City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, November 3, 2010
3:30 pm to 5:30 pm
Room 333 City Hall, 350 5th Street South

Agenda:

1. Approval of September Committee Meeting Notes *(attachment 1)*

2. Approval of October Field Walk Notes *(attachment 2)*

3. Announcements (opportunity for members to inform committee of activities of interest)

4. Riverside Avenue Reconstruction Project *(attached via url: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2010-meetings/20101105/Docs/12-Riverside-LAYOUT.pdf)*

5. Snow Clearance Communications Plan *(attachment 3)*

6. Pedestrian Master Plan Implementation – Maintenance Chapter *(attachment 4)* (Opportunity to review Maintenance Chapter recommendations and identify an implementation strategy for which to request a staff update at December meeting)

7. Next Meeting, Next Field Walk, Potential Future Topics

Next Committee Meetings:
December 1, 2010 (previously scheduled as field walk)
January 5, 2011

Next Field Walk: February 2, 2011 – Snow Issues Field Walk

Potential Future Meeting/Field Walk Topics:

City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Notes
Wednesday, September 1, 2010

Attendance:
Voting Members: James Andrew, Neal Baxter, Anna Gillette, Matti Gurney, Martha Hage, Diane Hansen, Elizabeth Haugen, Dan Herber, Tony Hull, Kelly Wilder
Non-Voting Members: Anna Flintoft, Liliana Rivera, Karen Nikolai, Sarah Stewart, Mary Jackson
Others: Kristin Klinger, Scott Engel, Beth Elliott

1. **Approval of May and July Committee Meeting Notes.** The committee approved the May and July committee meeting notes.

2. **Approval of August Field Walk Notes.** The committee approved the field walk notes for the August field walk of the Target Field Area with the correction that Diane Hansen attended the walk. Neal Baxter and Matti Gurney offered to prepare a revised field walk worksheet for the next field walk, in order to make it easier for participants to record observations. Diane Hansen suggested that the committee make an effort to have participants using wheelchairs and strollers at every field walk because of their unique perspective.

3. **Announcements.** Liliana Rivera from the Bike/Walk Ambassadors and Sarah Stewart from the Dept of Health and Family Support introduced themselves and explained that they would be serving as non-voting members representing their organizations. Tony Hull announced that the state Non-motorized Transportation Advisory Committee is seeking an applicant from the metro area and that TLC is seeking volunteers to conduct bike and walking counts. Anna Flintoft will forward the information from Tony to the committee.

4. **Approval of Bylaws.** The committee approved the draft bylaws with the following modifications:
   - Article II, Section 2 (a) (1) – Change "Health and Family Services Department" to "Health and Family Support Department."
   - Article III, Section 3 – Strike section 3 (b).
   - Article III, Section 4 – Modify as follows: "In lieu of meetings ~~approving documents~~ committee actions can be accomplished by a ~~quorum~~ simple majority of the members of the Committee by using faxes, e-mails and other written means available."
   - Article III – correct the section numbers for sections 3-9.
   - Article IV (a) – Change "Board" to "Committee."

   The bylaws were approved 9-1, with Martha Hage dissenting. Martha felt that the bylaws should contain the standard language on accessibility accommodations. Anna Flintoft will investigate city policy for including this language on all committee documents.

   The committee also discussed the need for more diversity among committee members.

5. **Selection of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair.** The committee unanimously approved the nomination of Matti Gurney for Committee Chair and Kelly Wilder for Committee Vice-Chair.

6. **Warehouse District Heritage Streets Plan.** Beth Elliott from the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development presented an overview of the Warehouse District Heritage Streets Plan, the subject of the committee's planned October Field Walk. This area has a lot of historic street infrastructure, including loading docks and street pavers, and it does not have continuous and accessible sidewalks. Determining how to reconstruct these streets to best preserve the historic features and improve pedestrian accessibility is the purpose of this plan. Beth distributed a copy of the scope of work. An RFP for consultant services to complete this scope of work has been released, and proposals are due at the end of the month. Committee members suggested that the scope of work include an assessment of accessibility barriers and ADA complaints and connectivity issues. Beth explained that connectivity issues have been addressed through the North Loop Master Plan. The committee discussed having the field walk focus on the area bounded by Washington Avenue N, 3rd Street N, 10th Avenue N and 5th Avenue N.

7. **Snow Clearance Follow-up Discussion.** The committee briefly discussed the snow clearance discussion from the July meeting. The committee discussed the potential to organize a pedestrian-oriented snow season kick-off for the media, similar to what is done annually for snow emergencies. The committee requested that Anna Flintoft forward a copy of the snow clearance encouragement emails used last year. The committee should take up this issue at the November meeting.

8. **Next Meeting, Next Field Walk, Potential Future Topics.** The next committee field walk will be October 6, 2010; the subject will be the Warehouse District Heritage Streets Plan. The next committee meeting will be November 3, 2010; potential agenda items include snow clearance communications, Riverside Avenue reconstruction, the Interchange project presentation, and pedestrian master plan implementation.

