

Recommendation to Revise the Winter Maintenance Policy SER-009-026**Report Purpose**

To bring forward recommendations for minor revisions to the Winter Maintenance Policy.

Recommendation

THAT revised Policy SER-009-026 Winter Maintenance Policy – Roads, Sidewalks, and Parking Lots, as set out in Enclosure 2 of the September 21, 2022, Transportation and Agriculture report, be approved.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

Report

Strathcona County follows a priority system based on the Winter Maintenance Policy SER-009-026 to clear winter roads, trails, parking lots and transit stops. The policy guides this work and related operational decision making.

Overall, the current policy approach is working well to meet winter maintenance needs of the community. However, there are two areas of the policy Transportation and Agriculture Services (TAS) has identified for improvement. These are outlined below.

1. Snow routes and residential roads

The current approach to clearing Priority 3 snow routes and Priority 4 residential roads continued to be a challenge in meeting the needs of residents. Unseasonable weather patterns in recent winters created an increase in freeze/thaw events, compounded with multiple instances of freezing rain, led to substantial ice buildup in gutters throughout Sherwood Park.

The increased ice buildup has made it a challenge to remove all the material out of the gutters during major snow removal activities, resulting in some material left along the edge of the roadway. This leads to greater challenges in the spring with our minimal grade gutters.

The adjustment to the winter maintenance thresholds as proposed will help get more material off the roads by addressing the accumulated snow before it has too much time to melt and freeze in. We will also continue to monitor the trends in weather patterns and ongoing impacts as typical winters are no longer as predictable.

The suggested changes in the updated policy are:

- Priority 3 – snow routes (collector roads)
Snow accumulation of 15 cm and cleared within six days
- Priority 4 – residential streets
Snow accumulation of 7 cm compacted snow year-round and cleared within 10 days

The proposed threshold changes would see snow removal activities start sooner and reduce the risk of accumulation sitting and freezing in place. The improvement would better our operational response, shorten the duration of clearing activities, and

closer align with resident expectations. There is potential that there will be additional clearing events, but the reduced timelines would see a change in the cost per clearing, resulting in no additional budget impact. This will be reviewed annually as weather patterns continue to change and become more unpredictable.

2. Trails and pathways

Strathcona County follows a priority system that defines the order and timelines for clearing 232 km of County-maintained pathways and trails.

Public engagement was completed in the spring and feedback from stakeholders and residents has resulted in operational improvements for winter trail maintenance. The policy now includes clearing all trails within five days and adjusting trail priorities to focus on school sites and adjacent trails.

The suggested changes in the updated policy are:

- (a) Priority 1 (within 24 hours)
 - school sites including student drop zones, school bus zones, school parks and connector sidewalks from residential areas
- (b) Priority 2 (within 48 hours)
 - all hard surface sidewalks and trails leading to public recreation facilities
- (c) Priority 3 (within 120 hours/5 days)
 - all remaining hard surface trails including trails between residential streets

The changes outlined above will be evaluated in 2023 to ensure that intended improvements were achieved. As part of the 2023 budget, a previously planned Fleet addition request will be brought forward for consideration to meet the needs of the current trail network growth that has taken place over the past few years.

3. Unforeseen climatic conditions

The policy update includes two proposed changes to the unforeseen climatic conditions section.

1. Increase the threshold for a single snow fall event from 17 cm in 48 hours to 25 cm. A snow fall of 17 cm is very close to the 15 cm threshold for clearing collector roadways. In previous years, snow accumulations between 17 – 25 cm resulted in commencing both a snow route clearing and a residential clearing.
2. Remove the following statement: "When a single snowfall event exceeds 25 cm in a 48-hour period, in addition to the above, all urban Priority 3 and Priority 4 roads will be bladed to create a snowpack of 7 cm within 48 hours of accumulation."

Blading the roads in this way would have major impacts on accessibility from driveways and would require the County to come back and windrow the snow and remove it later. The change will keep a standard approach of removing all snow off the roadway in the predictable way.

Council and Committee History

- June 21, 2022 To provide the Priorities Committee with an update on winter maintenance and trail public engagement report back information.
- January 18, 2022 That Winter Maintenance Policy SER-009-026 and County service levels for winter trail maintenance be reviewed as outlined in the January 18, 2022, TAS report, and administration provide a report for Council's consideration by the end of the third Quarter of 2022 with a revised policy and corresponding budget amendments.

Other Impacts

Policy: SER-009-026 Winter Maintenance Policy – Roads, Sidewalks and Parking lots

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Financial/Budget: n/a

Interdepartmental: n/a

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Communication Plan

If Council approves the proposed updates to the Winter Maintenance Policy, the changes will be communicated to residents through a media release, social media, and updates to the website. Information related to winter-related parking bans is also shared as part of a comprehensive communications campaign called "Avoid a Tow".

Enclosures

- 1 SER-009-026 Winter Maintenance Policy – Roads, Sidewalks and Parking lots
- 2 SER-009-026 Winter Maintenance Policy – Roads, Sidewalks and Parking lots (REVISED)