

Pipestem Refuse Collection

Informational briefing for the Town Council work session

Department of Public Works & Utilities | October 6, 2026

Where things stand

54 pipestems in the Town

159 addresses served by those pipestems

190' median pipestem length (range 100' to 400')

Bottom line

- DPW collects solid waste from public and private streets, but not the private pipestems. Residential units off pipestems take their carts to the nearest right-of-way for collection.
- Residents have raised concerns about mobility, snow and leaves. DPW offers a Backyard Collection program under which staff collect household refuse, recycling and bagged yard waste and return the carts to the pick-up point.
- This briefing is informational; no Council action is requested.

How refuse is collected today

Public streets

Truck

Mechanical-arm trucks

Cart placement

In the right-of-way, where the arm can reach the cart.

Service

Standard curbside service.

Private streets

Truck

Rear-loading trucks

Cart placement

Within 10 feet of the curb-line or edge of pavement.

Service

Trucks travel the private street.

Pipestems

54 in Town

Truck

No truck access on pipestems

Cart placement

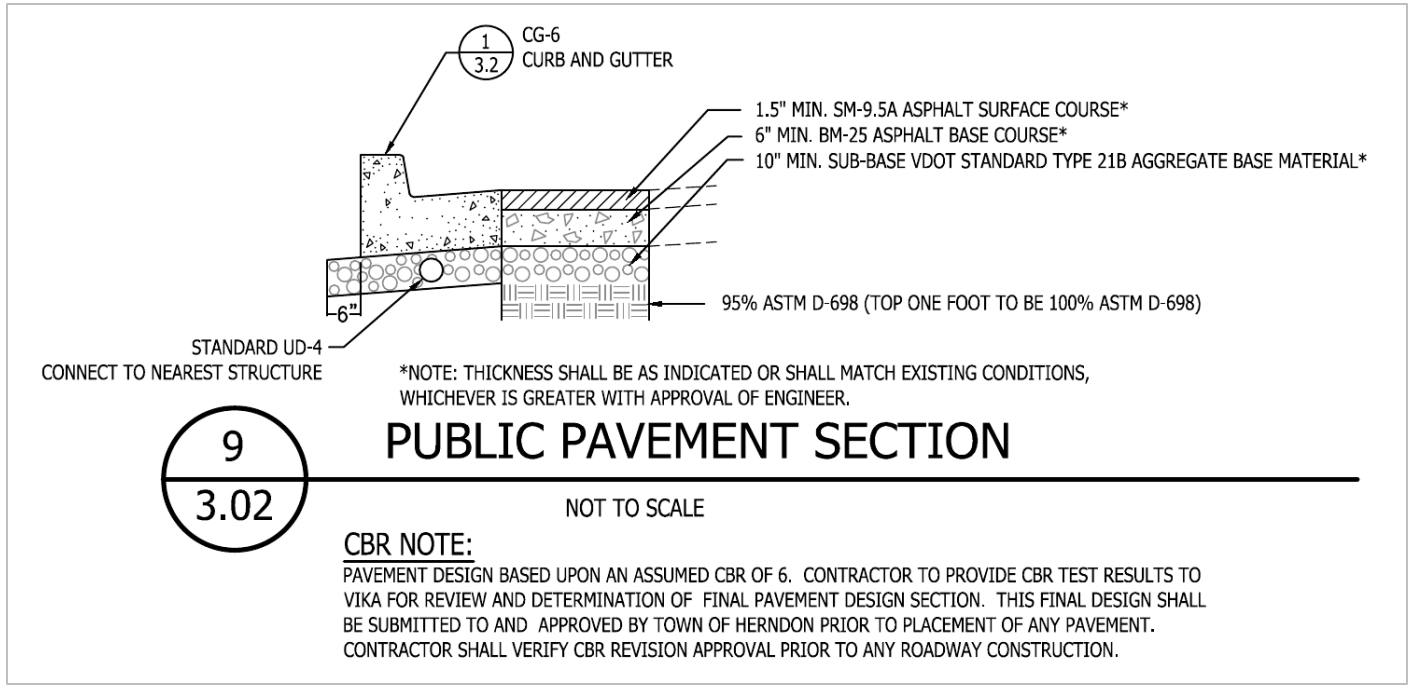
At the right-of-way or the pipestem entrance.

