



TRAIL & SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE POLICY

City of Ramsey, Minnesota

Adopted December 10, 2025

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SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 The purpose of this policy is to outline an orderly, consistent and fiscally responsible process to be used by the City officials and City staff in determining which public sidewalks and trails are to be maintained by the City and the standards under which these sidewalks and trails will be maintained.
- 1.02 The City of Ramsey, Minnesota finds that it is in the best interest of the residents for the city to assume basic responsibility of maintaining sidewalks and trails. This Trail Maintenance Policy sets forth the means and methods to maintain safe trail conditions, produce quality of trail user experiences, and protect the community's investment in the infrastructure over time.
- 1.03 The City has public sidewalks and trails that vary in age and condition. The City has limited employee and financial resources and cannot reasonably repair and/or replace all sidewalks and trails identified as needing replacement and repair in a given year. As such, the City officials and staff must exercise discretion and professional judgment in determining whether and when such sidewalks and trails need to be repaired or replaced.
- 1.04 This policy is written and prepared primarily for internal city use, and is not intended to replace plans and specifications, be a technical resource, nor be a primary communication piece for the public.
- 1.05 The goal of this policy is to develop and sustain maintenance practices that keep trail conditions in a good to average pavement rating status or better. Safety shall be the primary focus. Additionally, the city should continue to budget a consistent amount each year, such that staff can build a trail maintenance program around this amount that can be planned for on an annual basis.

SECTION 2.0 SIDEWALK AND TRAIL INSPECTION

- 2.01 The Director of Public Works or designee shall establish procedures for regular sidewalk and trail inspection. These procedures shall include:
 - a. An initial City-wide sidewalk and trail survey.
 - b. A schedule for routine sidewalk and trail inspections.
 - c. Criteria for determining whether a particular sidewalk or trail condition is in need of replacement or repair.
 1. Criteria for determining whether a particular sidewalk or trail segment is in need of replacement or repair shall include, but not be limited to, a deviation in elevation consistent with best practices, City Policy and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, where applicable.

SECTION 3.0 SIDEWALK AND TRAIL REPLACEMENT AND REPAIR POLICY

- 3.01 Upon completion of the initial sidewalk and trail survey, the Director of Public Works or designee shall establish a replacement and repair schedule. This schedule is subject to modification based both on sidewalk and trail conditions and the availability of resources for sidewalk and trail replacement and repair. The sidewalk and trail replacement and repair schedule will:
- a. Prioritize replacement of sidewalks and trails in a reasonably timely manner considering available funding.
 - b. Take into consideration and weigh the following factors:
 - 1. Sidewalk and trail location and amount of pedestrian traffic.
 - 2. Proximity sidewalk/trail identified as needing replacement or repair to other sidewalks/trails also needing replacement or repair.
 - c. The nature and severity of the condition needing replacement or repair.
 - d. The City's budget for replacement or repair of sidewalks and trails
 - e. Whether, or to what extent, the cost of repair can be recovered from adjacent property owners.
 - f. Availability of employees, equipment, independent contractors and other resources needed for replacement or repair.
 - g. Public safety impacts.
 - h. History of prior accidents or complaints.

SECTION 4.0 BITUMINOUS TRAIL MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

4.01 There are several different categories of bituminous trail maintenance techniques, summarized as:

- ~ Crack sealing
- ~ Slurry-sealing
- ~ Pavement Rejuvenation
- ~ Patching
- ~ Overlay
- ~ Reconstruction

4.02 Each of these pavement maintenance practices have been employed for Ramsey’s trails – with 1.5” overlays generally determined to be the most cost effective and frequent annual maintenance activity, with patching occurring in isolated locations as needed each year. The table below from ACI Asphalt & Concrete of Maple Grove, MN provides a typical life cycle for bituminous trail maintenance (aciasphalt.com).

‘Asphalt trail pavements, like most infrastructure, has a life cycle. They start out new, they age, and eventually they decline to the point where they need to be replaced. How long pavement lasts depends on a variety of factors, including how well they are constructed initially, the weather, shade and standing water, the amount of use and – most importantly – how well they are maintained. A well-constructed trail can last 20 years or more’.

A trail overlay at Ramsey’s Trail Maintenance Policy goal of generally around the 15-20-year interval may extend the useful life of the trail to 40 years or more before needing a complete reconstruct.

