

HALIFAX

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Item No. 2
Halifax Regional Council
March 23, 2021

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Brad Anguish, Executive Director, Transportation & Public Works

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 16, 2021

SUBJECT: Sidewalk snow-clearing for residential streets

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- September 29, 2020 motion of Halifax Regional Council Special Meeting, Item No. 11.1.18

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT the motion be amended to include new subsection 6 which reads as follows; request a supplementary report on changing the sidewalk snow clearing standard for Residential Streets and Walkways (currently P3) from 36 hours to 18 hours.

- March 9, 2021 motion of Halifax Regional Council Special Meeting, Item No. 12.1

MOVED by Councillor Cuttell, seconded by Councillor Cleary

THAT Halifax Regional Council request additional information on prioritizing the clearing of snow from the main sidewalks in school zone areas from P3 to P2 be included in the supplementary staff report requested by Regional Council on September 29, 2020 regarding sidewalk snow clearing standards for residential streets walkways.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

s. 320 confers legislative authority for Council to make by-laws relating to snow and ice removal.

s. 322 (3) The Council may expend funds for the purpose of clearing snow and ice from the streets, sidewalks and public places in all, or part, of the Municipality.

BACKGROUND

Following approval of the Winter Operations Service Standards by the Halifax Regional Municipality on September 29, 2020, a motion was raised requesting a supplementary report on changing the sidewalk snow clearing standard for Residential Streets and Walkways (currently P3) from 36 hours to 18 hours (currently P2).

DISCUSSION

HRM provides winter maintenance to approximately 3,844 lane kilometres of streets, 1064 kilometres of sidewalks and walkways and approximately 2,300 bus stops, across all 16 Districts. The region often experiences severe, and varying winter weather. The municipality’s winter operations are performed by HRM’s Transportation and Public Works (TPW) in collaboration with other HRM business units, along with six external contractors whom provide winter maintenance through performance-based contracts.

A jurisdictional analysis completed by KPMG in 2020 to support their review of HRM’s Winter Operations Service Standards, found that standards for residential sidewalks in comparator cities had completion times between 16hrs (Ottawa) and 4-7 Days (St John’s and Winnipeg).

Disclaimer by KPMG: *“Note that while some comparators may have higher standards, in practice, delivery of these standards may not always be achieved.”*

Table 1 summarizes current Winter Operations Service Standards for sidewalks in HRM. Staff have identified the following total kms of each priority: P1 – 470km, P2 – 130km and P3 – 464km.

Table 1:

Infrastructure Type	Priority	Length	Standard
Sidewalks, Walkways & MUPs (AT Infrastructure)	Priority 1 (Main Arterials, School and Health Centre Frontages)	470km	Start time: After 5CM Finish Condition: Bare Time to completion from end of event: 12 Hours
	Priority 2 (Transit Routes)	130km	Start time: After 15CM Finish Condition: Majority of surface bare, with salt/sand for traction Time to completion from end of event: 18 Hours
	Priority 3 (Residential Sidewalks and Walkways)	464km	Start time: After end of event Finish Condition: Majority of surface bare, with salt/sand for traction Time to completion from end of event: 36 Hours

Currently, 413kms of P3 Sidewalks are located within 9 contracted areas across the municipality, with an approximate value of \$6.7 million annually. HRM in-house staff provide service to 52kms of P3 sidewalk in Downtown Dartmouth and Burnside.

The present service priority levels (12hrs, 18hrs and 36hrs) were introduced by council in 1998 and provide residents with a realistic expectation of when sidewalks will be cleared after the end of a snowfall. In addition to this, the staggered completion times allow for crews to focus initially on P1 inventory (main arterials, school and health frontages), followed closely by P2 inventory (transit routes) and lastly P3 inventory (residential sidewalks). The current 18-hour difference between P2 and P3 inventory, allows service providers to utilize the same equipment and operators, to service all three sidewalk categories.

Staff reviewed the current student walking distances determined by Halifax Regional Centre for Education (Pre-primary and elementary students – 1.6 km from their school, Middle/junior high and secondary students – 2.4 km from their school) and applied them against the sidewalk inventory surrounding all HRCE and CSAP schools within the municipality. Of the 464km of P3 sidewalk serviced by HRM, 460.3km fall within the described walking distances from schools. As only 3.7km of sidewalk would remain outside of the study area, the cost and service outcomes of each motion are consistent, which would remove the P3 standard for sidewalks moving forward.

As contractors are currently equipped and staffed for the present service levels, significant investment in both equipment and operators would be required if Regional Council chose to remove the P3 standard and transition into two priority levels, 6 hours apart. This change would result in 464 km of sidewalk requiring service 18 hours earlier.

As most P3 Sidewalks (36hrs) abut P2 Streets (24hrs), 218 kms of P2 streets would need to see priority levels increased to either match or exceed the updated sidewalk priority. If the priority of these streets were to remain unchanged, while the priority of sidewalks was increased, service providers would have to make additional passes to service previously cleared and salted sidewalks due to the depositing of snow (plow-in) from street plows.

There is some risk that servicing the entire sidewalk inventory (1064kms) within 18hrs may be too challenging to realistically achieve. Even with a significant increase to the budget, achievement of these standards, especially in the early years, may be limited due to current market capacity.

Contractually, HRM would need to provide 180 calendar days written notice to the Contractor(s) to modify any of the service standards set out in the contracts. As the current sidewalk contracts renew on November 1st of each year, this notice would need to be provided no later than May 5th of the given year. After notice is provided, staff would then enter into negotiations with the 5 service providers, representing 9 individual contracts, during the spring and summer months to attempt to have agreements in place before the start of the winter season.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on information received from current contractors regarding increased costs associated with changing the standard from P3 to P2, staff completed a preliminary cost estimate. The estimated increase would be in the range of \$3.5M - \$4.5M annually.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As this Supplementary Report follows on from the Winter Operations Service Standard Review, the Community Engagement work carried out by KMPG included information gathering on Sidewalks. The findings of the engagement are contained within the review document presented to Regional Council on September 29, 2020.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Steven York Superintendent - Road Operations & Construction 902-880-0948
