

Dear Mr. Umar:

The Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation (GCAT) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase the quality, quantity and safety of active transportation in Guelph. We serve as the collective voice of active transportation users in Guelph, with members and followers now numbering over a thousand.

We wish to make some comments, ask some questions and make some suggestions regarding the Phase I Speedvale Avenue improvements taking place between Manhattan Court and Glenwood Avenue:

Comments:

1. GCAT wishes to acknowledge the excellent consideration that has been given to pedestrians and cyclists in the design of these improvements. Thank you.
2. GCAT is very pleased to see the proposed cycling-safe, protected intersection of Speedvale Avenue and Woolwich Street. The cycling facilities at this intersection appear to be similar to those at the intersection of Stone Road and Gordon Street, which GCAT believes function well. It will also make a much safer alternative for cyclists making left turns at this intersection.
3. GCAT is very pleased to see the addition of the multi-use paths on the both sides of Woolwich Street north of Speedvale Avenue, and on the east side of Woolwich south of Speedvale. If we're not mistaken, these paths are off the roadway and are protected by curbs and gutters. These additions close the short cycling network discontinuities that had previously existed and which had forced riders to share roadway space with motorists without protection.
4. GCAT is pleased to see the extension of the multi-use path along the east side of the GJR track leading from Speedvale Avenue to just south of Gemmel Lane. This is a much safer alternative for pedestrians and cyclists who wish to travel westbound and then northbound. GCAT is pleased to see the slight jogs in the multi-use paths on the north and south sides of Speedvale Avenue at the rail crossings which allow cyclists to cross the tracks at a much safer perpendicular angle.

Questions:

1. Recognizing the limits of this project's scope, do the multi-use paths along Woolwich Street north and south of Speedvale Avenue continue for any distance? For example, a bi-directional multi-use path on the east side of Woolwich extended north to the intersection with Marilyn Drive would enable a safe, enjoyable route to the Evergreen Senior Centre and Riverside Park West from the Riverside Park East trails. Together with a multi-use path on the west side of Woolwich, it would also offer a safe route to the Trans Canada Trail through Woodlawn Cemetery and the Woodlawn multi-use path with many opportunities for shopping and dining, etc. Additionally these multi-use path extensions would also enable safe alternative routes to the Guelph section of the Guelph to Goderich Trail (G2G) that GCAT is currently working on with the City Parks Department. Multi-use path extensions would also offer an alternative safe route to all of the above if the future Speedvale Bridge underpass is closed for

various reasons like maintenance or flood conditions. Finally, for those users who simply want to walk or bike to the Speedvale/Woolwich plaza the combination of the multi-use path and the protected intersection will now encourage active transportation as it is direct and safe. When our TCT/ATN Trail South has not been winter-maintained, for example, this combination also offers bikers a safer alternative to the bike lanes on Woolwich leading to our Downtown. Ideally the multi-use paths should extend north all the way to Woodlawn Road for safe access to businesses in the Walmart plaza and the Canadian Tire plaza. The area on the east side of Woolwich Street from Speedvale Avenue is ideal for multi-use paths since there are fewer driveways, making it safer. We also ask that consideration be given to extend the multi-use paths east on Speedvale Avenue as far as Marlborough Road if space permits to provide access to residents and businesses in this area to the Emma to Earl Street Bridge or the TCT trails, etc.

