



Thursday, March 25th, 2021

Re: **2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program**

I am writing you today on behalf of the Board of Directors of TAAG regarding the proposed **2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program**.

The creation of patio spaces in parking stalls within Downtown Guelph will offer everyone from transit and active transportation users to residents and visitors of Guelph an enjoyable dining experience. This program will also assist businesses in recovering from the economic impacts of Covid-19. With that said, we are in full support of **Recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 6 as outlined in the 2021-2023 Seasonal Patio Program Report**.

The Board of Directors does have concerns with each of the proposed options listed **within Recommendation #2** (closure of the intersection of Macdonell and Wyndham Streets)

The closure of the Wyndham and Macdonell intersection had significant impacts on transit users last summer. While there were a few transit users who did contact the City with their concerns, there were many others who did not and felt it would lead nowhere due to past experiences.

With a short window to make any significant changes to keep transit moving through this area, we believe, while not perfect, the mitigation options and associated costs presented **with Option 3** would keep transit moving while addressing some of the concerns raised from last year.

We are proposing the following amendments **to improve on Option 3** to assist in keeping transit moving:

1. **That the closure of the Wyndham and Macdonell intersection does not occur until the conclusion of the A.M. Transit Peak period and/or after 9:15 a.m. on Fridays except for July 2nd.**
2. **That the closure of the Wyndham and Macdonnell intersection be extended from Thursday, July 1st (Canada Day) uninterrupted to Sunday, July 4th.**
3. **That the closure is extended into the following Holiday Mondays: Victoria Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, and Thanksgiving Day with the teardown times the same as Sunday.**
4. **That Guelph Transit partners with downtown restaurants and businesses to provide transit information, provide a hand-out map of the detours, have those detours posted throughout Guelph Central Station and throughout the downtown area.**
5. **That the Guelph Transit Group Day Pass be promoted to users of the Patio Program this summer.**

**We believe these adjustments for 2021 can make Option 3 work better for everyone.**

We are willing to compromise on **Option 3 for 2021**, but we believe there is a tremendous number of alternative options that have not been considered due to the short timeframe Council gave City Staff. We recommend that Council



direct City Staff create a Special Committee or Task Force to research, explore, and propose different road closure scenarios and street patio zone options for 2022 and/or 2023.

1. **That the City set up a special working group to explore, research, and propose various road closure and street patio zone options, and report back in the 4th Quarter of 2021.**

With various unknowns leading into 2022 and 2023, we must be flexible and willing to experiment with these alternative options for road closures, pedestrian space, and patios zones. One of those options could be to explore a temporary *Transit Mall*. Please see the attached article that was published in both Guelph Today and Mercury Tribune.

To help rebuild and gain new ridership, we wish for the City to promote transit as one of the means to access the Seasonal Patio Program and if approved, the closed intersection.

[An article in \*Scientific American\*](#) suggests that initial fears of COVID-19's spread on public transit, at least, were perhaps a tad overblown.

Despite an early panic that sent ridership plummeting and kept it low, public transportation has proved to be one of the most COVID-safe places to be outside the home. Scientists think that's because many public transit vehicles are relatively [uncrowded, well-ventilated](#), and usually not the site of the kind of boisterous conversations that [can accelerate the spread of airborne particles](#) — not to mention the fact that most transit agencies like ours are requiring [\(and sometimes even supplying\)](#) personal protective equipment to passengers.

There is capacity within the network to handle additional passengers safely and if there were routes that did become extremely popular throughout this Seasonal Patio Program, then the City has the means to add additional frequency to those routes as needed.

There is no reason to keep ridership levels low. It is time to start working on rebuilding and gaining new ridership. Helping get people downtown to experience the Seasonal Patio Program and potential road closure is a smart first step.

In conclusion, while there are some in the community who believe sticking to weekend-only model for the next 3 years can be adjusted accordingly, we believe there are better options to experiment with over the next 2 years.

Our downtown core can be turned into a safer and enjoyable destination for all users.

If we want to pedestrianize more of our downtown streets, especially to enjoy patios and entertainment, then effective integration of Active Transportation and Guelph Transit needs to be a priority, not an afterthought.

Thank you.

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# LETTER: A car-free downtown can include public transit

Mar 13, 2021 10:00 AM By: Letter to the Editor



/ Photo by

Dear Editor

The term “car free” has been thrown around a lot lately in regard to the Seasonal Patio Program. But do we understand the term? The term "car free" can encompass an array of different restrictions on vehicles.

In between a traffic-calmed area and a completely car-free city is a range of other possibilities that vary by both the spatial and temporal nature of the vehicle restriction. Rather than encompassing the entire city, a vehicle ban may be limited to a particular district or street. Vehicle restrictions may also vary by the time of day, day of week, and even the season.

The principal idea of a car-free areas is to encourage residents to try sustainable options such as public transit and non-motorised modes. If the quality of these alternatives is lacking in terms of delivery, then it will only harden future resistance to change. Positive car-free areas typically not only address the provision of alternative modes but can succeed in creating an atmosphere that leaves residents with a feeling that something quite special has occurred.

Car-free shopping and dining streets are perhaps the most common examples of car-free areas.

These streets typically allow some exemptions from restrictions. Shops may be given special delivery hours to bring in goods and products. In some instances, transit vehicles are permitted to share the road space with pedestrians and cyclists. This integration is known as a “transit mall” Such integration provides residents with a high level of convenience and accessibility.

The presence of transit vehicles may be seen by some as dampening the quality of the car-free experience; however, there are instances where the addition of transit does not appreciably deter the quality of the public space. In such cases, the volume of transit vehicles is sufficiently low to retain the high-quality ambiance of the street environment.

Since car-free areas allow greater pedestrian freedom of movement, people will tend to be less aware of the occasional transit vehicle. Extra precautions like reducing the speed of the bus or adding barriers in select areas can help avoid accidents with pedestrians and cyclists.

Whether separation between the two areas is required most likely depends upon the volume of persons being moved by transit. If the buses are operating on higher frequencies, then separation may be the realistic option. On the other hand, if volumes are much lighter than this, then a shared space arrangement, in which transit, bikes, and pedestrians share the same space, may be appropriate and safe.

Public Transit and Active Transportation are two mutually dependent concepts. Transit depends upon a high volume of customers and pedestrian zones are ideal feeders into the transit system. Likewise, public transit supports pedestrian zones by allowing access without the need for a private vehicle. Transit essentially frees up a considerable amount of urban space that would otherwise be required to move an equal number of persons by private vehicle. Both concepts also have large economic spin-offs.

Improving integration can provide many benefits, ranging from increased ridership to safer streets, and it can generally be accomplished for far lower costs than other forms of infrastructure. Improving active transportation access to transit can also improve equitable access to transit for both low-income people and people with disabilities.

A car-free downtown can easily become complete streets projects when transit and active transportation infrastructure is treated as an integral element. This approach should be rolled into the Downtown Secondary Plan as it can both ensure that transit is easy to access by walking or cycling and serve to create continuous corridors for cycling and walking.

Combining a car-free initiative like the Seasonal Patio Program in conjunction with a temporary “transit mall” can create a mutually supporting package that provides a definitive alternative to driving. Toronto’s King Street Transit Priority Corridor is one of hundreds of different examples that include patios.

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If we want to pedestrianize more of our downtown streets, especially to enjoy patios and entertainment, then effective integration of Active Transportation and Guelph Transit needs to be a priority not an afterthought.

Thank you.

Steven Petric

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