

September 10, 2025

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

202501584

From: Sheryl M. M. Long, City Manager

Subject: **Preventative Road Maintenance to Minimize Potholes**

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### **Reference Document #202500125**

The Council at its session on January 29, 2025, referred the following item for review and report.

**MOTION**, dated January 21, 2025, submitted by Councilmember Albi, **WE MOVE** that the Department of Public Services publish a report within 30 days to highlight how the City could leverage Cincy on Track funding to prioritize preventative road maintenance and use sealcoating to minimize the severity of potholes. This report should also highlight strategies that the City has previously employed and/or best practices from other peer cities across the country.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Using preventative maintenance treatments like sealcoating is a great way to extend the life of City streets. The City of Cincinnati has used preventative maintenance treatments (sealcoating, micro-surfacing, and Cape seals) since 2016. Over the past 5 years, 111 lane miles received preventative maintenance treatments averaging 22.2 lane miles per year.

### **CINCY ON TRACK FUNDING**

In 2016, the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) hired a pavement management consultant to determine the most efficient amount of funding for preventative maintenance activities. The report stated that between 10 and 15 percent should be dedicated to preventative maintenance. Currently, 10% of DOTE's Street Rehabilitation Program Budget is allocated to preventative maintenance. This could be increased to 20% with additional funding from Cincy on Track and would allow for additional streets to be added to the program.

### **CITY STRATEGIES**

The City of Cincinnati uses a multiple-pronged approach to roadway preservation that covers work in the following three major categories:

1. Preventative maintenance (crack and surface coatings)
2. Rehabilitation (grinding a few inches of the asphalt and paving with new asphalt)
3. Reconstruction (removing all the pavement and replacing it with new)

Managing a road network the size of Cincinnati's requires several different treatments. Road resurfacing, sealcoating and other preventative maintenance measures all combine as an ongoing program to deliver the smoothest road network possible. Additionally, the Department of Public

Services (DPS) provides pothole patching and full depth pavement repair through the Spot Infrastructure Repair program as needed. Under new leadership, DPS is reviewing ongoing pothole practices and will have more information to share on this in the Fall.

Projects implemented by various public and private utilities within the public right of way are required to repair the right-of-way that has been impacted by their project. The repairs required depend on the type of work and the existing condition of our roadways. DOTE has published street restoration requirements detailing these repairs.

### **BEST PRACTICES FROM PEER CITIES**

Evaluation of peer cities and industry best-practices related to roadway preservation confirms that the multiple-pronged approach provides the highest value (rate of return) for our investment. Peer agencies including City of Dayton, the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Hamilton County Engineer's Office, and the City of Pittsburgh all utilize the multiple pronged approach the City utilizes.

Additionally, DOTE's peer agency review identified numerous strategies whereby road repairs resulting from utility or other permit work are handled differently and result in other agency funding being directly applied to maintenance. Specifically, other agencies do not permit trench restoration and require more robust repaving repairs.

### **SUMMARY**

In summary, DOTE could add additional streets to the preventative maintenance program with an increase in funding from Cincy on Track. The department is constantly evaluating strategies to ensure we capture the largest benefit with funds allocated to the department. DPS is also reviewing their maintenance processes and pothole repair practices. We are looking specifically at industry best-practices and peer agency implementation regarding allocation of funds spent on roadway maintenance types and how restoration requirements are handled.

cc: Cathy Bailey, Interim Assistant City Manager  
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Greg Long, Interim Director, Department of Transportation and Engineering  
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