2. Although we are pleased to see multi-use paths along Speedvale Avenue west of Riverview Drive, we note the narrowing at the bridge that results in a cycling network discontinuity and, inevitably, conflict between pedestrians and cyclists in a very restricted, potentially dangerous space. While the proposed bridge deck sidewalk is wider than that on the existing bridge, due to the guardrail, there is no escape path for cyclists and pedestrians in the case of conflict. Left unchanged, this design forces all of the safety compromise onto pedestrians and cyclists, the most vulnerable right of way users, and none onto motorists whose way through is completely unimpeded. This is both inequitable and potentially dangerous. Is it possible to increase the width in this area in order to continue the multi-use path across the bridge span? Is there no other solution to this problem, including sharing the safety compromise equally among all road users?
3. From consultation with Sustainable Transportation City staff we understand that the concrete sidewalk on the bridge deck cannot be considered a multi-use path because the surface is not asphalt. This really must be addressed because cyclists would be required to dismount since they may not ride legally on sidewalks. As the rest of the bridge deck is paved with asphalt for motorized traffic, why cannot the area used by pedestrians and cyclists be similarly paved? If not this, can the surface be painted with a permanent surface coating to permit legal cycling?
4. GCAT has noted the annual problem of road and sidewalk snow plows throwing windrows in opposite directions, often making the existing bridge and sidewalk impassable to both pedestrians and cyclists. We hope that consideration is given to increase the width as previously mentioned but also to providing areas for snow storage for the larger trail snow clearing machine particularly on the South side of the bridge. The current situation leaves much to be desired as snow is dumped from street plows onto the bridge sidewalk making it impassible and unsafe.
5. With the improvements being made, GCAT anticipates higher volumes of westbound cyclists coming off of Riverview Drive onto the multi-use path on the north side of Speedvale Avenue. Riverview Drive will become an 'active transportation collector road' serving the entire neighbourhood to the north and east. From the perspective of westbound motorists it may appear that cyclists southbound on Riverview Drive are about to ride out dangerously onto the Speedvale Avenue roadway. Is it possible to solve this problem by extending the multi-use path northward in a wide radius around the corner at Riverview Drive and continuing it at least until the driveway into the fire station parking lot? This would offer a much safer route for cyclists and pedestrians

using Riverview Drive to access the new multi-use path. Currently cyclists using the roadway are forced to ride around parked cars at the end of Riverview Drive, then dismount and walk to the crosswalk (or ride illegally on the sidewalk.)

6. We note the addition of a capacity for a sidewalk underpass on the west end of the bridge span. As you know, GCAT has advocated for years for a continuous trail on the west side of the Speed River both north and south of Speedvale Avenue and under the bridge. Anticipating that the connecting trails will be built in the future, is it possible in the current project to provide pedestrian and cycling access to the bridge underpass from the new multi-use path on the north side of Speedvale? Unless this access to the underpass is provided, residents and users of the Riverside Park East trails would continue to be required to use the crosswalk, disrupting the flow of traffic and, for cyclists, dismounting, since otherwise they would need to detour to the pedestrian bridge further north in the Park (requiring dismounting again.) Surely this is an undesirable option considering the huge investment in the Speedvale Avenue Project to increase capacity well into the future. With much more active transportation usage this problem will only increase in time. We hope that our suggestion of a loop from the underpass on the north side of the bridge that connects back up onto the multi-use path and bridge sidewalk be examined before and during the bridge replacement. This will enable a much earlier solution to actually opening the underpass to users as the current plan of waiting until the west side retaining wall is replaced we understand to be anywhere from 10 to 20 years or more into the future. Access to the underpass from the north side of Speedvale Avenue is in line with the reports from the consultants' recommendations and examination reports on the condition of the West retaining walls.

Additionally, the sidewalk underpass width is only 2289mm compared to the bridge deck width of 3200mm. Can this be widened to at least 3200mm to reduce conflict for pedestrians and cyclists, especially due to the added concern of security underneath the bridge? We realise that there is a compromise on the clearance height between the surface of the underpass sidewalk and the bottom of the bridge ceiling due to the average water level of the river. However given that bicyclists will ride on the underpass, perhaps consideration should be given to increasing the clearance height.

Thank you for providing the information about the improvements. On the whole GCAT believes that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists have been well met. Please do not hesitate to contact me for clarification of any of our comments.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with City Staff on this and future projects. Thank you.

Yours truly,

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# GCAT



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Active Transportation*

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