

March 1, 2023

To: Alaska State Legislators representing Districts within the Spenard Community Council boundaries:



*Elvi Gray-Jackson; Matt Claman; Löki Tobin; Alyse Galvin; Jennie Armstrong, Zack Fields*

Dear Legislators,

The residents of Spenard Community Council request that additional funding be moved to prioritize clearing snow from pathways designed for non-motorized travel. We also request funding for vehicles designed for snow removal that will also not pile snow from the roads onto sidewalks and into bike lanes and for additional vehicles designed to remove snow from sidewalks and other narrower pathways designed for non-motorized travel.

Though not a new issue in 2023, this winter has been particularly difficult for those who do not travel in Anchorage by car. As of this writing, for example, there are still no clear pedestrian travel routes on the east side of Minnesota Boulevard, making pedestrian or cycling travel difficult or impossible for those trying to get to nearby businesses or even to area bus stops; the sidewalks on the west side of Minnesota Boulevard are not flat and the angle slopes onto the road where traffic often travels faster than the 45 mph posted speed limit. This is of particular interest to Spenard residents as this major roadway cuts through our neighborhood; in order to cross safely at a crosswalk, residents must currently traverse across uneven “social” paths approximately 8 inches wide and created by the steps of previous pedestrians. Residents using mobility devices or with visual impairments are currently unable to travel by foot safely in these conditions. It is along the roads maintained by the Alaska State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities that these conditions are particularly disastrous.

In an effort to ensure all residents of Spenard and of Anchorage are able to safely travel to their destinations, we ask for the following in order of priority:

- 1. Funding adequate to cover the equipment and staffing necessary to clear snow from the sidewalks along state maintained roads in Anchorage within 72 hours of a snowfall of 4 inches or more.** Anchorage is currently struggling to maintain a workforce able to clear the streets and sidewalks. We suggest in addition to purchasing additional equipment necessary to clear snow from sidewalks within 72 hours, a substantial increase in salary and benefits is due to potential equipment operators in this competitive market.
- 2. Funding to create and administer a system to disseminate real-time or end-of-shift updates to let the public know which sidewalks have been cleared following a snowfall of 4 inches or more.** A website currently exists to let residents know what priority state-maintained roads hold with an explanation that reads “[m]ost sidewalks are assigned the same priority level as the

adjacent roadway, but will have a different level of service and response time due to the availability of resources.” Our first priority request addresses the second part of that note, but our second request is to aid residents in making safe travel plans. We request that clearance information be available on a website and by phone.

- 3. Funding adequate to cover equipment and staffing necessary to maintain clear sidewalks after plows clearing the road have pushed snow back onto sidewalks.** While maintaining roads, plows on state-maintained roads will often push snow back onto sidewalks. This builds berms that sidewalk users must climb up and down at intersections, creating a situation that can make a pedestrian fall into oncoming traffic and making the sidewalk impassable by users with mobility devices or vision impairments. These plows also push ice, snow chunks, and other debris back onto the sidewalk, and on other occasions will plow enough snow back on to the sidewalk that it once again completely blocks the path. We ask for funding to cover regular maintenance using up-to-date equipment and adequately paid equipment operators.

Residents of Spenard and Anchorage rely on maintained paths on which to travel regardless of the method they use. Pedestrians and cyclists deserve at least the same level of maintenance attention regarding snow removal as do operators of motor vehicles. We ask that you fund snow removal on sidewalks adjacent to state-maintained roads so that residents of all abilities are able to travel safely throughout Anchorage.

Sincerely,

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Meg Mielke, President  
Spenard Community Council

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by Spenard Community Council Members: \_\_\_\_ in favor, \_\_\_\_ opposed.