

Cespedes, Christopher

From: City of Ann Arbor Transportation Commission
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2024 9:37 AM
To: Cespedes, Christopher
Subject: FW: From Chip Smith - RE: Snow Removal in A2

From: Chip Smith <xxxxxx@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 10:00 PM
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Subject: From Chip Smith - RE: Snow Removal in A2

Friends, I hope this finds you all well.

I write to you all with some thoughts and observations about snow removal in Ann Arbor.

You've no doubt heard from many, many constituents about the lack of plowing, or ineffectual plowing in our neighborhoods across the city. Our crews plow what they can, which is often just the center of the street. They do the best job possible given uncomfortable working conditions, long hours, and unrealistic expectations. But our residential streets are still covered in snow and ice, more than a week after the primary storm hit us on January 12th. The icy neighborhood streets have been directly cited by AAPS in two of the four closures over the last two weeks. The fact of the matter is these streets weren't effectively cleared - and I'm not faulting our staff and our plow crews.

Now I had the opportunity because of today's AAPS closure to work from home. This afforded me the opportunity to watch the plows come down my street (Krause St, near downtown). Now it's a precision operation with one plow going down the middle of the street, and the other following going along the inside lane up to the curb. Seems genius, and in a controlled, perfect environment this would clear our streets from curb to [curb.in](#) one pass by two plows in each direction.

Here's the wrinkle - the only way to make this strategy work is by removing parked cars from our public roadways. Which, alas, we do not do here in Ann Arbor. The result? Icy residential streets that are so narrow because the plows can only run down the center of the street that they become functionally single lane roads. Private vehicles get plowed into a fortress of packed snow and ice. Some car owners get mad, others just give up and leave their car in the public roadway until it thaws. Then the plows can never get in and fully plow a street.

The great thing is, there's a policy fix that you can implement that will go a long way toward improving the effectiveness of our plowing. **Winter parking restrictions will allow our crews to fully clear streets - maintaining full access for cars, cyclists, pedestrians and parking!** The City's responsibility is to make sure we have a fully functioning, multimodal transportation network - not guaranteeing private car storage space for residents on our public streets. I urge you to take a look at how a comparable Big Ten city, Madison, Wisconsin, handles winter parking and snow removal. You can see their winter parking information and how they communicate it to residents here: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/residents/winter/parking/alternateSideParking.cfm> . In fact, most cities in

climates where large snow events are not uncommon have some kind of parking restrictions for snow events. Our lack of such a policy manifests itself in icy, snow covered residential streets with restricted traffic flow, and unsafe conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. The way we plow residential streets turns our transportation network from a multimodal network into an almost completely auto-dependent network - totally counter to our Climate and Vision Zero goals.

If we're going to make meaningful progress building a safe, year-round multimodal transportation system - essential to achieving both our climate and vision zero goals - then the time to act is now.

Some additional observations and examples from the 5th Ward in areas we need to improve - and these involve many partners - the Ride, the DDA and Main Street BIZ, the City, and private property owners.

- We need to figure out how to make sure intersections and crosswalks are passable for pedestrians - relying upon adjacent property owners isn't working. For instance, I saw a man in a wheelchair get stuck in the street at 3rd and West Washington on Wednesday 1/17 -three days AFTER the end of the storm event.
- The crosswalks at Huron and 3rd/Chapin, the main crosswalks connecting Lurie Terrace to the eastbound bus stop on Huron, were impassable for people with any kind of mobility concerns for almost a week.
- These Bus stops were not cleared so passengers can easily get on the bus. This is a safety AND an equity issue. And an AAATA issue.
- When I asked the DDA why the crosswalks were cleared on the east side of Ashley Street, but not the west side of Ashley or along First Street, the response from the DDA is that snow removal is a BIZ District responsibility and snow removal only happens within the BIZ district and does not extend across Ashley. It seems self-defeating to not clear all of the intersections in and around our downtown.
- The crosswalk through the First Street bikeway at Liberty was still not clear as of last night - it will obviously take small scale intervention to clear the crosswalks as they cross the protected bike lanes. Identify the responsibility (Public Services, DDA) and assign the work!
- Many of the sidewalks within a half mile of west side neighborhood schools Bach, Slauson, Open, Wines and Eberwhite remain uncleared, even after warm weather, rain, and significant melting.. Our code enforcement is reactive - responding only to A2 fixit complaints - instead of being proactive starting enforcement within a quarter mile of neighborhood schools to get those sidewalks cleared quickly. We can do better.
- Any sidewalk that crosses the railroad (WATCO) right of way remains uncleared. It seems crazy to me that the DDA clears the sidewalk adjacent to 415 West Washington (both along Liberty and Washington), but does not have the contractor do the 20 feet of sidewalk as it crosses the ROW next to 415. The City should either be citing WATCO, or clearing these sidewalks. Instead, we seem to be content with passing the buck.

If we really want to make this a place where year round walking and biking is possible, we have to get better at this. I have full confidence that this city council and our staff can develop workable solutions to all of this.

If you've made it this far, thanks for reading. I hope we can move something forward to make our transportation network accessible for all on a year round basis.

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Chip Smith
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