



RE:

3. Guelph Junction Railway
2023 Annual Report to the Shareholder
Item 2024-271
June 25th, 2024

Mr. Mayor, Shareholders, GJR CEO and Board of Directors, and city staff.

My name is John Fisher, I am the Past President of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club. The Club has close to 500 members. I am delegating on behalf of the Club.

This is the fourth time I have delegated at the GJR Shareholders meeting. My concerns have been the governance structure and a corporate focus that does not include “community benefit “in its mandate. The governance structure has not changed although I sense some discomfort with the “modus operandi” that allows the corporation to operate without the checks and balances that would be required by any other city department. I concede that there have been actions and efforts to reflect a more community minded outlook, but GJR continues to prioritize commercial opportunities at the expense of community benefit considerations.

But credit to GJR and its management team for another excellent year. They are clearly effective in maximizing the commercial side of the corporation. Also, where there is no potential for a commercial opportunity GJR does work collaboratively to assist in infrastructure changes that impact the public good such as the Woolwich to Woodlawn trail that will use the GJR rail corridor. But regarding the G2G trail the statements on P10 of the Annual report under Business Development concern me. This section of the report states, “this line over will create additional opportunities such as potential trail network, or additional rail sidings” and I am concerned that the desire to accommodate private business will again come at the expense of the public good.

In addition, although, there is a section on P16 of the report under Trail Connectivity which references G2G and says, “GJR remains an active stakeholder in this community led, city supported project” and a “Community Partners” slide which reinforced that statement, the statement still concerns me. Being an “active stakeholder and participant” falls short of a full-throated commitment by GJR to work with the community to make the G2G railway a reality.

Last November council approved a motion to consider a “community led, city supported” approach to building a trail to Bridge the Gap between Woodlawn and Silver Creek. The community has been hard at work mobilizing allies, applying for grants and working with the city on a project charter. Just last week a field survey was conducted by one of our partners which we will use collaboratively to plot the recommended trail route.

It has not been easy going as GJR has been guarded in sharing information that would contribute to developing the trail route. We acknowledge our responsibility as part of this process, but the fact is this railway cannot become a reality without the full cooperation and support of GJR. We must work together if we are to Bridge the G2G Gap.

As shareholders and council members many of you have supported this project openly and behind the scenes. Bridging the Gap is a feature of numerous Master Plans and Strategic plans which council has supported. Supporting the commercial focus of GJR and developing the GJR corridor as a community asset are not in conflict. The Macdonell to Speedvale rail with trail corridor demonstrates the value of sharing the GJR corridor to the community. We ask shareholders and council for support by encouraging GJR to actively work with the community to create the G2G Guelph Trailway and maximise a city asset that contributes financially to the city but can also have an outstanding impact on the community’s wellbeing.

Thankyou

John Fisher

Past President Guelph Hiking Trail Club.

G2G Guelph Trailway team member.

Re: “The Dividend”

In 2022 Councilor Downer motioned the “possible use of the GJR dividend for trails associated with the railway be referred to the 2023 budget discussions”.

The city was engaged in its first multi-year budget and predictably the planned discussions got lost amid other priorities. In 2023 the city was wrestling with a massive tax increase and again the \$164 000 dividend did not come up in the discussions.

Since then, the city and council have endorsed the MAT tax and seen the benefit of a revenue source dedicated to support the city's Tourism strategy and objectives.

Building on that experience I would like council to consider putting the annual GJR dividends into a Rails with Trails reserve fund. The fund would be used for Rail with Trails infrastructure development, a clear indication that the city recognizes GJR not just as a revenue generator, but that revenue earned should be directly applied to benefit the community good.