

DECISION/DIRECTION NOTE

Title: Sidewalk Snow Clearing Priority Revisions

Date Prepared: October 23, 2020

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Councillor Ian Froude, Public Works & Sustainability

Ward: N/A

Decision/Direction Required:

This note outlines a response to three points included in the motion moved by Councillor Froude at the September 16, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting. Council direction is requested for points 1 and 3:

Point 1: Revised sidewalk snow clearing priority system.

Point 3: Reduce the level of service on local streets.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The three points points discussed in this document are outlined below:

1. To ensure resources are used efficiently on the most important routes: that staff review the priorities of sidewalks, laneways and stairways with recommendations to Council this fall on changes to make.
2. To address the quality of the clearing of sidewalks, as it's sometimes that the area of grass or curb adjacent to the sidewalk is cleared, which makes for a poor-quality pathway.
3. And whether there is a potential deprioritization of some side roads, to free up resources.

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Point 1: Revised sidewalk snow clearing priority system

The existing sidewalk snow clearing routes contain a high percentage of Priority 1 sections for the current resource allocation. Comments received during recent public engagement suggested that not all Priority 1 segments are cleared well enough and if a sidewalk is listed as a Priority 1 then it should receive a high priority. The effectiveness of a priority system is reduced when there are too many top priority segments. This revised priority system aims to rebalance the priorities of the existing routes and provide a higher level of service to one side of most streets in the current sidewalk snow clearing program. This is expected to result with a faster completion of a network of main commuter corridors throughout the City. Public engagement feedback also referenced the connectivity of routes and creating pedestrian corridors. These comments were kept in mind during the reprioritization of the routes to ensure Priority 1 sidewalks connected to other Priority 1 sidewalks wherever possible. Further enhancements to the sidewalk snow clearing program will be considered in the budget discussion.

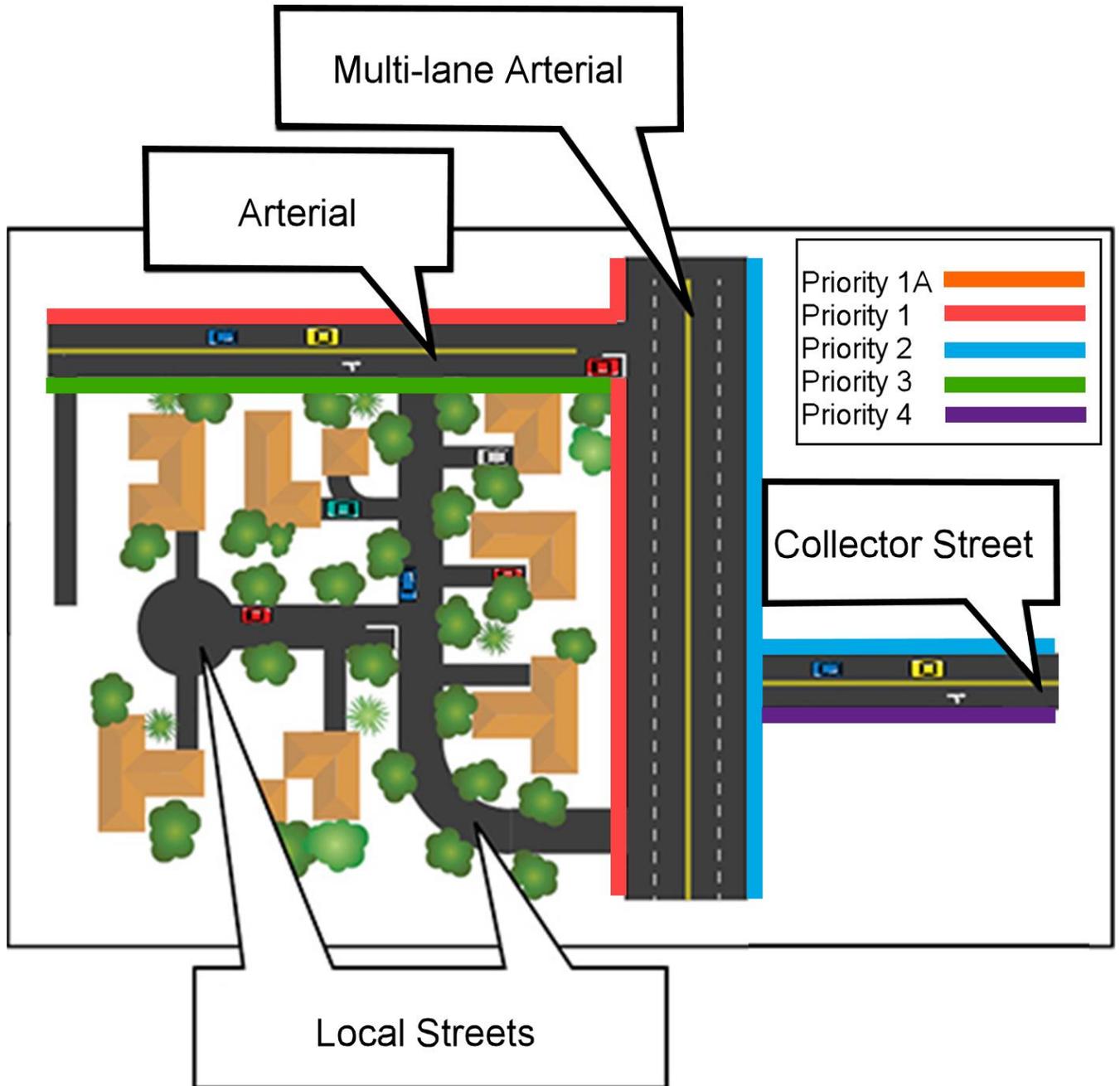
The City's Inclusion Advisory Committee submitted several requests for route improvements in 2019. Several of these changes were implemented including access to a bus stop near the CNIB on the Boulevard. Other route additions are under consideration in budget discussions.

