

From: Harold Payne

Sent: Tuesday, November 9, 2021 9:13 PM

To: Council Agenda <councilagenda@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Blackfriars Bridge should be for active transportation

To whom it may concern:

I urge council to designate the Blackfriars Bridge for active transportation only.

The Blackfriars Bridge has undergone countless major and minor repairs before the recent restoration. Throughout, the goal has always been to preserve the bridge because it is a historic landmark. If the goal was truly about moving as many cars as possible it would have been demolished a long time ago and replaced with a four lane eastbound-westbound bridge like we have on Oxford. Luckily it doesn't really connect in any meaningful way to any arterial roads or points of interest. It connects two quiet residential neighborhoods.

The eastern portion of the bridge is not safe for cyclists, pedestrians or people with mobility devices if cars are put back on the bridge. I am old enough to remember the plaque put up on that side of the bridge that described the bridge's history. It did not stay up long before being taken out by a vehicle crashing into it. Moreover, part of the rationale for eliminating westbound traffic on the east side of the bridge was because if struck by a car going down that steep incline on Ridout, it would cause catastrophic damage to the bridge, which would mean even more risk to everyone and more hefty repair bills.

I have lived in Ward 13 for all of my adult life. My primary way of getting around the city is by car. But even I see there is absolutely no point in opening up the Blackfriars Bridge to motorized traffic. It has perpetually been a square peg in a round hole problem. During my time in the city they have tried: alternating east and westbound traffic, two lanes of traffic simultaneously, and now this current one way eastbound system. Every single configuration has baffled thousands of drivers over the years going the wrong way, with people cursing at each other that traffic actually goes two ways or one way.

If you open up the bridge to cars, be prepared for more accidents. Even during the brief period it has been open to eastbound traffic only, I have seen cars going westbound despite all the wrong way signs they see along their way. In 2019 a car crashed into the Society Café and then careened into a house on Blackfriars St. One ways encourage more speeding and careless driving.

I also have to wonder, what is the plan for when a car goes the wrong way when a car travelling eastbound is already on the bridge? Are they just going to scratch each other and scrape by and hope for the best? Unlike other one-way streets in the city, there really aren't any opportunities for someone to pull to the side and correct course. I guess if you're a cyclist you're doubly out of luck in this scenario. The current plan appears to be: pray it doesn't happen. I don't have much faith in blind prayers.

People who clamor that the bridge must be open to accommodate current traffic congestion clearly have a woefully short memory. Back when it was devoted to two lane motorized traffic, it was frequently shut down completely every year or two for weeks of repairs. You had to accommodate for it and plan around it. I have more memories as a driver of it being out of commission than actually in service. Enough is enough, retire the bridge and dedicate it to walking and cycling only.

I consent to adding this letter to the public agenda.

Yours very truly,

Harold Payne