City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee Field Walk
Summary Notes
Wednesday, October 6, 2010
3:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Location

Warehouse District Heritage Streets

Participants

James Andrew, PAC member
Neal Baxter, PAC member
Beth Elliott, Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Dept.
Anna Flintoft, Minneapolis Public Works Dept.
Anna Gillette, PAC member (and son Charles in stroller)
Matti Gurney, PAC member (and daughter Tessa in stroller)
Martha Hage, PAC member
Elizabeth Haugen, PAC member
Tony Hull, PAC member
Dan Herber, PAC member
Lonnie Nichols, Park Board
Karen Nikolai, Hennepin County
Liliana Rivera, Bike/Walk Ambassadors
Karen Rosar, North Loop resident
Brian Schaffer, Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Dept.
John Slack, North Loop resident
Sarah Stewart, Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support
Kelly Wilder, PAC member

Observations

(Participants rated the following factors on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is a poor pedestrian condition and 5 is a good pedestrian condition. The overall rating was an average of 2.)

- PEDESTRIAN FACILTIES (Average rating: 3)
  - E-W streets (3rd St N, Washington Avenue N) have continuous sidewalks, but N-S streets (5th Avenue N, 6th Avenue N, 7th Avenue N) have major gaps in sidewalk continuity due to loading docks and truck doors. Varies widely block to block. 6th Avenue N has virtually no sidewalks.
  - The loading dock at SE corner of 6th/3rd was shaved to provide a sidewalk; however, Brian Schaffer observed that this is not desirable from a preservation standpoint (see photo).
  - The loading dock at Washington/7th Avenue N does a better job of maintaining the historic integrity of the loading dock, while also providing for accessibility, via a combination stair/ramp (see photo). However, this location should have had a ramp at the other side of the loading dock, as well. The railings also match the historic character of the building.

  - The loading docks/ramps need to have a continuous railing from floor level to hand railing level to prevent children from falling under the hand railing; this is a problem on many existing loading dock railings.
  - Having to zig-zag from one side of the street to another is very inconvenient for pedestrians. It would be better to have a continuous path of travel on at least one side of the street for several blocks than what is existing.
  - Some sidewalk gaps (where there are no loading docks) exist and need to be filled in (end of 3rd St N 10th Avenue N).
  - Super blocks made convenient walk access an issue.
  - There is a dirt path west of the intersection of 3rd Avenue N and Traffic St connecting the I-394 on-ramp and the alley between Washington and 3rd St N.
- PEDESTRIAN CONFLICTS (Average rating: 2)
  - Lack of sidewalks presents high conflict potential between pedestrians and vehicles.
  - Observed buses honking at pedestrians.
  - Observed semi-trucks blocking entire street to back into building.
  - 6th and 7th Avenues are probably the worst streets for ped/bike and vehicular conflicts because of the numerous loading docks and use by trucks and buses.
  - The brick streets not only add to the historic character, but also help to manage traffic speeds.
- CROSSWALKS (Average rating: 2)
  - There are no marked crosswalks in this area.
  - Pedestrians generally cross where they feel most comfortable, which may not necessarily be at intersections, particularly where there are loading docks interrupting the continuous sidewalks network.
  - Pedestrians shouldn't have to push the button to get a "walk" when the light turns green anyway.
- MAINTENANCE (Average rating: 2)
  - Neither sidewalks nor the street are being maintained.
  - The sidewalks are severely cracked in many locations.
- PATH SIZE (Average rating: 3)
  - Where there is a continuous sidewalk, the width is fairly comfortable (at least 6 feet wide in most places).
  - Areas adjacent to 8th and the end of 3rd St have narrower walks.
- BUFFER (Average rating: 2)
  - Good buffer with trees along Washington Avenue.
  - No buffer on streets with a lack of continuous sidewalks.
- UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY (Average rating: 2)
  - Loading docks impede accessibility. On existing loading docks, the stairs, steep ramps, or lack of ramps/stairs impede accessibility.
  - Cannot always tell visually whether the end of a loading dock has an accessible ramp or not.

  - There are curb ramps in one direction in many locations. This, in combination with other accessibility issues, such as vertical obstructions, cracked sidewalks and steep slopes, create difficult crossing issues.
  - Sidewalks are cracked and heaving, impeding accessibility.
  - There are a growing number of children in the North Loop neighborhood, and safe and convenient access for strollers is a big issue.
  - There is a large pole in middle of ramp at 3rd St and 5th Avenue.
- AESTHETICS (Average rating: 3)
  - The historic character of the warehouse district creates an interesting pedestrian environment, and it should be preserved. The brick and wooden pavers, in particular, are cool.
  - This is a very urban environment that is active with businesses and residents. This makes it an appealing place to be a pedestrian. People especially like the areas with outdoor seating.
  - The surface parking lots, noise, and lack of trees creates an unappealing pedestrian environment and negatively impacts the livability of the area.
  - There is a particularly uninviting environment on 5th Street under the 3rd/4th viaducts.
- SHADE (Average rating: 2)
  - There are very few trees in this area. Buildings provide the only shade.
  - There are definitely opportunities for more trees. Trees contribute to shade, stormwater management and aesthetics.
  - Trees are particularly needed along 5th Ave N, as this is a major feeder to LRT/Northstar and ballpark, and there is no shade provided by either buildings or trees.

