

Government of the District of Columbia



DC Department of Public Works

Testimony of
William O. Howland, Jr.
Director

**“Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Public Works FY 2014-FY 2015”**

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
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11 AM

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM O. HOWLAND, JR., DIRECTOR
DC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
PERFORMANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING, FY 2014-FY 2015
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2015/11 AM

INTRODUCTION

- Good morning, Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee and staff. I am William O. Howland, Jr., Director of the Department of Public Works. I am happy to testify before you today on the Department's FY 2014 and FY 2015 performance.
- The mission of the Department of Public Works is to provide environmentally healthy municipal services that are both ecologically sound and cost effective. To that end, DPW serves all District residents, businesses, visitors and commuters by providing:
 - Trash, recycling, litter, household hazardous waste, and e-cycling collection and disposal.
 - Street and alley cleaning.
 - Solid waste education and enforcement.
 - Snow removal.
 - Parking enforcement, including towing, booting, removing and impounding abandoned and dangerous vehicles.
 - Fleet management, including acquisition and disposal, fueling, and vehicle maintenance services.

THE FOUR-LETTER WORD SPOKEN TOO OFTEN

- I opened last year's testimony with a discussion of our snow removal effort. Last year's snow season was challenging, marked by almost double the amount of snow we are accustomed to receiving.
- This snow season has brought a more modest amount of snow, with the greatest accumulation, 4.6 inches, occurring last Monday, February 16. Our total thus far for the season is less than 10 inches.
- I would like to point out that while the total accumulation has been low, we have deployed almost 20 times in full, partial and prowl modes to meet the weather conditions.
- What has been most significant has been the stretch of subfreezing temperatures accompanying snow events. When the temperature is below 20 degrees, salt is less effective, which means increasing the number of salt applications to melt snow and ice.

- At the beginning of snow season, our salt was at full capacity of 39,000 tons. Thus far we have used 30,000 tons and have replenished to some degree and about 16,000 tons are available. Our snow budget was increased by \$3.3 million, primarily to ensure we have sufficient salt to last through the end of the season. Thanks to our tenacious snow coordinator, our salt domes are being replenished.
- We also are refreshing our equipment. We ordered eight new six-wheel dumps that will be part of the “heavy” plows group. So far, we have received six and they are in service. The remaining two will arrive this week and will be prepped for service. An additional 14 trucks have been ordered. We expect delivery to begin November 2015.
- At this time, I want to thank our trash and recycling collection customers for their patience despite being inconvenienced by collections missed due to snow and ice in the alleys and on the streets.
- I want to salute the Snow Team, which consists of DPW, DDOT, DGS; OUC; DC Water; DOC; HSEMA; MPD; FEMS; and DCPS. Each agency’s employees are to be commended for working tirelessly throughout the snow season.
- Our unsung heroes are our families who support us by handling everything in our absence during snow season. Unfortunately, winter isn’t over, yet, but it’s close.
- We are fortunate that Serve DC and the Office on Aging are continuing to partner with us to help seniors and people with disabilities to clear snow and ice from their sidewalks.
- While on the subject of clearing sidewalks, I think our message of helping our neighbors walk safely on cleared sidewalks has taken hold. Last Monday afternoon, I drove across the District checking out roadway conditions, but what was most gratifying was the number of blocks with sidewalks totally clear of snow.
- Yes, there were isolated sidewalks where snow remained, but this was the first time I remember seeing the majority of the sidewalks citywide clear of snow so quickly after the end of the storm.
- I believe the reason is a combination of messaging reminding the community of snow shoveling, which has influenced compliance on sidewalk shoveling. The Mayor also is reminding everyone at every press conference to shovel their walk. Our District Snow Team’s message to be a good neighbor and the Council’s legislation on sidewalk shoveling also have encouraged people to be responsible.

DPW, AN ACKNOWLEDGED LEADER FOR FLEET-RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- This year DPW was cited as the fourth Greenest [government] Fleet in the country, which is our highest ranking ever.

- Our use of alternative fuel vehicles also was profiled by PBS's Motorweek, which featured several of our vehicles, including trash trucks, street sweepers and plug-in electric vehicles.
- This month, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments selected the District of Columbia for the COG-Vision Fleet Pilot Fleet Assessment.
- The purpose of the pilot assessment is to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of plug-in electric vehicles to local governments through comprehensive analysis and implementation models. Vision Fleet has established an innovative model for municipal vehicle fleets that addresses obstacles to EV adoption.
- And we not only are meeting our federal alternative fuel vehicle requirements, we are exceeding them. We have reduced our use of gasoline by 40 percent, while the federal requirement is a 25 percent reduction. And that is why the federal government is seeking our advice to share with other jurisdictions.
- I also should mention that our use of biodiesel allows us to meet District requirements as well federal requirements.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN FY 2014 AND FY 2015

- One year ago, we began to our universal distribution of new Supercans, 32-gallon trash cans and larger recycling cans. The results are in and are surprising.
- First, our total tonnage of trash and recycling collections is virtually unchanged from a year ago. However, we have seen a shift in the breakdown between trash and recycling, with 300 more tons of recycling collected than previously and a commensurate reduction in trash collections. That represents an 18 percent increase in recyclables collected.
- Each month, since distributing the larger recycling cans (64-gallon cans in Supercan neighborhoods and 48-gallon cans in twice-a-week collection neighborhoods), we have seen a boost of several percentage points in collections over the previous year.
- We are keeping a close watch on recycling collections because we have noticed an increase in contaminants.
- Last week we published and began distributing a new recycling brochure that provides residential and commercial property owners with the guidance they need to recycle properly.
- We also are developing an electronic advertising campaign to help us reach customers whose primary news resources are the Internet, television and radio.
- By the way, Monday, March 2, we resume residential neighborhood street sweeping. In FY 2015, we are going to clean every residential street at least once a month.

