

FY26 Snow Operations for Sustainability & Infrastructure

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City of Somerville DPW

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Agenda

01. Snow Operations
101

02. January Storm
Post-mortem

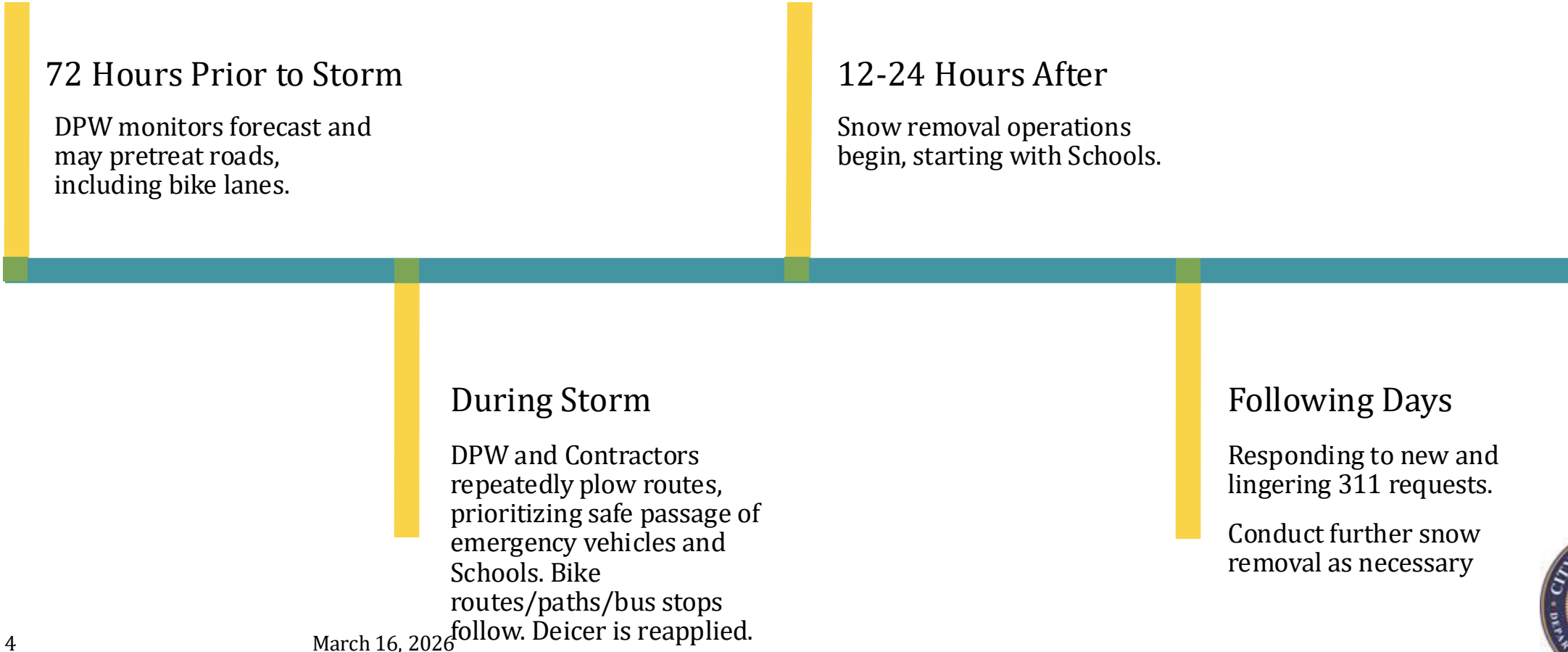
03 Dead Ends and
Private Ways

04. Mobility
Infrastructure

05. Enhanced
Enforcement Area



Typical Storm Timeline



Whose Responsibility is Snow Clearing?

City

- City Streets
- Sidewalks and adjacent ramps around City Property
- Schools
- Squares and Islands
- City and School lots
- Bridges
- Bus Stops and Adjacent Ramps
- Parks & playgrounds

State

- State Roads (Routes 28 and 16)
- McGrath Pedestrian Bridge and Sidewalk
- MBTA Stations

Property Owners

- Sidewalks and Curb Ramps adjacent to Property



Snow Fighting During Storm

Operations

- Towing operations conducted in conjunction with Police and Parking.
- Coordination with Communications, Public Safety, Constituent Services, Emergency Management.

Highways and Infrastructure

- Plowing and deicing of City Streets and separated bicycle facilities.

Facilities

- Clearing of Snow from Schools, City Buildings, Sidewalks adjacent to City Property, Parking Lots



Levels of Snow Response

Based on Forecasted Accumulation

Forecast	Deicing	City Plowing Operations	Bike & Pedestrian Facilities	Contractors	Removal Operations
0"-2"	Salting, brining (weather permitting).	Plowing dependent on forecast.	Pretreatment of community path.	None.	As needed.
2"-4"	Salting, brining (weather permitting).	Plows on each route.	Plow path, plow separated bike facilities	May supplement on major and selected routes.	Snow removal from schools, back-dragging bus stops.
4"-8"	Salting, brining (weather permitting).	Plows on each route.	Plow path, plow separated bike facilities	More expansive contractor activity.	Snow removal from schools. Likely removal from bus stops.
8"+	Deicing may be limited to beginning and end of storm.	Plows on each route.	Plow path, transition to removal operations on separated facilities.	Tandem plowing with City plows on every route.	Snow removal from schools, bus stops, bike lanes, corners as possible.

Snow Removal Areas post-storm

Schools and City Facilities

- Highest Priority
- Involves clearing and removing from parking lots, drop offs and adjacent cross-walks.

Mobility Infrastructure

- Next Priority
- Clearing all MBTA bus stops and adjacent ramps.
- Clearing bike and pedestrian (Community Path) facilities as necessary.

Additional Safety and Operations

- Lowest Priority, typically triggered as Snow Emergency is lifted and cars move onto the opposite side of the road.
- Removing snow from streets and corners to maintain public safety and City operations
- Clearing Public Squares



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I am extremely proud of the work our DPW staff and contractors have done so far this winter – especially amid historic snow totals. We are not perfect and we believe that there is always room for improvement. We welcome feedback, and we love to look for new ways to refine our operations and to better serve our constituents.

