Summary of the Active Pathways Service Level Review Project

Background

Administration initiated the Snow and Ice Control (SNIC) Active Pathways Service Level Review in May 2026, aiming to ensure that the Active Pathway Service priority system for snow and ice removal effectively aligns with broader transportation development and delivery objectives. Ensuring a consistent definition of active pathways and a singular organizational approach to SNIC related to active pathways will ensure the best service to residents.

Approach

Administration conducted a review of all corporate directives related to the development, design, accessibility and implementation of the active transportation network and operational servicing. Internal teams and interest holders were engaged on the definition of the active transportation network inventory as they relate to SNIC, and a review of the current priority definition and associated service levels was conducted. Administration completed budgetary analysis and implications for options related to adjusting service levels and developed recommendations on potential improvements to the existing service levels framework.

Results

Administration identified that City departments share a baseline commitment to winter accessibility, but have differing goals and interpretations of maintenance obligations. These differences relate to the scope of the inventory the City should maintain and the appropriate service levels for different inventory types or locations. The team also identified that data systems are fragmented, with at least six distinct internal and public active pathway GIS maps with variances in tracking and ownership.

A current inventory breakdown was completed, showing that for the 2025-26 season there was 1,729 km of active pathways inventory maintained as either Core Facilities and Pathways (Priority 1) or Machine City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access (Priority 2) service levels, with the majority being Machine City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access (Priority 2). Also completed was analysis on the usage by pedestrians and cyclists in summer vs. winter (referred

to as “retention rate”), including Social Vulnerability Index as well as analysis of winter retention by Priority level and path type. Their work identified the top 10 busiest active pathways for cycling out the approximately 40 locations with permanent counters installed. These top locations account for approximately 50 per cent of total bicycle crossings recorded at permanent counter locations in the winter. Further analysis is required to assess the remaining service levels, which may provide further insights and considerations for more proactive crosswalk and access point windrow removal and clearing.

Growth pressures were identified, including planned expansions that will add another 47 km of active pathways by 2027[1], which could require up to another 449 hours of labour per snow event to maintain current service levels. During the 2023-26 budget, both capital and operating funding were approved to support both the purchase of winter maintenance equipment and for the operations and maintenance associated with the Active Transportation Network Expansion program based on the level of information known at the time. Finally, the project began to analyze implications related to adjusting City-maintained active pathways winter inventory, analysis of which is still ongoing.

Implementation Approach

The project started in May 2026 and is expected to finalize its proposed options, including but not limited to those with prioritization of accessibility in areas high on the Social Vulnerability Index, in late summer 2026. Any changes to the current procedure will require cross-departmental review and approval across City Operations, Infrastructure Services, Urban Planning and Economy, Community Services, Financial Services, and Legal Services, with final approval from the City's Executive Leadership Team. If a different approach is approved, full implementation of such changes would be scheduled for the 2027-28 winter season.

[1] Based on the Active Transportation Network Expansion program and Building Great Neighborhoods renewal plans.