



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Richard C. Rossi *RCR*
Deputy City Manager and Acting Commissioner of Public Works

DATE: February 18, 1987

SUBJECT: Plan for Towing Vehicles Which Obstruct Snow Removal
Operations Following a Snowstorm

The following report is in response to City Council Orders No. 3 and No. 10 of February 2, 1987. As requested, a meeting was held with representatives from the Traffic Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, and City Manager's Office to discuss our existing plans for towing of vehicles on side streets which obstruct snow-plowing operations after a storm has abated. In order to explain our plan it is first appropriate to discuss our entire emergency snow plowing operation:

OVERVIEW: The City of Cambridge has approximately 121 miles of street that need to be plowed during snow emergencies; 36% or 44 miles of these streets are part of our emergency artery system (Federal Urban Aid). These are the major routes into and out of the City as well as the arteries that have bus routes on them. The other 64% or 77 miles of streets are secondary and local roads which are primarily residential.

In trying to develop a plan that would serve the residents and business areas of the City, it was determined that a one-sided ban throughout the winter would create hardship for the residents of the City as there is insufficient off-street parking for all residents. Therefore, it was determined that an emergency-type system would serve the City best and create the least amount of problems for residents. They would only have to find other parking arrangements during a declared snow emergency.

The plan provides that when a snow emergency is declared, parking is prohibited on both sides of our emergency artery system and on the posted side of all secondary streets. Snow emergency signs are posted on both sides of emergency arteries and one side of all secondary streets except where parking is restricted at all times. This system allows the major arteries to be cleared first to assure that buses and emergency vehicles can traverse our City at the same time that we are plowing our secondary streets. Once our main arteries are cleared, we then allow our residents to

park there and concentrate on our secondary streets, plowing the one restricted side to the curb where possible. This can only be accomplished with the cooperation of the residents and with enough equipment on hand.

PROBLEMS: Our major problems since January 1987 have been the difficulty in hiring contract equipment, the frequency of back-to-back storms which did not provide an adequate recovery period, limited space to store towed vehicles, the heavy rains and subsequent freezing conditions which followed this year's storms, and our inability to tow vehicles with resident parking stickers.

The City advertises annually and awards contracts to several private contractors for snow plowing equipment. We have determined that the City pays on the higher end of the scale for private equipment rental yet we cannot acquire an adequate number of vehicles to handle our main and secondary streets. Our recent experience has been to get approximately 30 to 40 pieces of hired equipment and to use approximately 20 pieces of City equipment. The City is divided into eight plowing districts which would mean that we had an average of about seven pieces of equipment per district for each snowstorm. Our goal would be to have at least 72 to 80 pieces of equipment per storm. Equipment breakdowns and inadequately sized vehicles further complicate this problem.

This winter's weather conditions have produced a very unique set of conditions which have further complicated plowing of our secondary streets. Back-to-back large accumulations of snow have not provided us with adequate recovery periods to properly deal with secondary roadways. While we were in the midst of clearing our secondary streets, we were having to prepare for an impending storm. The snowfalls have been very heavy, very wet, and have been either preceded or followed by heavy rains, extreme flooding, and severe ice conditions. These factors have made plowing almost impossible directly after a storm when secondary streets would normally be plowed. During one storm, the peak period of the storm hit during the evening rush hour and our plows and salters were tied up in major traffic jams for at least three hours throughout the City. In addition, the freezing conditions created a thick base of ice on all our streets which was difficult to deal with.

When the City contemplates declaring a snow emergency, the Commissioner of Public Works receives input from the Police Department, Traffic Department, and Executive Department before announcing the Emergency Parking Ban. When towing commences, each of the three tow companies is required to provide at least five tow vehicles per company to the City. Recently, we have received at least 20 trucks in total, and we are working to increase that number to a total of 30 or more vehicles. Attached is a plan of our emergency tow routes. Storage of towed vehicles has been a problem. City-wide, during one week with two major storms, we towed approximately 450 cars from main roads and over 200 snowbound cars blocking secondary roads. Due to this number of cars, all towing storage lots were full. The City is continuing to look for available land in Cambridge to store towed vehicles in future years.

In 1978, the City Council voted to request the Traffic Director to amend his regulations to exempt vehicles with resident stickers from being towed for being parked at the same location for a 24-hour period. Attached you will find a response to City Council Order No. 3 of February 2, 1987 which addresses the problem that this 1978 regulation causes and a joint recommendation from the Traffic Department, Public Works Department, and Police Department to have that regulation rescinded.

PLAN: Notwithstanding the problems which have been mentioned we still have a plan for towing of snowbound vehicles and for towing of vehicles which make the plowing of secondary streets more difficult. When the plowing of major arteries is complete, we next concentrate on school bus routes, schoolparking lots, school sidewalks and areas where students load and unload buses, MBTA bus stops, public sidewalks, public parking lots, and handicapped curb cuts. This work will continue for 48 hours after a major storm (longer if the storm is extremely large) and must also provide a period of time for employees to rest. Other normal Public Works operations must also continue.

When the snow emergency has been lifted and while other clearing operations are underway, we can then concentrate on areas which need to be plowed for the first time or to be replowed. In Cambridge, this is an extremely difficult problem to deal with because of residents and business owners who continually shovel snow back into the street after it has been plowed and due to the problems which occur with our on-street parking and inadequate storage areas for residents' vehicles.

"Snow Removal" or "Emergency No Parking" signs will be posted on certain problem streets to enable us to plow the snow back, or in very limited circumstances, remove it. The City has neither the budget, nor the available land, to remove snow on all streets. Information will be gathered from Public Works supervisory personnel once they have driven their entire district, from the Traffic Department personnel who assist during storms, from Police and Fire Department reports, from the School Department, and from reports made by the general public to determine the list of streets which need to have vehicles removed for further plowing operations. This plan will be put into effect after each declared snow emergency. The plan's success remains a function of our ability to hire proper and adequate equipment, and the amount and frequency of snowfall and subsequent weather conditions.

The Chief of Police will provide an adequate number of Police Officers for towing cars from secondary streets and the City Council should go on record as requesting the Traffic Director to promulgate his March 13, 1978 regulations relative to towing vehicles with resident stickers and out-of-town vehicles which park on public ways for periods in excess of 24 straight hours. Under any normal storm conditions, this plan will be adequate to provide for well-plowed secondary roadways.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

February 23, 1987

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report No. 12 regarding a plan for towing vehicles on side streets which obstruct traffic flow and snow removal operations, and City Council Order No. 3 of February 2, 1987 regarding snowbound vehicles, I submit the attached report from Richard C. Rossi, Acting Commissioner of Public Works.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

AGENDA ITEM #5 S-135

Response to Awaiting Report Item # 12,
regarding a plan for towing vehicles on
side streets which obstruct traffic flow
and snow removal operations.

In City Council,
February 23, 1987

Placed on F. Li