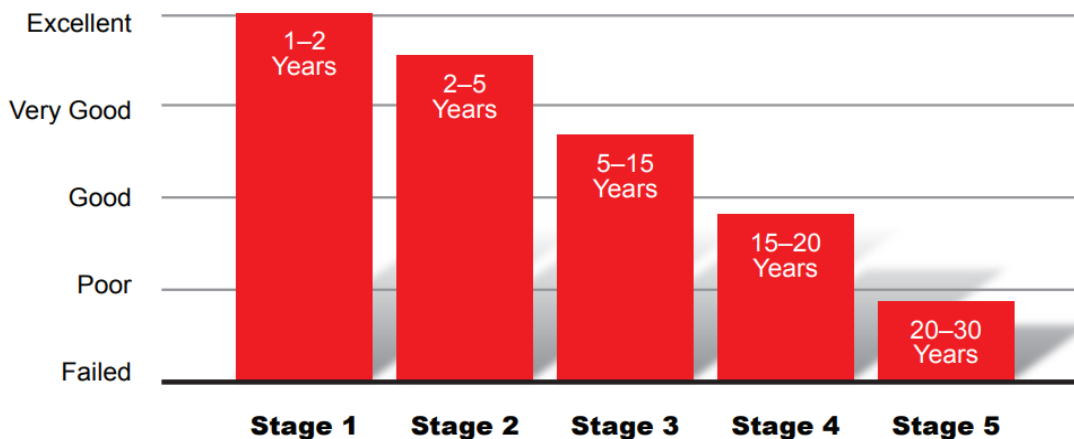
Stage 1: New Pavement (0–1 Years)
 ♦ Little or no maintenance required, sealcoating, crack sealing

Stage 2: Initial Preventive Maintenance Phase (2–5 Years)
 Typical maintenance procedures:
 ♦ Sealcoating, crack sealing, patching

Stage 3: Minor Repairs and Continued Preventive Maintenance (5–15 Years)
 Typical maintenance procedures:
 ♦ Patch repairs, crack sealing, sealcoating

Stage 4: Major Repairs (15–20 Years)
 Typical maintenance procedures:
 ♦ Extensive patching repairs, asphalt overlay

Stage 5: Extensive Repairs or Complete Reconstruction (20-30 Years)
 Typical maintenance procedures:
 ♦ Major repairs throughout the property or complete removal and replacement of the asphalt



SECTION 5.0 SIDEWALK SNOW/ICE REMOVAL

- 5.01 City employees will be responsible for removing snow from sidewalks that abut City-owned property. Adjacent property owners, including other public entities, are responsible for removing snow and ice from sidewalks that abut their property. This includes any snow plowed from public streets onto the sidewalk.
- 5.02 The City may, as a public service or for public safety, remove snow and ice from sidewalks that abut private property when consistent with this policy.
- 5.03 As there are a limited number of personnel and financial resources available, the City will only maintain snow removal from sidewalks after the streets have been plowed. The Director of Public Works or designee will decide when to begin snow and ice removal operations. The criteria for that decision are:
- a. Snow accumulation of two inches or more.
 - b. Drifting snow that impairs pedestrian travel.
 - c. Time of snowfall in relation to pedestrian travel.
 - d. Icy conditions which seriously affect pedestrian travel.
- 5.04 Snow and ice removal operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snow removal from sidewalks will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than two inches.
- 5.05 The level of service will be limited to what can be provided by mechanical equipment.
- a. Due to these limitations, sidewalks may not be cleared or maintained to a dry pavement standard.
 - b. No hand work will be performed by the City or its contractor.
 - c. Surface irregularities or slippery conditions may result.
 - d. No ice control (sanding or salting) will be performed by the City or its contractor.
- 5.06 Reasonable attempts will be made not to deposit excessive snow on driveways or private sidewalks if it is operationally or mechanically controllable. The removal of any snow deposits on private driveways or sidewalks will be the responsibility of the private property owner and/or occupant.
- 5.07 The City will not be responsible for plow damage to turf, driveways, irrigation systems or landscaping located within public right-of-way or easements. Any related repair will be the responsibility of the private property owner and/or occupant.
- 5.08 In cases where a nuisance is declared via the City's Code Enforcement Policy, the City may remove snow from walks other than those identified in 4.02 and seek reimbursement if practicable and consistent with City Code.

SECTION 6.0 TRAIL SNOW / ICE REMOVAL

- 6.01 City employees will be responsible for removing snow and ice from trails identified on the City's Plowed Trails and Sidewalks map.
- a. After a snow accumulation of two inches or more.
 - b. As there are a limited number of personnel and financial resources available, the City will only maintain snow removal from trails after the streets have been plowed and as time allows.
 - c. Trails providing access to major sections of the City will be plowed first.
- 6.02 The level of service will be limited to what can be provided by mechanical equipment.
- a. Due to these limitations, sidewalks may not be cleared or maintained to a dry pavement standard.
 - b. No hand work will be performed by the City or its contractor.
 - c. Surface irregularities or slippery conditions may result.
 - d. No ice control (sanding or salting) will be performed by the City or its contractor.
- 6.03 Reasonable attempts will be made not to deposit excessive snow on driveways or private sidewalks if it is operationally or mechanically controllable. The removal of any snow deposits on private driveways or sidewalks will be the responsibility of the private property owner and/or occupant.
- 6.04 The City will not be responsible for plow damage to turf, driveways, irrigation systems or landscaping located within public rights-of-way or easements. Any related repair will be the responsibility of the private property owner and/or occupant.

SECTION 7.0 TRAIL SWEEPING, MOWING AND TRIMMING

- 7.01 Trails are swept as needed, which is most often associated with aforementioned storm and wind events.
- a. Fall sweeping is performed if leaves and acorns accumulate on trail surfaces – however, in some years, and early snowfall can be beneficial in that trails can be plowed, and the wet snow 'lifts' leaves from the trail as part of the snow plowing process.
 - b. In addition to a PTO driven rotary broom, the city can use a turbine debris blower, also operated by PTO as an attachment to a multi-use maintenance machine. The debris blower can also be employed for light, dry snowfalls which would be useful for situations where there are mostly dry leaves on the trail at the same time.
- 7.02 Trailside mowing is performed as needed, which is often every few weeks during the Spring and early Summer, for a total of 7 to 10 times per year.
- a. Generally, a three-foot or more swath is cut alongside the trail to minimize long grass and brush hanging over the trail. This practice also provides for improved airflow over a bituminous trail, which reduces periods of standing water, which can lead to premature pavement deterioration.
 - b. Sweeping after mowing is not necessary, as mowers are dispatched to mow one side, then the other – then usually run down the center of the path with mower deck engaged to

blow clippings off the trail surface.

- 7.03 'Brushing' refers to the practice of cutting weeds, woody plants and small trees that encroach into the 2' + foot clear zone referenced above.
- a. Some work is done by hand, but most is performed with specialized brush mowers, mounted to light equipment.
 - b. Due to the size and velocity of debris thrown from the machine, 'Trail Closed' and other signage is deployed to separate trail users from this maintenance activity.
- 7.04 Pruning and Trimming trees along and over trailways is done at least two times a year.
- a. Branches are cleared to a minimum of 9' feet overhead and limbs projecting out into the trailside 'clear zone' are also removed.
 - b. Trees that are demonstrably in jeopardy of falling onto the trail may be identified and removed at this same time.
 - c. Dead and downed trees that are away from the trail are considered valuable wildlife habitat and are not removed.
 - d. As for clear zone maintenance activity along sidewalks, most of the adjacent areas are maintained by homeowners.
 - e. Pruning of these boulevard trees is nonetheless critical to maintain clear passage as well as sight-lines for both pedestrians and motorists.
 - f. Pruning should be done during the tree's dormant period of late Fall, Winter and sometimes early Spring.
 - g. Homeowners are asked to prune their trees for the above reasons, but Public Works staff trained in proper tree care, do travel throughout the sidewalk system before and during the snow removal season to provide these safety pruning services.
 - h. This pruning includes properly pruning low limbs back to the tree's trunk, so as to not create hazardous 'stub-cuts' or branches that are cut off and jut out towards the clear zone.