Selected Photos

Washington Avenue @ 7th Avenue N

3rd Street N @ 6th Avenue N

Communications Department
301M City Hall
350 Fifth St. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1300

2010-2011 snow shoveling season

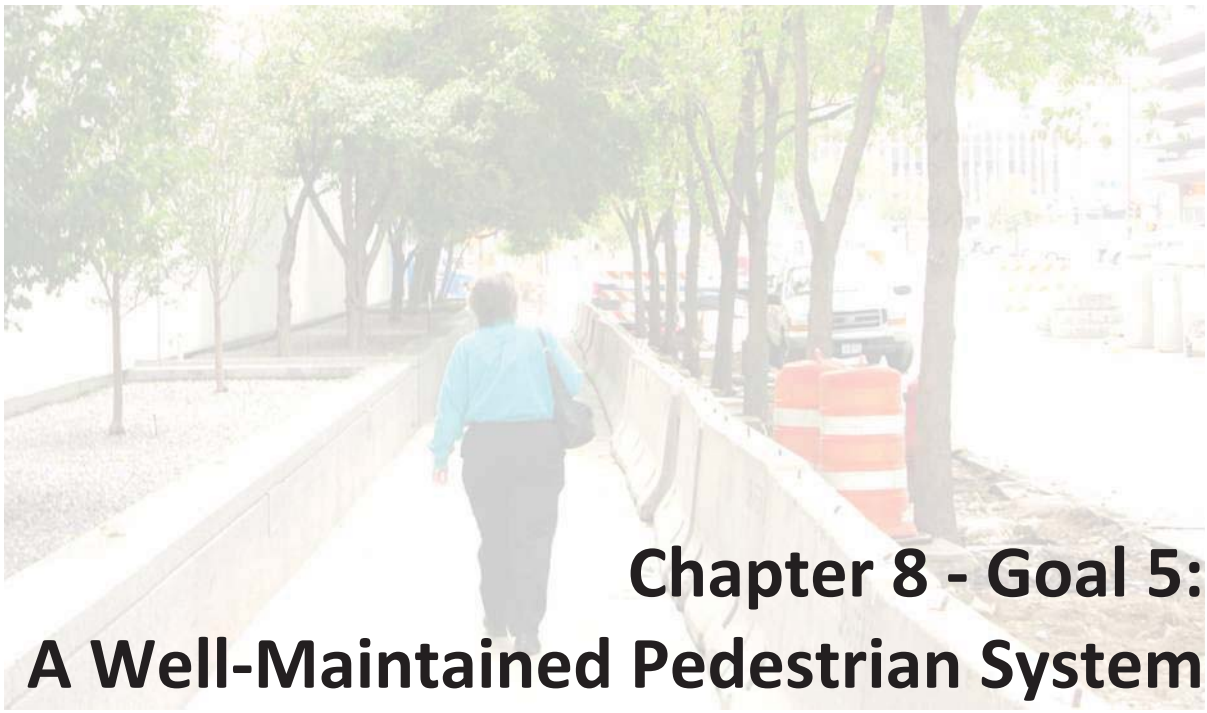
Communications plan

Topic	Messages	Tactics	When?	Who?	
Sidewalk shoveling	• Do your part to make Minneapolis a great year-round walking city • Shovel the full width, down to the pavement • Be a good neighbor… and follow the law • Emergency responders, postal carriers, bus riders need access	Shoveling season kickoff media event sidewalk award winner checklist of preparation	2011		
		Article in CityTalk intranet site	First snow	Communications	
		?Media pitch. Positive shoveling story about a neighborhood (brainstorm: how about Rebecca Gomez's block—remember she was saying they shovel for each other? Maybe this can be the media event too.)		Communications	
		?Winter walk group		?Ambassadors	
		News release to neighborhood newspapers (message: the rules)	Oct. 15 for November	Communications	x
		News release to neighborhood newspapers (message: be prepared)	Nov. 15 for December	Communications	

