

Dear Mayor Guthrie, Guelph City Councillors and City Clerks,

I am writing in support of the Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation in their call to action to re-allocate public space during this Covid Emergency.

On May 11 I urge you to vote in favour of the following as outlined by the GCAT:

Increase road share given to active transportation users. Public health directs us to give at least 2 metres of space between strangers to support "social distancing" but without more public road space allocated to walkers and bikers the city as configured does not allow residents to follow this directive.

Some such places have high active transportation traffic volumes and we are asking the city to temporarily repurpose vehicle lanes to give other road users the space they need.

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.

It is our opinion that these suggestions could be implemented quickly and with a minimum of staffing requirements, and constitute an "easy win" in the initial fight against the spread of COVID-19. This is not a time for business-as-usual thinking, and we hope these proposals are well received.

As a city during this unprecedented time, we have a tremendous opportunity to change the street-scape to support pedestrians, cyclists and other forms of human powered transportation. This will allow for proper physical distancing by creating wider thoroughfares for these modes of transport throughout Guelph.

Now that spring is here and summer is approaching, more people want to get outside in the fresh air. There are fewer cars on the road now and this provides us with a chance to really see where we can build in more areas for safe modes of travel. For many, there are not enough places to safely walk or ride, especially as we are trying to physically distance and prevent the spread of Covid-19. The added benefits also include better air quality, safer roads, reduced greenhouse gas

emissions, better overall health for the public, reduced pressure on the medical system due to traffic accidents, asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

This could be a time where we could pilot a car-free downtown, so that restaurant patios can expand and customers can safely physically distance. This could potentially help restaurants recover from their recent losses.

I love the city of Guelph and one of the things I love about it is that it is a culturally vibrant place. Let's really open it up to people. We've been cooped up for 2 months and with some of the trails closed, the only places to walk are the streets, so make the streets really safe and close a large portion from cars.

Below are links to a Guardian article and this morning's The Current on CBC which are specifically about these issues and how cities are moving forward, innovating in this current crisis.

Read from The Guardian:

'World cannot return to 'business as usual' after Covid-19, say Mayors'

City leaders publish 'statement of principles' putting climate action at centre of recovery plans

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/07/world-cannot-return-to-business-as-usual-after-covid-19-say-mayors>

Listen to: CBC radio "The Current" -

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1734923843636>

Aired today, May 7th. At just past the 22 minute mark - the segment is called "The Future of Public Space" Notes how some cities in Canada as well as in the US, Europe and South America are opening up streets that once were for cars but are now opening up for pedestrians, other forms of active transport and for restaurant patio space.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views and I hope that the city of Guelph will be bold and pilot a more car-free city for all.

Sincerely,

Sidney Sproule
Ward 2 Resident

From: Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation <info@gcat.ca>
Subject: Call to action -Re-allocating public space during COVID emergency
Date: May 2, 2020 at 11:44:14 AM MDT
To:
Reply-To: Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation <info@gcat.ca>



photo courtesy of <https://www.tcat.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Example-street-re-balancing-in-Canada.pdf>

[What could we do in Guelph?](#)

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

Special Guelph City Council Meeting May 11, 2pm

Hello active transportation supporters,

Our community, as well as the rest of the world, has undergone many changes due to the emergence of a new coronavirus. The only weapon we have to slow the spread of this virus is physical distancing. Health officials say that it's crucial to maintain physical distancing likely for many months, if not longer, until a vaccine is developed and then administered.

I'm sure you've been getting outside for some fresh spring air and going for a walk or for a bike ride. However, even though there are fewer cars on the road, maintaining the recommended two-meter distance from your neighbours is difficult without stepping onto the road and essentially into

traffic. Public transport isn't much of an option with reduced runs and reduced capacity.

Some municipalities are adopting measures to expand cycling and walking spaces into roadways by reducing car capacity <https://www.tcat.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Example-street-re-balancing-in-Canada.pdf>

Don't you want Guelph to be one of those municipalities? We are in a unique position to make this happen because this motion will be presented at the May 11th City Council meeting:

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).

By contacting our City Councillors (their email addresses are provided below) or clerks@guelph.ca you can let them know that you support this motion. [If you want to write a letter to appear as part of public record or you want to delegate](#), please sign up before 10 am on Friday May 8.

Here is what we would like to see:

Increase road share given to active transportation users. Public health directs us to give at least 2 metres of space between strangers to support "social distancing" but without more public road space allocated to walkers and bikers the city as configured does not allow residents to follow this directive.

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It is our opinion that these suggestions could be implemented quickly and with a minimum of staffing requirements, and constitute an "easy win" in the initial fight against the spread of COVID-19. This is not a time for business-as-usual thinking, and we hope these proposals are well received.

Please let your councillors know that you would like to see these changes, and add others that are important to you. Thank you. Below you will find their email addresses.

For more information, contact activeguelph@gmail.com or info@gcat.ca