SECTION 8.0 LITTER AND REFUSE MANAGEMENT

- 8.01 Litter and general garbage and debris is picked up as needed and also as part of the reoccurring mowing.
- 8.02 After the snowmelt each Winter, staff are sent out onto all trails for a concerted litter recovery – before the Spring 'green-up' begins to conceal trash in wooded trail corridors.
- 8.03 Some longer off-roadway trails have trash receptacles placed periodically along trails near intersections with maintenance accesses or trail heads, which are emptied weekly during park system trash disposal runs.

SECTION 9.0 BOARDWALK AND OTHER TRAIL MAINTENANCE

- 9.01 Trails other than bituminous
- a. Most of the city's trail system consists of 8' and 10' foot bituminous trails, with only short segments of crushed and compacted aggregate – with the latter not needing formal,

planned-for maintenance.

9.02 Boardwalks

- a. Wood boardwalks require regular inspection for maintenance activity, usually consisting of a single plank needing replacement due to breaking or warping.
- b. Often these conditions are reported by trail users, with staff dispatched to address the deck board replacement right away – or to place a traffic cone at the broken board to alert trail users of the condition if the repair cannot be made immediately.
- c. Some of the inherent appeal of boardwalks is their location in natural environments, and their rustic ‘feel’ – which means they are not assured to be pristine in all dimensions – as long as they are safe to use.

9.03 Trail Bridges

- a. The city presently has three, Cor-10 steel arched bridges withing the bituminous trail system that are load-rated and designed for maintenance vehicles.
- b. These bridges have not required any maintenance except for the occasional replacement of a steel band placed on the wooden deck to provide for a surface for the snow plow cutting edge to slide upon.
- c. A fourth bridge spans Trott Brook as part of the 1,200’ foot Lake Itasca Boardwalk. The construction consists of deck boards bolted onto galvanized steel trusses, and has not needed any maintenance since its construction by city staff in 2014.

SECTION 10.0 SIGNAGE

- 10.01 The city has maintained a policy of not signing trails, except for unique and temporary conditions that require them, such as ‘Trail Closed’ or ‘Work Ahead’.
- 10.02. The city does not sign for conditions that a trail user should expect, and ride safely for if on a bicycle, like a curve, slope or driveway ahead.

SECTION 11.0 WEATHER CONDITIONS

- 11.01 Sidewalk and trail maintenance will be conducted when weather conditions permit and do not limit the ability to perform the work.
- 11.02 Sidewalk and trail maintenance will be conducted when such work would not endanger the safety of city employees and equipment.
- 11.03 Factors that may delay sidewalk and trail maintenance operations include, but are not limited to: temperatures below 32°F, wind, rain, and snow.

SECTION 12.0 FUNDING

- 12.01 The Trail Maintenance Policy should lead the city:
 - a. to evaluating past practices and funding, to align more so to with on-the ground

bituminous maintenance that addresses 5% to 8% of the system each year, versus the historical average of about 1.5% or less.

- b. to reassess on a regular basis appropriate funding levels to keeping pace with the aging pavement conditions and demand for resurfacing trails.

12.02 Funding considerations should include

- a. Trail maintenance is performed by Public Works staff and also by contracted work as described in this policy, with the funding of both accounted for within the annual General Fund parks operations budget.
- b. Annual increases to allow for funding increases as need to meet the needs of trail maintenance and increases for inflation.

12.03 Additionally, for some trail maintenance and especially if in the same vicinity of planned street maintenance, consideration should be given to bid the work as an Add Alternate as part of the Street Maintenance program for best value, and to consolidate administration and staff bidding time.

12.04 Incorporating recycled materials will be considered, if applicable.

SECTION 13.0 DOCUMENTATION; REVIEW AND MODIFICATION OF POLICY

13.01 The Director of Public Works or designee will document sidewalk and trail maintenance activities, any emergency responses, and keep on file all citizen comments and complaints regarding this policy and/or sidewalk and trail maintenance in general.

13.02 The City Council and/or Public Works Committee shall review this policy periodically, including

- a. The documented maintenance activities,
- b. Any emergency responses, and
- c. Citizen comments and complaints.
- d. It shall also review any factors/circumstances affecting this policy or its implementation and determine goals for the future.

13.03 The City Council may modify or clarify this policy at any time. Where the City Council has delegated responsibility or authority to any city employee or official for development or implementation of any portion of this policy, that employee or official shall have full authority to modify that portion of the policy at any time.

SECTION 14.0 APPENDIX

- a. Maintenance Schedule