

# Snow Removal for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

## Policy and Planning

The transportation agency responsible for the roadway regarding pedestrian/bike facilities should have a snow removal policy and implementing procedures that:

- Plan to keep pedestrian/bicycle facilities safe, accessible and free from snow and ice
- Clarify responsible parties for clearing snow from pedestrian/bicycle facilities
- Establish priority routes for snow removal for pedestrian/bike facilities
- Set clearance guidelines for various pedestrian/bike facilities
- Communicate and educate the public and affected agencies
- Ensure compliance with federal and state laws and provide for enforcement

## Pedestrians

Following a snowfall, snow and ice must be cleared from sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks to provide safe and accessible passage for pedestrians, especially on key pedestrian routes. Bare pavement is the safest condition. Common challenges to pedestrian travel after snowfall include sidewalks that have not been cleared, street plowing that pushes snow onto sidewalks or blocks crosswalks, clogged or obstructed drains that create puddles at curb ramps, patches of ice that create slip hazards. Clearing accumulated snow soon after snowfall can often prevent footsteps from packing snow onto surfaces.

## Bicyclists

The winter maintenance of bikeways should be a planned, regular activity in cities and towns that receive significant amounts of snowfall. Bicycles have different winter needs than motor vehicles—for example, weight and tire surface area means they are more sensitive to snow and ice—and winter roadway maintenance programs should have specialized practices to respond to these needs. Like for pedestrians, the safest bicycling surface for bicyclists is bare pavement. Achieving bare pavement may require action before, during and after winter precipitation. A heavy snowfall will typically require the initial removal of snow from the bikeway to restore the functionality of the facility. A proactive and reactive de-icing program in conjunction with scheduled snow removal is necessary to help maintain good riding conditions along bikeways in the winter.

## Key Elements

**Priority Network:** Prioritize routes for snow clearing, include walking and biking facilities. Residents should know which routes can be best relied upon for year-round walking and biking. High priority routes should receive early/often attention reliably.

**When to Clear:** For bikes specify the amount of accumulated snow before clearing will commence; best practice is as low as ½" to 2" of snow. For pedestrians you may specify an accumulated amount or clearing within a certain time period after snowfall has ended.

**Clear Width:** Specify how wide a path along the bikeway or sidewalk must be cleared, with a minimum of 4 feet. An initial snow clearing that provides at least 4 feet can allow the bikeway or sidewalk to be operable while allowing the public agency or contractor to increase the extent of the sidewalks or bike lanes that can be cleared.