



Department of Public Works
Streets Division
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September 17, 2014

To: Bicycle Facility Maintenance Policy Workgroup
From: George P. Dreckmann, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
Subject: Winter Bike Lane Snow and Ice Control

I want to apologize for the fact that I have been unable to attend the first two meetings of the workgroup. I have reviewed the suggestions from the workgroup on winter maintenance of bike lanes with the Streets Division's operations staff. We would like to offer you our ideas and get your reaction to them.

On Street Bike Lanes

Rather than focus on a selected number of on street bike lanes, we would propose that we have our crews work on all of the on street bike lanes that are on salt routes with the exception of those lanes that have parking issues. This should cover almost all bike lanes.

What we would do is have our crews make an effort to clear bike lanes on their final pass on their salt routes. Our operations staff believes that this will open up the lanes to the fullest extent possible. Our current practice is to stop our snow and ice operations when the traffic lanes are open. Whenever possible, we would have our operators make their final pass as far to the right of the roadway as possible with the goal of clearing as much snow/slush as possible from the bike lane.

Our primary purpose, clearing traffic lanes for motor vehicles, would not change. Nor will this effort guarantee clear bike lanes at all times. (The fact that little, if any, salt makes it to bike lanes and that traffic tends to push material that falls from cars to the side of streets after our plowing operations are finished means that there will still be times when bike lanes will be icy or slippery.) But, we feel it will greatly improve the status of bike lanes in winter.

Bike Lanes with Parking Issues

At this time, our operations staff believes that we are not in a position to change our procedures for those bike lanes that have cars parked along them 24 hours a day. We cannot get our plows close enough to the parked cars to adequately clear the bike lanes. We also have issues surrounding street narrowing that is also associated with parked cars. These lanes will get cleared whenever we have to do snow removal operations due to narrowing.

We believe this is an appropriate response, especially on the Isthmus, where the Mifflin Street bike

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boulevard offers bicyclists an alternative route. E. Mifflin is on a salt route so the street is salted and plowed every snow and ice event.

It is our intention to monitor this situation over the winter of 2014-15 and discuss this again with the PBMVC as we move forward.

Capital City Trail and Williamson Street

As you know, this is a very complex intersection. We will try to coordinate our efforts with Engineering who plows the bike path. We believe that we can keep this intersection open. We have a Public Works operations managers meeting in October and this item will be on the agenda. We will report back to the workgroup after we develop a plan.

Overview

The Streets Division will be working to improve our clearing of bike lanes this coming winter. There will be challenges and we may not always be successful. Since we do not have additional resources to accomplish our goal of improving the conditions on bike lanes, our primary goal for our snow and ice operations will remain public safety and for the vast majority of Madison residents that means a focus on traffic lanes.

This season we are going to be devoting more resources to clearing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit stops. These facilities are cleared by small plows which cannot be used on the street because they cannot push large amounts of snow. This winter we are adding two new small plow routes in order to open up the new bike paths on the west side. We also have new paved bus stops added to our current small plow routes. We have not received any additional funds for these efforts.

We think that Madison offers our residents a good variety of transportation options. Bicycles are an important option within our overall plan, but they are not a widely used option in the winter months. The Streets Division will make an effort to improve winter riding conditions within in our staff and equipment limitations and keeping in mind the overall demand for our services and preserving public safety.