

From: Trent Cleland

Sent: Thursday, November 4, 2021 8:19 PM

To: Council Agenda <councilagenda@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Blackfriars Bridge should not be re-opened to motorized traffic

Dear Mayor Holder and Councilors,

I am writing to you to urge you to keep the Blackfriars Bridge closed to vehicle traffic.

We have seen an explosion in people walking and cycling since the start of the pandemic. As any bike vendor in the city can attest, this is not expected to end any time soon. It is wrong to believe that walking and biking is just leisure. It is not – it is transportation for people who want to help the city reach its climate targets and for people for whom owning a car is simply too expensive. If by keeping the bridge closed, it would encourage more people to walk or bike rather than drive, then that is a worthy in itself.

Car traffic volumes into the downtown core have not increased to 2019 levels and may not in the future. With more people living and working downtown walkability is a priority and keeping bridge dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists enables that.

There is a strong safety justification for keeping the bridge open only to active transportation as well. Normally on a bike route there is space on the shoulder to get away from a car if it gets close to clipping you. There isn't this possibility on the Blackfriars Bridge because of the pedestrian barrier. I wish I could say everyone would be kind to each other but I've been seen way too many accidents and near misses of motorists hitting pedestrians and cyclists to know this is nothing more than wishful thinking. The bridge also cuts through the Thames Valley Parkway and the northern half of the route is not visible, even at the pedestrian crossover. The added convenience of a few minutes for motorists is not worth the risk of someone else's life.

The pedestrian portion of the bridge alone is not adequate to handle two opposing lanes of people walking. It also mistakenly assumes that everyone who uses it can walk. I see plenty of people use their mobility devices and wheelchairs on the "car" side of the bridge during the closure because there simply isn't enough room to maneuver on the wooden side of the bridge. Not every person with a mobility device can drive or has access to a vehicle. The city should be accessible to them just as it is to everyone else.

I do not think there is anything to be gained by re-opening it to vehicle traffic. Yes there is construction as it happens periodically and necessarily. Construction alone is not a sufficient reason to re-introduce cars. Drivers can already get to and from downtown on east west corridors on Queens, Riverside, Stanley, Oxford, and Horton. And none of these routes are that congested. My partner recently had her car detailed at Scotty's Shine shop just this week. Trip times during peak rush hour (8am and 4pm) were 9 and

8 minutes respectively. The same similar trip in the dead of night would be 7 minutes. Again, there is little to be gained by opening to bridge to vehicle traffic but a lot to lose.

There is no significant net benefit to reopening the Blackfriars Bridge to vehicle traffic. It should be dedicated for active transportation (walking/cycling) use only.

I consent to having this added to the public agenda.

Thank you,

Trent Cleland