

CHAPTER 8 — MAINTENANCE

Trail maintenance is a crucial factor in providing for the continued usefulness of all types of trails. The quality of maintenance is most demanding with bicycle trails and groomed trails, and least demanding with natural trails.

The problems with trail maintenance now are:

- Trails are often a repository for side-cast road snow,
- Often there is little to no maintenance,
- Where trail maintenance exists, it is often not known who is responsible, and
- Implementation is often patchy.

I. REQUIRED MAINTENANCE

The periodic clipping of brush is necessary with most trails. User groups are generally willing to do this and save the Municipality many dollars in maintenance money. Under no circumstances should herbicides be used to control brush along trails. Herbicides leave dead standing shrubs that are an eyesore and a fire hazard, and do little to clear the trail. Many herbicides could endanger the water supply. where domestic sources are drawn from wells.

A. SIDEWALKS

Proper maintenance of sidewalks is an essential ingredient for pedestrian trails. Maintenance includes keeping sidewalks free of dirt, gravel, rubbish, ice, and snow. It also includes keeping breaks in the sidewalk surface from construction and utility projects to a minimum and requiring that they be repaired as soon as possible. In those situations where sidewalks are going to be impassable for any length of time, pedestrians should be given proper notification and safe, alternate travel routes should be provided.

Winter maintenance of sidewalks is of particular concern in Anchorage. In many instances, high snow berms are piled on the sidewalks when streets are plowed, forcing people to walk directly in the vehicle lane of travel. At some transit stops pedestrians are forced to wait in the roadway or in deep snow. There is insufficient right-of-way to accommodate separated sidewalks along many of the existing major roadways in Anchorage (i.e., 15th Avenue, Fireweed Lane, Dimond Boulevard). Separated sidewalks could be maintained in the winter with small snow blower/plow equipment, with the space between the sidewalks and the road being used for snow storage. However, the lack of right-of-way for snow storage requires that snow be stored on the sidewalks until it can be hauled away. The benefit to having sidewalks attached along roadways is that it can be removed by the same equipment used to plow the road.

Section 24.80.090 of the Anchorage Municipal Code states that maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to private property in the Residential-Office, commercial, industrial, and Public Lands and Institutions zoning districts, where ever located in the Municipality, is the responsibility of the owner or occupant of the premises. Snow and ice shall not be allowed to accumulate or be cast onto any sidewalk, street, avenue, alley, or public place. This section is enforceable by any police officer or employee of the Municipality who is a peace officer.

Furthermore, pursuant to Section 24.80.050 the Director of Public Works may have a sidewalk cleaned if the sidewalk has had debris or other material placed upon it and is inconvenient or dangerous to the public. The Director will bill the appropriate property owner, occupant, or manager for the services.

As the ordinance is currently written, the Municipality has the burden of the expense rather than the property owner. Penalties should be established commensurate with the personnel requirement entailed in enforcement. Anchorage would be a significantly more pedestrian-friendly city if maintenance requirements were imposed.

It is possible that this section could be expanded to include the occupants of land adjacent to sidewalks in all zoning districts, including residential districts. The Trails Oversight Committee should discuss this issue.

There should be a hierarchy of maintained walkways in Anchorage, just as there is for maintained roadways. There should be a goal of clearing significant hard surface walkways within 72 hours. Significant walkways include the following:

- transit stops and stations;
- trails from transit stops to schools, hospitals, government institutions, major commercial centers, elderly housing centers; and
- walking routes to schools.

All other hard-surfaced walkways should be cleared within one week of a major snowfall.

B. MULTI-USE PAVED TRAILS

Trails next to the roadway accumulate large quantities of gravel, salt, and other road debris after a winter of snow removal. After spring snow melt, it can be difficult to find the trail under the accumulated debris. It is at this time, usually late in April, that a thorough sweeping of the trail is necessary before it can be used for that year. When a trail is well separated from the roadway, usually one sweeping during the spring is enough to clear gravel and debris. However, broken glass may accumulate all summer.