Topic	Messages	Tactics	When?	Who?	
		News release to neighborhood newspapers (message: safety and accessibility)	December 15 for January	Communications	
		News release to neighborhood newspapers (message: ice removal)	January 15 for February	Communications	
		News release to neighborhood newspapers (message: go easy on the salt)	Feb. 15 for March?	Communications	
		News release to dailies (message: the rules)	November or first snow	Communications	
		News release to dailies (message: be prepared)	December during snow	Communications	
		News release to dailies (message: safety and accessibility)	January during snow	Communications	
		News release to dailies (message: ice removal)	February during snow	Communications	
		News release to dailies (message: go easy on the salt)	March during snow	Communications	
		Newsbites story written for City Council newsletters – include shovel graphic	Dailies news releases timeline	Communications	

Topic	Messages	Tactics	When?	Who?	
		Web news story posted on the City's Web site – include shovel graphic	Dailies news releases timeline	Communications	
		On-hold message	Nov - April	Communications	
		Cable still	Nov – April	Communications	
		E-mail to neighborhood associations	First snow	Public Works/Communications	
		Flyer to neighborhood associations lists, ask them to post on their websites	First snow		
		E-mail to block club lists	First snow		
		Flyer to business associations	First snow		
		Public Works Web pages updated	By first snow		
		Flyers posted in coffee shops and community spaces		PAC members	
		E-mail to pedestrian govdocs list	Dailies news releases timeline		
		Facebook	Dailies news releases	Communications	

Topic	Messages	Tactics	When?	Who?	
			timeline		
		Twitter	Dailies news releases timeline	Communi cations	
		Snow shoveling flyer distributed at fire stations, council offices, 311.	With Snow Emergency mailer distribution	Public Works	
		Awards to businesses, residents. Photo feature, certificate they can post	Several throughout winter		
		Short video for Facebook		Communi cations	
		Work with DID on shoveling			



Chapter 8 - Goal 5: A Well-Maintained Pedestrian System

Many of the concerns raised through the *Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan* process relate to the everyday operations and maintenance of the pedestrian system, including snow and ice clearance, sidewalk repair, regulation of newspaper boxes and sidewalk cafes, and sidewalk closures in work zones. This chapter addresses these issues. Other maintenance issues addressed in other chapters include crosswalk markings (see Chapter 6) and street furniture (see Chapter 7).

Objective 5.1: Ensure Effective Snow and Ice Clearance for Pedestrians.

Objective 5.2: Maintain Sidewalks in Good Repair

Objective 5.3: Manage Encroachments on Sidewalks

Objective 5.4: Maintain Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility in Construction Zones

OBJECTIVE 5.1: ENSURE EFFECTIVE SNOW AND ICE CLEARANCE FOR PEDESTRIANS.

Pedestrians need sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian facilities to be safe and accessible year round. Incomplete snow clearance discourages people from walking and using transit, poses significant accessibility barriers for many pedestrians, and can pose safety hazards for pedestrians who find it easier to walk in the street. Poor snow and ice clearance on pedestrian facilities is one of the biggest concerns raised through the *Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan* process, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Online Survey Results Related to Snow Clearance

How well do current snow removal policies work?	% Agree
Sidewalks on city-owned property are cleared in a timely manner	79%
Existing snow removal system is effective	69%
Transit stops and stations are cleared in a timely manner	63%
Snow build-up at curb ramps is routinely cleared	42%
Property owners clear sidewalks in a timely manner	38%
The enforcement policy is effective	36%

Source: Pedestrian Master Plan Online Survey, 2008; 111 respondents

Snow and ice clearance on pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way is the responsibility of the City. The City manages that responsibility by requiring property owners to clear snow and ice on sidewalks and curb ramps adjacent to their properties. City ordinance (see Appendix D, Chapter 445) requires property owners of single family or duplex residential properties to clear sidewalks within 24 hours of end of snowfall and requires property owners of commercial and multi-family residential units to be cleared within 4 hours of end of snowfall.

If the ordinance required time period has expired and a complaint about failure to clear sidewalk snow is received, the City's Public Works Department Sidewalk Inspections Division takes the following actions:

- An inspection is performed; a warning letter is sent (only one Warning Letter is sent to the property owner in a given snow season); and if a subsequent inspection has found non-compliance, a $102 citation may also be issued.
- After the warning letter has been sent, a commercial property may be re-inspected within 1 business day, and a residential property may be re-inspected within 5 business days. If the re-inspection has found non-compliance, a snow removal work order will be issued and the property owner assessed for the cost of snow removal.
- Most sidewalk snow removal work orders are completed within 1 week.
- In addition, City ordinance 445.40 allows the City to revoke business licenses or permits for not complying with the snow and ice clearance requirements.

Sidewalks like this that are not well cleared of snow remain icy and slippery all winter.

During the 2007-2008 snow season, the City received over 6,000 complaints about improper snow and ice clearance on sidewalks. Just under half of the complaints came from the public, mostly through 311, and the rest came from field inspectors. About

75% of complaints were for residential properties. Most complaints resulted in property owners clearing snow or ice; only 1/3 of complaints resulted in City crews removing snow and assessing property owners for the cost. Less than 20 citations were issued.