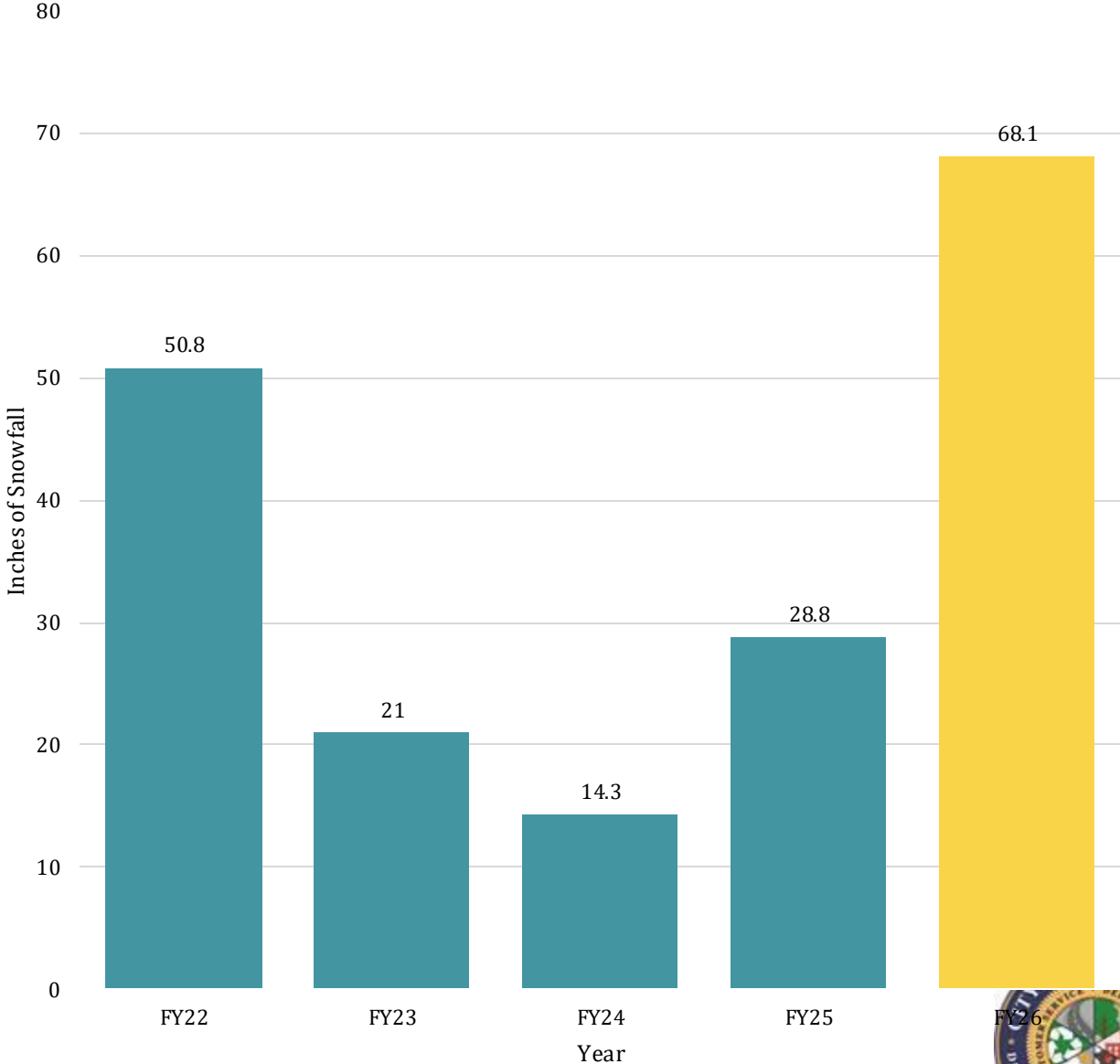


Season to Date in Context

- 68.1” of snow has fallen as of 3/9 this season
- Highest snowfall total since the winter of 2015
- January Storm: 23.5” of snow fell.
- February Storm: 16.7” of snow fell.

- *For comparison, Boston received 27.1 inches in the Blizzard of '78, while of course other areas received higher totals.*

Somerville Seasonal Snowfall in Inches



Operational Analysis January Storm

What Went Well

- Staff did an incredible job dealing with the first major storm since 2022, which produced one of the top ten snowfall totals in Boston history.
- We were able to keep not only road access, but also the Community Path open in spite of nearly two feet of snow.

Room for Improvement

- Private Ways and Dead Ends snow response fell well below our standards.
- Separated Bike Facilities were completely snowed in at the end of the storm, despite running small equipment throughout the storm.
- Many routes did not have snow plowed as close to the curb as we would have liked where possible.



Overview of Dead Ends and Private Ways

City-owned Dead Ends

- Makes up 2% of our roadway mileage
- Narrower than average, but subject to parking restrictions
- Nowhere to push snow

Private Ways

- Makes up 7% of our roadway mileage
- May be narrow, not subject to parking restrictions
- Can push snow through

