

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.

I value the plowed trails for commuting and for healthy exercise at a time of year when being physically active is more difficult due to weather conditions. The plowed bike trails also provide me with a feeling that I live in a progressive city which cares for the health of its citizens and the environment. I often boast to friends and family about how great this city is and I often cite the winter maintenance of the recreation trails as a great resource this great city provides. If the city is to eliminate plowing bike trails from the budget I will be very disappointed.

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.

