

**Savings and safety must be top considerations for any changes to Speedvale Avenue**

*Re: City staff recommends cancelling Speedvale underpass - Oct 5<sup>1</sup>*

Speedvale Avenue is a conduit for fast traffic and therefore unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. The road's current design also makes it dangerous for drivers attempting to exit or enter the road from side streets and private driveways.

Due to council's imprudent \$16 million decision in July 2015 that approved the widening of Speedvale's 4-lanes (between Woolwich and Manhattan Court) without installing safe sidewalks and bike lanes, they suggested that a new underpass and Emma-Earl bridge would be alternatives for active transportation enthusiasts.

Unfortunately, council forgot to consider the environmental, financial and legal implications of this new infrastructure. City staff has now come back with professional recommendations that did consider all the issues. Meanwhile, the related Emma-Earl EA now in progress is pegging the cost of a new bridge at \$1.8 million minimum.

In order for cyclists/pedestrians to have safe passage, for staff to have their professional recommendations followed and for council to save taxpayers millions of dollars, I proposed a "Barrier Free" Speedvale Avenue during my deputation:

In terms of design:

- The safe zone would be similar to a school safety zone with speed limit of 40 km/hr maximum – or preferably 30 km if the province allows it.
- A large crosswalk zone would be created that extends from west side of bridge/river to Marlborough Road.
- The existing crosswalk and signalization in front of the fire station would be moved to west side of bridge.
- Traffic lights would be added at Marlborough.
- The zone would be painted a bright red to warn drivers they are entering the safe zone. Signs would be erected and rumble strips added to the east and west of the zone.

In terms of benefits:

- This design will allow for safe east-west travel along Speedvale. Pedestrians, runners, cyclists and those in wheelchairs would be able to move across the street from north to south when traffic signals are activated.
- Motor vehicles will have safer egress from side streets and private driveways. Large fire trucks will have a far easier time moving in and out of the fire station on the north side.
- Installing a barrier-free Speedvale zone would render the Earl-Emma bridge proposal redundant.
- The city could save between \$2.5 and \$6 million in infrastructure costs, staff time, potential lawsuits and would save Speed River habitat as well.
- The money saved could be used to apply similar "barrier free" design principles to the TransCanada Trail at Eramosa, MacDonnell and other "disconnected" locations throughout the city.

If council is truly committed to safety for all road users, fiscal responsibility and environmental protection, a "Barrier Free" Speedvale is the best answer.

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Founder, Transport Futures

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/7595475-guelph-staff-recommend-not-to-go-ahead-with-speedvale-underpass/>