

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Council:

The Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation (GCAT) is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to increase the quantity, quality and safety of active transportation in Guelph.

GCAT wishes to congratulate City Staff, Jennifer Juste in particular, on the forward-looking, insightful and comprehensive work on the Transportation Master Plan Update (TMPU) project to date. We are excited by the prospect of moving around in a community in which active transportation modes are significantly expanded so that all of us can enjoy benefits such as:

- Invigorated local economy
- Physical and mental health, and wellbeing and happiness of participants
- Improved traffic flow due to fewer private automobiles on the roadways
- Reduced infrastructure capital and maintenance costs
- Better and more efficient use of public space
- Reduced energy use
- Alignment with CEI pathway to net zero carbon by 2050
- Less noise and air pollution
- Increased social interactions among citizens
- Independent children

GCAT notes the near perfect alignment between its own mission statement and the strategic directions articulated in the TMPU.

We are writing to encourage you to support the first of City Staff's recommendations regarding the TMPU, specifically, "that Council approve staff's recommendation to proceed with Alternative 3, the "Sustainability and Resiliency Focus" as the preferred solution for the Transportation Master Plan.

It should be noted that GCAT expressed our concern to staff that any resilience capacity associated with Alternative 3 must not be consumed by increased demand for car traffic at the expense of active transportation. Through our dialogue with staff, GCAT is satisfied that active transportation modes will not be compromised in this way.

Though we are extremely supportive of the project work to date, and we are eager for staff to proceed with implementation, it must be recognized that the plan at this stage remains mostly strategic and highly conceptual. We believe that there are many issues with respect to implementation that Council should consider before it grants wholesale approval to proceed. We make the following comments regarding the plan's next steps:

1. **Vision Zero**: The TMPU Strategic Directions paper on road safety recommends the City formally adopt the Vision Zero approach and aspirational goal of zero serious injuries and deaths. To our knowledge Council has not yet formally adopted Vision Zero, and it is unclear whether, in approving Alternative 3, this constitutes such a formal adoption.

GCAT acknowledges the principles and value of Vision Zero as a guiding philosophy in the design and implementation of the transportation system. However we are concerned that, as has been the case in many other municipalities, a formal adoption of Vision Zero by the City of Guelph, without a true commitment of political will that translates into the necessary short- and long-term investment, would be both undesirable and perhaps even counterproductive.

Consequently, GCAT believes that it is vitally important for Council to formally adopt the Vision Zero approach and aspirational goal of zero serious injuries and deaths prior to directing staff to proceed with formulating implementation and financial plans.

2. **Modal Share Targets:** Although GCAT does not have the research resources required to form a basis for specific mode share targets into the future, we would like to suggest that shifts to active transportation should be made more ambitious than those defined in the staff report.

For example, intuitively, we believe that aiming for a cycling modal share increase of only 3% in the entire decade starting in 2031, and then another 2% only in the following decade up to 2051 will not make a sufficient contribution to Guelph's achieving Net Zero on emissions. The proposed gains in pedestrian modal shares are similarly modest. We speculate that, infrastructure investments aside, more progressive land use decisions alone could achieve such modest gains.

We note also that bicycle retailers have sold out their inventories last year and again this year. We have heard of retailers taking orders for delivery in 2023. In addition, even if only from casual observation, it is clear that more community members are walking and cycling than before the pandemic. While much of this activity may be for recreation or exercise as opposed to purposeful transportation, at least this trend demonstrates the ability, capacity and willingness of the community to walk and cycle for short distances. If this is true, then the problem becomes convincing people that the very same amount of walking or cycling can serve them for purposeful transportation as well when distances are short.

Consequently, GCAT recommends that Council direct staff to re-cast modal share targets to be more ambitious and that these targets be stated in terms of minimum, likely and maximum levels to be attained.

3. **Need for Programming Expertise:** GCAT believes that infrastructure investments are necessary but insufficient to cause modal shifts to more sustainable forms of transportation. As staff has pointed out in its analysis reports, the majority of peoples' trips are short, with a large proportion of those trips well within the practical range for pedestrians and cyclists.

If we focus for a moment on walking, we must ask why more people aren't walking where they need to go right now. GCAT believes that a lack of infrastructure is probably not the biggest barrier to walking, which leads us to hypothesize that peoples' choices may be more a matter of behavioural and attitudinal factors. (It must be noted that, given

the lifespan of this plan, many of Guelph's citizens who will be making transportation mode choices haven't yet been born.)

Clearly the TMPU has been formulated within the paradigm of urban planning and engineering, and this, of course, is both necessary and to be expected. However, GCAT argues that successful implementation of Alternative 3 over the many years of this plan, should it be adopted by Council, will require perspectives that go beyond the traditional municipal planning paradigm. Specifically, we believe that successful implementation will require not only infrastructure investments and policy development, **but also programming investments supported by sustained messaging.**

Consequently, GCAT recommends that, while infrastructure and policy play a vital role in effecting modal share shifts, as part of its implementation of the TMP, staff leadership should be directed to source and contract with consultants whose expertise is in change management, and specifically behavioural and attitudinal change.

4. **Essential Transportation:** One of the obstacles to shifting to more sustainable transportation modes is the widely-held perception, particularly among many who do not use active transportation, that walking and cycling are recreational activities, not legitimate transportation options in their own right.

In an effort to establish active transportation modes on an equal basis with more dominant modes within the overall transportation system, GCAT recommends that pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and amenities become officially designated as “essential transportation” in all relevant City plans and documents, including the Official Plan.

5. **Model for Ongoing Collaboration:** The GCAT Board is proud of the fact that we practise a unique brand of advocacy that is characterized by maintaining positive working relationships with its government, business and other organizational partners. GCAT acts as the collective advocacy voice for our members and social media followers now numbering over a thousand. Having supported this community of pedestrians and cyclists, we believe that GCAT is well-positioned to contribute to the City's development of the transportation system's networks, policies and programs on an ongoing and formal basis. While we do not bring specific engineering expertise to the table, that is not the only expertise needed to achieve the desired result. What we do bring is the real and authentic lived experience of our Board, members and followers who walk and cycle throughout Guelph.

Prior to the pandemic, GCAT accepted the invitation of engineering staff to consult with them regarding the Gordon Street improvements project. Over two meetings, we held very fruitful discussions with staff and the project consultant.

More recently, GCAT and other stakeholder groups have had very satisfying and mutually-beneficial discussions with staff regarding the Trails Master Plan Update. As part of this interaction GCAT and others were afforded the opportunity to help formulate lists of priority projects to extend and improve the trails network.

GCAT would like to hold up these experiences as models for future interactions with Transportation Department staff as it moves forward into the next stages of developing the TMPU.

Consequently, GCAT recommends that Council direct staff to organize and conduct stakeholder meetings with the purpose of considering the options for active transportation network improvements, extensions and priorities.

Finally, GCAT fully supports the creation of the Emerging Mobility Technology Office and the expansion of staffing to implement the TMP. Again, GCAT wishes to congratulate City staff on its exemplary work to date on this project and we look forward to ongoing collaboration. Thank you.

Mike Darmon,
President, Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation

