

City sidewalk snow removal: A necessity for a liveable, equitable city.

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You are a senior, trying to decide whether or not you will attend the seniors' breakfast club at the Eva Rothwell Centre today. You haven't spoken to a single soul in days, and you could really use the food, but it's snowed again and the walk is treacherous; you fear you will slip. The last time it snowed like this, you had to walk on the road and you were almost hit by a car.



Wentworth st. N (by Empire Steel).

You are a parent, and you are encouraging your child to walk to school--the Public Health nurse who spoke at Parent-Teacher Council about the Active Sustainable School Travel program was so convincing; praising the benefits of active mobility for children's physical and mental health. But the sidewalk to get to Dr. Davey school is extremely narrow, slippery with ice and snow, and directly along an arterial road (no buffer between this road and the strip of sidewalk if you don't count the unpredictable cars pulling dropping kids off) with transport trucks speeding along.



Dr. Davey Elementary School, Wilson St.

You are a student with a knee injury. Or a person in a wheelchair. Getting off the bus is going to be difficult, and embarrassing; how will you manage to navigate the pile of snow directly left by the road plows, directly where the bus pulls up?

You are a commuter, trying to catch the number 10 beeline to work from Eastgate bus transit terminal to downtown, but the major roadway is sleek with ice, you have your computer you are terrified of falling on top off should you fall, plus you've already pulled your back, and really can't afford to take the time off.

These scenarios are typical, real life stories the Friendly Streets Hamilton project (an initiative of Environment Hamilton and Cycle Hamilton since 2017) routinely hears from residents we engage with. To us, it is egregious that the question of whether or not sidewalk snow removal, particularly along major roadways causes so much debate when the answer is clearly staring at us in the face: yes, of course! Why? Because what we are talking about is the wellbeing of residents and the liveability of a city.



King at Dundurn.



York Blvd.

By contrast, we would laugh our pants off if someone were to suggest that the roads not be cleared for drivers. And yet, in other great Northern nations like Sweden, unbelievably, sidewalks are cleared first, BEFORE roadways. Priority is given to active mobility/transportation since a car can push through a couple inches of snow, no problem, but the impact of the same amount on vulnerable road users, (often women, studies show) on quality of life is drastic. In our partnership with the City of Hamilton's Vision Zero program (called Friendly Streets for Vision Zero) we can attest that most people want sidewalk snow removal to be prioritized for safer streets. Our most recent survey (since January, 21st 2020) to our question, "Thinking about these neighbourhood streets, how often, if ever, are any of the following a concern? [Lack of snow removal on sidewalks in the winter]" only 3 out of 100 responses to date say they are not concerned with snow removal on sidewalks. 21 say they worry about it occasionally. The rest are either often concerned (37), or always concerned (35). From our street audits and direct engagement the response is the same.

The city has vowed to make Hamilton "the best place to raise a child and age successfully." Safe, active transportation is key to achieving this goal. Coupled with the fact the City of Hamilton has literally declared a Climate Emergency, and given that private, fossil-fueled based transportation is responsible for most of our personal emissions, and we need to drastically reduce carbon emissions if we have a hope of a familiar climate moving forward, it is time to

reward, rather than punish those participants of active travel. Let's embrace Hamilton as a winter city and act accordingly for all its residents.

Links

Why Sweden clears walkways before roads

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2018/01/24/why-sweden-clears-walkways-before-roads/>

Other Ontario cities that do sidewalk snow removal

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/kitchener-snow-removal-climate-change-warmer-winters-1.4968898>

Liveability and Climate Change

In Paris, it's a 15-minute city--getting from A to B.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2020/01/21/phasing-out-cars-key-to-paris-mayors-plans-for-15-minute-city/?utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=82421127&_hse_nc=p2ANqtz-kBL0tPJNj8rKNRsoZR9pLDW9DpJmyT4q7xiXpZdcXRrLgRI4EiOg2677zppafx5PFmJX3cZt93GEpGnL1WgKFLQ5jd6xXm88Jv2FfH9x-QenLCJ4&_hsmi=82421127#5b22d5476952

Love your city

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/02/07/how-torontos-late-poet-laureate-taught-us-the-importance-of-caring-for-a-citys-emotions.html>

Disability context

<https://braceworks.ca/2018/01/17/health-tech/how-to-make-snow-bound-cities-less-of-a-frozen-hell-for-people-with-disabilities/>