

TECH NEWS

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

November-December 2004

Watching out for winter walkers' welfare

The Town of Concord, Massachusetts, is embracing the idea of walkable communities. The town recently increased its commitment to providing safe, convenient pedestrian access during the winter.

Winter access for pedestrians

New equipment

Concord now has five plows/municipal tractors to clear its commercial and outlying sidewalk areas and school walking routes. The equipment includes attachments for treating walks with salt and/or sand.

Priority service

Priority winter service is given to Concord's sidewalks as well as to its streets. The morning after a recent rain/sleet event, all streets and major sidewalks had been cleared.

Rationale

Many communities have ordinances or bylaws making property owners legally responsible for clearing their walks of snow. Although this may be preferable to no one being responsible for clearing sidewalks, such bylaws and ordinances do not come close to providing the same level of service to pedestrians that is provided to motorists.

Even when communities do clear sidewalks, the standard of service is usually lower than the standard for streets. Streets are cleared immediately, while sidewalks can remain covered with snow for days.

According to Bill Edgerton, director of public works, Concord has decided that the city is equally responsible for protecting its motorists and pedestrians. City crews clear both streets and sidewalks in a timely manner.

"Additional efforts need to be made," says Edgerton, "to make pedestrian needs and rights equal priorities."

Year-round commitment

Continuous sidewalk maintenance is a priority in Concord. For example, when city crews sweep the streets in the spring, they also sweep the sidewalks.

Concord has a Sidewalk Improvement Program based on a sidewalk condition index (SCI). The SCI parallels the city's pavement condition index (PCI). The goal is to keep sidewalks and streets within a low 80s SCI/PCI rating.

The town's capital budget provides funds to maintain this condition level.

For more information

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