



Paul St. Cyr  
DPW Commissioner

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

**FROM:** Paul St. Cyr, DPW Commissioner

**CC:** Conor Baldwin, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs  
Shawn Machado, Assistant City Manager/ Operations  
Andy Silva, Deputy DPW Commissioner/ Streets Division

**DATE:** February 17, 2026

**SUBJECT:** **MOTION RESPONSES** (*Various*) - Winter Operations, Storm Debrief, Arterial Clearing, Overflow Parking & Financial Analysis

- **1/13/2026 – C. McDonough** - Req. City Mgr. work with appropriate department to provide a detailed report on winter operation procedures in high pedestrian traffic locations throughout the City.
- **2/3/2026 - C. Juran** – Req. City Mgr. to provide a debrief about the recent snow storm: what the City and residents did well or could improve; best practices and metrics; lessons learned; measures of plowing quantity/quality; and how information was communicated regarding responsibilities for parking, shoveling/plowing, etc.
- **2/3/2026 - C. Scott** – Req. City Mgr. report on the feasibility of using parks with dedicated parking lots as overflow parking during snow emergencies to increase neighborhood access.
- **2/3/2026 - C. Nuon / C. Liang** – Req. City Mgr. provide a report examining how arterial (minor and major) streets are cleared in winter to ease sidewalk clearing—especially for elderly residents and those without snowblowers—with a focus on repeated plowing that piles salt-laden snow, and snowbanks at intersections that impede access to crosswalks.

### Executive Summary

This report addresses all motions by: (1) detailing winter operations in high pedestrian traffic areas; (2) providing a debrief of the recent storm with performance metrics and lessons learned; (3) examining arterial clearing practices and mitigation strategies for sidewalks/intersections/crosswalks; (4) evaluating overflow parking at park lots during snow emergencies; and (5) presenting a historical (FY15–FY25) and current year (FY26) financial analysis based on MUNIS records, including the projected FY26 deficit.



## I. Winter Operations in High Pedestrian Traffic Locations

### Priority Pedestrian Zones:

- Downtown business district sidewalks and commercial corridors
- School zones (approaches, crosswalks, curb ramps)
- Municipal buildings and public facilities (libraries, public safety sites)
- Designated pedestrian pathways where practicable

### Procedural Outline:

- **Forecasting & Pre-Treatment:** Anti-icing (salt brine) ahead of events when conditions permit, focusing on bonding prevention in pedestrian corridors.
- **Roadway–Sidewalk Sequencing:** Road routes by priority (arterials → collectors → locals). Sidewalk units (mini plows/blowers) follow roadway passability to reduce re-deposition on freshly cleared walks.
- **Trauma Center:** Constant clearing and treatment of Emergency routes to LGH
- **During and Post-Storm Ice Mitigation:** Calibrated salt/sand distribution via our Cirrus Centralized Control System at crosswalks, bus stops, steep/shaded areas.
- **Snowbank Management & Hauling:** Targeted removal in Downtown and near schools to restore sightlines, loading zones, transit pads, and ADA curb ramp access.
- **ADA Compliance Monitoring:** Field checks; corrective work orders for curb ramps, crossings, entrances.
- **Owner Responsibilities:** Property owners must clear adjacent sidewalks within ordinance timelines; enforcement escalated for repeat non-compliance.

## II. Recent Storm Debrief (per Councilor Juran)

### What Went Well

- Timely **snow emergency** declaration and parking ban improved plow access and route efficiency.
- Route completion targets met on primary/secondary roads; sidewalk crews deployed promptly to priority pedestrian areas.
- Effective cross-department coordination (DPW, Parking, Police) for **downtown hauling** and restoration of pedestrian access.



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### Areas for Improvement

- Increase enforcement and **assistance options** for sidewalk clearing—particularly for **elderly** residents or those **without snowblowers**.
- Accelerate **intersection cutbacks** to reduce high snowbanks affecting sightlines and crosswalk access.
- Expand **multilingual communications** about responsibilities (parking, shoveling, timelines).
- Change of process for 26’/27’ separate Snow Relocation Contract and High Pedestrian Use areas.