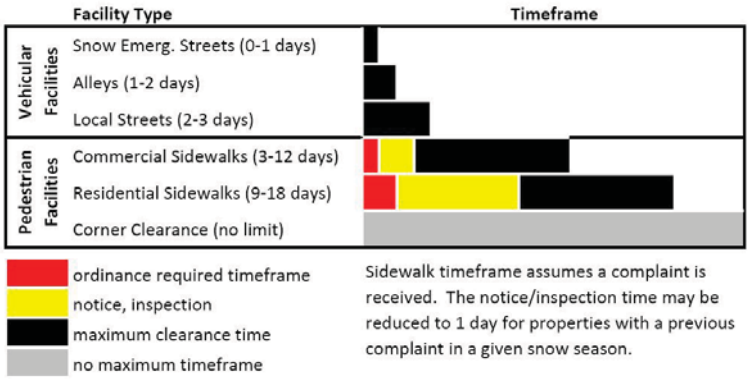
Residents who are unable to clear snow may contact the sidewalk inspector and request more time to remove the snow and ice from their public sidewalk. The City's Senior Citizen Ombudsman can also offer assistance to seniors and disabled property owners and can identify community groups who can offer their services to shovel for a fee. The city also offers free sand at several locations.

City crews are responsible for snow and ice clearance at crosswalks, sidewalks on bridges, pedestrian refuge islands, and bus stops without shelters. After snow clearance on City streets and alleys is completed according to the three-day snow emergency clearance schedule, the City then dispatches crews to clear the snow piles that form between the crosswalk and the curb ramps due to snow plow clearance of streets. Some locations, such as downtown corners, commercial corridors, off-street trails and sidewalks on bridges, are cleared during the first two days of snowfall, using crews that are not responsible for street snow clearance. Clearance of snow at corners is considered an enhanced level of service and is provided as resources allow. Some special service districts pay for an enhanced level of snow and ice clearance for sidewalks and curb ramps.

Snow and ice clearance at bus stops without shelters is the City's responsibility; snow and ice clearance at bus stops with bus shelters is the responsibility of the bus shelter owner, currently Metro Transit or CBS Outdoor.

While roadway snow clearance follows a predictable, three-day clearance process, there is no policy to ensure a similar clearance plan for pedestrian facilities, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Relative Timeframe for Snow Clearance



Challenges with the current practice include:

- *Enforcement of private property owner responsibilities is complaint-based and can be slow.* If a complaint is not received, the sidewalk will generally not be cleared of snow. If a complaint is received, it may take up to 12 days at a commercial property and up to 18 days at a residential property from the date a complaint is received. (See Figure 10)
- *There is no designated timeframe for the snow clearance responsibilities of the City.* While City crews generally prioritize early clearance efforts on commercial districts and high pedestrian use areas, there are no officially designated corridors or areas recognizable to the public for priority snow clearance of pedestrian facilities. There is no designated timeframe for snow clearance of these facilities; in many snowfalls, it may take three weeks to clear all the snow, and with repeated snowfalls, some of these areas may not be completely cleared of snow all winter.

- *Transit stops without shelters are often not adequately cleared of snow.* Snow clearance at bus stops is the responsibility of the bus shelter owner, currently Metro Transit or CBS Outdoor. Snow clearance at bus stops without bus shelters is the responsibility of the City. Many of these bus stops without shelters are not adequately cleared of snow, and it is common for bus riders to board buses either within street intersections or by climbing over snow piles.
- *Curb ramps and corners are often difficult to clear of snow.* Because snow plows travel straight through the intersection and do not plow around corners, a wedge of snow typically remains at corners. It is common for this snow to block the curb ramp, particularly if the curb ramp is diagonal or otherwise not aligned with the crosswalk and sidewalk. Snow frequently remains on curb ramps and curb ramp landings, making drainage difficult and icy conditions likely.

The City currently informs and reminds property owners of their responsibilities to clear sidewalks as part of its communications on snow emergencies and related parking restrictions. Figure 11 shows the portion of the utility bill insert on snow emergencies devoted to sidewalk shoveling, and Figure 12 shows one of the slides shown on its cable station between programs related to shoveling sidewalks. Figure 13 shows a door hanger recently developed by the City of St. Paul and SMART Trips for individuals to use to remind their neighbors of their responsibilities or snow clearance.

Figure 11: City of Minneapolis Utility Bill Insert

Don't forget to keep your

sidewalks shoveled!

Please remember to shovel your sidewalks. Children walking to school, your neighbors walking to work, your postal carrier, and especially folks who have a difficult time getting around even without ice and snow rely on you to keep your sidewalks safe.

And it's the law. **City ordinances** require that **commercial properties clear the walks within 4 daylight hours** after the snow stops falling; **residential properties have 24 hours** to shovel the walks. Failure to shovel your walk could lead to a ticket *plus* the cost of City crews shoveling it.

