

2019/2020 SNOW OPERATIONS PLAN RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

Introduction

The City's Snow Operations Plan was posted for Public Comment from October 25th through November 5th. Additionally, staff presented the draft plan to City Council on October 15th and met with other departments and with Post Falls Highway District to coordinate operations. This document addresses the written comments received from the Public Comment Period. Each comment is presented in its entirety, followed by the Staff response.

Comment:

As confusing in a way that reading this was.. last year was one of the worst years for snow removal I have ever seen.

Response:

Snow Operations are a complicated process and we have made an attempt to make this document as clear as possible. We would welcome specific suggestions to improve the document or our snow removal efforts in the future. We have a continuous improvement goal wherein we try to learn from past years.

Comment:

Last year 2018-2019 the use of priority routes led to neighborhoods (priority 3 routes) to be neglected for up to a week. In singing hills cars routinely got stuck, there would be up to a foot of snow on the road for multiple days not having been touched. It is my personal opinion that at least 1 plow should be dedicated to neighborhoods at all times, priority routes clear means nothing when we cannot get out of our neighborhood to a main road.

Response:

Due to staffing constraints, we are not able to dedicate a crew to plow solely residential streets. It is not efficient to have one operator working solo, or even a single team of two operators. It takes approximately 20 to 24 working hours for a crew of 8 operators to plow the residential streets. Having one or two operators working alone would increase this time to 80-98 hours (3-4 days). Staff believe the plan as presented would result in quicker service for all residential streets.

The 2019/2020 plan also includes a provision to plow the traveled way without gates, should an extreme snowfall occur. This would likely have been implemented in February of 2019, which would have improved the situation noted in the comment.

Comment

This all seems reasonable, similar to previous years and works if the personnel adhere to it. I had an instance two seasons ago where a berm left by the plow(s) came up to my bust-line, so almost 4 feet tall. This is a literal, non-exaggerated height. I was trapped. This was extremely excessive and took me two hours to shovel myself as a single mom with a knee injury. Last year, after I had just finished all my shoveling/blowing, a plow WITH A GATE came by, did not use the gate, and left me a nice berm the full width of my driveway. Not nearly the size of previously mentioned berm, but not sure why the gate was not used ☐. I was standing in my driveway when our eyes connected as this happened. I'm on a corner lot so don't know if that's more of a factor being at the end of a street. So, the plan is good, as long as the execution follows 😊☐.

Response

There are many factors, including human error, which could have caused this event to occur. Staff will continue providing operators with a clear understanding of the operational goals, including using gates for all driveways. Please contact the Streets Division should a specific event like this occur. Staff rely on feedback to make improvements.

Comment

Plan looks comprehensive and reasonable. Well done, team!

Response

Thank you for your comment.

Comment

Slazenger just West of Prairie has residents on it and carries significant traffic from Spokane to neighborhoods to the west. Doesn't make sense to leave it off of list of secondary routes.

Response

Slazenger is not classified as a Collector street, which is the default sorting mechanism for Priority 2 routes. Generally, Priority 2 roads were also added to ensure most residents were within a quarter-mile of a Priority Road. Residents on Slazenger would meet this criterion as they are within a quarter-mile of Spokane Street.

In review of this area, as a result of this comment, Ashworth Lane, south of Slazenger, was added to the Priority 2 list as it now connects Chase Road and Spokane Street.

Comment

Because of the location of Ponderosa Elementary, should Spencer or even Ross Point Road's priority be higher? We have also noticed the corners not being pushed back for visibility at intersections.

Response

Ponderosa Blvd and Ross Point Road are both Priority 2 roads. Priority 2 roads are the designation used to prioritize school access roads, which are not arterials, over general residential streets.

With regard to past operational concerns, please contact the Streets Division should a specific event like this occur. Staff rely on feedback to make improvements.

Comment

Basically you should go back to previous years in snow plowing before last year. My guess is because of the gates. they are useful in some ways, but when you are using them to clear everyone driveways it slows down the service, yes its a nice gesture to not leave burns in front of peoples driveways but we can also clear them our selves yes it takes time but tough I never complained. the gates should only be used where reasonable, intersections, and elderly that request not having one left in there driveway because they do not have the means to clear them. Also be nice if you teach your drivers to get as close to the curve as possible instead of keeping a distance from it, when they stay to far away that is how the streets get smaller because the snow piles up quicker from plowing, along with making sure not to pile huge piles on corners when there is no reason to do that.

Response

The Snow Berm Reduction Plan was growing at an unsustainable rate and could not be continued as it was implemented in prior years. The decision to use snow gates was made to improve service to all residents. We continue to collect feedback on this issue and appreciate hearing from both those who appreciate the improved level of service and those who would prefer lesser service but in a faster timeframe. This is a decision we will continue to weigh in the years to come.

We have modified the operations plan this year to include plowing closer to the curbs, especially on arterials.

Operators attempt to avoid snow piles where it obstructs visibility, whenever possible. Please contact the Streets Division should a specific event like this occur. Staff rely on feedback to make improvements.

Comment

I think the priority 3 neighborhoods would benefit from a small postcard campaign reminding people about responsibility to shovel sidewalks, keeping the drainage area clear, not shoveling into the street, and above all, keep cars moving from streetside parking. Most years it's not a big deal to wait until higher priority roads are treated, but in a neighborhood loaded with code violators, if the above concerns were less of a battle, the roads would be in better shape.

Thank you for all you do to keep us safe and moving!

Response

Obstacles and snow piled in the roadway do significantly slow operations. We have included a mailer within the utility bills for November this year attempting to address these issues. We are also discussing ways to improve enforcement efforts.

Thank you for your comment.