



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

(formerly Transport 2000 Ontario)

Advocating for Sustainable Public and Freight Transportation

P.O. Box 6418, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X3

www.transport-action.ca/ontario

Deputation to Toronto Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (PWIC) on Snow Clearing to Transit Stops

May 14, 2014

Every time a major winter storm arrives, authorities urge people to stay off the roads and take public transit. Rather than telling people to do the right thing, a more proactive approach would be for the city to plough Toronto's sidewalks to help people access transit.

TTC passengers tend to use sidewalks at the trip origin, destination, and in-between (transfers). This is especially the case in the central part of Toronto, where walking volumes are highest. Similarly, those who arrive from other operators like GO, VIA or the future Pearson Express are also likely to benefit from a connected network of passable sidewalks in Toronto.

While city sidewalk clearing in suburban areas tends to come after roads and routinely leaves a layer of snow behind, it is significantly more consistent and predictable. Not only do Toronto's sidewalks rely on individual property owners to clear their section of sidewalk, but enforcement is similarly left to individual complaints. This results in Toronto's winter sidewalks being an ever-evolving patchwork quilt, where every block has properties that are left snow or ice covered until warmer weather arrives.

Those who aren't able to trudge through snow and climb over snow banks are more likely to depend on services like Wheeltrans and taxis or stay home until sidewalks improve. Even for those able to walk through snow, ice and slush, the conditions make it difficult to do the right thing.

Imagine for a moment if we left the winter maintenance for Toronto's highways to abutting property owners. Some would clear while others hope for warmer weather. This approach would clearly not work for motorists, and it doesn't work for transit access. We recommend that Toronto's PWIC extend the city's current sidewalk snow clearing program to the entire city, as is done in many other cities such as Ottawa and Montreal.

Roger Brook
Transport Action Ontario