Current and Proposed Priority Percentages

	Current	Proposed
Priority 1	79%	54%
Priority 2	17%	33%
Priority 3	4%	8%
Priority 4	0%	5%

Proposed New Priority System

Priority 1A	School Zones
Priority 1	First side of arterial roads and downtown business district (main pedestrian corridors)
Priority 2	Second side of multi-lane arterial roads and downtown business district, and first side of collectors
Priority 3	Second side of remaining arterial roads (with both sides serviced)
Priority 4	Second side of collector streets (with both sides serviced) and any remaining sections of sidewalk in program



Point 2: Quality of Sidewalk Snow Clearing

Staff assigned to sidewalk snow clearing receive equipment-specific training. They also review the routes prior to the first snowfall to identify obstructions or other site-specific problems they will encounter once the snow starts. Snow clearing supervisors work closely with the operators and they are familiar with the equipment and routes. Several contractors are also engaged to supplement this service. City inspectors are assigned to manage the contracts and inspect the routes for compliance with specified standards.

Sidewalk snow clearing equipment must be maneuvered around sidewalk obstacles (utility poles, traffic lights, fire hydrants, etc.) and parked vehicles. Large snow piles placed on the sidewalk by contractors or residents can also present difficulty for the small equipment, this is compounded when there is a lack of snow storage space. These issues often cause the cleared path to veer off the sidewalk and onto lawns or into the street. When street and sidewalk upgrades are planned, City staff also review for sidewalk obstructions and seek ways to eliminate or work around them when possible. This is done for year-round accessible sidewalks, not just snow clearing. Similarly, parking violations are enforced year-round.

Council also approved an additional \$1.4 million earlier this year to upgrade the City's sidewalk snow clearing equipment fleet. These equipment upgrades increase the capacity to clear snow and apply salt at the same time, many of the older machines were not equipped for this.

Point 3: Reprioritize Local Streets

A reduced level of service on local streets will result in a change from bare pavement to snow packed conditions.

The local climate is one of the biggest challenges we face for snow clearing. St. John's is one of the snowiest cities in Canada, but also has a very temperate climate which results in a lot of rain and/or snowmelt immediately after a snowfall. That rain and melt causes our snow to get wet and heavy very quickly. The snow subsequently freezes, turning into ice. The most significant challenge to service delivery is the ability to recover completely from an event before a subsequent event begins. Reducing the level of service on local streets will result in times that all plowing will not be completed when the subsequent event begins.

In these circumstances, vehicular traffic will compact snow on the road surface prior to plows completing the first pass. If the snowpack is left on the roadway, ruts will form and could be difficult for some vehicles to navigate. This snowpack will be very difficult to remove, require large amounts of salt, and will result in additional ice chunks plowed across driveway entrances. Additionally, rain causes snow packed roads to become very slippery until sufficient melt exposes asphalt.

Local streets do not typically receive sidewalk snow clearing as the reduced traffic volumes and speeds make walking along the edge of the roadway relatively safe. However, should the level of service be reduced on local streets, it will negatively impact the walking surface for pedestrians on these local streets.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:
 - Bylaw enforcement officer overtime or additional staff
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:
 - All commuters in the City of St. John's including pedestrians and motorists
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:
 - A City that Moves
4. Legal or Policy Implications: N/A
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:
 - The decision of council must be communicated via all channels and to all stakeholder groups, especially advisory committees, who contributed to the engagement process. Further engagement and communications are anticipated on this matter in the 2021 budget development process.
7. Human Resource Implications:
 - Contingent on the chosen options.
8. Procurement Implications: N/A
9. Information Technology Implications:
 - LIS support required to update routes.
10. Other Implications: N/A

Recommendation:

That Council approve the following two points:

Point 1:

Adopt the following sidewalk snow clearing priority system:

- Priority 1A** School Zones
- Priority 1** First side of arterial roads and downtown business district (main pedestrian Corridors)
- Priority 2** Second side of multi-lane arterial roads and downtown business district, and first side of collectors
- Priority 3** Second side of remaining arterial roads (with both sides serviced)
- Priority 4** Second side of collector streets (with both sides serviced) and any remaining sections of sidewalk in program

Point 3:

Maintain the current level of service on local streets.

- Complete and initial pass within 12-hours from the end of a snowfall
- Clear all driving lanes within 24-hours from the end of a snowfall

Prepared by: David Crowe, Manager – Roads Division

Approved by:

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Sidewalk Snow Clearing Priority Changes.docx
Attachments:	- 2020 Sidewalk Snow Clearing Priorities.docx
Final Approval Date:	Oct 22, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Lynnann Winsor - Oct 22, 2020 - 11:17 AM