

December, 2016

Update: New Sidewalk Snow Legislation Passes County Council

With snow in the near forecast, I am pleased to announce that the County Council passed my sidewalk snow legislation ([Bill 46-16](#)) that established a commercial-class fine for failure to remove sidewalk snow. I would like to thank Council President Roger Berliner for co-sponsoring this legislation, my colleagues on the Council for their support, and members of the community for their strong advocacy.

This legislation will enable the County to levy a fine on commercial property owners up to \$250 for the first offense of not clearing snow and up to \$500 for subsequent offenses. While a \$50 fine seems adequate for residential properties, it has very little, if any, deterrent effect on commercial property owners. The fine needs to be larger to enable code enforcers to more effectively deal with the problem actors, which are few but have a larger impact.

Please see my full comments on the bill in the video below: https://youtu.be/l4UyDC_zBac

Overall, I am please with our progress on sidewalk snow removal, which I addressed in [legislation in 2014](#).

- MCDOT inventoried all of the County sidewalks and identified which ones the County is responsible for clearing. This information is organized in a GIS layer which I expect (and have requested) will be released soon. - online now
- In all other cases, the property owner is responsible, as per the [original legislation passed by Councilmember Phil Andrews in 2001](#).
- In 2015 MCDOT cleared over 50 miles of sidewalks focusing on high traffic pedestrian areas and bus stops.
- This year MCDOT will be responsible for clearing over 320 miles of sidewalks.
- Urban districts have significantly improved their response with better and more equipment and staff time devoted to removal.
- In my experience, private property owners are acting with more care and diligence for sidewalk snow removal. County education efforts have made a big impact.

There is, however, more work to do, particularly when it comes to enforcement. Ensuring that the County responds to property owners who do not respond to county education efforts or personal appeals to clear their sidewalks in a timely manner is an area where I think we still have work to do. This legislation will help.

Also: 311 online complaint form improved.

<http://councilmemberriemer.com/2016/12/update-new-sidewalk-snow-legislation-passes-county-council.html>