- Residents who live on streets where signs indicate when weekly street sweeping will occur have agreed to move their vehicles to allow the sweepers to reach the curb lanes.
- Residents who live on streets where no signs are posted will not have to move their cars. These streets will be cleaned once a month.
- Of course, with the start of street sweeping, we will resume enforcing the related parking restrictions, which can result in a \$45 ticket and possible tow. I want to remind motorists to pay attention to the signs and move their cars so they can avoid getting a ticket.
- DPW takes every opportunity to increase the use of technology to help our customers better understand our services. This year, we posted photographs of leaf collections in progress as well as completed collections. This year's effort was a pilot and we will continue it in FY16.
- Now, I would like to talk about a program that is our highest-rated service. I'm talking about the weekly household hazardous waste/e-cycling drop-off at the Ft. Totten Transfer Station.
- Weekly, we receive glowing reports from residents about the friendliness of the staff and the value the program provides. Last April, we began the weekly drop-off service and we are continuing it in FY15, absorbing its costs within our budget as no specific funding had been specified.
- Personal document shredding will continue to be provided on a monthly basis, on the first Saturday of the month.
- DPW touches or is touched by every age group in the District of Columbia. Starting in FY 2015, we began engaging our youth who attend middle and high school to help us stop people from littering.
- Litter Free DC is reaching out to these young people through television advertising, the Internet and face-to-face conversations. We also partnered with DDOE to make presentations in their schools.

PARKING ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT IN FY 2014 AND FY 2015

- Our Parking Enforcement Management Administration is enhancing its productivity through the expanded use of technology and enhanced training with the ultimate goal of improved customer service.
- PEMA has achieved a significant reduction in its error rate in parking tickets. DPW already had a low error rate, but now we have lowered it substantially through the introduction of various techniques. Since the beginning of FY 2015, PEMA has been doing a better job of daily monitoring officer errors and coaching and counseling staff for

higher performance.

- On the technology front, PEMA is in Phase 2 of its effort to upgrade the impound lot management system. Now, the focus is on improving efficiency of the towing operation. The result will be better information provided to the Towed Vehicle Locator, which will help customers more quickly learn where their vehicle can be found.
- Additionally, a software upgrade was initiated in early December to require officers to enter the license plate number twice on a ticket, which is similar to the double entry we perform when typing our password. This has reduced license-tag entry errors by 96 percent.
- By introducing smartphone technology, we have realized the following benefits:
 - The larger screens provide the officer a much better view of the confirmation screen prior to printing a ticket.
 - Smartphones are easier to use with easier access to drop-down menus.
 - Real-time ticket data transfer data to DMV is more efficient than the overnight download of data from the handheld equipment.
 - Smartphones provide superior photo quality for TicPics day and night ticketing photos.
- We deployed 130 smartphones between October and January and over the next 90 days will deploy another 100 smartphones.
- From October 2014 through January, Parking Enforcement has realized a 76 percent overall decrease in ticket errors. In four of our top 10 highest error categories (license tag number, state, location and missing or blank comments section) we have decreased errors by 96 percent.
- Another DPW innovation in parking enforcement is TicPics. Since we introduced the smartphones and began transferring ticketing and photo data in real-time, we have been able to review tickets often on the same day they were issued.
- Now staff can quickly determine errors and relay information to supervisors and managers to alert officers either the same day or at the next day's roll call.
- We reduced the turnaround time to post photographs to TicPics from 72 hours to less than 24 hours. TicPics has given management an opportunity to review tickets and void tickets with obvious errors. Management can void tickets within 24 to 48 hours after the ticket was issued.
- While increased parking enforcement is our second most requested service, just behind bulk collection requests, we know that those who receive a ticket aren't happy, which is why we make every effort to ensure we enforce parking regulations accurately.

ENSURING OUR FUTURE THROUGH TRAINING

- In FY 2015, we are expanding the “Thriving in the Workplace Program for Supervisors” following its successful pilot conducted in SWMA’s Street and Alley Cleaning Division in FY 2014. Our two new cohorts will launch tomorrow.
- The program began as a partnership between the DC Human Resources Center for Learning and Development and DPW’s Human Capital Administration. “Thriving” is a customized learning and development program designed to enhance the skills and development of entry level supervisors.
- Program benefits include:
 - Developing data entry and typing skills while becoming proficient in using Microsoft Word.
 - Enhancing employees’ writing skills so that they can produce clear and concise work reports.
 - Improving customer service skills so that employees may engage more effectively with co-workers and members of the community.
 - Enriching employees’ understanding of PeopleSoft so they will be able to complete “Self Service” functions, such as time and attendance as well as Learning and Development opportunities.
- Our employees are our most valuable resource and through this program, we are seeing increased productivity among the participants.
- This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.