



City of Omaha
Department of Public Works
Winter Street Maintenance and Snow Emergency
Resident Survey

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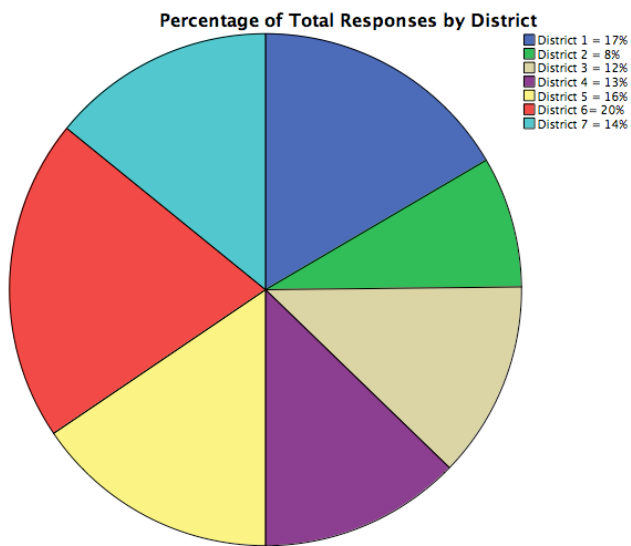
Executive Summary

Residents of Omaha report satisfaction with the effectiveness of snow emergency events and the service they receive from Omaha Public Works during the winter. The timing and quality of snow removal on major and secondary streets is satisfactory as is the condition of sidewalks during the winter months. In general, most districts also report satisfaction with timing and quality of snow removal on residential streets with Districts 2 and 4 expressing a bit more dissatisfaction than other districts. Residents are also satisfied with the City's communication, both in terms of general winter street maintenance policies and also when a snow emergency is called.

One concern that the survey uncovered was that The Snow Emergency Plan which most residents find clear and easy to follow, is nevertheless thought to be poorly enforced. Residents see no need for an on-street parking ban during snow emergencies and would not support an increase wheel tax to improve their streets maintenance services.

Survey Overview

In mid-July, 2016 (July 11 – 15), the City of Omaha Department of Public Works conducted a survey of residents to learn about their needs, priorities and level of satisfaction concerning winter street maintenance and snow emergency events. This survey is one part of a larger review of snow removal operations. A random sample of 1,400 residents was obtained consisting of names and addresses for 200 households from each of the 7 council districts. Surveys were mailed to each of these households with a reminder, follow-up letter sent on July 26. Two hundred and ninety responses were collected for a 21% response rate, consistent with expectations for mailed survey response rates.



The results of this survey, presented below, were analyzed in two ways. First, results were obtained for the overall population.¹ These results are discussed below and presented in the tables contained in Appendix A. Secondly, we looked to see if there were any significant differences among the council districts – particular districts where responses differed significantly from those seen overall. If such differences were found they are noted in the discussion below.

Two additional, non-random, surveys were conducted at the same time as the randomly sampled mail survey. First, the Mayor invited the public at large to complete the survey. The Mayor posted on her website an electronic form containing the same survey that was mailed. What were returned to the Mayor's office were surveys from individuals not a part of the random survey process and thus results of this additional survey cannot be generalized to the residents of Omaha at large. Thirty-three residents responded to this survey and results are reported in Appendix B.

¹ Results were weighted to allow for equal representation of each of the seven Districts.

Second, a group of constituents were identified by the Omaha City Council and sent an invitation via email to take an online version of the survey. Nineteen of the 61 individuals contacted responded to the survey and the results of that non-randomly sampled version are reported in Appendix C. These results are likewise not generalizable.

Survey Results

Major and Secondary Roads

Residents were first asked about their expectations for major and secondary roads during snow events. In particular, we were interested to know the time frame that residents have for the condition of these roads. We found that residents most commonly expect major and secondary roads to be passable and wet but with no snow at all times during these events. (See Tables 1 and 2, Appendix A) We find that while this characterizes residents' responses in general, there is a significant difference among districts with respect to these responses. In particular, Districts 1 and 2 were over-represented in these responses while the other 5 districts were just as likely to endorse the 3-hour or 6-hour time frame for passable roads that are wet but free of snow. Once snow has stopped accumulating, residents expect these roads to be plowed curb-to-curb within 6 hours (Table 3) and that dry pavement should be seen within 24 hours (Table 4). This is true for all districts.

