removal Policy
 - How can the City modify the current policy to make things better? Many people responded to Councillor Lukes' request for information, and there are two common themes:
 - We have pathways through parks that are connectors, but they aren't cleaned. Snow clearing is not done in the places it should be done.
 - Snow clearing is not done as fast as it should be done.
 - Priority I, II and III streets were defined for the group.

QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC & ANSWERS FROM COUNCILLOR LUKES:

1. Some streets are cleaned perfectly, but the sidewalks don't get done until 36 hours later. How can this be changed?
 - a. This is the policy for some areas - in certain areas, we need to look at changing that, and we need to do a consultation to see if changing the priorities is needed and creating the understanding so that when you see a sidewalk hasn't been cleared, you report it to 311. If you E-Mail it in (311@winnipeg.ca) it does get entered into the system. This is very important
2. On our street, there's a small connector to a park, but it's impossible to access by foot. How do we get these cleaned? Someone who wants to winter bike needs a secondary street to connect to trails. The streets don't get cleared right to the edge; this is not safe biking situation and needs to be addressed.
 - a. Not all parks trails are part of the current snow clearing policy – we have built many connectors that are not included in the snow clearing NETWORK.
3. Is there an opportunity to do something similar to what Vancouver does in terms of prioritization, by looking at how people move. Right now, Winnipeg's snow removal policy is based only on moving vehicles.

- a. Some cities prioritize according to vehicle. We are evolving as a City, and the idea of linking the pedestrian routes to the vehicles is a good start. If we have snow removal on an AT network that IS NOT tied to the roads, that would be a new step and one that I think is needed.
4. Think about thresholds. How much snow has to fall before areas are cleared? Right now, this is based on cars not bikes. These need to be adjusted to the users.
 - a. Moving by feet is different than moving by vehicle. Gina Sylvester at the U of W is looking at this right now, and we have posted her survey on our website. <http://janicelukes.ca/blog/survey-aimed-at-making-city-walkable/>
5. In terms of mobility, seniors want to be able to access buses when they no longer drive. Some seniors have to walk on ice just to get to Handi Transit. This needs refining.
 - a. Are we ensuring that our access to Transit is clear? This is very important. As an example, we just worked with the folks on the new Rapid Transit corridor on this issue.
6. There are seniors and people with disabilities in the community. Before we get to the actual roads, we have to get out of our homes. Maybe sidewalks should be Priority I so that we can get to the road and to the bus stop.
 - a. From the perspective of an age friendly community, we are working with Take Pride Winnipeg and local schools to pilot a snow removal project - Snow Angels - that would help with addressing this issue. It's expected that a pilot project will be announced in late 2016.
7. Where do new sidewalks fit into the plan? (i.e. South Drive in Fort Garry). Walkers in this particular area have to get off the road and scramble along the steep banks of St. John's Ravenscourt when vehicles come by. It's very dangerous, and residents in this area have never been asked if they want sidewalks.
 - a. In your area, Councillor Gerbasi is looking at this. For every road, there is an easement that could accommodate a sidewalk – and there is funding in the AT plan that could accommodate priority sidewalks. If a section is prioritized, a sidewalk could be constructed. Such a project requires community consultation. In addition, if we had a NETWORK of paths in this area and we had our own AT snow clearing crew, it would be cleaned for pedestrians.
8. There's a problem with 311, as you have to put in a specific location for snow clearing.
 - a. I've really been working on solving these communication problems. Please E-Mail 311 directly. In the parks, the Parks People clean the paths. In comparison, the Public Works Dept. cleans the sidewalks and pathways beside roads.
9. The medians really need clearing, i.e. when you try to cross Lagimodiere, it's extremely dangerous.
10. What is the level they are supposed to scrape sidewalks to? Are they safe for walking?
 - a. How clean is clean? In the downtown area, it must be scraped to the pavement. Everywhere else, it's down to the "compacted depth". But because it doesn't get cleared right away, people walk on it, create a path and ridge, and it becomes very difficult to reach this goal depth. The city's Policy spells out the specifics.
11. On our street, after I contacted your office, the street was done. Thank you.
 - a. People need to call 311 to request services such as snow removal. It's challenging; we're using humans and machines, and it's complex .
12. When the snow is cleared off the roads, it's dumped onto the sidewalks. How can the City monitor this? I keep calling 311, but it doesn't get resolved.
 - a. When you contact 311, and it doesn't get resolved, call your City Councillor.
13. In Calgary, they clear the trails along the rivers first so that cyclists can use those trails and not the streets.
 - a. Yes – they have a snow removal network – but in Calgary they do not clear many other sidewalks – Wpg is one of the rare cities that cleans all.

14. Independent 3rd parties such as the Forks how does that integrate with the City?
 - a. Private places like the Forks and Universities do their own snow removal and do it to a level of details they feel is important for their customers.
15. From the Forks to the Leg, there's 5 crews that do it. The City, Province, Forks, Leg, and private it's a hugely coordinated effort. Why isn't the Harte Trail cleared? Why aren't the Seine River trails cleared? These are heavily used trails and they need attention and maintenance.
16. Thank you to the Councillors for being here today. This is a very important discussion today. In talking about the consultation moving forward, there are a lot of different needs cyclists, pedestrians and people who don't have a choice, disabled people and seniors..... the groups who don't usually engage in these conversations need to be encouraged to do so. Their input is vital.
17. How is it decided what bus stops get cleared?
 - a. It's a good question, and not all Transit stops have sidewalks. Transit makes the decision.
18. If there is a sidewalk at a bus stop, and you have to climb over a huge snow bank just to get on the bus, who clears this area? Is this the City's responsibility or Transit's?
 - a. Transit and Public Works investigate and ensure it is cleared.
19. Does the presence of a school or seniors complex influence the prioritization of snow removal on pathways/sidewalks?
 - a. Several years ago, there was a group of us working to do this. We received \$200,000 to do enhanced cleaning around schools. This is the 2nd winter it's been in place, and I made calls to 311 on it because it wasn't happening in some areas. It comes down to understanding the policy and also making sure it gets done. I've also been working with CAA; in my ideal world, the schools would each receive this information. When you're not aware of something, you don't even know what to ask for.
20. Smaller parks aren't plowed at all, in comparison to regional parks.
 - a. People are confused about this because it's a communication issue at the City. We need to do better. It costs the City 72 cents per minute when residents call 311. If we do a better job communicating, we can reduce these costs.
21. How do we see people with disabilities and accessibility challenges fitting into this?
 - a. The Province of Manitoba Seniors Group and Winnipeg Access advisory Committee (Councillor Eadie is the Chair) will be involved in this. When we go down the path of formal consultations, all of these groups need to be involved.
22. Urban density is extremely important. The more people that walk, bike or take transit will have a huge impact on this, and will create a more efficient user of the system.
 - a. We are a city that is growing out, but we need to grow up more. We'll be doing a lot of talking about that this coming year.
23. 311 has begun doing a better job in communicating.
24. There is great value in having these informal conversations at the Forks, and Councillor Lukes was asked to continue doing so.