311 For more information, please call **311**

And don't forget your garbage and recycling containers.

Shovel a 36-inch-wide path from your garbage cart and recycling bin to the street or alley.

City ordinances require this path be cleared for **garbage carts and recycling bins within 48 hours** after the snow stops falling. If City crews have to clear them, a fee of **$30 per cart or bin** will be added to your utility bill.

Solid Waste & Recycling
612-673-2917

Need a Translation?

Attention: If you want help translating this information, call 612-673-3737.

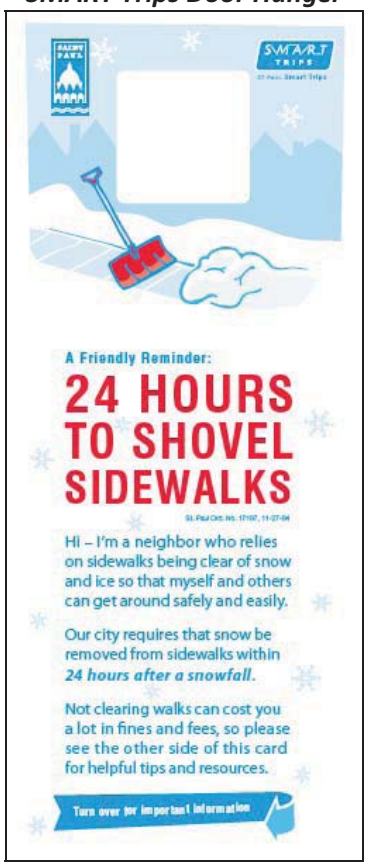
Atención: Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llama 612-673-2700.

Ogow: Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo laeag la' aan wae 612-673-3500.

Ceeb toom: Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 612-673-2800.

Figure 12: City of Minneapolis Cable Station Slide

Figure 13: City of St. Paul / SMART Trips Door Hanger



Implementation Strategies

5.1.1 Create a social norm of snow clearance through communications and education.

The City will improve upon existing efforts to inform and support private property owners with their responsibilities for snow and ice clearance on sidewalks. Opportunities include:

* Improving existing online information on proper snow and ice clearance, city ordinance requirements, and impacts to pedestrian users of improper clearance through text, photos, and videos.
* Including information on sidewalk snow clearance with all snow emergency communications, including utility bill inserts and press releases.
* Encouraging the public to use 311 to report pedestrian facilities that haven't been cleared of snow or ice.
* Working with neighborhood organizations, business organizations and other stakeholders to educate the public on the importance of proper snow and ice clearance of pedestrian facilities.
* Developing an approach to inform corner property owners of their particular responsibilities for snow and ice clearance since they are responsible for clearing two street frontages and curb ramps.

5.1.2 Establish priorities for sidewalk snow clearance, including high pedestrian traffic areas.

The City will build upon existing priorities for snow and ice clearance on sidewalks to establish a hierarchy of pedestrian facilities for prioritized snow and ice and clearance. The City will focus enforcement of private property responsibilities and City responsibilities for snow and ice clearance according to this priority system, as is currently done for snow clearance on streets.

5.1.3 Improve enforcement and monitoring of private property owner responsibilities for snow clearance.

The City will identify strategies to reduce the amount of time it takes to respond to snow removal complaints and investigate the expanded use of enforcement mechanisms, such as citations and business license/permit revocation, which are currently infrequently used.

5.1.4 Support property owners with snow and ice clearance assistance options.

The City will investigate expanding the fee-based assistance programs provided to property owners unable to clear snow themselves, using community organizations and youth programs.

5.1.5 Explore reducing City snow clearance responsibilities on pedestrian facilities.

The City will explore strategies including public/private partnerships for reducing City responsibilities for snow and ice clearance on pedestrian facilities on or adjacent to public property.

See also:

Objective 2.1: Identify and Remove Accessibility Barriers on Pedestrian Facilities

Objective 7.4: Foster Effective Pedestrian Advocacy and Stewardship

OBJECTIVE 5.2: MAINTAIN SIDEWALKS IN GOOD REPAIR

The City's Sidewalk Inspections Office operates an annual sidewalk repair program that inspects and replaces defective sidewalks throughout the City on a regular basis (see Map A-27). These inspections are often coordinated with major street renovation/reconstruction projects and major development projects. The cost of sidewalk repair is assessed 100% to adjacent property owners.

Many cities do not have a sidewalk repair program, and Minneapolis' program is an effective means of maintaining sidewalks and curb ramps, but there are some challenges:

- *Property assessments do not apply to public property.* Land owned by public agencies, such as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), and government buildings, cannot be assessed, and public funds must be used to repair these sidewalks. This issue was also addressed in Chapter 4. The City's Sidewalk Inspections Division coordinates its annual sidewalk repair program with other public entities, such as MPRB and MPS, allowing these public entities to use the City's sidewalk inspectors and sidewalk repair contractor for sidewalk repair along streets adjacent to these public properties. Depending upon their budgets and priorities, these public entities may or may not choose to coordinate their sidewalk repair needs with the annual sidewalk repair program.