Residential Streets

When we turn to examine expectations concerning residential streets, we find uniformity of response among all districts. Residents expect residential streets to be plowed only after major and secondary streets and only when snow accumulation is greater than 2 inches. And while residents most commonly do not expect these streets to be plowed to bare pavement, the responses to this question were more closely divided with 57% of respondents saying they did not expect to see bare pavement while 43% do have this expectation. (See Tables 5, 6 and 7, Appendix A) When asked if they used special winter tires on their vehicle, the vast majority of residents (87%) report that they do not.

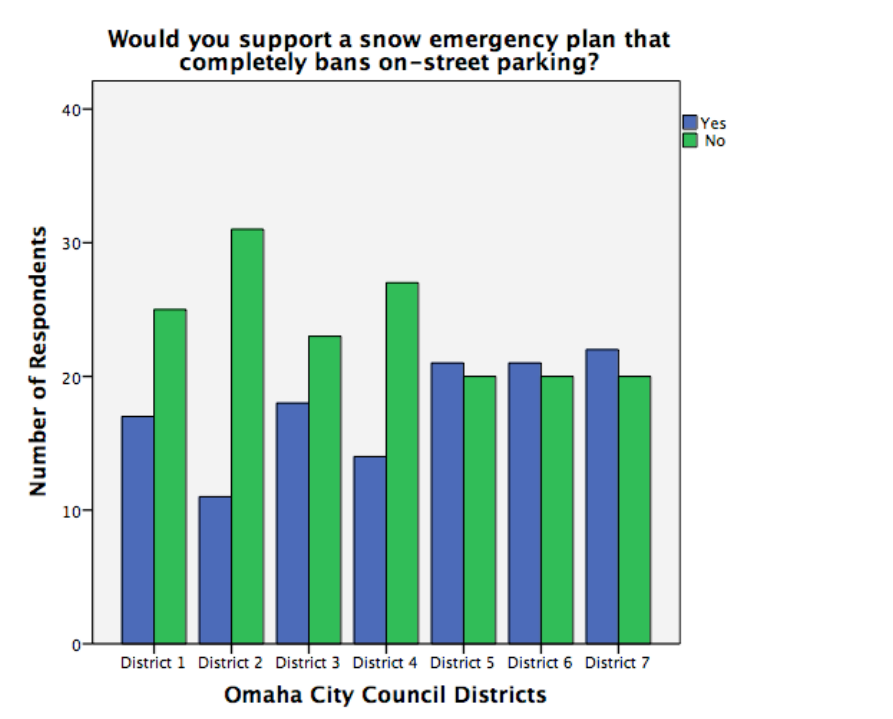
Current Snow Emergency Plan

Residents were also asked about the City's current snow emergency plan. This plan is commonly seen as clear and easy to follow; yet far fewer residents think that it is effective. One explanation for this may lie in the plan's enforcement. Almost a quarter of residents (23%) think that it is poorly enforced with significant differences of opinion on this issue arising among the 7 council districts. In fact, in District 2 close to half of residents (46%) say that the plan is poorly enforced. Interestingly, in District 7 only about 7% of residents maintain this opinion.

Residents were given the opportunity to explain their reasons for why they find the current snow emergency plan either “unclear” or “difficult to comply with.” Among the most common explanations for why the plan was unclear had to do with a lack of awareness of such a plan and not knowing where to find this information. There were a number of explanations for why it is difficult to comply with however the vast majority described scenarios that involved a lack of off-street parking.

On-street Parking Ban During Snow Emergencies

Two questions examined residents’ interest in and the feasibility for residents of banning on-street parking during snow emergencies. While residents most commonly do not support a ban on street parking during snow events this would not seem to be because of a lack of available off-street parking, which over ¾ of residents report having. (See Tables 11 and 12, Appendix A) It is important to note that there were significant differences among districts with respect to this issue. In particular Districts 2 and 4 were more likely to object to an on-street parking ban, while Districts 5, 6 and 7 were significantly more supportive of such a ban. (Results by district can be seen in the figure, below.) At the same time – and perhaps not surprisingly - these districts (5, 6 and 7) were also significantly more likely to report having reliable access to off-street parking for all of the vehicles at their residence.



Communication

When asked what the best way for the City to communicate with them about snow emergencies, residents overwhelmingly replied (89%) that television was the best mode of communication with radio also being rated highly (70%). We also asked what information residents believe should be communicated at these times. Timing of snow emergencies – in particular, *when* they are called – was identified as information that needs to be communicated. With respect to snow emergency parking rules and general policies on snow removal, districts provided significantly different responses. In particular, a smaller percentage of District 7 respondents care about getting information on snow emergency parking rules (43%) while those in District 3 are more likely (85%) to want them. Similarly, differences exist when it comes to General policies on snow removal. District 7 is less likely than average to care about receiving general policy information while those in District 1 feel they have a greater need for this information than other respondents.

Best ways to communicate a snow emergency

Television	89%
Radio	70%
Text Message	34%
Social Media	32%
Website	26%
Email	20%
Phone Message	11%
Other:	3%

Information to Communicate

When a snow emergency is called	82%
What the snow emergency parking rules are	63%
General policies on snow removal	48%
Regular updates on winter weather related activities during a snow event	69%

How Residents Evaluate Their Service

Residents do not perceive a disparity in the winter street services they receive (Table 15). They most commonly report that the services they receive are the same as in other neighborhoods. Further, in evaluating service quality – in particular, the services received during snow operations – residents use what they believe the service *should be* like as their criteria for evaluation (Table 17). Residents *do not* support an increase wheel tax to provide a higher level of street maintenance service (Table 18).

Mobility During Snow Events

When asked to rate the level of importance of a number of mobility concerns during snow events, residents overwhelmingly (96%) identified emergency vehicles as the top priority. And while residents were more diverse in their opinions on other mobility concerns, school buses nevertheless were most commonly identified as their second priority. Personal appointments consistently came in as the least important mobility need during these times. The following list provides their overall ranking (See Table 19 for more detail).

Overall Ranking of Mobility Priorities
1. Emergency Vehicles
2. School Buses
3. Work Commuting and Public Transportation (tie)
5. Business Activities
6. Personal Appointments

When ask about their typical daily personal needs during a snow event residents, perhaps unsurprisingly, ranked major streets as their highest need. Secondary streets were clearly their next highest need with residential alleys, parks and trails identified as not a need during these times. The ranking below represents residents overall however there were some significant differences among districts. Most of these significant differences occurred with Districts 2 and 4. In particular, residents in these districts rank bus routes more highly than residents in other districts, with District 2 identifying it as a high need and District 4 as a moderate need. And while all other districts report sidewalks on bridges as not a need during these times, District 4, by contrast, identifies them as a moderate need. These districts also report that downtown areas are more of a moderate rather than a low need. Two districts, Districts 5 and 7, rated the importance of sidewalks on major streets as a low need, differing from the more common view that these sidewalks are a moderate need.

Overall Ranking:
1. Major Streets
2. Secondary Streets
3. Residential Streets
4. Sidewalks on Major Streets and Downtown Pedestrian Crossings (tie)
5. Downtown Areas Typically Covered with Snow Piles and Windrows
6. Sidewalks on Bridges
7. Bus Routes
8. Residential Alleys
9. Parks and Trails

(Table 20 provides more detail)

Satisfaction

Overall, residents report being satisfied with the effectiveness of snow emergencies and the service they receive from Omaha Public Works during the winter. In particular, they report being satisfied with the timing and quality of snow removal on major and secondary streets. In general, most districts also report satisfaction with timing and quality of snow removal on residential streets with Districts 2 and 4 expressing a bit more dissatisfaction than other districts. Nevertheless, all districts report satisfaction with the condition of sidewalks during the winter months. Residents are also on average satisfied with the City's communication, both in terms of general winter street maintenance policies and also when a snow emergency is called.

Residents by-and-large do not have opinions concerning their satisfaction with ticketing or responses to their requests concerning street plowing or sidewalk clearing. We find that this is usually because residents have not received tickets, nor have they made inquiries concerning plowing and sidewalks. Notably, however, Districts 2 & 4 do have opinions on these matters. In particular they are satisfied with ticketing during snow emergencies as well as the responses that they receive to requests for street plowing and it is that they are satisfied.

Appendix A

Table 1.

When do you expect to see major and secondary streets passable during a snow event?

	Responses	Percent
Major and secondary streets should be passable at all times	127	43.1
Within 3 hours of the end of accumulating snow	73	25.9
Within 6 hours of the end of accumulating snow	53	18.3
Prior to rush hour	37	12.8

Table 2.

When do you expect to see major and secondary streets wet but with no snow during a snow event?

	Responses	Percent
Major and secondary streets should be passable at all times	91	31.7
Within 3 hours of the end of accumulating snow	69	25.9
Within 6 hours of the end of accumulating snow	85	27.2
Prior to rush hour	45	15.5

Table 3

When do you expect to see major and secondary streets plowed curb to curb during a snow event?

	Responses	Percent
Within 3 hours of the end of accumulating snow	77	26.2
Within 6 hours of the end of accumulating snow	88	30.3
Within 12 hours of the end of accumulating snow	64	21.4
Within 24 hours of the end of accumulating snow	61	22.1

Table 4

When do you expect to see dry pavement on major and secondary streets during a snow event?

	Responses	Percent
Within 6 hours of the end of accumulating snow	65	22.4
Within 12 hours of the end of accumulating snow	77	26.6
Within 18 hours of the end of accumulating snow	35	12.1
Within 24 hours of the end of accumulating snow	113	39.0

Table 5
I expect residential streets to be plowed:

	Responses	Percent
When snow accumulation is greater than 1"	41	13.1
When snow accumulation is greater than 2"	150	52.4
When snow accumulation is greater than 4"	62	21.0
Anytime snow of any depth accumulates on the street	37	13.4

Table 6
When residential streets are plowed, I expect them to be plowed:

	Responses	Percent
Within 24 hours of the end of the accumulating snowfall	63	23.1
Continuously once snow starts accumulating	33	11.7
Only once the major and secondary streets have been cleared	111	36.9
Within 12 hours of the end of the accumulating snowfall	83	28.3

Table 7
When the City plows residential streets, I expect them to be plowed to bare pavement.

	Responses	Percent
Yes	124	42.8
No	166	57.2

Table 8
Do you use special winter tires on your vehicle?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	37	12.8
No	253	87.2

Table 9
The City's current snow emergency plan is: (check all that apply)

Clear	38%
Easy to follow	41%
Unclear	14%
Difficult to comply with	8%
Poorly enforced	23%
Effective	15%

Table 11

Omaha is interested in considering modifications to the snow emergency plan in the future. Would you support a snow emergency plan that completely bans on-street parking?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	129	42.8
No	161	57.2

Table 12

Is there reliable access to off-street parking for all of the vehicles at your residence?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	231	76.6
No	59	21.4

Table 15

When compared to other neighborhoods inside the Omaha Metro Area, I believe the quality of winter street services I receive in my neighborhood is:

	Responses	Percent
The same	109	41.0
Better	61	19.0
Worse	43	15.9
I don't know	77	24.1

Table 17

How do you evaluate the quality of services you receive during a snow operation?

	Responses	Percent
I compare the service to another city	32	10.3
I compare the service to what it should be	144	50.7
I compare the service to recent past years	90	31.0
I compare the service to how it was years ago	24	7.9

Table 18

Would you support an increased wheel tax to provide a higher level of winter street maintenance service than what is currently provided?

	Responses	Percent
Yes	71	24.5
No	219	75.5

Table 19

We would like to understand your priorities concerning mobility during snow events. Please rate the following items.

	High Importance	Moderate Importance	Low Importance	Not Important
Emergency vehicles	96	3	>1	>1
School Buses	52	32	8	8
Public Transportation	38	49	8	5
Business Activities	10	54	31	6
Work Commuting	34	51	11	3
Personal Appointments	11	33	44	13

Table 20

We would also like to understand your mobility needs during snow events. Please take a moment to consider your daily activities then rate each of the following in terms of the degree to which access for you during a snow event is a need.

