

Mr. Mayor and Members of Council,

I am writing in support of staff's recommendation to approve the City-initiated Official Plan Amendment No. 81 (OPA 81) for the Emma Street to Earl Street pedestrian bridge.

The bridge will provide an essential active transportation link to north-east Guelph. As the City has committed to becoming a net zero carbon community by 2050, we must take every step we can now to move in that direction. We must prioritize active transportation. I currently ride my bicycle across the Speedvale bridge several times a week. It is extremely dangerous, and extremely discouraging. Every local cyclist I know (and I know hundreds) strongly supports the construction of the Emma-Earl bridge.

Also, as I mentioned in my September 2020 presentation to Council, the pandemic has led to a huge increase in the number of people - of all ages and fitness levels - hiking, running, cycling and scootering on local trails and residential streets and pathways. This is a remarkable phenomenon that must be supported. The benefits from mental and physical wellness perspective are obvious, but also do not ignore the economic benefits of ultimately creating a city that highlights its two beautiful rivers. The most important way the City can support this increased outdoor activity is to make it safe. The proposed Emma St bridge will be a wonderful addition to allow our local citizens and tourists to safely recreate.

Thank you for your consideration and your dedication to a better Guelph.

Dr. Meg Thorburn