

SIDEWALK REPAIRS AND ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

(A. Knack)

RECOMMENDATION

That the November 15, 2021 City Operations report CO00690, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the June 7, 2021, City Council meeting, the following Councillor Inquiry was made:

Can Administration provide a report on the following:

1. The average timeline to investigate a report made via 311 about a sidewalk concern.
2. The criteria used to determine if a crack, hole, or slant is an accessibility issue.
3. The target timeline to repair a sidewalk that has an accessibility issue.
4. The target timeline to repair a sidewalk that does not have an accessibility issue.
5. The criteria used to determine if a sidewalk panel should be replaced instead of repaired.
6. The annual budget for sidewalk repair and replacement over each of the last 10 years.

Executive Summary

- The City of Edmonton has a mature asset maintenance process to address sidewalk issues.
- Administration has identified an opportunity to incorporate a GBA+ lens into the City's current sidewalk maintenance prioritization.
- The City's sidewalk maintenance strategy will advance equitable safety priorities laid out in the Safe Mobility Strategy 2021-2025 that contribute to Edmonton's goal of achieving Vision Zero by prioritizing notifications to enhance the accessibility of the most vulnerable sidewalk users.

REPORT

As of 2018, there were 5,508 kilometers of sidewalks within Edmonton's city limits. Based on the yearly growth rate, the City's sidewalk inventory has increased nearly 16 per cent since 2012. In response to the June 7, 2021 inquiry, Administration offers the following information:

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Average Timeline to Investigate Sidewalk Notifications

In general, the average timeline to investigate a sidewalk notification is five days when conditions allow. The City of Edmonton is committed to providing timely responses to sidewalk concerns and has service standards to ensure the accessibility and safety of sidewalks are maintained. Administration sets targets related to the time to inspect (TTI) and the time to repair (TTR) sidewalk deficiencies. The target timeline for Administration to inspect a sidewalk notification (i.e., TTI) is 5 days. The target TTR for a sidewalk depends on the type of repair needed and is influenced by a variety of factors such as resource availability and weather conditions.

In 2019, Administration initiated a project to review the notification process flow from residents to customer service agents to inspectors and back to the citizens. The first phase of the project focused on backend system users and resulted in a clarified intake processes and performance standards. The second phase of the project is currently underway, and will ensure interested individuals have access to more detailed status updates online or through the 311 App. Administration anticipates this improvement will result in fewer contacts to 311 for status updates.

In 2020, approximately half of all sidewalk notifications were inspected within five days (Attachment 1). A small number of notifications were inspected within a month, which was typically due to an increase in notifications in peak seasonal work. The remainder of the notifications, which took more than a month to inspect, were mostly received during the winter season when conditions may not be conducive for inspections. Inspectors who conduct sidewalk inspections are also responsible to conduct inspections for other programs such as asphalt repair and snow and ice control.

Criteria to Determine if a Crack, Hole, or Slant is an Accessibility Issue

When Administration is notified of a sidewalk concern, every location is inspected by district inspectors. The concern is evaluated based on size, severity, and location and evaluated against the risk to the public. When evaluating the concern, higher priority of repair is assigned to defects in areas that require increased accessibility requirements such as higher volumes of pedestrian traffic such as Business Improvement Areas or those that are located in the proximity of schools, hospitals, nursing homes etc. Safety concerns impacting accessibility are given higher consideration and expedited repair and are part of the Standard Operating Procedure for District Inspectors.

Sidewalk deficiencies, such as a crack, hole, or slant, contribute to accessibility challenges and can pose accessibility barriers for users in some circumstances. The criteria to determine which specific maintenance task is performed depends on the type of deficiency that needs to be addressed (Attachment 1). As repair methods present their own unique challenges, the time involved in addressing each repair can vary widely, though 65 per cent of repairs are completed within 60 days. Attachment 1 also outlines repair methods, construction duration and weather limitations that factor in the most common sidewalk repairs.

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Target Timeline to Repair a Sidewalk

Administration's target TTR is 60 days for trip hazards and 120 days for larger repairs or panel replacements. Attachment 2 outlines the criteria Administration uses to assess repair priorities. In 2020, 65 per cent of all sidewalk notifications were repaired within the 60 day target and 75 per cent of all notifications were repaired within the 120 day target (Attachment 3). The remaining repairs took more than 120 days due to the seasonal nature of sidewalk maintenance.

