

June 21, 2017

Mr. Andrew Janes  
Project Engineer  
City of Guelph  
1 Carden Street  
Guelph, Ontario

Dear Mr. Janes:

As a sustainable transportation planner, I support sustainable transportation infrastructure where it meets the mobility needs of the most people at the lowest cost but not where it will exacerbate issues related to public safety, our environment and city finances. Unfortunately, the proposed Emma-Earl Bridge (EEB) in Guelph fails to meet my criteria. Therefore, I am calling on the the City of Guelph to terminate the Emma-Earl Bridge (EEB) Environmental Assessment (EA) and refocus its efforts on Speedvale Avenue and the existing Trans-Canada Trail (TCT) for several reasons:

- **Project Need:** The need for the EEB has not been established given current city policing, infrastructure, housing, health and financial challenges.
- **EA Scope:** The scope is too narrow as it only focuses on the bridge spanning the river. The EA process should have focussed on the area between Speedvale, Dufferin and Marlborough so it included sidewalk and road/hydro realignment.
- **Environment:** Having read River System Advisory Committee (RSAC) reports and minutes pertaining to the underpass and bridge reports you've received, I can tell that environmental planning staff and RSAC are doing their best to balance competing interests but must ultimately follow the direction of engineering department and council. According to Natural Heritage System (NHS) policies, the City commits "to maintain, enhance and restore its natural heritage system (NHS) includes an environment first approach to ensure the integrity of the system is not compromised. The NHS contributes to enhancing the quality of life within the city by preserving the integrity of a wide range of natural features and ecological services, while also providing natural and open spaces for leisure activities and enjoyment opportunities for residents and visitors." But, as I learned when I worked at the Nature Conservancy of Canada, sometimes we must leave the environment intact instead of introducing infrastructure and people that disturb it. This part of the Speed River has gone relatively undisturbed for almost 60 years. Why change things now when existing infrastructure – Speedvale Avenue -- is so close by?
- **Planning & Demand:** Council and staff used the EEB as "a bone" thrown to cyclists to get their support for the Speedvale road design in 2015 – which contradicted the city's own cycling policy. The rationale for the EEB is also based on an outdated 2005 Trails Master Plan (TMP) -- which did not identify the EEB as a priority -- along with the outdated 2007 Local Growth Management Plan (even planning staff could not find the wording about bridges). The 2017 TMP should be completed in conjunction with the city-wide Transportation Master Plan before moving forward with EEB as there is no hard origin-destination data to indicate that cycling and walking will increase amongst the majority of Ward 2 and Ward 3 residents who have access to an automobile – 90% drive and will continue to do so.
- **Cycling, Pedestrian and Neighbourhood Safety:** The current level of assaults, vandalism (Molotov Cocktails) and drug activity on TCT could increase since it isn't being patrolled regularly by bike police - of which there are only 4 across the city. 36 wheeler trucks exiting the Armtec plant by EEB and driving along Earl Street will lead to more accidents.
- **Garbage:** The nearby Norwich, Speedvale and Riverside Park bridges are used as dumping grounds for garbage of all types, including needles. The EEB would bring more of the same, further compounding the environmental disruption for wildlife (both locally and downstream).'

- **Financial:** We're spending at least \$9 million more than we have to on Speedvale reconstruction and the EEB. The preferred single-span bridge capital cost is \$1.8 million but could be as high as \$5 million when lighting, guarded sidewalks (recommended by Armtec), road/hydro realignment, possible expropriation, policing and other operating costs are included. These scarce dollars should be invested in Speedvale Avenue, increased police surveillance, river enhancement/clean-up, lighting on existing TCT and a city-wide TDM program that goes beyond building AT infrastructure.
- **Consultation: Several points:**
  - There has been a lack of communication between city staff and citizens (other than two 2-hour PIC meetings, the second being held 6 months later than originally scheduled).
  - Those who attended the first meeting in October 2016 were not notified of June 2017 meeting.
  - The open house format (with 25 separate display boards) is designed to limit citizen interaction.
  - City advertisements included incorrect phone numbers.
  - Requests to access public comments has been refused by staff until after EA documentation has been filed – which could be months away.
  - Requests for origin-destination trip data was not provided.
  - Preliminary Alternative Evaluation at the June 7 Open House was limited and biased. I have updated and improved it so total score for Null Alternative is 40 and Alt 1 Bridge is 23 – a 17 point difference (see attached).
  - RSAC minutes pertaining to EEB and Speedvale Avenue Bridge Underpass (SAU) were made available on the city's EEB website.
  - In the end, citizens had two weeks to respond to information that took staff and consultants 8 months to gather.

It is important to note that we wouldn't be discussing the SAU or EEB if it wasn't for council and engineering staff's abysmal Speedvale Avenue decision to prioritize cars over people, the environment and finances. This unfortunate choice contradicted city policy and ignored the far superior 3-lane road diet option (which was an alternative proposed by staff, to their credit). In the end, council knowingly voted to build the least pleasant, highest cost, most traffic inducing and most property expropriating road possible. As mentioned above, the city could have saved over \$9 million!

Speedvale Avenue reconstruction will not start until 2019 earliest and detailed bridge design is barely underway. I suggest that the city immediately make Speedvale safer and more accessible by:

- Creating a large crosswalk zone that extends from west side of bridge to Marlborough
- Painting the crosswalk zone a bright colour (red or green)
- Adding crosswalk and signalization to west side of bridge
- Adding traffic lights or cross walk at Marlborough Road
- Adding rumblestrips to the east and west of the red crosswalk zone

Once again, I call on the the City of Guelph to terminate the Emma-Earl Bridge (EEB) Environmental Assessment (EA) and refocus its efforts on Speedvale Avenue and the existing TCT.

Thank you,  
Martin Collier, MES (Pl.)