MEMORANDUM

CC-26-031

Ordinance 26-05 APPROPRIATING AN ADDITIONAL $20,000 EACH FROM HART ROADS AND HART TRAILS FUNDS FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE MT7 TRACKLESS MUNICIPAL SIDEWALK TRACTOR.

Item Type: Backup Memorandum

Prepared For: Mayor Lord and Homer City Council

Date: January 22, 2026

From: Daniel Kort, Public Works Director

Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

SUMMARY:
The City is intending to purchase a Trackless MT7 Municipal Sidewalk Tractor (Trackless MT7) for the maintenance of trails and sidewalks. This Ordinance is requesting additional funding to cover recent tariffs associated with purchases of equipment from Canada.

BACKGROUND:
The Public Works Department currently uses a Bobcat Toolcat (Toolcat) to provide maintenance to City sidewalks, trails, among other duties. While this piece of equipment is capable of performing the job, it is designed to be used as a "yard equipment" such as doing maintenance around a large manufacturing plant, school site, construction site, or landscaping. It was not designed to be driven long distances on a consistent basis. The City's Toolcat is wearing out prematurely, and the department submitted an FY26/27 budget request that was approved by Council, to purchase a Trackless MT7 to take over the Sidewalk and Trail maintenance duties such as sweeping and snow removal.

The Trackless MT7 is the generally regarded as the "Standard Tool of Choice" in North America for maintenance to sidewalks. The City of Anchorage has a fleet of approximately 40 Trackless MT7 tractors and replace them on a schedule of approximately every 5 years due to the milage they put on them. The City of Kenai had a 15-year old Trackless MT7 that they replaced with a Mini Loader a couple years ago and are looking to go back to Trackless MT7 due to the Mini Loaders poor performance. The City of Soldotna owns 2 Trackless MT7 sidewalk tractors and Soldotna does not have as large of a footprint as Homer. Yukon Equipment is the local vendor in Alaska for Trackless and has provided reliable service to the City of Homer, and other communities have indicated that parts for the Trackless MT7 are easily accessible from Yukon.

The City received notification from Trackless in November of 2025 that Proclamation 10984 issued by President Donald Trump applies to the purchase of the Trackless MT7, and the tariff applied to this machine would be $34,811.20, which triggered this request for additional funding. At the introduction of this Ordinance City Council made the request that Public Works come back and report on options available that are US made and additional information was requested through the City Manager following the January 12th meeting. Please see the responses below.

Additional Requested Information

1. Provide information on US manufactured alternative equipment that would avoid or reduce tariff impacts (for example, Ventrac equipment, which is widely used by other municipalities).

   In the following section you will find alternatives originally considered by the Public Works Department prior to the original request for the Trackless MT7. The requested evaluation of the Ventrac is also included in this evaluation as well as additional options.

2. Provide at least 3 comparative quotes from vendors that are not subject to tariffs.

   Public Works was unable to identify 3 US vendors who produce an equivalent machine but did include all options identified. Given the short turnaround time between meetings, we were unable to fulfill this request.

3. Provide a clear explanation of what the Trackless MT7 can do that the Toolcat cannot.

   Information related to the capabilities of the Trackless MT7 and the Toolcat are listed in the section below where the positive and negative attributes of each machine are discussed.

4. Provide a clear explanation of why a tracked device such as the MT7 is better suited to travel from the Public Works Department's location to more distant sidewalk segments. From a lay perspective, it would appear that a wheeled device might travel faster and more efficiently than a tracked one.

   The name of the company is "Trackless". The Trackless MT7 is an articulated wheeled machine designed specifically for municipal sidewalk maintenance. The statement that a wheeled device would travel faster and more efficiently than a tracked one is an accurate statement.

5. What is the total number of miles the City clears and the typical time-to-clear sidewalks and trails following a snowfall?

