

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

As a resident of the Junction Neighborhood and an impacted property owner, if the drafted plan of an underpass at Edinburgh Rd were to go ahead, I was shocked by the way I learned about the possibility that my family might lose its home in the years to come without any signs or warnings or direct conversation with City staff but through a document posted publicly to the City's website. Transparency is one thing but one should always consider all stakeholders in a project and make sure that they are aware and sufficiently informed.

I hope that there will be lessons learned from this experience and that future projects will include all stakeholders at an earlier stage, even if the project sounds as 'simple' as a feasibility study.

Although I have still pending questions about the feasibility study itself to be answered, if the outcome of the feasibility study remains the warrant of having an underpass at Edinburgh Rd. which will then be followed by an Environmental Assessment Schedule C (EA), I, personally, would prefer a proper and complete EA to be conducted with all options in mind including the underpass option.

The reason why I come to this conclusion even though my property were to be impacted by the current underpass plan, is because I believe that an objectively conducted EA cannot as easily be contested for procedural errors at a later stage and will settle the issue faster on the long run so that the community and residents can go about their normal lives again without prolonged uncertain and worries.

In my view, the issue of the Edinburgh Rd underpass is far-reaching and much bigger than our personal property because it will affect the whole Junction and Sunny Acres community and neighbourhood is will shape the neighbourhood for decades to come.

Lastly, I would like to share a vision and consideration with you about – turning the rail crossing study into an opportunity for Guelph

In my view, Guelphites have co-existed with the rail forever and I wholeheartedly believe there is a way to continue doing just that.

I am a public transit user myself and I do agree that two-way all-day service on the Metrolinx corridor is long overdue and will be welcomed, but it does not have to come at the expense of changing the naturally grown neighbourhoods around the tracks by cutting through them and inserting an underpass or by completely blocking off level crossings.

There are well-established, European engineering solutions for safe rail barriers and gates which put safety first, come at a fraction of the cost of an underpass, and allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists alike to cross the tracks safely as they have done for over a century in Guelph.

Therefore, I would recommend the City consider turning its Rail Crossing Study into an opportunity by becoming a Pilot Project and model case to install state-of-the-art barriers and gates for level crossings and demonstrate how a vibrant community can continue to coexist with modern rapid transit solutions. Such an approach can also include reopening the Dublin St. level crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

It could start a shift in thinking as to how people coexist with the rail without having to decide between one or the other.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Kindly,

Thomas Eckert