Another disadvantage of paved trails immediately adjacent to the roadway is that road debris may continue to accumulate on them all summer. This happens principally because gravel and debris from heavy construction spill onto the roadway and are eventually swept on to the trail by traffic. This is also true of broken glass. Broken glass is a particular deterrent to bicycle users.

Vegetative screening between a trail and the roadway serves to reduce the amount of snow on the trail that is plowed or blown from the roadway. However, vegetation placed between a trail and a roadway becomes loaded with snow from the road, and as a result, is difficult and expensive to maintain.

C. CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, DOG MUSHING AND SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Maintenance for cross-country ski trails, dog mushing trails, and snowmobile trails has primarily been taken on by the affected user group. The Nordic Skiing Association through the voluntary "Trail Pin" program begun in 1984 obtains money for maintenance of the ski trails. This effort collects significant amounts of money for the maintenance of trails throughout Anchorage.

D. EQUESTRIAN TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Trails used by equestrians, unless they are on firm dry soils, may develop mud pockets that require filling with gravel or crushed rock. This would partly depend on the volume of use.

E. INTERPRETIVE TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Interpretive trails may require fencing of principal attractions if they are being damaged by unregulated walking. It is unfortunate when such measures have to be taken, yet the alternative would be to sacrifice the attraction. Closer regulation is the consequence of density.

II. TRAIL MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY

The following agencies are responsible for trail maintenance. However, operational/administrative responsibilities may be delegated to or assumed by other municipal agencies. For example, in the Anchorage Bowl, while the Department of Public Works has the responsibility for maintenance of separated trails in the road right-of-way, the Department of Cultural and Recreational Services actually performs the maintenance.

Assigned service area responsibilities reflect their legally authorized services for which the service area, except as otherwise noted, is the sole, legal source of maintenance funding appropriated from municipal tax revenues. Service area maintenance responsibilities do not necessarily dictate administrative or operational responsibility for managing or performing the maintenance. Service area tax revenues could be appropriated to whatever municipal department is assigned management and performance of the maintenance pursuant to AMC 3.20 or 25.10.050 through 25.10.060.

A. ANCHORAGE ROADS AND DRAINAGE SERVICE AREA (ARDSA), GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA (GVSA) and GLEN ALPS SERVICE AREA (GASA)

Except for predominantly recreational trails and walkways, ARDSA, GVSA and GASA are the sole, legal source of funding appropriated from municipal tax revenues for maintenance of trails and walkways within all municipally maintained, vehicle and pedestrian rights-of-way in ARDSA, GVSA and GASA respectively. Areawide tax revenues are the legal source of municipal funding for municipally maintained transit stops and pads unique to and for mass transit

Except as otherwise assigned, it shall be the responsibility of the Department of Public Works, Street Maintenance, to maintain all trails and walkways, including transit stops and pads, within all municipally maintained vehicle and pedestrian rights-of-way in ARDSA, GVSA and GASA. Some or all of these maintenance responsibilities could be delegated to other municipal Departments. At the present time, snow removal and sweeping of trails and walkways is accomplished by the Department of Cultural and Recreational Services. Transit stops and pads are maintained by the Public Transportation Department.

B. CHUGIAK-EAGLE RIVER RURAL ROAD SERVICE AREA (CBERRRSA)

Except for predominantly recreational trails and walkways, CBERRRSA is the sole, legal source of funding appropriated from municipal tax revenues for maintenance of trails and walkways within all municipally maintained, automotive road rights-of-way in CBERRRSA. Areawide tax revenues are the legal source of municipal funding for maintenance of municipally maintained transit stops and pads unique to and for mass transit.

Except as otherwise assigned, it shall be the responsibility of the Department of Public Works, Street Maintenance, to maintain all trails and walkways, including transit stops and pads, within all municipally maintained, automotive road rights-of-way in CBERRRSA. Some or all of these maintenance responsibilities could be delegated to other municipal departments.