This railroad crossing on Marshall Avenue NE is an example of a location with complete sidewalks approaching the tracks, but an incomplete walking surface crossing the tracks.

- *Legal barriers prevent sidewalk repair across railroad tracks.* It is illegal to assess the railroad the cost of a repair for any infrastructure that exists on railroad property, and the City is required to file a permit to perform work within railroad right of way to repair sidewalks across railroad tracks. There are over 90 at-grade freight railroad crossings in Minneapolis. Many of these crossings have incomplete walking surfaces or walking surfaces that are an extension of the asphalt roadway crossing the tracks. This is an accessibility and safety issue because it forces pedestrians to walk in the street to cross the tracks. An inventory of sidewalks crossing at-grade railroad tracks is shown in Map A-28 and Table 10.

- *The frequency of the sidewalk repair inspection cycle has decreased.* The cycle of sidewalk inspection has decreased from a 10 year cycle to the current 12-14 year cycle. Current funding levels will allow the city to gradually resume the 10 year cycle.

- *"Temporary" asphalt patching may remain for years.* When the Sidewalk Inspections Office receives complaints of defective sidewalks that are outside of the annual sidewalk repair program area, the sidewalk is typically patched with asphalt on a temporary basis at no cost to the property owner, and a permanent repair occurs when the sidewalk cycles through the annual repair program, which could be a number of years later. This is primarily an aesthetic issue and not an accessibility issue.

Table 10: Condition of Sidewalks Crossing At-Grade Railroad Tracks

Type of Rail Service	Presence of Sidewalks Leading up to Tracks	Number of Railroad Crossings by Primary Sidewalk Crossing Material			Total Crossings
		Concrete Surface*	Asphalt Surface	No Surface	
Freight	Complete Sidewalks	9	31**	5	45
Freight	Incomplete Sidewalks	3	9	31	43
LRT	Complete Sidewalks	23			23
Trolley	Complete Sidewalks		1		1
Total		**35**	**41**	**36**	**112**

* Concrete crossings of freight railroad tracks often include asphalt between the railroad tracks and the sidewalk.
** 2 of the freight crossings with incomplete sidewalks and a concrete surface have concrete on one side of the street and asphalt on the other side of the street.

Implementation Strategies

5.2.1 Inspect and repair sidewalks in an effective time frame.
The City will continue to implement an annual sidewalk repair program and will seek to resume and maintain an appropriate frequency of inspections and repairs to maintain safe and accessible sidewalks.

5.2.2 Prioritize and implement improvements to sidewalks at railroad crossings.
The City will prioritize improvements to existing sidewalks crossing railroad tracks and investigate funding and implementation strategies to ensure these crossings are safe and accessible.

5.2.3 Continue to coordinate the annual sidewalk repair program with repair of sidewalks adjacent to public property.
The City will continue to work with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minneapolis Public Schools, and other public entities to support and encourage coordinated inspection and repair of sidewalks adjacent to public property with the annual sidewalk repair program.

See also:

Objective 1.1: Complete the Sidewalk Network

Objective 2.1: Identify and Remove Accessibility Barriers on Pedestrian Facilities

OBJECTIVE 5.3: MANAGE ENCROACHMENTS ON SIDEWALKS

There are a lot of things that are placed in the sidewalk corridor, which can clutter the sidewalk, and create accessibility barriers, and contribute to a poorly maintained pedestrian system. Some of the most common encroachment issues reported by pedestrians are:

- *Sidewalk Cafes* - Sidewalk cafes are a private use of the public right-of-way that if properly designed and operated can contribute to a more vibrant street life and walking environment. However, sidewalk cafes need to be carefully managed as they can also degrade the quality of walking by narrowing the physical space available for walking, trees, street furniture, and other needs in the Pedestrian Zone. It is not uncommon for sidewalk cafes to gradually, if unintentionally, expand into the Through Walk Zone. As of October 2008, there were 230 licensed sidewalk cafes in Minneapolis. Sidewalk cafes in Minneapolis are licensed and enforced by the City's Regulatory Services Department. The City's sidewalk café standards provide specific guidance on the layout of sidewalk cafes on sidewalks. Generally sidewalk cafes are allowed on sidewalks 12 feet or narrower if a 4 foot clear, unobstructed Through Walk Zone is maintained and on sidewalks wider than 12 feet if a minimum 6 foot Through Walk Zone is maintained. The current annual license fee for sidewalks cafes is $325 for cafes with 30 or fewer seats, and $468 for cafes with more than 30 seats. Violations of the sidewalk café license can result in a progressive administrative fine between $200 and $2000.