	High Need	Moderate Need	Low Need	Not a Need
Major Streets	81	15	3	1
Secondary Streets	48	46	5	1
Bus Routes	25	22	14	39
Residential Streets	28	55	15	2
Parks and Trails	2	7	28	64
Residential Alleys	5	12	33	51
Sidewalks on Major Streets	27	30	19	24
Sidewalks on Bridges	19	22	23	37
Downtown Areas Typically Covered with Snow Piles	11	29	30	30
Downtown Pedestrian Crossings	28	30	14	28

Table 21

For each of the following, please rate your level of satisfaction.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	No Opinion
Timing of snow removal on major & secondary streets	1	17	61	19	1
Quality of snow removal on major & secondary streets	2	15	63	18	1
Timing of snow removal on residential streets	8	34	50	7	1
Quality of snow removal on residential streets	11	34	50	3	2
The overall effectiveness of snow emergencies	2	15	60	14	9
My access to businesses in Omaha during the winter	1	7	71	13	7
The condition of sidewalks during the winter months	7	36	39	2	15
The information I have received concerning winter street maintenance policies	3	24	53	8	13
The City's communication when a snow emergency is called	2	10	66	16	6
Ticketing during snow emergencies	5	16	28	2	49
The response that I have received to my requests concerning street plowing	3	13	23	2	59
The response that I have received to my requests concerning sidewalk clearing	2	13	15	2	69
The overall service that I receive from Omaha Public Works during the winter	1	14	61	11	12

Appendix B – Mayor’s Hotline Survey

The Mayor invited the public at large to complete a version of the winter streets maintenance and snow emergency survey. The Mayor's survey was posted on her website and was an electronic form. Because respondents were not randomly selected to complete the survey, results cannot be generalized to the residents of Omaha in general.

These respondents differed in a number of significant ways from those responding to the randomly sampled survey. While they agreed that major and secondary streets should be passable at all times, they in general only expect to see these streets wet with no snow and plowed curb-to-curb within 6 hours. Dry pavement is expected only within 24 hours of the end of accumulating snow. They only expect residential streets to be plowed when there is snow accumulation greater than 2” and then only within a 24-hour period after the end of accumulating snowfall. However, they do expect to see bare pavement. This group on average does not use special snow tires.

When asked about the current snow emergency plan, 58% thought that it was poorly enforced. Unlike the general population, those responding to the Mayor’s Hotline survey did not feel strongly that the plan is clear (only 36% agree) or easy to follow (only 39% agree). A change to this plan that would ban on-street parking during snow emergencies is favored by 55% of these respondents, 91% of whom have reliable off-street parking.

Unlike the population at large, those responding to the Mayor’s Hotline survey were more likely to identify email, the website and social media as good ways for the City to communicate with them during snow emergencies. While the primary response was still television (82%), social media, the website and email were endorsed by approximately 50% of respondents – similar to the percent of respondents identifying radio (52%) as a good source of information. As for what information these individuals expect to receive, over ¾ of these respondents expected to know when a snow emergency is called, what the parking rules are and expect regular updates on snow event activities. Moreover, 58% of them expect information on general snow removal policies.

Unlike the general population, who reported that the quality of winter street services they receive is the same as in other neighborhoods, these respondents believe that their service is worse. They compare the service they receive to what it should be and would not support a wheel tax to improve their service.

When presented with a list of possible priorities during snow events, those responding to the Mayor’s Hotline survey reported that emergency vehicles were their highest priority during snow events while school buses, public transportation, business activities and work commuting were of moderate importance during these times. Personal appointments while recognized as important were given a rating of “low importance.” The overall ranking of priorities for this group:

1. Emergency Vehicles
2. Public Transportation and Work Commuting (tie)
3. Business Activities
4. School Buses
5. Personal Appointments

These respondents report that only major streets and residential streets are a high mobility need during snow events, while secondary streets were most commonly identified as a moderate need. All other options (see Table 20 above for the complete list) were, on average, reported as not a need during these times.

Finally, Mayor’s Hotline respondents report satisfaction across the majority of areas surveyed. They report being either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service that they receive during the winter with 2/3rds or more reporting that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the timing and quality of snow removal on major and secondary streets and the City’s communication during a snow emergency. Satisfaction was split on a number of topics including timing and quality of snow removal on residential streets and the overall effectiveness of snow emergencies. Complete results are provided in the table below.

