WHAT WE HEARD

Snow & Ice Program

Winter 2023/2024

Community Feedback:

At the onset of the pilot program, we made a commitment to listen to and seek the perspectives of community members throughout the winter. We wanted to:

- Gain regular insight into public perceptions of road conditions throughout the winter.
- Learn from residents about their likes and frustrations during the 2023/2024 pilot project.

From December 2023 to March 2024, we formally heard from approximately 850 citizens through the following mechanisms:

- **Engaged Citizens Group** – a group of self-selected citizens who signed up to provide regular input on road conditions and perceptions of operations. Seven input opportunities were provided.
- **Community surveys –** two broad public surveys were issued through the winter - one at the end of the Green Route Campaign and at the end of winter.
- **Transit Rider feedback** – riders surveyed about transit stop clearing, accessibility and maintenance.
- **Citizen Satisfaction Survey** – satisfaction with services, including snow clearing was asked in the statistical representative citizen survey conducted by a third-party.

These activities were in alignment with the **CONSULT** level of the IAP2 Spectrum.

What We Heard:
Through each of the above techniques, several key themes emerged, with the top themes being:

- Satisfaction with speed of Green Route plow: we heard high levels of satisfaction about this plow campaign, and positive response to overnight plowing.
- Mixed response about no Grey Route plow: some residents satisfied because no plow meant no windrows were left, while others identified rutting on their streets (particularly later in the season when the melt began).
- Satisfaction with trail clearing and maintenance: residents reported a high level of satisfaction with public trails being well maintained and accessible throughout the winter. However, there was dissatisfaction with incidents of private sidewalks not being cleared.

1. **Engaged Citizens Group Summary:**
   Participants in this group were asked the same questions throughout the winter, after major snowfall events, to gauge how satisfaction changed over time, and in response to weather patterns. Results from this group showed:

   - **Satisfaction with Arterial Roads**: Throughout the winter, high levels of satisfaction for snow clearing on main arterial roads were reported.

- **Satisfaction with Bridges and Overpasses**: Responses typically showed a moderate level of satisfaction.
- **Public Sidewalks and Trails**: Satisfaction was lower here, with a notable proportion of respondents feeling dissatisfied. Through further surveys, we determined confusion between public and private sidewalks.
- **Snow Clearing at Transit Stops**: Satisfaction also varied widely, with satisfaction and dissatisfaction were equally split among those who responded.
- **Green Routes:** There was generally high levels of satisfaction with Green Routes is, with most reporting that these routes were accessible and safe throughout the winter.
- **Grey Routes:** Ratings of safety and accessibility decreased over the course of the winter as it pertained to Grey Routes.
- **Awareness of Snow Clearing Information**: The majority of people were informed about snow clearing schedules through various channels, including city social media, signs, and other media outlets.

2. **Public Survey Feedback:**

- **Pulse Check (January 29 – February 2):**
  At the end of the Green Route campaign, we asked residents to rate their satisfaction with **Green Route Plowing** with:
    - 71% respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied
    - 16% respondents were neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied)
    - 13% respondents either very unsatisfied or unsatisfied

- **End of Season Survey (March 18 – April 4):**
    - When asked to rank the winter maintenance on Red Deer's **roads overal**l:
        - 67% of respondents said they were either better or much better maintained this winter than compared to last winter
        - 20% said they were worse
        - 13% said the same/ no change

    - When asked about **traction control** (sanding and salting) efforts on City streets this winter:
        - 55% of respondents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied,
        - 25% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied,
        - 19% neutral

    - When asked about the **speed of Green** Route plowing:
        - 60% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied
        - 25% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

- 15% neutral

  o When asked to rate the accessibility of **trails and public sidewalks** throughout Red Deer (including in public trails in neighbourhoods, downtown, and the park system):
    - 40% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied
    - 37% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied
    - 23% were neutral

3. **Transit Rider Feedback:**
   In March 2024, transit riders were surveyed on their satisfaction related to transit stop clearing.

   - When asked how was the accessibility and winter maintenance at transit stops this winter:
     - 49% of respondents said either good or very good
     - 33% rated it as acceptable
     - 18% said either poor or very poor

   - When asked whether snowing clearing at transit stops was better or worse this year:
     - 31% of respondents said better than last year
     - 8% said worse than last year
     - 27% said no change
     - 33% were unsure

4. **Citizen Satisfaction Survey:**
   In March 2024, Leger conducted a Citizen Satisfaction Survey for The City of Red Deer. A statistically representative sample of residents are selected to complete the survey, and are asked a series of questions related to municipal services and satisfaction of each.

