

Pedestrian Advisory Committee Resolution

To: Minneapolis City Council, Minneapolis Public Works

From: Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Date: March 9, 2022

Subject: Winter Maintenance Study

Winter Maintenance Study

In May 2018, Public Works presented the [Winter Maintenance Study](#) to the City Council's TPW committee. At that time, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee was hopeful that the report, though limited in scope/depth, would mark the beginning of an effort to address year-round accessibility to our transportation network for all residents.

In the intervening four years, the PAC has requested winter maintenance updates from Public Works on a roughly quarterly basis. We've repeatedly invited Public Works to engage on winter maintenance with us, in our role as their primary relevant advisory board representing the perspectives and expertise of impacted communities. With the exception of one report-out by a departing staff member to the PAC, our requests have gone unfulfilled.

Where in 2018, we were hopeful that attention to and conversation about winter maintenance would become the norm in our interactions with Public Works, we have instead found that we must still remain vigilant in pressing for the inclusion or even an acknowledgement of winter as a condition. The City has continued to display chronic apathy until pushed by the PAC, even in major policy work like the Transportation Action Plan and the updated ADA Transition Plan. The few changes in winter maintenance practices that we have seen—namely reminder letters sent to property owners from the City, a streamlined 311/LIMS process, and the training of additional staff to serve as inspectors—have happened entirely without consultation with the PAC in its expert advisory capacity, and in some cases, without being shared with the PAC even as a response to our regular requests.

With climate breakdown rapidly intensifying—along with international conflict spurring the urgency of shifting to transportation modes free from dependence on fossil fuels and lithium stores—and with many new city council members holding office, we again plead for renewed attention to and conversation around winter maintenance. As the sidewalk/street conditions of early March 2022 show, few sidewalk routes—including those shoveled beautifully after each snowfall—remain accessible through these increasingly frequent cycles of freeze-thaw and precipitation.

We are aware of and strongly support a growing conversation in Minneapolis around the responsibilities of the municipality to ensure that people can get around the city in winter, whether walking or using wheelchairs. As this conversation continues to gain energy within our communities, we ask our elected officials to direct Public Works to meet with the PAC on the following fundamental concerns we have regarding winter conditions vis-a-vis the City's current plans, processes, and policies:

1. Regulations requiring the drainage of impervious surfaces on private properties to pass across sidewalks before entering the storm drain system
2. Public Works' engineering of sidewalks, including slope and grade
3. Public Works' co-location of storm drains and curb ramps
4. Public Works' maintenance practices in the plowing of streets and alleys that
 - a) create impassable windrows, and
 - b) push or spray chunks of snow across already cleared sidewalks on streets with no boulevard

We are eager for a dialogue with Public Works staff that includes topics completely absent from the 2018 study. Specifically, the Winter Maintenance Study focused almost exclusively on individual property owner sidewalk-clearing compliance and the projected feasibility of municipal clearance. The study ignored both the multiple ways in which the City itself—through engineering, regulations, and implementation—not only fails to ensure sidewalks are clear of snow and ice, but actually significantly worsens and even creates dangerous conditions. We request that you, as City Council Members, direct Public Works to engage with and include the PAC on both short- and long-term efforts to plan, provide, and maintain passable winter conditions for those walking/using wheelchairs.