

Brushing of Roads in the Town of Sherman

(Much of the content of this handout was taken from internet research and considered to be applicable to the roads of our town)

Roadside right-of-way brush clearing is an area of maintenance that the Town of Sherman will pursue year-round. The Town right-of-way generally extends at least ten feet off of the paved surface, though it usually will go further. There are several important reasons that this right-of-way zone should be kept free of trees, branches, brush, and other obstructions. Trees and roads do not coexist very well. If we are to accommodate trees in proximity to roads, it would be to the detriment of roads and traffic in various ways. Residents need to understand that if we are going to preserve trees near and a large canopy over our roads, they must be prepared to spend more money more frequently in various ways for road use and maintenance. Particular problems with vegetation in Town right-of-ways include:

- Trees in close proximity to the edge of pavement represent an increased direct contact hazard to vehicles. Even if contact is avoided, excessive growth along roadways tends to force traffic toward the centerline, reducing mutual clearance with on-coming traffic. This is a liability issue.
- Excessive brush in intersection right-of-way areas presents sightline obstructions and increases the risk of vehicular accidents in these areas. This is a liability issue.
- Excessive growth along roadways reduces accessible areas for pedestrian traffic, and forces walkers and bikers closer to the centerline, increasing potential for accidents.
- Trees in close proximity to the edge of pavement typically cause heaving and cracking of pavement due to root and trunk growth.
- Excessive trees, limbs, and brush in right-of-way may obstruct visibility of street and traffic signs. This is a liability issue.
- In addition to sightline problems, low growth extending over the pavement nudges traffic toward the centerline, thus reducing the separation zone between opposing lanes of travel. Additionally, overhanging branches present a particular hazard to larger trucks, including the Town's plow trucks. Town plow trucks have sustained costly damage related to contact with low-hanging branches.
- Low brush and clutter in the shoulder areas degrades snowplowing efforts. In Wisconsin, clear road shoulders are essential as snow shelf areas for storage of plowed snow. Obstructions in the shoulder areas hinder proper clearing of the road surfaces and even distribution of plowed snow.
- Excessive canopy in roadside areas hinders the drying and melting processes for residual moisture on road surfaces that relates also to travel safety. Sun exposure and air movement at the road surface are key factors in enhancing melting and drying.
- Road deterioration is accelerated by prolonged exposure to moisture. Thus, improving drying conditions is an investment in our road maintenance program.
- Trees in close proximity to roads increase the probability of blowdown and ice storm impacts. Because of particular storm impacts (or even randomly), trees and limbs may fall into or over the roadway, impeding traffic, or into utility lines, disrupting service.
- Excessive canopy and growth along roadways diminishes lighting conditions. Clearing improves visibility by enhancing the access of natural light.
- Also, moving the clearing limit further from the edge of pavement discourages some wildlife activity close to the road. If entering the right-of-way, clearing improves sightlines for wildlife, giving it and motorists greater margin for mutual visual contact, and thus tending to reduce the potential for accidents involving animals.

- Residents are strongly urged not to plant new shrubs or trees within the right-of-way, or near the right-of-way that would eventually extend branches into it. Though residents are not discouraged from maintaining and beautifying Town property (particularly roadside right-of-way areas), the Town offers no guarantee that items placed within or otherwise growing on or into Town property will be immune from efforts of the Town to maintain its own areas. Though the Town makes no specific effort to target ornamental-type items, they may sometimes be affected by routine maintenance, such as roadside mowing.

- Residents who have bushes or trees that already exist in the right-of-way area are strongly encouraged to relocate them on their own property, if possible, or trim them back as much as possible. If trimming efforts are inadequate, the growth will still be subject to Town maintenance efforts. Finally, it is important to have an aggressive and regular road right-of-way clearing program to ensure that trees are eliminated at the earliest stage possible. A proactive program helps to avoid the more difficult problems that arise when trees have been allowed to grow to a larger size where they are both more costly to remove.

Trees cut on Town right-of-way remain the property of the land owner and can be used as firewood or simply left to decay in the woods. Small brush and limbs left on the right of-way within 25ft of driveway or within sight from your residence may be chipped at landowner's request.

Town of Sherman