### Metrics Framework (examples; actuals provided in Section XI):

- Lane-miles plowed and route cycle times
- Depending on the length of time and amount of active snowfall, we prioritize sidewalk coverage within 24 hours post-storm
- Material usage (salt, sand, brine)
- Service requests volume/response times
- Parking ban compliance (tows/citations)
- Intersection/crosswalk clearance KPIs

## III. Arterial Street Clearing & Sidewalk Impact Mitigation (per Councilors Nuon & Liang)

### Strategy & Operator Guidance

- **Pass Sequencing Control:** Optimize plow angles/~~wings~~ to limit windrows into curb lanes, driveways, and **ADA curb ramps**.
- **End-of-Route Pushback Management:** Schedule follow-up cutbacks to remove ridges left by final passes—especially at **intersections** and **bus stops**.
- **Priority Intersection List:** Maintain and update high-pedestrian intersections/school approaches for expedited **snowbank reduction** (mechanical removal/hauling).
- **Curb Ramp Protection:** Pre-flag ramps; instruct operators to avoid discharge into ramps and report locations needing immediate follow-up.
- **Salt-Laden Snow Management:**
  - Calibrated spreaders and anti-icing brine to minimize over-application;
  - Spot-treat intersections/grades instead of continuous high-rate application;
  - Post-storm sweeping/drain maintenance near pedestrian areas to mitigate chloride accumulation.
- **Sidewalk Team Coordination:** Time arterial passes with a planned **lag window** and conduct **secondary sidewalk passes** after major pushbacks.
- **Sight Triangles & Refuge Islands:** Clear intersection sight triangles and pedestrian refuges first in priority areas; **haul** banks exceeding safe thresholds.



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#### **Performance Measures (Arterials)**

- % of priority intersections cut back within 24–36 hours; snowbank heights below target thresholds
- **and median clearance time for blocked curb ramps/crosswalks**
- Application rates (up to 400 lbs/ 60 gallons per lane-mile) against targets
- Resident windrow complaints per lane-mile and trend

#### **Support for Elderly/No-Snowblower Households**

- Partnerships with the **Council on Aging**, neighborhood groups, nonprofits for **volunteer shovel assistance** at curb ramp/crosswalk approaches
- Explore **micro-grant/voucher** pilot for contractor assistance at hardship addresses (clear criteria)

### **IV. Overflow Parking at Park Lots During Snow Emergencies (per Councilor Scott)**

**Objective:** Improve neighborhood plow access and reduce on-street congestion by designating **parks with dedicated lots** for overflow parking during bans.

#### **Candidate Facilities (*examples; subject to coordination*):**

- Parks/recreation lots with adequate capacity, lighting/security, ADA access, and proximity to residential blocks.

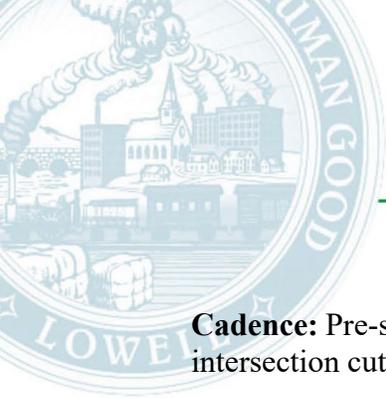
#### **Operational Considerations:**

- Include designated parking lots in emergency plow/de-icing routes.
- Temporary **signage & wayfinding** with rules, permitted hours, towing windows, and return-to-street timelines.
- **Security & Enforcement:** Coordinate with Police/Parking for patrols and compliance.
- Communications: Publish **digital maps** and include overflow locations in **ban notices** and FAQs.
- Manage event conflicts/winter recreation and protect ground access.

**Recommendation:** Implement a **pilot** at select park lots during the next declared snow emergency; monitor utilization, compliance, and resident feedback and report back with data.

### **V. Communications & Public Information**

**Channels:** City website (Snow Operations page & DPW FAQs), social media, local media/cable, email/text alerts, and posted signage during bans.



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**Cadence:** Pre-storm (T-24/T-12), during storm, and post-storm reminders (sidewalk deadlines, intersection cutbacks, hauling notices).

**Accessibility:** Translated notices for commonly spoken languages in Lowell, ADA-compliant digital materials, and visual maps.

## VI. Frequently Asked Questions (Publicly Available Online)

*(Summarized for convenience; full details are posted on the City website.)*

- When/why the City declares **snow emergencies** and **parking bans**.
- Where residents can park during a ban (designated municipal lots; pilot **park lots** if activated).
- **Sidewalk responsibilities** and enforcement timelines for property owners.
- How DPW **prioritizes** roads, sidewalks, school zones, transit stops, and pedestrian corridors.
- How to **report** snow/ice issues (online/phone) and what details aid response.
- Use of **salt, sand, and brine**, and why rates vary by temperature/conditions.