C. ANCHORAGE AND EAGLE RIVER-CHUGIAK PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICE AREAS (APRSA and ERCPRSA) and GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA (GVSA)

APRSA, ERCPRSA and GVSA are the sole, legal source of funding appropriated from municipal tax revenues for maintenance of all municipally maintained, predominantly recreational trails and walkways in APRSA, ERCPRSA and GVSA respectively.

In APRSA, ERCPRSA, and GVSA, it shall be the responsibility of the Department of Cultural and Recreational Services, Parks and Recreation Division, to maintain all municipally maintained, predominantly recreational trails and walkways. Some or all of these maintenance responsibilities could be delegated to other municipal Departments.

Within the Chugiak-Eagle River and Girdwood parks and recreation service area, the service area will be responsible for trail and walkway maintenance in parks and greenbelts.

D. ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

It shall be the responsibility of the Anchorage School District to maintain all municipally maintained trails, sidewalks, and walkways on municipally maintained property which has been delegated to the School District for management, except those located in municipally maintained, vehicle and pedestrian rights-of-way in ARDSA or automotive road rights-of-way in CBERRRSA.

E. STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

Trails within State rights-of-way fall within the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). DOT&PF maintenance activities are generally limited to summer use of the trails, and include:

- annual inspection of the trails,
- removal of debris and obstructions, and
- occasional sweeping.

DOT&PF often enters into agreements with other governmental units for trail maintenance, and is working towards a policy to require such agreements with local governments before constructing new facilities. Thus, the Municipality generally maintains trails in Anchorage in State rights-of-way. Additional funding must be provided from other sources if there is to be winter maintenance or improved summer maintenance of trails by DOT&PF within State rights-of-way that are not maintained by another governmental unit.

F. FEDERAL LANDS

On Federal lands it is the responsibility of the concerned agency, such as the Bureau of Land Management at the Campbell Tract, or the military on the bases to maintain their trails, sidewalks, and walkways.

G. INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNERS

It is the responsibility of occupants of land abutting sidewalks in R-0, all Business (B—) and Industrial (I—) and PLI zoning districts to clear accumulations of snow and ice from such sidewalks.

III. MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT

All equipment used for trail maintenance should be designed for trail and walkway use. For example, the weight of the equipment must not exceed the surface bearing capacity of the trail or walkway surface. Maintenance equipment tires or tracks must fit fully upon the trail so as not to damage the trail shoulders.

IV. USE OF VOLUNTEERS

The Municipality has instituted an Adopt-A-Trail Program in the same manner as the Adopt-A-Park program. Volunteers are responsible for light maintenance and litter removal along designated sections of trails and walkways.

The Municipality could develop a new program that employs volunteers to operate mechanized trail maintenance equipment if a training program were established and risk liability was ensured. The Municipality would purchase, maintain and store the equipment. The Municipality would have to train volunteers in the proper operation of the equipment. and be responsible for transportation between the storage facility and the job site. This program could be modified or supplemented by contracting with private non-profit organizations.

The Municipality could enlist volunteers in a Trail Watch program, much like the Neighborhood Watch program. They would routinely patrol designated sections of trails and walkways. Thus, trained volunteers, equipped with hand-held radios, would be on the trails to assist people in trouble and to report illegal or dangerous activities.

There are also opportunities for public-private partnerships for trail maintenance.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Trail Oversight Committee (See Chapter 10.), should execute a maintenance implementation plan. The plan would involve a study of maintenance techniques in presently maintained areas, identification of what the problems are, what are solutions, and location of needed maintenance where maintenance is needed. The oversight committee could also adopt incentive programs for trail maintenance.
2. Snow removed from roads should not be deposited on trails or walkways, except where necessary for temporary storage.
3. Street maintenance techniques for removing snow from driving lanes should be conducted such that a minimum amount of snow goes onto adjacent trails and walkways.
4. There should be no herbicides used in brush removal.

