

Dear Councillors, Mayor and Staff,

A connected community:

I am a resident of the Sunny Acres neighborhood. I use Edinburgh to drive north and south. I bike on Edinburgh to work biking south, especially in winter when Edinburgh is ploughed before the other routes. Since I moved to the neighbourhood Fixed Gear and Junction development has grown in popularity and every day I see people walking back from buying 6 beers and jay-walking at Robinson and Edinburgh. Every morning between 8am-9am and in the evening around 430-530pm I see parents pushing their toddlers to and from daycare at Noah's Ark. They wait for a break in traffic and dash across the street. My daughter's best friend lives on Alma, she wishes there was a safe way to cross at Crimea and Robinson instead of walking down to Waterloo or up to Paisley. Children in grades 7,8 in the junction neighbourhood (west of Edinburgh), attend John McCrae PS on Water street, east of Edinburgh. They often cross Edinburgh mid block to meet their friends' who have attended John McCrae since kindergarten and trundle on to school together. I can always tell who is off to Backpadding, the bike repair shop, to get their bike fixed since they are often freewheeling their bike down my street and hop across Edinburgh. During the early part of the pandemic there were more food bank users. Guelph Food Bank is on Crimea and people would walk down my street with an empty pushcart trolley and full one coming back. Sometimes they would be lost and worried: is this the right way to the food bank? It is a big step to ask a stranger that question. They cross Edinburgh when the road is clear. I am the volunteer community garden co-ordinator at Sunny Acres and many of our gardeners live on west side of Edinburgh- in the spring you know who they are because they dash across Edinburgh carrying a shovel! Sunny Acres park may appear dull as you drive by but it is one of two parks in the City with a wading pool- a big draw on these hot days- and in the winter we have a fabulous natural ice rink – hosed by volunteers who call themselves: the hosers. I see shinny players and young families dragging sleds of skates across Edinburgh to practice on the rink. The park has some incredible trees – requiring 3 adults to hug them – mostly black walnuts but other trees too. Dog walkers- Oh my – there are so many dogs that come to Sunny Acres- their owners wait for a traffic break and cross Edinburgh to get their dog running in the morning and evening. I am telling you all this, so you know what our neighborhood is like- it is vibrant, busy, has diverse uses and connected. We need to be more connected, not less.

My home and 20+ others, the park's trees, the community garden's space, the connectedness of the neighborhood, access to old and new businesses, walkable access to a large daycare and the Guelph Food Bank, are all at risk.

Metrolinx is such an all-powerful force – as we saw at Dublin street. Is the solution is technological? Can Guelph be a pilot project of European style gates and signalling? I urge council to put a motion to staff to investigate this option.

When the environmental assessment problem statement is created, as the scope of the environmental assessment is defined and its parameters weighted, connectedness should be of primary importance. I urge it to be weighted as highly as safety. While the cost to taxpayers of an underpass is huge – the real cost is in the loss of connectedness for walkers, bikes and drivers for generations.

Amy withers