



Department of Public Works

Streets Division

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July 18, 2014

To: PBMVC

From: George P. Dreckmann

Subject: Streets Division's Goals in the Platinum Bike Report

The Streets Division's goals outlined in the 2008 Platinum Bike Report focus on maintaining the bike route and bike lane infrastructure. Those goals can be divided into three areas, Surface Repair and Maintenance, Sweeping, and Snow and Ice Control.

Surface Repair and Maintenance

The Streets Division repairs potholes and cracked surfaces on all off street bike routes. We also do all repairs on the on street bike lanes. Our street repair supervisors will conduct inspections of all of these facilities and we respond to Report A Problem, telephone, and e-mail requests for service. This is work that is done on an as needed basis.

On street bike lanes are maintained as part of our regular street repair program. We cover all areas of the City looking for potholes and cracks that need repair. We also try to respond to Report A Problem reports, phone calls and e-mail requests within 48 hours.

Sweeping

The Streets Division currently does twice a year sweeping of all off street bike routes. In 2013 a special sweeper was purchased to sweep the bike paths and it the plan was to sweep them at least monthly. Unfortunately, the Storm Water Utility, which funds the Street Division's sweeping operation was unable to provide money for more than two sweepings per year.

The Streets Division sweeps on street bike lanes on the same rotation as all city streets. Most streets in Madison are swept every 2.5 to 3 weeks depending upon equipment availability. There are many streets in the Downtown/Isthmus are that are swept every week as part of the Clean Streets/Clean Lakes program (CS/CL). Streets in the CS/CL zones tend to be in older areas of the City that are not served by retention ponds.

In addition to regular sweeping, the Streets Division responds to many request for problem clean up. These requests range from the frequent reports of broken glass on the southwest bike path to accident debris along a curb line on a residential street. Sometimes we dispatch sweepers for clean up problems.

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In the case of off street bike paths, we generally send staff with brooms to remove the debris.

Snow and Ice Control

In 2012 the City of Madison set up a new program for clearing off street bike routes, city owned sidewalks and bus stops with concrete pads. Consolidated routes were set up with responsibilities split geographically. Crews from Streets, Parks, and Engineering were assigned all off street bike routes, sidewalks and bus stops in an area. This reduced travel times for crews who used to travel all over the city clearing properties that were the responsibility of their particular agency. (For example, Parks crews would plow all sidewalks surrounding a park Streets staff was plowing a city sidewalks and bus stop right across the street.)

This new routing system reduced travel times and increased the efficiency of our snow and ice operations. The result is off street bike routes, sidewalks and bus stop being cleared much faster than under the old system.

The City's three bike boulevards, E. Mifflin St., E. Main St, and Kendall Av are on salt routes. That means that these streets are plowed and salted whenever it snows. Because bike boulevards are set up to accommodate bikes for their entire widths, bicyclists should find the boulevards offer a good winter riding experience.

Even though most on street bike lanes are on salt routes they are seldom clear during winter. Salt's effectiveness is limited due to its dependency on traffic volume to distribute the salt and stir the snow and ice accumulations to promote the melting action. Given the lack of volume and small tire size of bicycles few bike lanes will be as the adjacent vehicle lanes.

Because parking is allowed on virtually all on street bike lanes our plows are not able to access the entire bike lane due to the proximity of parked cars. Bike lanes are then seldom cleared down to the bare pavement. Our efforts are also hampered because plows and traffic will move snow off to the side of the road where it can accumulate along bike lanes. This leads to bike lanes icing up over time.

Our ability to clear bike lanes is also hampered by the lack of compliance with the Alternate Side Parking Ordinance (ASPO). Many cars do not move during snow events and we are forced to plow around them. This leaves large gaps where snow is not cleared. This problem gets worse and the winter season goes on and on street bike lanes can almost disappear on streets with limited ASPO compliance.

The Streets Division does try to go back and open up streets and bike lanes to the curb. Our efforts to date have had limited success.

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The Platinum Bike Report calls for an on line map that will give riders an idea of what streets and bike lanes have been plowed. At the time this report was written, all Streets Division plow trucks were equipped with GPS systems that could provide some location data. However, that system has been eliminated due to budget constraints so that option is no longer available.

Conclusion

The Streets Division has made a good faith effort to meet the goals set forth in the Platinum Bike Report. As the City's expands its bike network, we are called upon to do more. Unfortunately, the resources for maintenance, sweeping, and snow and ice control have not kept pace with expanded network. Unless more funding is set aside for maintenance it will be difficult for us to meet the growing expectations of Madison's bicycling community.