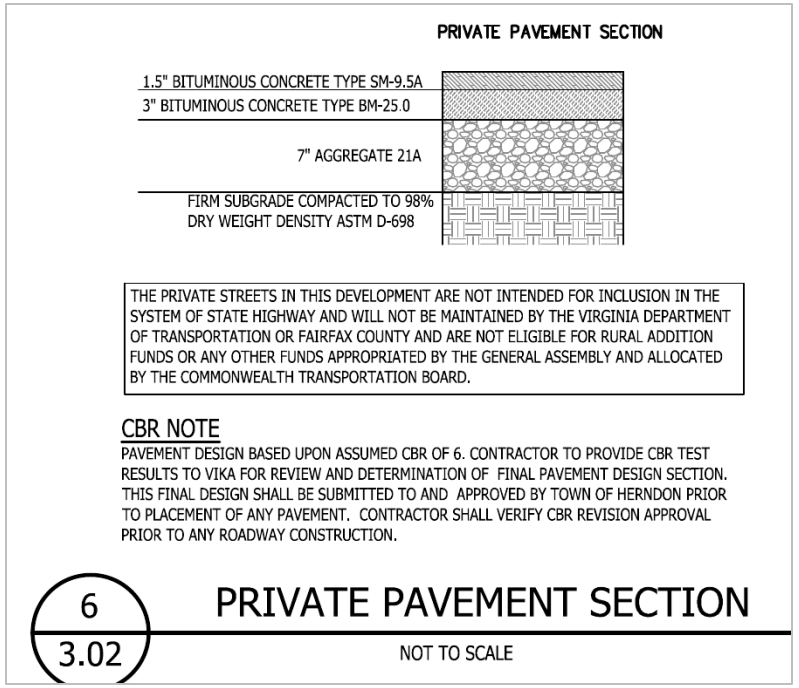
Service

Backyard Collection by exception: staff retrieve and return carts from/to the front of house.

Sources: Town Code Sec. 63-6(a)(1)b.