**Note:** These FAQs and operating procedures are publicly available on the City's website and are updated regularly.

## VII. Staffing, Equipment, and Contractors (*summary framework*)

- **Personnel:** Full-time DPW staff, seasonal/temporary, and storm-call list assignments (counts provided to Council upon request).
- **Fleet & Equipment:** Road plows (with wings), sidewalk units/attachments, calibrated spreaders & brine applicators, loaders/skid-steers, and hauling equipment.
- **Contractors:** On-call supplemental plowing/hauling activated by thresholds and assigned routes.

## VIII. Best Practices & Near-Term Improvements

- Expand scheduled intersection snowbank reduction within 24–36 hours post-storm and haul where banks exceed safety thresholds.
- Increase sidewalk unit capacity and attachments to accelerate pedestrian clearance and reduce re-deposition from arterial pushbacks.
- Optimize treatment via anti-icing and strict spread-rate calibration to limit salt-laden windrows.
- Explore public-facing ops map (GIS) for route status.
- Pilot resident support programs (assistance/volunteer/voucher).
- Pilot overflow parking at select parks; gather data and refine.



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## IX. Implementation Timeline & Reporting

- Pre-Season (Fall): Route review, training, calibration, signage inventory, communications plan.
- Storm Activation: Execute routes; monitor metrics; communicate at set intervals.
- Post-Storm (T+0 to T+72 hrs): Second sidewalk pass; intersection cutbacks; hauling; debrief logging.
- Quarterly Reporting: Provide Council KPIs, pilot outcomes (parks overflow), and recommended adjustments.

## X. Financial Analysis (MUNIS Records & FY26 Projection)

### a. Historical Snow & Ice Expenditures (FY15–FY25)

MUNIS totals show year-to-year variability with a high in **FY15 (\$4,403,415.34)** and a low in **FY20 (\$1,141,385.19)**, reflecting storm severity, duration, and mix (snow/ice). Recent years: **FY23 \$2,001,244.62; FY24 \$1,687,968.53; FY25 \$2,780,512.51.**

**Trend Note:** The spread between lower-activity winters and heavier seasons underscores the importance of contingency planning and mid-year adjustments.

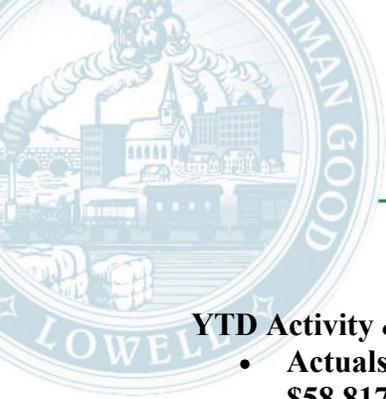
### b. FY26 Year-to-Date & Projection (as of Feb 8, 2026)

**By Account (Max Exposure vs. Budget; Projected Deficit):**

- **Snow & Ice Contractors (04008753-529600):** FY26 max exposure \$2,186,905 vs. budget \$775,000 → projected deficit \$1,411,905.
- **Salt & Sand Expense (04008766-542300):** FY26 max exposure \$582,145.28 vs. budget \$325,000 → projected deficit \$257,145.28.
- **Miscellaneous Charges (04008757-573400):** FY26 max exposure \$537,920.04 vs. budget \$50,000 → projected deficit \$487,920.04.
- **DPW Snow OT (04008551-513000):** FY26 max exposure \$342,917.05 vs. budget \$200,000 → projected deficit \$142,917.05.

**Aggregate FY26 Position:**

- **FY26 Max Exposure: \$3,649,887.37**
- **FY26 Original Budget: \$1,350,000**
- **Projected FY26 Deficit: \$2,299,887.37** (subject to final storm activity, pricing, and hauling demand)



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**YTD Activity & Commitments:**

- **Actuals to Date: \$1,985,631.85; Encumbrances: \$1,605,438.31; Open Requisitions: \$58,817.21**—aligning to the **max exposure** above.

**c. Statutory Note on Deficit Spending for Snow & Ice**

Massachusetts law permits municipalities to **deficit spend for certain emergency measures**, including **snow and ice**, per **M.G.L. c. 44, §31D**. This provision allows essential winter operations to proceed even when appropriations are exceeded, with funding adjustments addressed subsequently (e.g., through supplemental appropriations, free cash, reserves, or next-year tax recaps).

**D. Financial Management Next Steps**

- Continue monitoring **unit costs** (contractor rates; salt/sand; hauling).
- Prepare a **spring deficit-resolution plan** aligned to §31D requirements and best practices.
- Incorporate FY26 experience into **FY27 budget planning**, including contingency levels and fleet/equipment investments that reduce long-term costs.
- Provide Council with an updated **KPI dashboard** and **MUNIS-backed detail** at quarter close.