   The Toolcat is not outfitted with an Odometer because the equipment is not designed for driving long distances. It is difficult to accurately estimate the distance of sidewalk and trail plowed and maintained, and the distance driven varies widely for each snowfall event. Some examples that influence the variability are as follows:

   - *Some sidewalks and trails are wide enough that it requires to be plowed from two directions to clear its full width.*

- *An additional lap is required to sand the sidewalks after plowing is complete. The sander in the Toolcat only holds approximately half a yard of sand, so it has a limited distance of travel before having to return to the Public Works Campus to refill with sand.*
- *Some trails and sidewalks require special attention and additional effort due to their public use, such as routes to schools.*

Regardless of the difficulty, we estimated that the City plows and maintains approximately 22-miles of sidewalk and trails. This distance does not necessarily account for the travel distance between different locations that this device plows. Great effort is placed into creating a route or pattern to be sure we are being as efficient as possible. During some plowing events where it may still be snowing, the Toolcat does a second lap or more; AND follows up conducting clean up plowing for a day or two after a snow event is over. One full lap of the Toolcat route can take 6 to 8-hours (excluding the sanding the entire route). This machine could easily drive over 50 miles/day or more during a snow event.

6. What is the Toolcat performance data, including average hours per snow event, overtime costs, and any recent downtime due to breakdowns?

   The average hours per snow event was answered in question 5. Overtime costs for plowing sidewalks is not tracked separately from overtime associated with general snow plowing and is not likely a good measurement tool for the assessment for justification of the Trackless MT7 versus any other machine. There was not adequate time to pull data and come up with a logical estimate for this number. Lastly, we do not track downtime due to breakdowns. If additional tracking information is desired, we would need more labor hours (additional labor) to be able to conduct the additional tracking of data requested.

7. Provide a breakdown of which attachments are included in the proposed Trackless MT7 purchase price versus attachments we already have for the Toolcat.

   The Trackless was quoted with the following equipment: the tractor itself, a V-Snowplow, a snowblower (capable of blowing snow into a dump truck), a sander, a water tank, and a broom. The existing Toolcat has the following attachments: the machine itself, a V-Snowplow, a snowblower (NOT capable of blowing snow into a dump truck), a sander, a water tank, a broom, an auger, and forks.

8. Please provide confirmation that whichever equipment is ultimately selected will allow the Public Works Department to pursue extending its current sidewalk clearing along Pioneer in two directions: 1) Out East End Road to Paul Banks Elementary; and 2) Along the Sterling Highway to West Homer Elementary – in coordination with the State of Alaska Department of Transportation, as is currently done along Pioneer Ave.

   The proposed Trackless MT7 will have the capability of adding the proposed and requested additional sidewalk maintenance. The City would need to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the State of Alaska prior to initiating plowing from Pioneer Avenue out East End Road to Paul Banks Elementary and from Pioneer Avenue along the Sterling Highway to West Homer Elementary. The City currently has a MOA for plowing and sweeping of Pioneer Avenue and is annually issued payment from the Alaska DOT to conduct this work. Adding this additional work as proposed will result in additional City labor as well as wear and tear on City equipment, without any compensation from the State of Alaska. In other terms, it's a transfer of maintenance cost from the State of Alaska to the City of Homer without any compensation.

   Additionally, the State of Alaska typically does more than one plowing pass along the road per snow storm. The City would need to be prepared to make multiple passes on these sidewalks per snow event as these sidewalks will become covered with snow from each of the Alaska DOT's plowing passes. This will substantially add to the already full workload for the Public Works Department. For reference, one snowfall event can take our staff 12 to 16 hours of response, and can spill into the following days. As we add more roads and sidewalks to our maintenance list, we will eventually have to decide whether to add additional rolling stock and staff to provide the service or reduce the expectations of a timely response/plowing service.

   Lastly, the operator plowing the grader route out East End Road already drops the wing of the grader onto the connected sidewalk going to Paul Banks School as the grader drives along East End Road on it's way east and back west. Operators have taken to dropping the grader wing because they are driving by and out of good will towards the citizens of Homer and their children. Unfortunately, the State's plows typically cover up our grader operator's work as the State DOT plow passes and snow is thrown back onto the sidewalk. That is hiding the additional service that the City is providing to the State DOT and Homer residents. This further supports the statement that this additional sidewalk plowing will require multiple passes per day over the same length of sidewalk.

