

The City of London  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, ON  
N6A 4L9

Attn: Civic Works Committee

Dear Madam Chair and members of the Civic Works Committee

Thank you for taking the time to hear public input on the future of the Blackfriars's Bridge. I have had the opportunity to read through the traffic study and would like to make some comments.

First, I would like to thank staff for completing the study as promised and putting forth their recommendation. It is important to stress that unlike others, I will acknowledge that these are my own comments. I am not speaking on behalf of the community of Blackfriars or others because this has been a very divisive issue. There is no real agreement in the community on the future of the bridge. That said, I believe the recommendation in front of you is not practical in many ways.

For background, I want to state that I cross the bridge by walking, cycling and by vehicle. I cross the bridge easily over 1000 times annually, with over 90% of those being as a pedestrian. In that time, I could count on one hand the number of times where I have seen a driver act aggressively around pedestrians or cyclists. In most cases, drivers give way to anyone crossing the bridge or crossing north/south across the street. They are courteous, patient, and aware of the surroundings. Isn't this exactly what multi-use is meant to represent.

When this was discussed in October of 2022, at that point Councillors said there would be thousands of cars cutting through the neighbourhood daily. This has not come to pass, nor will it. There are those who choose Blackfriars Bridge as their entrance to the downtown, but not many do so. When looking at the numbers, it is important to bear in mind that at times, access to the core from Riverside was blocked completely due to construction. This was one of the open access points for people to use.

To assume this bridge can't be used in harmony with multiple uses is simply unfounded. There is no defined reason not to leave the bridge as is year-round. Still, on the arguments people give, I'd like to address a few of them below.

- 1. Closing the bridge is better for the community**

Many of the people who live in Blackfriars use the bridge daily to drive. For residents, the choice of closing it will, at times lengthen their trips, which is neither good for the environment or the community as we will be moving through the neighbourhood to exit.

When the bridge was closed to traffic, there were several times when nefarious activity was carried out on the bridge, so the free flow of traffic has been a welcome addition.

2. **Closing the bridge is climate friendly**

This is far from the truth. This means that we will be moving traffic to other busy roadways, adding to idling, traffic issues and lengths. For this to be accurate, we would require a specific number of London drivers to give up driving if the bridge was closed stating the “only reason for driving a vehicle was to cross the bridge in the first place”. I’m yet to find one of those people.

3. **The Blackfriars Bridge is unsafe for cyclists or pedestrians**

Neither of those is accurate, as there is simply no physical evidence to back up that statement. I would argue the bridge is extremely safe as demonstrated in my original comments about first-hand experience of using the bridge on a regular basis. Yes, the walking area is tight to pass, but the simple solution at times is patience and letting someone pass.

4. **Removing cars creates a well needed cycle lane**

With the renovation of Dundas Place at the forks, there are full cycle lanes and lights right there. These have been functional for only one year, and it would be beneficial to use the existing infrastructure without creating new. These lanes are still not fully operational as at the time of this letter, the intersection is still being worked on.

5. **Londoners will easily adapt to the open close schedule**

If we know one thing about Londoners, they do not adapt well to change. We also know that when it comes to driving, it’s the path of least resistance. A great example of that is the number of cars still going westbound over the bridge. Closing the bridge annually at the end of October will put passenger vehicles, emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles on Blackfriars Street with nowhere to go except exit through small residential streets. Frustrated, attempting to find their way out of the community quickly, I am concerned that this will create neighbourhood safety issues, especially around the school.

Lastly, I would like to address some of the reasons to keep the bridge open to traffic, moving eastbound.

1. It was the only untouched west access point to the downtown in recent memory. With construction so prevalent, the number one argument in the last election for London residents not coming to the core was access, even before safety. In a downtown that is suffering immensely to get people there, removing an access point will make it that much more difficult. It could hurt merchants, residential intensification, and any form of rebound in filling commercial vacancy.
2. Make no mistake that the Blackfriars Bridge is a treat for all people to go over. Whether you’re cycling, walking, or driving, it is one of London’s treasures that deserves to be accessed by all Londoners, not a select few.
3. From experience, safety is not an issue. Yes, some people speed down Blackfriars Avenue, but closing the bridge will not stop that. These same people will be left speeding through a neighbourhood of children. Closing the bridge can’t fix ignorance.

4. Blackfriars has commercial businesses that deserve exposure to Londoners, not just the neighbourhood. Residents from Oakridge and Hyde Park, Byron and North London not only have access to a beautiful route in the city, but view of some wonderful establishments.

I would urge this committee to vote down the recommendation from staff and instead leave the bridge as it is today, serving our community and the city as it has so effectively for decades. It is functional, safe, and beautiful. A gem that should be accessible to all who choose to enjoy its historic path.

Simply put, you are trying to fix something that is not broken.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

Highest regards

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Resident, Blackfriars Neighbourhood