

Attachment-2 Construction Mitigation Background

Community engagement activity to date

Staff have engaged with the community to understand the interests from Downtown businesses, residents and the broader community regarding desired construction pace and phasing, as well the various mitigation programs and activities under consideration to help mitigate potential impacts imposed by construction on this scale.

During this engagement period, staff and the consulting project team undertook a wide variety of activities and touchpoints with the community, including:

- March 18 to April 14: Online survey on [Haveyoursay.guelph.ca](https://haveyoursay.guelph.ca) promoted broadly to the community and directly to all businesses and residents in Downtown Guelph
- March 18 to April 11: Door-to-door visits and conversations with Downtown businesses, including detailed conversations about available supports for their business through project partners in Economic Development and business services across Guelph
- March 14: Appearance on the Breezy Breakfast Radio Hour podcast to explain the construction process and options, and receive questions and feedback from the audience.
- March 21: Presentation and feedback session with the Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA)
- March 27: In-person public open house hosted at City Hall to introduce construction phasing and pace, and to receive community feedback around preferred options as well as construction impact mitigation activities.

Results and outcomes from this engagement are being summarized by the consultant team for presentation at the Council Workshop. Door-to-door visits with Downtown businesses (mostly located on Wyndham Street North) resulted in an approximately even split between preferences for fast- and slow-paced construction.

At their meeting on April 24, 2024, the DGBA Board of Directors passed a motion in support of staged (or phased) construction (i.e., the slower-paced option) based on the information available.

The preliminary survey results from the general public show a strong preference for the fast-paced construction, with more than 80 per cent of respondents preferring the faster-paced option.

Construction Pacing

The impact of the construction work on Wyndham Street North will significantly disrupt regular Downtown operations. The most significant mitigation measure is to determine the optimal construction pacing to determine how long businesses will be impacted and how disruptive the impact will be. Considerations range from

construction speed, site measures, transit operations, business access, plus many more factors informing the optimal sequence of construction activities.

The public engagement relating to construction mitigation proposed two possible speeds of construction: “fast” and “slow.” The engagement focused on the Wyndham Street North reconstruction project as it is the first phase in the overall DTIRP phasing plan. However, construction pacing will be an important consideration for the overall program and the Downtown in general.

The **fast construction timeline** is estimated to take up to two years to complete and includes the complete closure of Wyndham Street North from Farquhar Street to Woolwich Street. This single-phase approach will benefit from economies of scale, use of St. George’s Square as a staging and storage area, and maintaining a consistent traffic control setup. This concept would require further exploration of whether full closure is warranted for the full duration of construction or if the closure can be staged.

The **slow construction timeline** is estimated to take approximately four or five years to complete and includes closing Wyndham Street North in sections to allow some blocks to maintain near-normal operations while others are under construction. This multi-phase approach would benefit from maintaining some traffic and on-street parking along Wyndham Street which will help Downtown businesses during construction, allows for more marketing focus on impacted areas, and allows blocks previously worked on to open sooner. Regardless, each business will experience 15+ months of construction activity fronting their location – just some sooner than others. The area under construction will need to be closed to through traffic to avoid excessive costs and time delays due to unproductive construction. This concept will require refinement to identify the optimal stage limits.

Fast-Paced Construction

In addition to minimizing the accumulated disturbance to the use of the Wyndham Street North corridor, the fast-paced construction method has several advantages from a construction, cost, and mitigation perspective. By providing contractors with access to the full length of the Wyndham Street North corridor, they would be able to work more efficiently and have more control over their own staging and operations.

- Use of the St. George’s Square area as a construction staging area, where materials can be delivered and stockpiled.
 - Use of St. George’s Square as a staging area will
 - be net savings of approximately \$850,000 (conservative, to be refined);
 - reduce the amount of construction traffic travelling to remote staging site; and,
 - Reduce construction debris outside of the work zone.
 - Locating an adequate site within a reasonable distance of Downtown will be a challenge without removing additional parking inventory.

- Use of multiple crews working on different stages, such as having one crew beginning underground work at the Wyndham Street North and Farquhar Street intersection while another crew begins working northward from Macdonell Street, and potentially a third crew begins working north of St. George's Square.
- Extension of working hours can be accommodated when using the fast approach to get more work done in a shorter timeframe. Additional working hours can be disruptive for residents and businesses; however, offers significant benefits from improved construction efficiency. Several business owners have indicated in the surveys that they would prefer to see long hours of work being done rather than additional quiet hours with a slow production rate.
- Economies of scale can be attained through both the multiple crews approach and the reduced mobilizations. It is far more efficient for specialty trades to come to the site fewer times for larger sections than to come frequently for smaller sections. Completing all of the underground work before roadworks begin offers significant cost savings.
- Consistent messaging for traffic control measures. With this approach traffic control setups would not change frequently, providing residents and businesses with more certainty when they make trips into Downtown.
- Low-cost risk premium and contingency allowances for shorter construction timeframe due to better cost certainty.
- Higher material and workmanship consistency using one contractor instead of several.
- Minimizes City constructor-related liabilities though the use of one contractor.

Slow-Paced Construction

The slow-paced construction method has several advantages from Downtown operations and public perception perspectives. Details of some of the advantages are listed below:

- Permits businesses not fronting construction to maintain near-normal operations.
- Maintains access into Downtown for personal vehicles, delivery vehicles, and allows some on-street parking, which has been referenced by businesses as a benefit to them.
- The completion of the first stage provides an example of the finished product which will assist the public visualize the final look and feel of the road and also permits some adjustments to be made on subsequent stages.
- Maintaining access for emergency services to more of the street, thus reducing complexity of responses during construction.
- Early completion of the first phase (likely south of Macdonell Street) would provide an earlier taste of final product and may result in improved public perception.

Other Construction Mitigation Approaches

While construction pacing is the most significant choice related to construction mitigation, several other strategies are being explored to help support our Downtown throughout construction. Staff have budgeted \$1.5 million in the capital budget for DTIRP Phase 1 to support non-pacing construction mitigation strategies. The following list is non-exhaustive, but provides an overview of strategies currently being considered for DTIRP Phase 1:

- Contractor incentive payments to achieve schedule milestones
- Construction Ambassador
- Dedicated Downtown office
- Specific business access plans
- Maintaining traffic through Macdonell Street intersection for priority vehicles
- Douglas Street temporary two-way conversion
- Active pedestrian access management
- Complimentary parking in select City parking lots and/or parkades
- Special construction-related Downtown events
- Downtown Dollars gift card promotion
- Economic development initiatives
- Click-and-collect location
- Dedicated delivery location

Continued Engagement on Mitigation Measures

The construction mitigation measures are still being explored and cost-refined to determine what has the greatest value to Downtown businesses, Downtown residents, and Downtown visitors alike. The project team will continue to work with the Business Centre Wellington-Guelph, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, and the DGBA to identify options and define the approach for supporting businesses through the construction project. Construction mitigation will remain a major theme throughout future public engagement for the Capital Implementation Plan and detailed design assignments, and the project team will work to continuously improve the approaches taken to preserve and improve the economic vitality of the Downtown core.