Criteria to Determine if a Sidewalk Panel Should be Replaced or Repaired

The decision to either repair or replace a sidewalk panel is based on several criteria including:

- The severity of deficiency identified during the inspection. The more severe the hazard is, the less likely other repair methods would be suitable to eliminate the concern. Each deficiency type has defined repair standards that identify the conditions under which replacement is required. Attachment 4 lists the repair levels. For example, if a joint displacement is greater than 30 mm, replacement is recommended. If a heave is greater than 15 mm, replacement is recommended. If a crack is greater than 25 mm and a temporary patch was previously installed, replacement is recommended.
- Whether other means of repair have been exhausted or are not suitable. If other repair methods such as patching, grinding, slab levelling have previously failed, replacement is recommended.
- The extent of the damage to the sidewalk. If the damaged area is greater than 50% of the sidewalk panel, replacement is recommended.
- If there is any planned capital rehabilitation (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal) within two years, replacement is not recommended.

Annual Budget for Sidewalk Repair and Replacement

The City's annual sidewalk maintenance budget was approximately \$4 million during the past 10 years (Attachment 5). In 2020, the sidewalk maintenance budget was temporarily reduced due to budget pressures experienced during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, however the 2021 sidewalk budget is at 2018 levels at \$4.3 M.

Since 2012, the total number of sidewalk notifications has increased 96 per cent, while the total sidewalk maintenance budget has increased just over 4 per cent facing an inventory increase of over 16 per cent in the same timeframe.

Next Steps

Administration is developing a new sidewalk maintenance strategy that will consider where people walk the most, where people need sidewalks the most (based on current and future usage), and overlay this information with asset condition to determine priority areas for targeted sidewalk maintenance. This strategy will focus on improving the way requests for repairs are managed through the City's customer relationship systems. It will also transform how maintenance work is planned, delivered, and communicated.

The objectives of the new sidewalk maintenance strategy include:

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1. Identifying a high-priority walk network where Edmontonians walk most and develop trip generation modelling. This will include integrating important community hubs, (i.e. schools, parks, transit, retail zones, etc.) into the priority walk network which will also consider missing links, City Plan objectives, and big city moves.
2. Using a GBA+ lens to engage the community on the development of the priority walk network.
3. Once finalized, overlaying the priority walk network to socially vulnerable/equity needs of Edmontonians to determine target areas which highlight optimal repair zones.
4. Create recommendations for future sidewalk repair investments, resource requirements, etc.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration listens and learns from Edmontonians through the analysis of 311 notifications and inquiries. Additionally, a para-pedestrian consultant was hired through the City's Recruitment Outreach People with Disabilities program in 2018/2019 to review the City's sidewalk maintenance practices. The consultant suggested special considerations for locations that pose a higher risk of injury or damage for people with mobility challenges as well as prioritizing concerns located near hospitals, schools and specialists, which have been incorporated into the current Sidewalk Maintenance Program.

Moving forward, the City's sidewalk maintenance strategy will emphasize listening and learning from our community. Administration will use public input gathered from previous public engagement activities to inform the sidewalk maintenance strategy and have targeted conversations as needed to help inform our recommendations (i.e. Public engagement through the safe mobility strategy implementation).

GBA+

Administration recognizes that 311 notifications often over represent communities with greater resources and can leave out communities with greater needs and less capacity. The City's sidewalk maintenance strategy will use a GBA+ lens by looking at qualitative and quantitative data and information to identify inequalities and barriers that affect Edmontonians' risk of being impacted by sidewalk accessibility concerns. This work will support the equitable safety commitments laid out in the Safe Mobility Strategy 2021-2025, which is designed to achieve Vision Zero through safe and livable streets by 2032. By considering diverse inputs, including technical studies, City policies and citizens' lived experience, sidewalk maintenance can play a critical role in contributing to Vision Zero, protecting vulnerable road users and addressing unintentional systemic service delivery inequity.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Timelines to Investigate Sidewalk Notifications and Maintenance Tasks Performed by Deficiency Type and Repair Methods, Construction Duration, and Weather Limitations
2. Sidewalk Prioritization Guide
3. Service Levels for Sidewalk Repairs
4. Asset Condition Nomenclature and Repair Levels
5. Sidewalk Maintenance Budget 2012 - 2021