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City Council
January 22, 2026

Trackless MT7 Municipal Sidewalk Tractor




The above photograph is an example image of the proposed Trackless MT7 for reference. Based upon questions, there appears to be a misconception that the proposed Trackless MT7 has "tracks". This machine is an articulated wheeled machine that is purpose designed for plowing and maintaining sidewalks and trails, and are designed to drive many miles per day, whereas machines like the Toolcat are designed for driving 1 to 2 miles per day. The Toolcat and Trackless MT7 have similar tool capabilities. The Toolcat has a front hydraulic arm that allows the attachment of a bucket or forks because it's design is more geared towards construction or landscaping. The Trackless MT7 does not have that option, however it has options for brushing attachments and the ability to drive much greater distances without premature failure. These machines have been time tested and are recognized as the premier preferred tool for municipal sidewalk and trail maintenance.

Alternative Options to the Trackless MT7

As requested, the following information is presented to the City Council for consideration and the available options. Research indicated that the only equivalent to the Trackless MT7 produced in the US is the Bobcat Toolcat, therefore Public Works expanded the search beyond the US and also included other equipment that had at least part of the capability that the Trackless MT7 offers as well as specific equipment that Council requested to be included in the evaluation. Unfortunately, with the large scope of the request, and the limited time provided for this research, not all of the information is available at this time.

Option 1 – Bobcat Toolcat

This is the same machine that the City currently owns. This is the only US made option that has the capabilities of the Trackless MT7 without completely changing to a platform. As stated before, our current machine is prematurely wearing out. As stated several times, these machines are designed and built to service a construction site, manufacturing facility grounds, or landscaping and are not intended to drive more than a mile or two a day, whereas we may drive our machine 50 miles per snowfall event. We could consider purchasing a second Toolcat and initiate a replacement schedule where we replace the older machine approximately every 3 to 5 years, so we are exchanging the older machine before it begins entering a costly maintenance cycle as the machine ages. This was originally considered before the proposition of purchasing the Trackless MT7, however it was not pursued because of the expense of owning 2 Toolcat's and the risk of accidentally holding on to one too long and incurring costly maintenance.

Pro's:

- This is the same machine the City currently owns, so there is familiarity.
- Made in the US.
- This machine has use around the Public Works Campus for multiple other projects.
- This machine has most of the capabilities of the Trackless MT7.

Con's:

- The City's current machine is wearing out prematurely because the City tried adapting this machine to an unintended use like many other municipalities. This commits the City to an advanced replacement schedule, and ownership of two Toolcats.
- Nearly the same cost as the Trackless MT7.

Cost:

Approximate cost of $250,000 with implements. There was not enough time available to get a new budgetary quote.

Option 2 – Mini Loader

This option is a deviation to a completely different machine platform. There are several manufacturers available in the US.

Pro's:

- Readily available within the US and Alaska.

Con's:

- The expected cost is estimated to be equal or greater than the Trackless MT7.
- This machine WILL NOT have many of the capabilities of the Trackless MT7, such as:
  - A sweeper may be attached, however it would NOT have a water tank therefore it would create excessive dust.
  - The optional equipment would be much more limited. Only options would be broom, snowplow, bucket, and snow blower.
- Much like the Toolcat, this machine is not built with the intention of driving many miles per day. This piece of equipment WOULD wear out quickly as the City of Kenai has experienced and told our maintenance staff.
- This machine is much heavier and may be much more limited on trails during spring breakup.
- The machine is tall and will have overhead limitations requiring additional tree and brush clearing.
- This machine is a little more top heavy and may have limitations on slopes.
- Kenai owned an older Trackless a couple years ago and switched to a machine like this hoping it would save some money. We have heard that after a year or two of ownership, they immediately regretted their decision because the machine is not nearly as capable at performing the job as the Trackless MT7. From the Public Works Departments research, the Toolcat would be a better tool than this option.

Cost:

There was not adequate time to secure a budgetary quote. Based off experience, the machine plus the attachments is estimated to cost around $300,000 to $350,000.

Option 3 – Multihog Tractor

This machine is manufactured in Ireland. There does not appear to be any local supplier in Alaska. Internet research indicates that US vendors are available in Colorado, California, Illinois, and Washington/Oregon.

Pro's:

- This machine is very comparable to the Trackless MT7.
- This machine can be outfitted with the same implements as the Trackless MT7
- From the limited research, this machine looks either equal to the Trackless MT7 or even more capable.

Con's:

- There is no local representation for this machine. Therefore, repair parts and support will be more difficult as well as longer lead times for parts delivery.
- This machine is manufactured in Ireland. From the specifications, it appears as though the engine is manufactured in Germany. This means that tariffs are likely to apply to repair parts and it's likely that there will be long wait times for parts due to them being shipped from Europe.
- Research indicates that US tariffs on Ireland are complex and volatile. Generally speaking, US tariff's on products from Ireland range from 20% to 30% which is roughly equivalent to the Canadian tariff's.

Cost:

Not enough time was available to secure a budgetary cost estimate. It is very reasonable to expect that the cost for this machine will be roughly the same as the Trackless MT7 or more based on it's origin and shipping.

Option 4 – Ventrac


The Ventrac machine is assembled in the US. It was requested that this machine and other US manufactured machines be evaluated. It was stated that many municipalities use these machines. We were unsuccessful of identifying any municipalities that use this equipment for a performance reference. Research indicates that these are mostly used for maintaining pathways and grounds for municipalities, grounds keeping for parks, universities, and homeowner associations. We doubt that this machine would be capable of performing the same work as the Toolcat, and would likely require multiple machines to complete the same work, which would also require additional staff.

Pro's:

- This machine is manufactured in the US.
- This machine is likely cheaper than all of the other options.

Con's:

- This machine is the least robust or durable of all the options evaluated. Looking at the specifications, it appears as though this machine is designed for maintenance for a school; commercial property such as SBS; or a small apartment complex. Evaluation of the specifications by our staff estimates that this machine would breakdown much more frequently than any other option. This machine is not constructed to endure the maintenance wear and tear demands of a municipality.
- This machine has very limited optional attachments available and would not considered to be an equivalent to the Toolcat or the Trackless MT7.

Costs:

Not enough time was available to secure a budgetary cost estimate. It is very reasonable to estimate that the cost for this machine will be significantly less than all of the other options.

Option 5 – Reduce the Miles of Trail and Sidewalk Maintained

While undoubtedly unpopular, but in the spirit of evaluating all available options, the City could consider reducing the number of miles of trails and sidewalks maintained. This would reduce the burden on the city owned Toolcat and allow the City to continue to function with the existing inventory of equipment.

Option 6 – Contract out Plowing of Trails and Sidewalks

While undoubtedly unpopular, but in the spirit of evaluating all available options, the City could consider contracting out all or a portion of the plowing maintenance of Trails and Sidewalks. Based upon the City's existing plowing contracts and with the understanding of the required labor associated with plowing these sidewalks, we estimate that the annual cost to contract out the plowing and sanding of the trails and sidewalks will annually exceed the purchase price for the proposed Trackless MT7 purchase.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Public Works Department did a lot of this research prior to the original proposal of purchasing the Trackless MT7 Municipal Sidewalk Tractor. The only locally available and comparable equipment to the Trackless MT7 is the Toolcat which the City currently owns. The Toolcat is far inferior to the Trackless MT7. The Public Works Department was unable to identify any other options manufactured in North America that are in the same competitive class as the Trackless MT7. This further research effort has reinforced the opinion of the Public Works Departments that the Trackless MT7 Municipal Sidewalk Tractor is the correct machine to purchase. The Public Works Department recommends adoption of this Ordinance to appropriate additional funding.