

Mall/Concourse Monthly Report February 2014

The unusually cold weather this winter has been challenging for the Mall Concourse crew, just as it has undoubtedly been for all sections of the Parks Division. Cold-related equipment problems, as well as limitations on how long people can safely work outside have been the norm rather than the exception.

The temperatures are impacting the Madison Streets Division as well, in the form of salt delivery problems. As this is where we obtain our rock salt, it affects us directly, so we've been mixing our limited supply of salt with sand before we spread it on the sidewalks. This practice is not popular with us because it is difficult to get the sand to come out of our spreaders, and it's not popular with businesses either, as the sand quickly gets tracked indoors. Sand also creates lots of cleanup problems once the snow begins to melt.

The upside of the weather, however, is that there is little refuse in the barrels, the garbage truck has not needed to go out every day, and the recyclables are collected less often. Cold temperatures mean that there are fewer people hanging around outside, both during the day and late at night. The lack of foot traffic has also allowed us to load and haul away a significant amount of snow, particularly from the State Street sidewalks. This is something which is very difficult to do when the sidewalks are busy.

During the rare "warm" days, we're out shoveling around benches and bike racks, stripping the old posters off of the self-service kiosks, and updating the postings in the kiosks with doors. If it ever gets above freezing again, we would like to clean some bus shelter windows.

The principal downtown special event of the season, the Madison Winter Festival, returns to the Capitol Square the weekend of February 15th and 16th this year. It's amazing to see the Square transformed into a Nordic ski course, the spectator turnout is always impressive, and the cleanup effort by the organizers is especially noteworthy.