Roadway sections: public and private





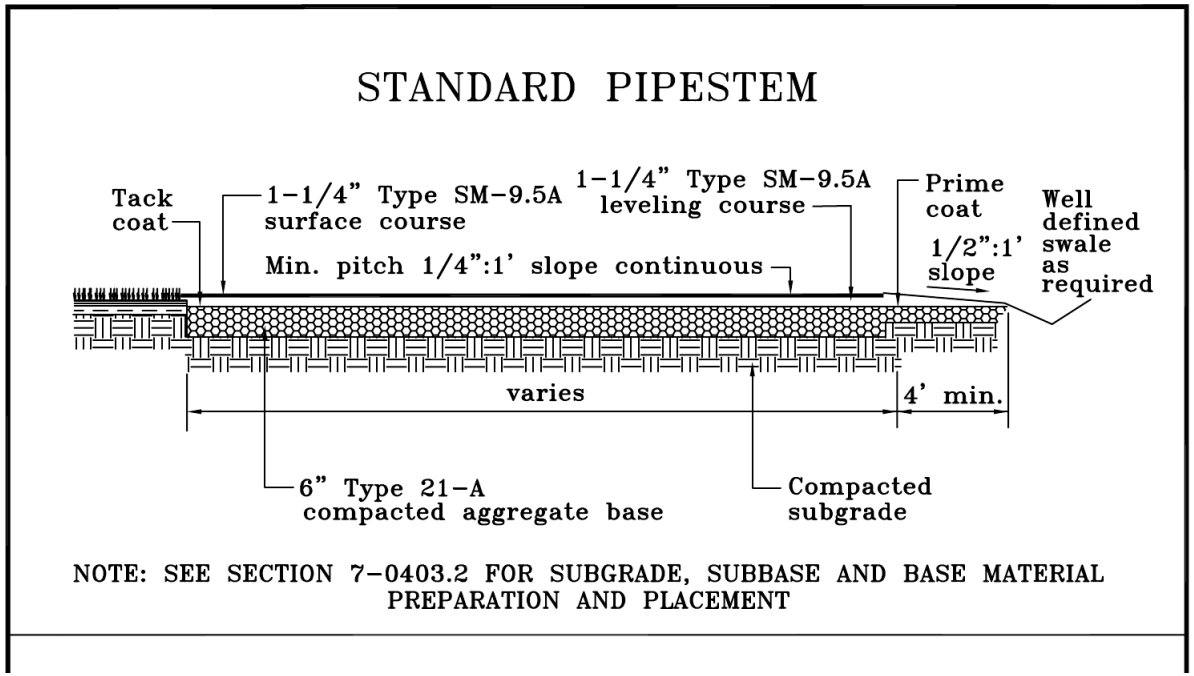
Public street section

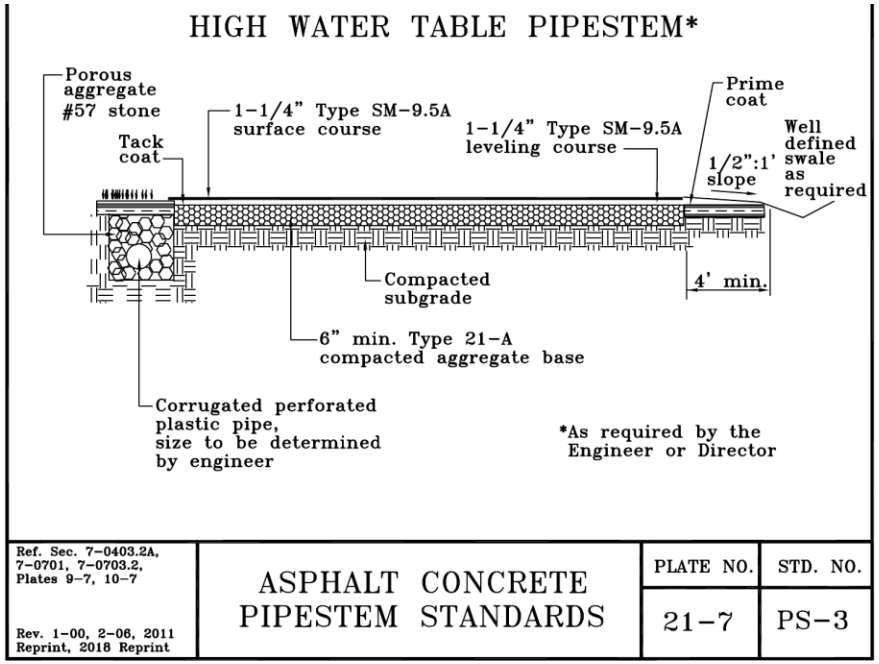
1.5" surface + 6" asphalt base over 10" aggregate base: 7.5" asphalt, 17.5" total, with curb and gutter. Served by mechanical-arm trucks.

Private street section

1.5" surface + 3" asphalt base over 7" aggregate: 4.5" asphalt, 11.5" total. Served by rear-loading trucks.

County standard pipestem section

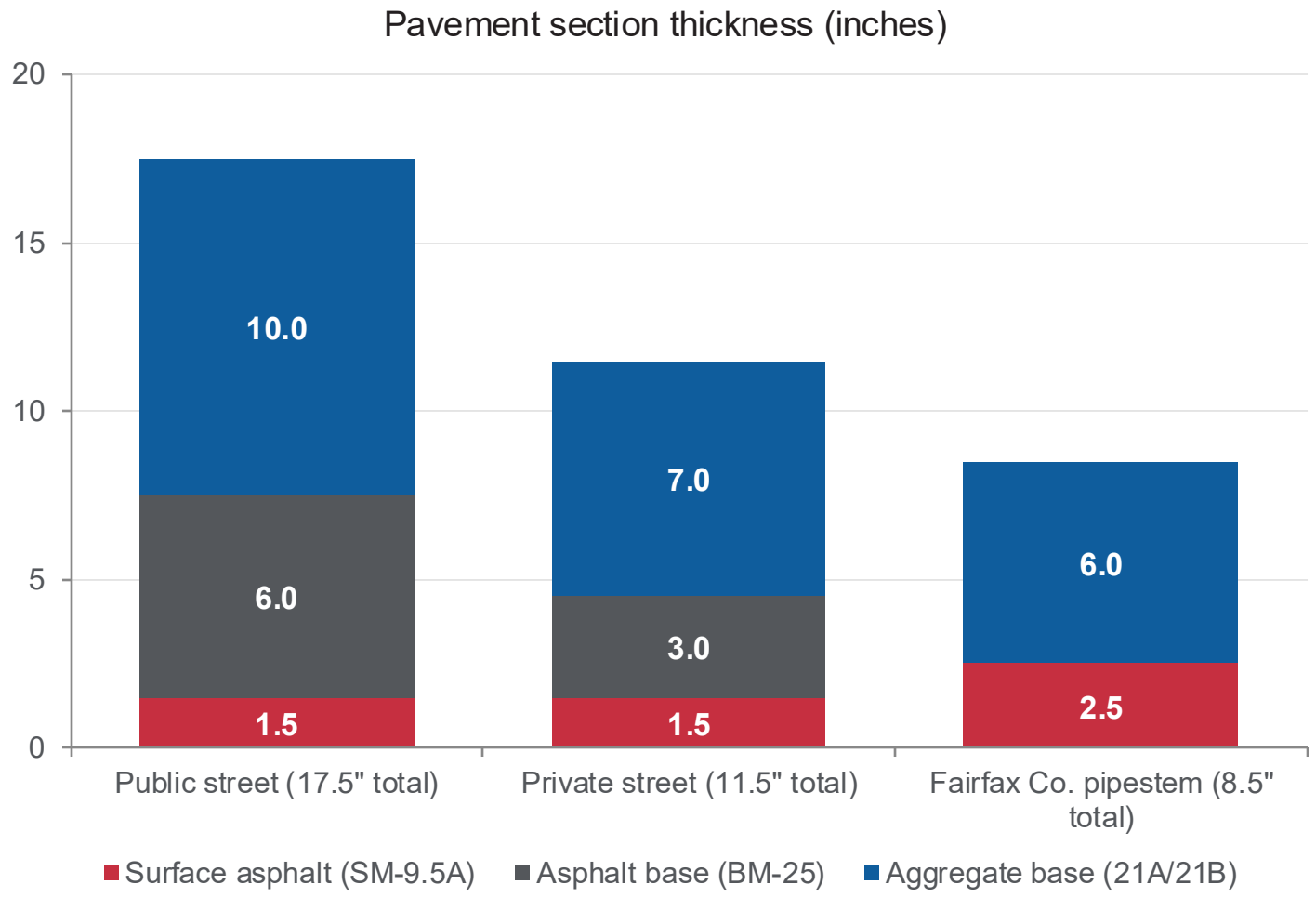




- Standard: 1-1/4" SM-9.5A surface over 1-1/4" SM-9.5A leveling course on 6" Type 21-A aggregate base; 4' minimum shoulder swale.
- High-water-table variant adds porous #57 stone and a perforated pipe along the edge, as required by the Engineer or Director.
- Total build-up is 8.5", about half of the public street section and about three-quarters of the private street section.

Source: Fairfax County Public Facilities Manual, Plate 21-7, Std. No. PS-3 (reprint 2018). A reference standard; each Herndon pipestem follows its own approved plan.

Pipestem pavement vs. public street



66%

Private street section vs. public: total depth. Asphalt is 60% (4.5" vs. 7.5").

