bikewinnipeg

MORE PEOPLE BIKING
MORE OFTEN

October 9, 2013

Bike Winnipeg is a voluntary, inclusive group of concerned citizens working to make cycling in Winnipeg a safe, enjoyable, accessible and convenient transportation choice year-round. We are proud to note that the emphasis we place on the year-round need for safe, enjoyable, accessible and convenient cycling facilities in Winnipeg is mirrored in the city's own policy statements. Specifically we would like to remind the committee that:

- A transportation system that supports active, accessible and healthy lifestyle options is a strategic goal of the city's Sustainable Transportation policy document (pg. 6);
- A key direction of the city's Master Transportation Plan Is to ensure that AT networks are planned, designed, implemented and maintained to address year-round access (pg. 40);
- The goal of the Policy on Snow Clearing and Ice Control is to maintain the City's roadways, back lanes, sidewalks, active transportation trails and designated park pathways in such a manner so as to provide safe and accessible operating conditions for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. (pg. 1)

These policies reflect the realization that city's that create bicycle friendly transportation systems benefit form healthier populations that are less reliant on motorized transportation and have more disposable income to invest in their homes or spend on activities with much higher economic impacts than things like fuel and cars. As an example of this, research conducted in New York City found that retail sales along a stretch of 9th Avenue reconfigured with fully separated cycle tracks increased by up to 49% (as compared to a 3% increase in sales seen borough-wide)[1].

It is for that reason that we are concerned that section 7.3.3 of the City of Winnipeg Operational Review of Public Works before you today recommends that the city:

> *Consider changing the service level standards of curb-to-curb and bare pavement plowing on residential streets during high snowfall events to narrower street plows and smoothing surfaces. Also consider changing the residential road plowing process to one that would see a plow run after each significant snowfall (once PI and PII streets are completed).*

While such a change in policy may indeed reduce expenditures for the city, it would also have a detrimental effect on the comfort of cyclists who are increasingly taking to Winnipeg's roadways in winter. Residential streets often serve as important bicycle routes, and by forcing cyclists to climb up and out of a narrower plowed lane every time they meet up with a car, the city would be undoing the progress it has been making over the last number of years. Having cycled through 20 winters, I can tell you from experience that when plows have been forced around parked cars (a scenario much akin to what this recommendation call for), the bikeability of the roadway suffers.

We would like to point out to you that the comparison cities used in the report – Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton – tend to have much wider roadways than Winnipeg, often accommodating parking on both sides of the roadway, which is not the case in Winnipeg. Furthermore, these city's tend to place their sidewalks against the curb, meaning they lack the boulevards that Winnipeg has to use for snow storage. This lack of boulevard space is one of the key reasons these city's have chosen to only plow a narrower lane.

[1] **Measuring the Street:** New Metrics for 21st Century Streets; NYCDOT (available at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2012-10-measuring-the-street.pdf)

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Rather than looking to reduce the level of service for snow removal, we believe the city should be looking to improve on its snow clearing policy. If we are looking for best practices in out sister city's, the City of Calgary policy of treating all roadways with bicycle lanes as priority I routes to be cleared within 24 hours is one idea we should be adopting in Winnipeg. On streets with bike lanes, smaller accumulations of snow are often swept into the bike lanes making them unridable. Moving these streets up to priority I level would go a long way towards remedying this situation.

Snow clearing policy needs to account for this by recognizing that in addition to differentiating snow clearing priorities by road class, we also need to differentiate between the needs of different modes of transportation (e.g. motorized vehicles vs. cyclists). We need to recognize that the importance of cycling routes will not always match the importance of adjacent streets, and allow enough flexibility in our snow clearing policy to classify paths on bike routes higher than the adjacent streets. An example would be a local road that parallels a regional roadway without cycling facilities. Even though such a route may serve cyclists with the same priority as the regional street, it would be prioritized as a level III route for snow clearing. If the cycling route passed through a park, that section could very well be rated as priority IV, which might only be cleared if funds allowed.

Similarly, our snow clearing policy needs to have an ability to deal with rutting caused by freeze/thaw cycles on pathways, cycle tracks, and bike lanes, which can cause considerable hazard to cyclists by allowing for more frequent inspection and opportunistic plowing to ensure a smooth riding surface for cyclists.

Sincerely,

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