

Sidewalk Accessibility Level of Service Impacts on Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs

ISSUE

This report reviews the adequacy of funding levels, service levels, and long-term sustainability of the roadway and sidewalk asset preservation programs.

BACKGROUND

City Council at its Regular Business meeting held on August 26, 2019, considered the Pedestrian Accessible Curb Ramps and Sidewalks Accelerated Implementation Program report, and resolved, in part:

- “1. That the Administration continue the recently implemented practice of replacing all missing pedestrian accessible curb ramps adjacent to complete roadway resurfacing projects; and
2. That the Administration report back on the adequacy of funding levels, service levels and long-term sustainability of the roadway and sidewalk asset preservation programs in mid-2020.”

CURRENT STATUS

The intention of the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs is to provide funding for roadways to receive a surface treatment on average every 20 years and for the adjacent sidewalks to be addressed based on set repair and replacement criteria. This means that, on average, 5% of the roadways in Saskatoon will be treated each year, with the actual totals varying from year to year depending on treatment distribution.

Two significant adjustments to the program in recent years include the 2019 criteria adjustment to retrofit all missing pedestrian accessibility curb ramps adjacent to roadway projects, and the 2017 service level improvement to eliminate asphalt overlays on sidewalks as a preservation treatment. These changes resulted in enhanced accessibility and sidewalk safety with associated upward pressure on funding adequacy of the Sidewalk Preservation Program. In addition, a number of years of large and more streamlined contracts have been issued since the inception of the program, which has resulted in more favourable contract costs available to the City of Saskatoon (City) for the program, as well as better data on the actual volumes of replacement required for each segment treated.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

This review of the adequacy of sidewalk funding includes consideration of all replacement and maintenance criteria currently utilized by the City.

The level of service improvements eliminating asphalt overlays on sidewalks and retrofitting all missing and non-compliant pedestrian accessibility curb ramps has had an associated impact on the programs. The level of service improvements requires additional repairing and replacing of sidewalk panels with a related reduction in the

network percentage that the program can treat each year. The roadway and sidewalk programs are delivered collaboratively to revitalize this infrastructure within the entire right-of-way during delivery of the program. Therefore, in order to make up the shortfalls, roadway preservation funding was utilized to offset the costs of pedestrian accessibility curb ramps and replacement of asphalt overlays to allow the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs to be fully completed across the same locations. In 2019, the programs treated approximately 4.4% of the network and in 2020, 4.3% of the network was treated, falling short of the 5% average target treatment cycle for roadways. Overall, the program increased to an average 1 in 23-year return cycle and was trending toward a 1 in 25-year return cycle.

In 2019 and 2020, City Council made several funding allocations to support the costs associated with the level of service improvements. Base funding increases were made during 2020/2021 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations, along with a one-time funding injection in June 2020 of \$575,000 from the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) to assist in addressing the costs associated with the 2017 level of service increase to remove all asphalt overlays on sidewalks as a preservation treatment. In July 2020, City Council also approved an additional one-time \$5 million in Reallocation Pool funding to the Sidewalk Preservation Program (\$4 million for sidewalk rehabilitation and \$1 million for accessibility curb ramps) to aid sidewalk rehabilitation and accessibility curb ramps. These funding increases and one-time funding injections will bring the return cycle for the programs back on track to a 1 in 20-year life cycle over the next four years (2021 to 2024), assuming no changes to the program and overall level of service.

The level of service improvements and funding increases will make a significant change in the overall condition and accessibility of the City's sidewalk network over the next four years. These changes will allow the Sidewalk Preservation Program to target the worst condition sidewalks not planned within the Roadway Preservation Program during this time, which will increase overall safety and condition of the network. These recent changes will have long-term effects on the programs; however, it will take time to analyse what those effects will be. The Administration will report back on the status of the programs, adequacy of funding levels, service levels, and long-term sustainability of the program in early 2023 utilizing construction pricing over the next two years and condition states to evaluate future funding to maintain a 1 in 20-year life cycle for roadways and sidewalks.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social, policy, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Unless otherwise directed by City Council, the Administration will deliver the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs over the next two years with the approved funding

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levels and current practices of installing pedestrian accessibility curb ramps adjacent to roadway projects and replacing asphalt overlays on sidewalks. In addition, the Administration will bring forward updated information for City Council's consideration in the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations for funding levels and service levels of the Roadway and Sidewalk Preservation Programs.

Report Approval

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