

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council,

I am writing expressing concern about the 2026 budget reductions to Guelph's active transportation network. I regularly cycle to work, for recreation, and for errands. Unfortunately the gaps in Guelph's trail network necessitate me to ride on busy sections of road.

Removal of the plowing of bike lanes will mean that I will be occupying motor vehicle lanes. Not only does this impact my safety, but it also increases frustration for drivers who are now stuck behind a slower vehicle. It increases at best, driver frustration, and at worst, the risk of dangerous passes by cars during suboptimal conditions (icy/slushy) on the roadway.

One need only look at the daily news, or posts on social media to see the number of poor driving incidents in this city. As I'm sure you are aware collisions with cyclists and pedestrians resulting in loss of life, or injury are not unheard of even during the best of road conditions. Most of the time, the victim is not the road user at fault. The removal of safe spaces for these users will inevitably result in more frequent incidents. With the recent mandate to remove speed cameras, I fear this risk increases further.

Beyond public safety, the removal of services to bike lanes, walkways, and other active transportation infrastructure results in a very real impact to municipal budget items allocated to paramedics, the hospital, and police services. Improvements to active transportation, and roadways as a whole can reduce incidents, opening space in our ER's and freeing up our public services for other issues.

To address these concerns, I am asking Council to take three specific actions in the 2026 budget:

- 1) restore winter bike lane snow removal to ensure year-round safe travel for cyclists,
- 2) reinstate dedicated funding for sustainable transportation, including new sidewalk construction (RD0404), cycling pavement marking (RD0452), and sustainable transportation programming (RD0392),
- 3) add funding to Vision Zero to compensate for the loss of automated speed enforcement cameras and development charges (TF0028). These are essential investments in safety, accessibility, and climate responsibility. These cuts move Guelph backwards from achieving its Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

For many Guelph residents, walking, cycling, and using mobility devices are essential means of getting to work, school, shops, and community spaces. For others, such as myself it is a form of recreation leading to healthier happier lives. For others still, it is a form of reducing their environmental impact. Active transportation is not limited to one group of people, but is represented by citizens of all walks of life and socio-economic class.

I urge Council to reconsider these reductions and restore full funding for active transportation programs and infrastructure. Investments in safe, connected, and well-maintained routes are investments in equity, health, safety, and climate resilience. They benefit everyone, not just those who cycle.

Sincerely,
Mike Siemens
Ward 2

