

Josh Jacobson
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner
Single Member District 1E06

Testimony before the Public Works and Operations Committee
Department of Public Works Performance Oversight
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Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Josh Jacobson, and I represent Single Member District 1E06 in Pleasant Plains. This testimony is my own and not the position of the Commission as a whole.

I want to begin by noting that the frontline workers I have interacted with have consistently demonstrated professionalism and dedication. My testimony is not a criticism of those individuals. Rather, it reflects systemic failures in process design, operational equity, and public communication during the recent snowstorm.

Route Equity and Emergency Operations

Residents on my block last had trash collected on January 22 and recycling on January 20. Meanwhile, residents just blocks away had their trash collected three times during the same period as service resumed unevenly across routes.

We are still waiting for our trash and recycling to be collected.

In future emergencies, DPW should develop procedures to balance collection equity across routes. When staffing or weather constraints prevent full service, routes should be rotated to avoid concentrated multi-week service gaps in specific neighborhoods.

Residents can tolerate delays. They will not tolerate inequities in collection though.

Communication Integrity

Beginning February 3, DPW publicly communicated that Tuesday collection alleys had been cleared of snow. That was not the case in my area. I notified DPW repeatedly. While staff acknowledged my emails, the public communication was never corrected.

Overconfident or inaccurate communications erode public trust and create confusion among residents.

In future events, I recommend that DPW:

- Communicate with greater humility (“to the best of our knowledge...”)
- Provide a formalized feedback loop for correcting public status claims
- Consider real-time route status dashboards

When communications are wrong and remain uncorrected, frustration will compound.

Sidewalks, Crosswalks, and Enforcement

It took more than a week for many sidewalks to become walkable. Numerous crosswalks were impassable. I also heard reports that Snow Heroes were not activated until after snow had frozen into ice.

Sidewalk clearing is legally the responsibility of property owners. However, categorical waivers of enforcement undermine compliance incentives and create predictable non-compliance.

Enforcement must be credible to be effective.

At the same time, we should recognize structural gaps. Even when sidewalks are shoveled, plowing often leaves snow berms blocking crosswalk entrances.

This past weekend, I joined five neighbors to clear five crosswalks that otherwise would have remained impassable for weeks. It was both productive and nice form of community-building.

I encourage the District to explore an “Adopt-a-Crosswalk” model that allows residents to partner with the government in maintaining critical pedestrian infrastructure during major snow events.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Josh Jacobson