
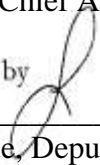


Item No. 10.1.6
Halifax Regional Council
April 30, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original signed by 

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 16, 2013

SUBJECT: Priority Snow Clearing of Bus Stops

ORIGIN

Transportation Standing Committee, September 27, 2012, item 8.1.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Part XII, Streets and Highways, Section 322 (3).

Halifax Regional Council approved December 11, 2012 that all budget increases, including unbudgeted reserve withdrawals, are to be presented to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee, prior to submission to Council.

This report has not followed the approved required process.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to bring the service standard for bus stops more in line with street and sidewalk standards, it is recommended that Halifax Regional Council adopt Option 2 and change the standard for clearing bus stops to 48 hours.

BACKGROUND

At the September 27, 2012 Transportation Standing Committee, Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Barkhouse, requested a staff report on the implications of priority clearing of bus stop shelters during winter snow events. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

DISCUSSION

The current service standard for bus stop clearing is 72 hours from the end of the snowfall. This standard has been utilized to allow for two full nights of snow clearing and removal following the end of the street standard (12 hours), and transit sidewalk standard (18 hours). Given that the accumulated snow at bus stops is generated from these two activities, this infrastructure must be cleared first, to allow for buses to safely travel the routes, and for pedestrians to access the bus stops via the sidewalk system.

In total, there are 2,295 bus stops that are serviced by Metro Transit. Each of these bus stops vary in the complexity of infrastructure attached. Some are full concrete pads with shelters, some are small pads attached to sidewalks, some are behind curbs with no pad and some are simply drop off areas on the road shoulder.

The clearing of bus stops is achieved through various contracts as well as in-house allocation of equipment and resources. It should be noted that there is a difference between clearing (pushing snow to achieve bare surface), and removal (loading and hauling of accumulated snow to a dump site). Bus stop clearing is currently carried out as follows:

1. Performance-based sidewalk contractors are required to clear snow from the bus stops that are attached to the sidewalks under their responsibility. The cost of this is embedded in the contract cost per km rate for the sidewalk. In addition, they clear “remote bus stops” which are generally across the street in areas with sidewalks on only one side of the road. This method accounts for 68% of the bus stop clearing.
2. The in-house sidewalk program services 70kms in the East region and 50kms in the West region. As with the contractors, this resource also clears the bus stops which are attached to the sidewalk routes. This method accounts for an additional 12% of the bus stop clearing.
3. Performance-based street contractors are required to clear remote bus stops that fall within their area of road responsibility. The majority of these types of stops have no infrastructure attached to them and are in the suburban areas. This method accounts for a further 4% of the stops. Direct cost for this is \$25,000 per year.
4. The in-house crews clear the remaining 16% of bus stops which are not currently serviced by one of the other resources.

In addition to clearing the remaining stops, the same in-house crews also provide the snow removal required to facilitate additional snowfalls. This removal includes 938 stops; the majority of which are on peninsula Halifax where snow storage is essentially non-existent. Direct cost for this activity is \$240,000.

Overall, snow removal is carried out by a combination of in-house resources and hourly based hired equipment consisting of backhoes and trucks. This activity is an on-street activity and subject to Provincial legislation through the Temporary Workplace Traffic Control Manual. During day light hours crews are required to place workplace signs and utilize Traffic Control personnel. This is required at every bus stop; consequently, progression of work is slow and increases costs.

A number of years ago, HRM received an approved variance that allows for this activity to be carried out during night time, low traffic volume time, and minimizes the requirements through the use of a signed “blocker truck” in place of Traffic Control personnel which reduces our costs.

Due to the lack of storage space at some bus stops, snow removal must be carried out at approximately 938 locations following accumulation of 25cms of successive snow falls. This activity starts 12 to 24 hours following the end of the snowfall, and depending on the timing of the storm can take up to two nights to complete.

In the past three years Municipal Operations has met or exceeded the 72-hour standard on 59 of the 61 snow events, with the exceptions being February 2, 2011 (40cms) and February 9, 2013 (45cms). On these two occasions the last of the stops were completed at 80 hours due to the heavy volumes of snow. Using the current contracts and resources it is estimated that 85% of the bus stops are cleared to a reasonable extent within 12 to 36 hours from the end of the snowfall, with the remaining stops completed within the current 72-hour standard.

OPTIONS ANALYSIS

There are three proposed options recommended for consideration. These are:

Option 1.

Retain the status quo, 72-hour standard.

There would be no increase to current cost levels.

Option 2.

Change the standard to have the bus stops cleared within 48 hours from end of snowfall. As previously stated, 85% of the stops are cleared to a useable extent between 12 to 36 hours from the end of snowfall. Going to a 48 hour standard would still allow for our performance-based contractors to continue operating in the same manner which currently is the most economical and efficient use of resources.

In addition, educate and communicate regarding standards and what residents should expect on bus stops at the 24, 36, and 48 hour milestones.

Additional resources would have to be retained to meet the new standard of 48 hours during the snow removal stage, mostly on the peninsula of Halifax. Adoption of this option would require a careful balancing during each event of in-house labour and supervisory resources between the focus on the bus stop activity and incremental street and sidewalk snow removal in the business districts.

This Option would increase current costs by \$280,000.

Option 3.

Change the standard to have the bus stops cleared within 12 hours from the end of the snowfall. In order to achieve this, separate contracts would have to be tendered independent of the current sidewalk contracts. This would involve 2,100 stops with full sidewalk and curb snow clearing, traffic control and removal at an estimated cost of \$2,500 per stop. Adoption of this option would necessitate that the majority of activity would take place during daylight hours resulting potentially in major traffic disruptions as multiple worksites across HRM would be required simultaneously.

This Option would increase current costs by \$5,250,000.

Changing service standards at this point will involve a variety of actions including over time the re-negotiation of several contracts. To note, of the existing 28 performance-based sidewalk contracts, nine are in their second year of a four-year contract and the remaining nineteen will expire in April of this year and need to be re-tendered.

From a staff perspective, Option 1 would also be an acceptable option, given that historical data demonstrates the majority (85%) of the bus stops are already adequately cleared within 12-36 hours following cessation of snow fall activity.

Option 3 is not deemed acceptable from a staff perspective given the cost, likely disruption of traffic patterns and potential situation where stops are cleared prior to the sidewalks that service them.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Additional costs associated with the change of standard will be managed in current planned appropriations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement was not required as this report is only providing information to Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Implications not identified.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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