

# **Trail Maintenance Policy**

**City of Ramsey, Minnesota**

**Adopted: x/x/2025**

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## SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION.

Trails are a valued recreational and transportation feature of Ramsey, and provide myriad benefits for residents, serving a broad demographic of the community. Depending on the type of use, bituminous trails may serve equally well two decades after construction as when initially constructed. However, pavement imperfections may actually negatively impact the experience of users when biking or walking if the surface is rough, or if visual connection to the pavement must be maintained to prepare for bumps, cracks or dodge potholes. In extreme cases, pavement conditions like potholes or obstacles in the clear zone alongside trails may create unsafe conditions. Therefore, 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.

## SECTION 2. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT.

At the time of adoption of this Trail Maintenance Policy the city of Ramsey has over 80 miles of bituminous trails, all of which will require varying degrees of maintenance into the future – and, additional trails are added to the system in most years. As general matter, 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 and 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 3. GENERAL MAINTENANCE GOALS AND INTENT.

For 2024, the trail maintenance allocation is \$120,000. This line item within the General Fund has increased \$5,000 to \$15,000+ each year as part of an informal trail maintenance plan – yielding one to three miles of trail overlaid or the subject of a reconstruct in a few instances. While the annual increases have risen 5-10% in many years, the miles of trail receiving maintenance treatments have not increased due to ordinary annual inflation associated with contracted services. Now that the city is wholly within the second decade of an informal maintenance plan, this new Trail Maintenance Policy should lead the city 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 – this, because it does not appear existing funding levels are keeping pace with the aging pavement conditions and demand for resurfacing trails.

## SECTION 4. BITUMINOUS TRAIL MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

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

- ~ Crack filling
- ~ Seal-coating or Slurry-sealing
- ~ Chip sealing
- ~ **Patching**
- ~ **Overlay**
- ~ Reconstruction

Each of these pavement maintenance practices have been employed for Ramsey’s trails – with 1.5” overlay’s 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.

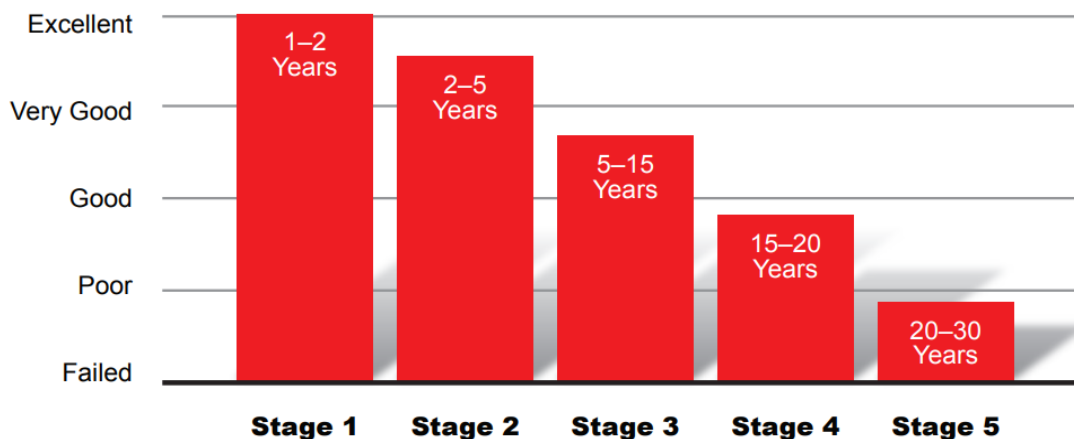
**Stage 1: New Pavement (0–1 Years)**  
 ♦ Little or no maintenance required, sealcoating, crack sealing

**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



The annual asphalt trail surface work described occurs by contractors, with routine patching performed by Public Works staff. As part of the course of travel around the park and trail system and providing work direction and inspections, supervisory staff are in and around trail corridors on a regular basis. This builds an awareness of the need and locations for patching, as well as more intensive annualized maintenance by contractors. This same familiarity with conditions guides other trail maintenance activity—for instance, after windstorms, staff are dispatched to areas known to have high probability for downed limbs or trees in wooded trail corridors. Other reoccurring work includes sweeping, mowing and brush management, as well as litter and refuse control, which are highlighted as follows:

### **Sweeping**

Trails are swept as needed, which is most often associated with aforementioned storm and wind events. 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. 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.

### **Mowing**

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. 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. 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.

### **Brushing and tree trimming**

‘Brushing’ refers to the practice of cutting weeds, woody plants and small trees that encroach into the 2’+ foot clear zone referenced above. Some work is done by hand, but most is performed with specialized brush mowers, mounted to light equipment. 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.

Another related activity that occurs at least twice per year, is pruning and trimming trees along and over trailways. Branches are cleared to a minimum of 9’ feet overhead and limbs projecting out into the trailside ‘clear zone’ are also removed. Trees that are demonstrably in jeopardy of falling onto the trail may be identified and removed at this same time. Dead and downed trees that are away from the trail are considered valuable wildlife habitat and are not removed.

### **Litter and refuse management**