

School Zone Snow Removal Enhancements

ISSUE

The City has received a number of requests to enhance the school zone snow removal program in recent years. These requests are likely due to a combination of higher-than-average snowfall, increased traffic flow, and the resulting traffic congestion during peak student drop-off and pick-up times. This report provides information on work underway by the Administration towards submission of a budget option request for the 2024-25 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget for an enhanced level of service for snow removal in school zones.

BACKGROUND

The school zone snow removal program was significantly re-vamped in 2014. The program has performed well over the last eight years; however, complaints and requests for program enhancements have increased over the past two years. There are four primary factors that may have contributed to the recent concerns: 1) more snow than in typical winter seasons, 2) more parents were driving their children to school due perhaps in part to the pandemic, 3) joint use public and separate schools or multiple schools in some neighbourhoods sharing the same school zones having large and increasing student populations, and 4) narrow streets adjacent to some schools.

CURRENT STATUS

The current school zone snow removal program consists of a total of 103 schools within 10 maintenance areas and is activated after City inspectors confirm an average windrow height of 0.6 metres or greater within a school zone. Once the contracts are activated, snow removal is typically completed within 72 hours as per the level of service. To notify residents of the upcoming work, “No Parking” signs are posted 24 hours in advance of snow removal by the contractor. A picture of a typical snow pile (windrow) identified for snow removal within a school zone is provided in Appendix 1.

Currently, the total city-wide school zone snow removal windrow length is 28,300 metres. In a typical winter season, there are two to three full removals completed under the program, with all work performed by private contractors. The cost of a single city-wide removal for this program is \$80,000, resulting in a typical annual budget of \$240,000.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

An initial assessment of all school zones was completed from February to June 2022. This assessment included field observations in 40% of the school zones in February and March 2022, a review of all school zone snow removal maps, review of received complaints, and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

Through the assessment, several enhancements to snow removal within school zones were identified. These enhancements, if approved, will increase the total snow removal length by approximately 1,600 metres. This represents a 5.6% increase from the current

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total school zone snow removal windrow length of 28,300 metres. This increase will alleviate the majority of known problem areas.

Engagement sessions for this project involved both internal and external stakeholders through in-person and virtual meetings. The focus of engagement sessions was on the program function, and flow and continuous improvement from an operations, school, and road user's perspective. Internal engagement included senior motor grader operators, Roadways management, and engineering support groups. External operating groups included maintenance managers for the Saskatoon Public Schools and Saskatoon Greater Catholic Schools as well as contractors for snow clearing and removal activities.

Action items identified are summarized below and grouped by themes:

Clarity, Consistency and Standard Work

- Update school zone snow removal maps based on this assessment and feedback from internal and external stakeholders;
- Update school zone snow removal contracts; and
- Update and implement training on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for equipment operators, inspectors, and contractors.

Communication

- Update the City's communication process with dedicated contact people to link and coordinate operational groups from each organization; and
- Update and enhance the City's internal process to manage complaints collectively between all operating groups.

Sustainability/Continuous Improvement

- Implement a joint close-out and lessons-learned session with the maintenance managers for the Saskatoon Public Schools and Saskatoon Greater Catholic Schools as well as contractors for snow clearing and removal at the end of each winter season.

Next steps include completing a more detailed assessment of all school zones on a system-wide basis with a focus on function and flow from an operations, school, and citizen's perspective. Potential program improvements could include reduced program activation times, enhanced traffic flow through additional snow removal outside of the school zone, synergies and efficiencies through operating group coordination and infrastructure design recommendations.

Identified snow removal enhancements to date through the initial assessment are summarized in Appendix 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approximate cost for an additional 1,600 metres of snow piles/windrow removal is \$14,000 annually. It is anticipated the Snow and Ice Management service line will exceed the budget in 2022 due to the recent severe winter.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

NEXT STEPS

Unless otherwise directed, the Administration will proceed with implementation of action items without a monetary impact in the winter of 2022 and plan to request an additional \$14,000, plus any additional funding required for further improvements, during the 2024-2025 Multi Year Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

If directed by City Council, Administration could also include the enhanced service as a pilot program within the approved 2022 and 2023 budgets and report associated variances in the budget forecasts and year end reports. Should this approach be implemented, the estimated cost for 2022 is \$7,000, and the estimated cost for 2023 is \$14,000.

APPENDICES

1. Photo – Typical Snow Pile (windrow)
2. Summary of Proposed School Zone Snow Removal Enhancements

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