What We Heard Summary

The Snow and Ice Control (SNIC) program completed a review of seven different feedback sources to identify common themes, frustrations and ideas related to the 2025-26 winter season. This comprehensive analysis integrated a diverse range of internal and public channels to assist in balancing community priorities with operational realities. The feedback was compiled and connected with service level enhancement options. The following identifies each source and summarizes the key themes identified from each source. These findings were connected to the enhancement options and used to provide the rankings of the impact of those enhancements.

Multi-Modal Transportation Survey

This survey is in partnership with the University of Alberta as part of a Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) grant for Advancing Winter Road Maintenance Systems with Data Intelligence and Analytics.

The online survey was conducted from April 30 to May 13, 2026, to understand the current equity and accessibility of non-automobile winter transportation. The primary goal was to identify winter travel challenges, understand the needs of various non-automobile travel modes, and address equity barriers to integrate safety with accessibility. Additional analysis from U of A is using geospatial data to provide location specific insights.

This survey captured the experiences of users, including drivers, cyclists, and those using assisted mobility devices. It aimed to evaluate satisfaction across various infrastructure types and prioritize potential service level enhancements.

The findings showed lower satisfaction for high-importance areas like curb ramps, City maintained & homeowner sidewalks, and bus shelters. The most important operations identified included clearing priority sidewalks, bus stops, and curb ramps in one day.

Multi-modal transportation users are most satisfied with snow and ice clearing of 'entryway to rec centers' (63%) & LRT stations' (62%). Users are least satisfied with the snow and ice clearing for 'homeowner maintained sidewalks' (25%) and 'curb ramps and curb cuts' (23%). The most important transportation infrastructure to be cleared within 1 day of snowfall were 'Senior center(s) entryway' & 'Wheelchair ramps to LRT stations/ transit centres' (96% each). The least important transportation-related infrastructure to be cleared within 1 day are 'Protected bike lanes' (45%) & "painted bike lanes' (46%).

High priority areas (where importance is high but satisfaction is low) include: Curb ramps and curb cuts, City maintained sidewalks, Wheelchair ramps to transit/LRT stations, Bus shelter and surrounding sidewalk, Homeowner maintained sidewalks, Crosswalks and On-street bus loading area.

Core strengths (where both importance and satisfaction are high) include: Entryway to seniors centres, Pedestrian school zones, Entryway or staircase to LRT stations and transit centres, LRT stations and transit centres and Entryway to recreation centres.

The data highlighted a sharp divide regarding infrastructure prioritization. While active transportation advocates highlighted that icy conditions and windrows often made bike lanes unusable, other respondents expressed frustration that bike lanes appeared to be cleared to bare pavement while residential roads remained impassable.

A critical learning from this source is the impact of snow clearing on vulnerable populations. Residents with disabilities emphasized uncleared crosswalks and windrows at intersections are an inconvenience and significant safety concern preventing them from leaving their homes.

This survey is used to inform improvements of operations specific to residents who rely on multi-modal transportation. The survey data and responses from open-ended questions provided additional feedback and were incorporated into the impact ratings of the enhancement options.

SNIC Communications Survey

The annual year-end communications survey focused on the effectiveness of service notifications and communications throughout the 2025-26 season. This survey has been conducted annually as a recommendation from the 2021 SNIC audit.

The findings show that residents are receiving the communications and many find the email and text notifications to be timely and helpful for planning. A recurring point of contention is the lack of enforcement during parking bans. Residents noted that bylaw non-compliance results in plows blading around vehicles, which leaves dangerous ruts and narrow lanes for the rest of the winter.

Many respondents reported that notifications did not always align with real-time operations, such as receiving a notice that clearing was complete when no plows had visited their street. This disconnect leads to a loss of trust in the City's digital tools, with some residents calling for a return to more localized signage.

In addition to helping inform changes to SNIC communications, responses and comments provided additional feedback and were incorporated into the impact ratings of the enhancement options.

EIC Pulse Survey on SNIC Maps

In May 2026, the City's monthly PULSE survey focused on the awareness and perceived effectiveness of the two SNIC maps: Roadways Snow Clearing Map and Active Pathways Snow Clearing Maps. It aimed to identify user priorities for map functionality and determine the acceptable frequency for data updates to help residents plan their travel. While the survey findings are being used to inform improvements of the maps, several open-ended questions provided additional feedback related to many aspects of winter maintenance.

A significant positive finding is the high level of awareness for the Roadways map (71 per cent) and a general consensus that the maps are easy to navigate with readable fonts. However, a major point of contention is the update frequency; only 22 per cent of roadway map users find the current update increments

acceptable, with a strong demand for updates every 4 hours or less.

Surveyed residents expressed frustration when maps indicated a status of complete while current visible conditions showed roadways or pathways remained snow-covered due to ongoing snowfall, leading to a cleared versus usable gap. Additionally, the mobile experience was identified as a major friction point as over half of all users access the maps via cell phone but reported difficulties with navigation, loading speeds and readability.

311 Analysis

This dataset provided a quantitative look at direct resident inquiries, tracking over 28,000 tickets recorded through 311 and related to snow and ice maintenance during the season. The data shows a significant increase in 311 tickets in January, with 15,121 tickets issued. The primary items brought up were requests for residential road clearing, complaints regarding icy walks and complaints where a road was blocked by snow.

A notable point of focus for the scoring was the volume of tickets related to catchbasin windrows and icy conditions, which highlights the public's concern with drainage and safety post-clearing. These figures helped populate the Resident Awareness category of the feedback scoring by providing a direct measure of community demand.

Councillor Inquiry Records

A review of councillor inquiries recorded in POSSE related to winter maintenance was also conducted with themes and common issues identified. Common items brought up from formal inquiries from Councillors on behalf of their constituents focused on unresolved service requests and specific operational failures, such as missed clearing in cul-de-sacs, concerns over windrow heights and emergency vehicle access to specific parks or facilities. There is a noted contention regarding the response time for these inquiries, with some files remaining open for several weeks during peak snow events.

The records highlighted specific service gaps and gray zones where responsibility for clearing was unclear, such as at school zones or specialized transit centres. These insights were vital for identifying the Frontline Perception and Operations Impact scores as they seemed to suggest where crews struggled to meet

Minimum Maintenance Standards.

Media Coverage and Inquiries

An analysis was completed of media coverage and inquiries received during the winter season specific to winter maintenance. These inquiries and stories often reflect the most prominent public-facing issues.

The media was focused on the cost differences between clearing active pathways compared to roadways as well as the unprecedented snow in December 2025. Another common theme was the City's enforcement policy, with stories highlighting resident frustration over being ticketed and the City's low compliance rates. An increase in operational updates during peak season resulted in an increase of ongoing stories on clearing progress leading up to and during the residential parking ban.

The media also brought attention to environmental concerns such as the microplastic debris left behind by bristle brushes used on active pathways. These reports provided a broader context for the resident popularity scoring in the enhancement options, showing which operational issues were gaining the most public awareness.

PARS Internal Staff Feedback

In spring 2026, the SNIC leadership team engaged all PARS staff involved with winter maintenance to identify issues and opportunities. An intensive Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was completed. This helped identify issues and solutions throughout the organization to ensure the best possible options for enhancements are included.

The internal review highlighted many areas of priority to frontline staff that are not necessarily at the top of public feedback. Topics such as types of equipment, collaboration with other internal and external groups, priority for resident cooperation and staff working environment. All possible internal adjustments are in the process of being implemented, the Well Maintained City service package encompasses many of the structural suggestions and larger requests have been included within Options for Enhancements.