   - 2024: 67% reported either being satisfied or very satisfied with snow clearing.
   - 2019: 61% reported either being satisfied or very satisfied with snow clearing.
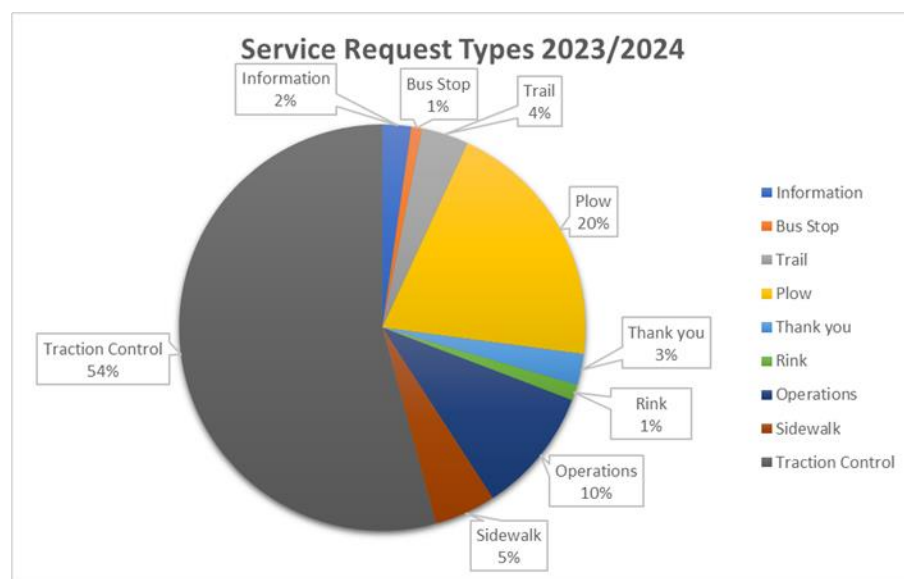
OTHER FEEDBACK:

 Citizen feedback was also informally collected through internal customer service channels including phone calls, emails, and social media.

1. Customer Service Analysis:

Customer service within the Parks and Public Works department encompasses handling incoming calls, emails, and report-a-problem notifications from both internal and external sources. This year's total call volume stood at 2,911, a decrease from the previous season's overwhelming 4,516 calls. On average, over the last decade, the department has received around 3,278 calls per season. Optimistically, the 2,911 calls representing an 11% decrease from average year, suggests that there is an uptick in the accessibility and effectiveness of communication modes being used, or perhaps the milder winter simply didn't generate the need or concern to call.

This year, most of our requests (54%) were for traction control, compared to the number of traction control requests from last year (34%). This can be explained by the number of freeze-thaw cycles the city experienced, and the overall warmer temperatures creating optimal conditions for icy roads.

The second largest service request pertains to plowing. This can be further delineated into one third of the 20% grouping that is driven from the request to spot maintain back alleys. Back-alley plowing is managed though a customer service request program rather than a network wide plowing program that would see plowing service provided based on triggers and targets.

Service Request Types 2023/2024

- Information 2%
- Bus Stop 1%
- Trail 4%
- Plow 20%
- Thank you 3%
- Rink 1%
- Operations 10%
- Sidewalk 5%
- Traction Control 54%

2. Social Media Analysis:

Overall, social media sentiment of non-residential plow was 36% percent positive, 41% negative, and 33% neutral. There were 1245 comments made on 31 posts.

During Green Route Clearing, the feedback on social media themes were:

- Confusion and/or lack of understanding between Green and Grey Routes
- Concern and/or dislike for windrows
- Night plowing: The majority preferred the short-term inconvenience as it meant quicker snow clearing overall. Only a very small group complained about noise at night.
- Comments made on Green Route operation posts were more positive than with general posts. Of 789 comments made, 36% were positive, 28% negative, and 35% neutral (mostly confirming their route colour and seeking other information about the program.

Social Media Sentiment Analysis Through Winter:

Month	Comment positive	Comment negative	Comment neutral
Oct	5%	73%	22%
Nov	12%	73%	15%
Dec	24%	26%	50%
Jan	36%	28%	35%
Feb	19%	33%	48%
Mar	26%	43%	31%