	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	No Opinion
Timing of snow removal on major & secondary streets	28	72	0
Quality of snow removal on major & secondary streets	31	69	0
Timing of snow removal on residential streets	54	46	0
Quality of snow removal on residential streets	51	48	0
The overall effectiveness of snow emergencies	45	39	15
My access to businesses in Omaha during the winter	30	58	12
The condition of sidewalks during the winter months	30	40	30
The information I have received concerning winter street maintenance policies	34	50	16
The City’s communication when a snow emergency is called	27	64	9
Ticketing during snow emergencies	33	6	61
The response that I have received to my requests concerning street plowing	40	21	39
The response that I have received to my requests concerning sidewalk clearing	16	12	72
The overall service that I receive from Omaha Public Works during the winter	44	47	9

Appendix C – Constituent Survey

Nineteen of the 61 constituents who were sent email asking them to respond to the survey did so. As with all other respondents to this survey, Constituents believe that major and secondary streets should always be passable during snow events. These nineteen individuals most commonly believe that 3 hours is the time frame within which they should expect to see streets that are wet with no snow and plowed curb-to-curb. As with other respondents, dry pavement is only expected within the 24-hour time frame.

With respect to residential streets, Constituents expect them to be plowed when snow accumulation is greater than 2” and expect this to happen only once major and secondary streets have been cleared. These respondents do not expect to see bare pavement when residential streets are plowed. Also, they typically do not use special winter tires.

According to this group, the current snow emergency plan is poorly enforced and difficult to comply with. Reasons for this included “Not sure what the rules are”, “unclear rules concerning 3-lane streets”, “some people can't understand because of language barriers, very little available parking in our neighborhood, most of the apartments don't offer off-street parking” and “complying would be near impossible for some families without having to walk for several blocks back to their homes.” An on-street parking ban during snow emergencies was not, however, supported regardless of the fact that the typical respondent reports having reliable access to off-street parking for all vehicles at their residence.

In formulating a communications plan, these respondents would like to know when a snow emergency is called and what the parking rules are. Less important, but nevertheless desirable are regular update. General policies on snow removal did not appear as an important communication need.

As with the general population, Constituents believe that their service during winter events is the same as in other neighborhoods. They most commonly list Dundee, West Omaha and Benson as neighborhoods that provide their point of reference for this comparison. They, too, like the population in general, evaluate their service against what they believe it should be. They do not support a wheel tax.

Their priorities concerning mobility in the City during snow events are:

1. Emergency Vehicles
2. Work Commuting
3. Public Transportation
4. School Buses
5. Business Activities
6. Personal Appointments

And their personal overall mobility needs are ranking in the following order.

1. Major Streets
2. Secondary Streets
3. Downtown Pedestrian Crossings
4. Bus Routes

5. Sidewalks on Bridges
6. Residential Streets
7. Residential Alleys
8. Sidewalks on Major Streets
9. Downtown Areas Typically Covered with Snow Piles and Windrows

Finally, with respect to satisfaction, we find that the nineteen Constituents who responded to the survey report the following levels of satisfaction. Notable differences from the overall population include dissatisfaction with the overall effectiveness of snow emergencies and the condition of sidewalks. This group is also dissatisfied with ticketing during snow emergencies – all area where the general public was satisfied or very satisfied.

	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	No Opinion
Timing of snow removal on major & secondary streets	26	74	0
Quality of snow removal on major & secondary streets	21	79	0
Timing of snow removal on residential streets	47	53	0
Quality of snow removal on residential streets	47	52	0
The overall effectiveness of snow emergencies	47	46	7
My access to businesses in Omaha during the winter	11	85	4
The condition of sidewalks during the winter months	73	21	5
The information I have received concerning winter street maintenance policies	26	68	6
The City's communication when a snow emergency is called	27	73	0
Ticketing during snow emergencies	70	21	10
The response that I have received to my requests concerning street plowing	21	42	37
The response that I have received to my requests concerning sidewalk clearing	26	21	53
The overall service that I receive from Omaha Public Works during the winter	26	68	6