

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the 2026 budget reductions to Guelph's cycling and active transportation programs. Not only do these cuts undermine our city's commitments to equity, safety, and climate action, but they also disproportionately harm residents who rely on affordable, sustainable ways to travel.

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), and 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.

Active transportation is not a luxury. For many Guelph residents, especially low-income families, youth, seniors, newcomers, and those without access to a car, walking, cycling, and using mobility devices are essential means of getting to work, school, shops, and community spaces. Reducing funding for safe and accessible active transportation infrastructure increases barriers for those already facing financial and social inequities.

The decision to scale back cycling and trail investments, eliminate winter maintenance of bike lanes, and delay projects from the Cycling and Trail Master Plans will make our streets less safe and less inclusive. Vulnerable road users, including children and seniors, already face heightened risks on roads not designed to protect them. These cuts move Guelph backwards from achieving its Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

Adding to these challenges, recent provincial legislation that prevents municipalities from using automated speed enforcement cameras has removed one of the most effective and equitable tools for traffic calming. With this avenue closed, Guelph must rely even more heavily on physical infrastructure, such as protected bike lanes, curb extensions, and safer intersections, to reduce vehicle speeds and protect vulnerable road users. Now is not the time to divest from safer streets; it is the time to double down on investments that prevent harm before it occurs.

These reductions also threaten progress on our Climate Action Plan. Shifting more trips to active and low-carbon modes is one of the most effective ways to reduce transportation emissions, which addresses the single largest source of greenhouse gases in our community. Slowing implementation of the Cycling Master Plan undermines our shared responsibility to meet these targets and leaves Guelph behind other cities on sustainable mobility.

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.

Please stand up for a city where everyone, regardless of income, age, or ability, can move safely and affordably.

Sincerely,  
Gabhan Chalmers