

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council,

We say Guelph is moving toward sustainability. We say we want to be leaders in change, an example to other Canadian cities of how to make meaningful shifts in lifestyle and impact on the environment.

And then we consider deferring active transportation, cycling, and trail projects. Again.

On top of that we consider not maintaining what cycling infrastructure we already have.

I am a long-time Gueph resident, graduate of the University of Guelph, and car-free mother of three. I live in Ward 3, close to Willow Rd and have many friends and neighbours who either cannot afford a vehicle or cannot drive one. I take my three children (all under the age of 6) to school, doctor appointments, social events, preschool, and religious gatherings by bike, bus or walking.

Anyone who has been the primary caregiver for young children knows how difficult it can be to get places on time, even with a car. Catching a bus that only comes once every 30 minutes with three little ones can seem nigh impossible, especially if a missed bus means a 30 minutes wait at a bus stop in the dead of winter. Flexibility is one of the reasons I prefer to bike even when it's snowing.

If the city stops winter maintenance of cycling infrastructure, cyclists like myself will have to choose between being forced off the road for the season and riding in car lanes. For myself, not being able to bike in the winter often means I am trying to push a stroller through deep snow or over slick ice. It means risking throwing out my back and being unable to get out at all for days or weeks. It means a lot more anxiety and stress for my family when trying to get to bus stops on time. And when the cost of all this is added up, I end up staying home more than is healthy, facing isolation and depression.

Is it really a wonder that more people in our city don't consider alternative methods of transportation as viable?

Many of the routes I take when cycling are on roads where car lanes have already been narrowed to make space for bike lanes (for example, Silvercreek's protected bike lanes), but if those bike lanes are full of snow, I will have to bike with cars on a lane now too narrow for cars to easily pass me. Drivers are already annoyed enough by cyclists and cycling infrastructure. Don't put us at odds even more by first removing space for car-traffic and then forcing cyclists back onto what was left for the cars!

I am deeply concerned regarding the 2026 budget reductions to Guelph's cycling and active transportation programs. These cuts undermine our city's commitments to equity, safety, and climate action, and disproportionately harm residents who rely on affordable, sustainable ways to travel, especially those already facing financial and social inequities.

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.

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. Haven't we had enough preventable deaths in our community?

I urge Council to reconsider these reductions and restore full funding for active transportation programs and infrastructure (only 0.2% in budget savings compared to the total revised 2026 city budget).

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,
Sonya Ogilvie
Ward 3