Sidewalk cafes foster street life, but need to be managed to ensure accessibility.

- *Newspaper Boxes* - Newspaper boxes are often poorly maintained and improperly placed to restrict pedestrian movement and accessibility. In December 2008, the City Council adopted an ordinance to improve the regulation of newspaper boxes (Title 17, Chapter 464). The ordinance includes detailed requirements regarding the placement of newspaper boxes and institutes a new newsrack license fee to fund the City's administration and enforcement costs for regulating newspaper boxes.

These newspaper boxes are too close to the crosswalk .

- *Sandwich Boards* - Portable "sandwich board" signs can restrict pedestrian movement and accessibility if placed where pedestrians need to walk. City ordinance (Title 20, Chapter 543) allows portable signs outside downtown on sidewalks if they are placed in the Planting/Furnishing Zone or Frontage Zone, but not in the Through Walk Zone (see Figure 9). Within downtown, portable signs may be allowed if permitted in connection with an approved valet parking license or sidewalk café permit.

- *Vegetation Maintenance* - Overgrown hedges, landscaping or trees behind the sidewalk can narrow the effective sidewalk width or reduce visibility for pedestrians; these issues are the responsibility of private property owners and enforced by the City's Regulatory Services Department. Similarly, boulevard trees and boulevard gardens may become overgrown and

narrow the effective sidewalk width or reduce visibility; maintenance of boulevard trees is the responsibility of the Park Board, and regulation of boulevard gardens is the responsibility of Public Works.

Implementation Strategies

5.3.1 Enforce sidewalk café standards.
The City will continue to enforce the requirements of the sidewalk café standards.

5.3.2 Review and consider updates to the City's existing sidewalk café standards.
The City will also review the requirements of the sidewalk café standards for compatibility with the *Design Guidelines for Streets and Sidewalks* and consider updates to the café standards as appropriate.

5.3.3 Implement and enforce the newsrack ordinance.
The City will implement and enforce the recently adopted newsrack ordinance, which requires all newspaper boxes to be licensed, the fees from which will fund the City's enforcement of the placement and maintenance of newspaper boxes.

5.3.4 Educate the public on requirements and best practices for maintaining the public right-of-way and reporting problems.
The City will improve communication tools and online information to inform the public and property owners of requirements for maintaining landscaping, fencing, newspaper boxes, sandwich boards, and other potential encroachments into the public sidewalk, as well as how to report problems.

See also:

Objective 2.1: Identify and Remove Accessibility Barriers on Pedestrian Facilities

Objective 4.4: Provide Street Furniture Appropriate for Pedestrian Needs

Objective 7.4: Foster Effective Pedestrian Advocacy and Stewardship

OBJECTIVE 5.4: MAINTAIN PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN CONSTRUCTION ZONES

During construction, pedestrian access via sidewalks and crosswalks may be altered or restricted. Temporary alterations to the pedestrian network can significantly affect the safety, accessibility, and convenience of walking. The City currently charges daily closure fees for sidewalks ($0.15 per lineal foot per day outside downtown and $0.25 in downtown) and traffic lanes ($0.50 per lineal foot per day outside downtown and $1.00 in downtown). Challenges with current practices for construction zones include:

- *Practices for maintaining accessible and safe pedestrian access through construction zones is inconsistent.* While the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Part 6, Chapter 6D) provides guidance on pedestrian safety and accessibility in work zones, there is not training or policy in place to ensure it is in use by all city crews and private contractors.
- *Sidewalks may be closed without a temporary walkway on one side of the street in downtown.* There are no requirements for providing a temporary walkway when a sidewalk is closed, unless the sidewalks on both sides of the street are closed. While this may be appropriate in most of the city, it causes considerable inconvenience for large numbers of pedestrians in downtown and other high pedestrian activity areas.

Pedestrian safety and accessibility needs to be maintained in work zones.

Implementation Strategies

5.4.1 Develop guidelines for safety and accessibility in work zones.
The City will develop guidelines for staff and contractors on safety and accessibility in work zones, drawing upon guidance in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control.

5.4.2 Establish regular staff training programs and materials on the City's practices for safety and accessibility in work zones.
The City will provide staff and contractors with the necessary information to implement the City's recommended practice for safety and accessibility in work zones, including potentially integrating the training into the Public Works Department's annual Safety Days programs.

5.4.3 Re-examine the City's existing policy and rate structure for sidewalk closures.
The City will re-examine its current policy and rate structure for sidewalk closures. The examination should include the feasibility of requiring a temporary pedestrian route be provided in high pedestrian use areas when the sidewalk on one side of the street is closed. Tradeoffs to be considered include cost and traffic impacts associated with providing a temporary walkway.

See also:

Objective 2.1: Identify and Remove Accessibility Barriers on Pedestrian Facilities

Objective 2.2: Improve and Institutionalize Best Design Practices for Accessibility