49%

Fairfax County pipestem standard vs. public: total depth. Asphalt is 33% (2.5").

Sources: plan sheet 3.02; Fairfax County PFM Plate 21-7 (PS-3). County pipestem = 1-1/4" SM-9.5A surface + 1-1/4" leveling over 6" Type 21-A.

Why trucks no longer enter pipestems

Pipestem Strength

The pipestem is a driveway-scale way. Garbage trucks are very heavy – can be as heavy as 25 Tons when fully loaded. Driveway damage will result.



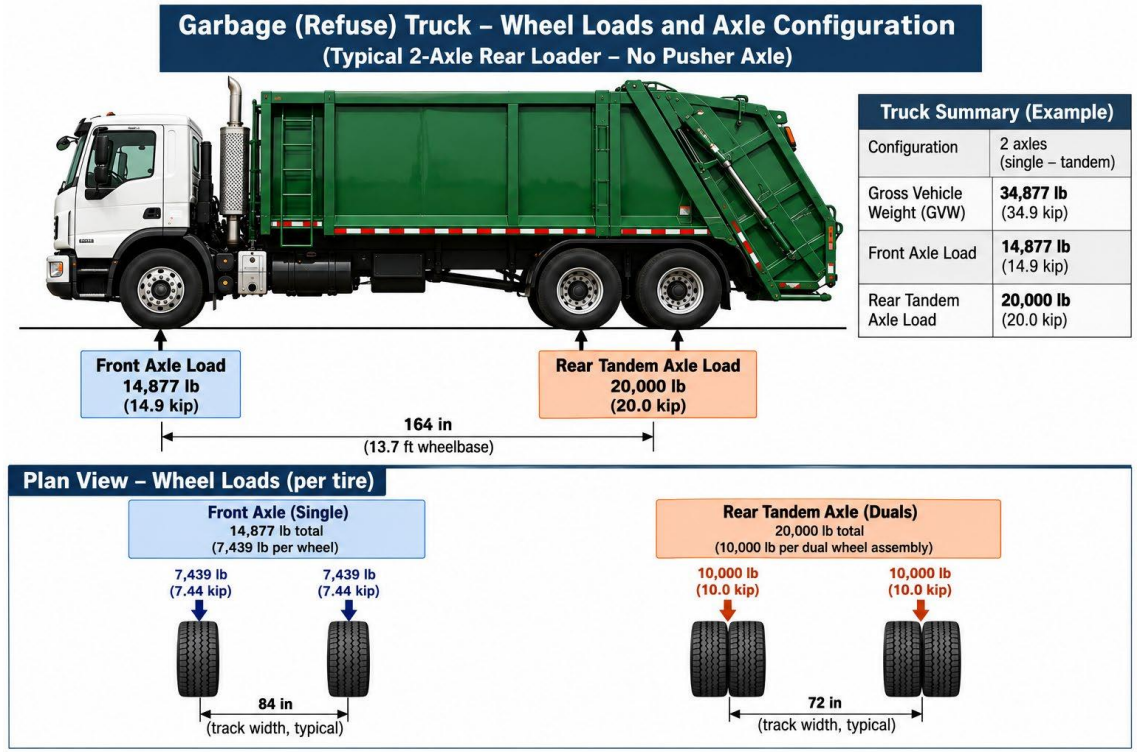


Illustration: example wheel loads for a typical 2-axle rear loader.

Reasonable Accommodation collection program is a good alternative

1 Resident applies

Application for Exception, by mail or email to Public Works.

2 DPW approves

Temporary (with dates) or continuous.

3 Staff collect

Staff take refuse and recycling carts and bagged yard waste from the designated area.

4 Carts returned

Staff empty the carts and set them back where they found them.

Terms

- Owner lets DPW staff enter the property and holds the Town harmless.
- Granted to the present resident only.
- Resident must notify DPW when conditions change or the exception ends.

TOWN OF Herndon

LIVE DIFFERENTLY.