

Call to action -Re-allocating public space during COVID emergency

Recommendation: That staff be directed to prioritize work to close traffic lanes during the COVID-19 public health emergency to support social distancing by creating special separated active transportation routes in strategic locations with funding of up to \$50,000 reallocated from capital project New Sidewalk Construction (RD0283).

We have specifically identified the following:

(a) Wyndham Street through the downtown core. As stores and restaurants begin to open up, more space will be needed than what the sidewalk can accommodate for social distancing.

(b) Several bridge pinch points that are badly in need of more space for social distancing and which have multiple traffic lanes, such as

- 1. Speedvale Avenue Bridge over the Speed River, and**
- 2. Eramosa Road Bridge, and Macdonell Street Bridge over the Speed River as being areas that are badly in need of more space for social distancing and which have multiple traffic lanes.**

Dear Sir, Madam,

With respect to the above recommendations to support public health by creating appropriate distancing for pedestrians and cyclists I fervently endorse the following suggestions to close traffic lanes, therefore providing widened access routes for active transportation in the downtown core, on Wyndham Street, potentially Quebec Street, as well as Carden Street. As someone who walks frequently downtown to my private work space on Wyndham, I have often stepped out onto the road alongside parked vehicles to avoid coming within the 6 metres of another pedestrian, or group, which I feel unsafe approaching.

As the weather warms this potentially precarious situation will be compounded by more people wanting to be out of doors, and with the impending opening of businesses and restaurants in these areas, traffic will most certainly become heavier. Maintaining a safe distance on crowded narrow sidewalks will become impossible.

Yesterday, Sunday May 3, was the first day temperatures climbed into the upper teens and low twenties. I was astonished to see the numbers of people out on the streets, sidewalks, and trails, walking and cycling. It was a density like I've not seen before, having lived on Arthur Street North for 20 years. I expect this will only continue. With transmission rates still climbing, and with the knowledge that the COVID virus is aerosol born and can be transmitted by close contact within the community, I regard this to be an obligatory measure the City of Guelph (as are many other cities in Canada) must provide during the warm weather months. The cost of not implementing these measures could well result in increased community transmissions and a return to harsher isolating measures.

In addition to opening streets to pedestrian traffic in the downtown core to facilitate a healthy environment, I also would strongly endorse safety measures put in place on the above mentioned bridges which all have very narrow sidewalks. There is barely room for two people to pass without bumping shoulders and the traffic on these bridges is more often than not, heavy and fast. Eramosa Bridge, a half a block from my home, is particularly rife with speeding vehicles in both directions. It is also, and still (although NO TRUCKS signs are posted) a major route for truck traffic as well as emergency vehicles and buses. One dare not step out onto the road without risking life and limb!

As the City of Guelph has mandated itself a progressively green city, closing traffic lanes to enhance and protect the health of its citizens during this very difficult time seems an essential imperative, no longer a dubious option. Lest we be left behind whilst other cities with far denser traffic and populations make these safety provisions available, I encourage the City of Guelph to follow suit.

Linda O'Neill, 2020-05-05