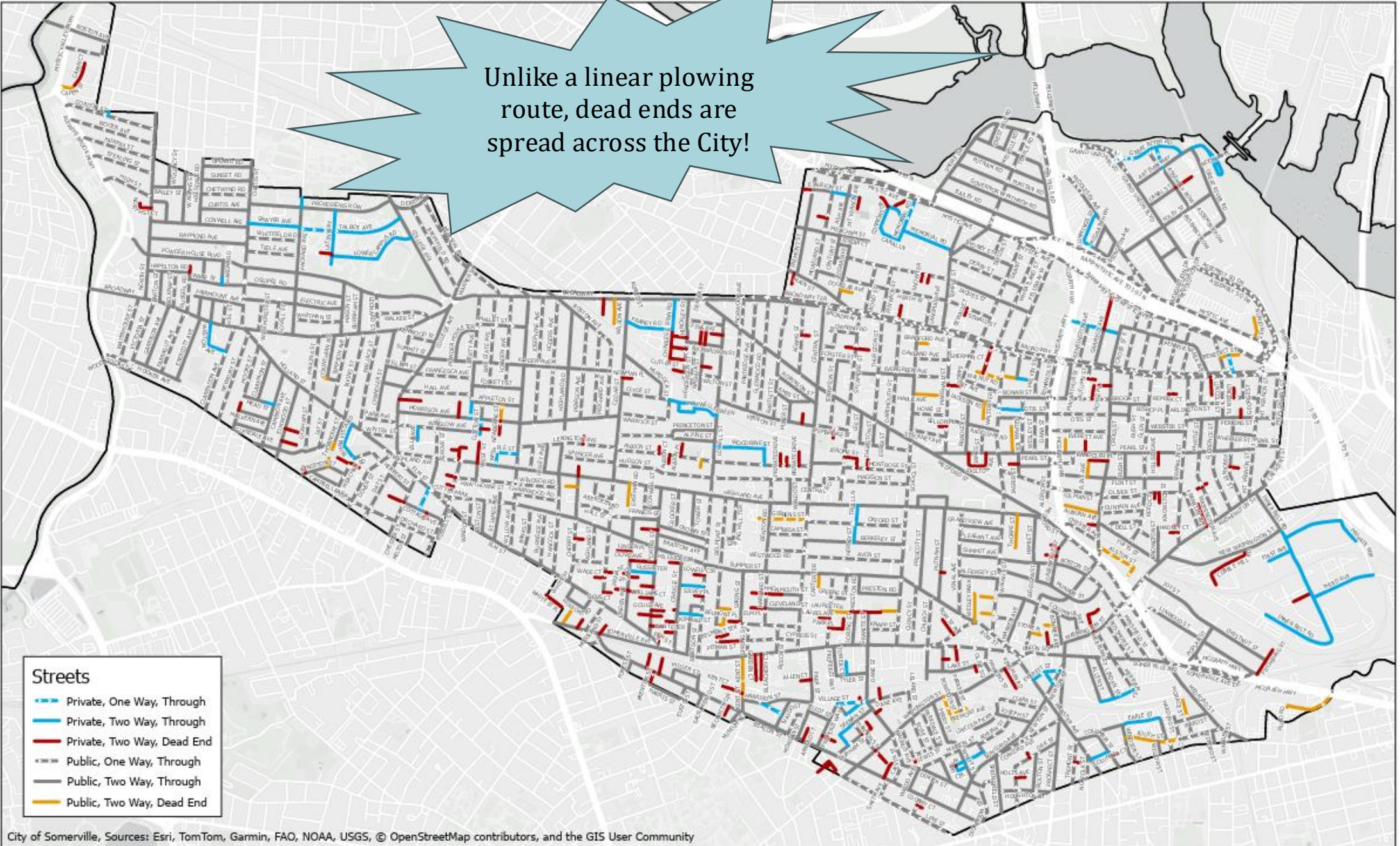
Private Dead Ends

- Makes up 7% of our roadway mileage
- May be narrow, not subject to parking restrictions
- Nowhere to push snow





Unlike a linear plowing route, dead ends are spread across the City!



Streets

- Private, One Way, Through
- Private, Two Way, Through
- Private, Two Way, Dead End
- Public, One Way, Through
- Public, Two Way, Through
- Public, Two Way, Dead End



Changes to Dead End Approach

The Challenge

- In the past routes were cleared after the storm, or by a contractor throughout and after a storm.
- We put three contractor plow trucks dividing the City's dead ends.
- It became clear that the approach was not working.
- We dispatched staff that was not otherwise engaged in snow operations to help and transitioned to a clean-up operation.

A New Approach

- For storms up to 4" we will have staff remove snow from dead ends after the storm when they have finished their routes.
- We identified a contractor with four small plow trucks and four small pieces of equipment. These would rotate through the dead ends throughout storms with forecasts less than 8" of snow accumulation.
- When more than 8" is forecasted we bring in additional small equipment that can navigate the tight streets.

The Results

- We were able to keep the dead ends clear throughout the second storm in February.
- NOTE! WAITING ON DATA FROM 311.



Treating different Bike & Pedestrian Facilities:

Separated Bike Facilities – Highest Priority

- Snow-fighting conducted using small equipment equipped with plows, sanders, occasionally blowers and brushes.
- Routes are established via consultation with the Mobility division.

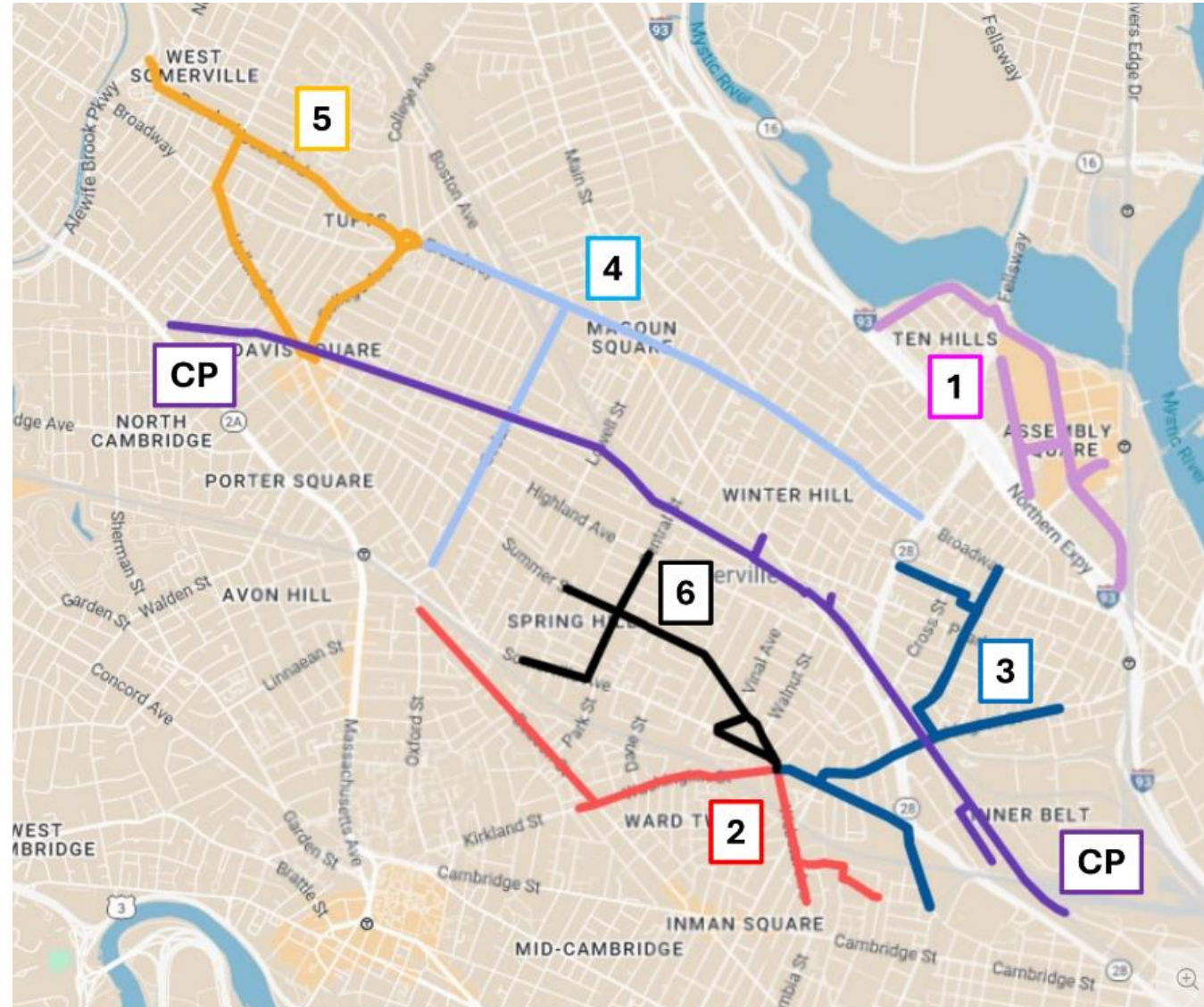
Non-separated Bike Facilities & Community Path

- Snow-fighting primarily conducted by trucks and other large equipment while plowing road routes.



Bike Lane & Path Routes

- As the number of separated bike facilities have grown over the years, so have the number of bike routes we maintain.
- We currently run 6 routes with 12 small pieces of equipment on separated facilities, plus a route on the Community Path





GLX Community Path

- Maintenance, especially snow removal is extremely difficult due to design of path.
- Snow is handled jointly by DPW Grounds and DPW Highway (with contractor support).
- Were able to keep the path open throughout the January storm due to light fluffy snow.
- In February storm, we had to temporarily suspend operations due to heavy, wet snow, low visibility. Cleared the remaining snow the following morning.



Changes to Mobility Infrastructure Approach

The Challenge

- In our first significant storm since 2022, we found that running snow routes was not effective in larger storms.
- Small equipment could not keep up with the amount of snow that plows were pushing into the roadway.

A New Approach

- Instead of running the routes with no benefit, we decided to run separated facilities as a post-storm operation in storms over 8”.

The Results

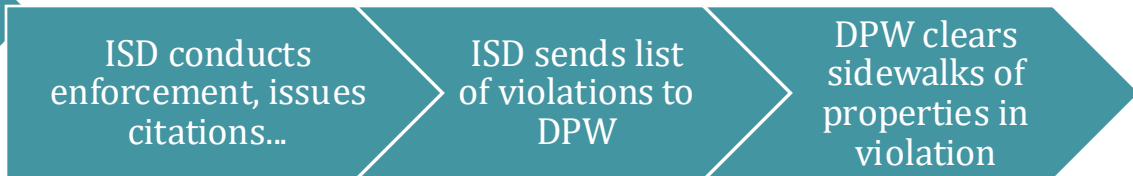
- We were able to clear separated facilities the days following the storm.
- This freed up the “Bike” equipment to work on other areas during the storm, including on private ways/dead ends and on City and Schools facilities.



Enhanced Enforcement Area

Background

- Worked with Mobility to select 2 key corridors: Broadway and School St.
- Communications and Mobility conducted outreach at the start of the program
- The process:



Performance

- Conducted enforcement in target area after 3 storms with 4 or more inches of snow:

Date	Properties Ticketed and Cleared:
1/20/26	9
1/27/26	14
2/24/26	23



Potential Improvements

Expand the Enforcement Window

- Currently only conduct pilot when there are over 4" of snow (specifically after snow emergencies).
- We could expand the number of events to include enforcement and removal of Broadway and School any event where more than an inch of snow fell.

Expand Enforcement

- Max out all snow tickets at \$300
- Expand enforcement area
- Expand enforcement capacity



Next Steps: FY27 and beyond.

Continue to search for additional snow storage.

- Work with OSPCD and PCS to identify local and remote snow storage facilities.
- Plan for eventual transition to snow melting operations.

Improve access to HP spaces

- Contract a vendor to clear all ADA spaces that are covered in snow.

Improve plowing operations.

- Add additional vendors to support faster and more efficient snow removal operations.
- Work on training staff and organizing routes so that we plow closer to the curb where appropriate.





Thank you

Any questions?

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