

Good Evening Mayor Guthrie Councillors and City Staff

My Name is Mike Darmon and I am President of GCAT, the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation. Our Mission is to increase the quantity of safe and enjoyable Active Transportation Infrastructure in Guelph. The Emma to Earl pedestrian bridge is a shining example of what is needed to encourage those less reluctant to bike or walk because they feel unsafe on or near busy roads. We therefore highly endorse approval of the OPA #81 recommendation.

We also note the many staff references to the bridge meeting the definition of "essential" as defined in the Official Plan (OP). This reference is really significant in our opinion, and a huge shift in recognizing Active Transportation Infrastructure on an equal footing with vehicular transportation infrastructure.

We have corresponded with City staff to officially request designating Active Transportation Infrastructure as "essential infrastructure in the OP and Glossary of Terms definitions as we continue in the update process of the OP. This recognition and eventual designation also aligns with the objectives and goals of the recently approved TMP update but most importantly will help resolve the previous transportation choice inequity in our OP. People of all ages and abilities should have more sustainable, affordable and safer choices in their transportation needs.

If we adopt these changes in our OP we may be the first municipality in Canada to lead in this progressive direction.

The Emma Earl bridge will improve connectivity of our trail and road Active Transportation Network and will also support our 2050 Climate goals by encouraging less use of cars for short trips. Please refer to Correspondence in your package from GCAT board member and Geographer at the University of Guelph, Adam Bonnycastle, for specific examples of network connectivity.

Perhaps the least promoted advantage of this pedestrian bridge has been understated. Due to its unique location spanning a beautiful, quiet section of the Speed River away from the noise and distraction of busy roads it will be the jewel in the cap of our envied river trail system. It is placemaking at its finest!

Opportunities to birdwatch, and with views North and South of the river valley, it will become a destination in itself and a meeting place for neighbours both close and further away. I already see this happening at the new Norwich street Pedestrian bridge which is one of my favourite biking routes. I frequently run into friends and neighbours in the 2 Rivers neighbourhood and its wide deck allows for this interaction. However in terms of an even more natural setting I think the Emma to Earl bridge will be more popular as it is located beside the new Hiking Club Rapids Side Trail. I hope you take the opportunity to explore this amazing hiking trail adjacent to the river to get a better idea of what views will be available from above on the Emma Earl bridge.

Just this morning I spoke with a young parent who lives near Sunny Acres Park and their favourite activity is to ride their bikes with their kids on safe trails to various amenities. She said

this bridge will be a lovely and enjoyable destination stop as they can access the Spurline Trail starting at Paisley road which directly connects to the TransCanada rail trail with just a short jog to this new bridge. We are also advocating for an extension of this Spurline Trail further South along the existing GJR tracks to a future crosswalk near Sunny Acres Park connecting the Junction neighbourhood. This project could offer a safe and affordable and more direct route for those needing access to the Food Bank.

In conclusion, I hope you can see what possibilities the Emma to Earl bridge opens in terms of Active Transportation Network connectivity and more inclusive equitable and sustainable Transportation choices for everyone in our City.

Thanks

Mike Darmon

President GCAT (Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation)