

May 3, 2024

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And to: Mayor and Councillors, Town of The Blue Mountains
c/o townclerk@thebluemountains.ca

Re: Bay Street East Infrastructure Reconstruction Project
Comments on the information provided in the Notice of PIC - April 18, 2024, and the
December 2, 2023 Neighbourhood Meeting

The Town has presented preliminary designs for the reconstruction of Bay Street East, a project which is currently proposed to contain three elements:

1. **Sewer, Water and Stormwater Facilities** – proposed upgrades to the existing, ageing-out infrastructure
2. **Forcemain** – a proposed Bay Street East route alignment for a new forcemain
3. **Active Transportation Infrastructure** – proposed addition of active transportation facilities which include bike lanes and sidewalks

I respectfully submit the following comments and concerns on these three elements:

Note: These comments pertain only to the section of Bay Street East between Elgin Street & Grey Street (E to G).

1. **Bay Street East (BSE) Sanitary Sewer, Watermain and Stormwater Management Infrastructure**
 - We recognize that the sanitary sewer, watermain and stormwater systems on BSE are in need of replacement and support its necessary renewal.
 - We would support the renewal of these services independent of the inclusion of a forcemain along BSE.
 - It has been presented that the travelled road needs to be centered over the 66 ft allowance width, but there has been no clear rationale provided for that (in the absence of a forcemain on BSE), or why a minor widening of the existing travelled location is not a viable option.
 - BSE along Elgin St to Grey St (E to G) is currently ± 19 ft of paved surface which is aligned close to the southerly edge of the 66 ft BSE road allowance.
 - **The reuse of this 19 ft width and location, plus the bare minimum required to accommodate required current pipe separation distance standards, is the preferred option in this infrastructure renewal proposal.**
 - This option would be the least disruptive to the existing BSE neighbourhood's cottage-type character.
 - This option would have the least impact on the BSE aesthetic and natural features – particularly the established mature trees many of which are adjacent to the northerly paved edge.
 - This option would have the least impact on the current use of the road which easily accommodates the low volume of traffic E to G experiences, vehicular, pedestrian and cycling. The majority of the residences from E to G are part-time (± 24 part-time/12 permanent).
 - Low traffic and relatively few full-time residences have contributed to use of the road by pedestrians and vehicles in a safe and mutually respectful manner over many years. Narrow roads are the best traffic calming roads as vehicles simply must slow down for pedestrians & peddlers, who in turn must go to the road edges.
 - The narrow width is similar to many cottage and rural roads in the municipality. Retaining these varied road-types helps maintain some of the charming small-town lakeside heritage of this municipality, balancing out the increasingly urbanized starkness of other parts of town.

- It is also proposed to provide “improved stormwater management facilities” to BSE.
- There are no documented drainage problems on Bay St E from Elgin to Grey. The underlying gravel substrate provides nature's perfect drainage.
- Increased hard road surfaces & width, hard-surfaced sidewalks, curbs, gutters, etc, would increase stormwater runoff volume & velocity, thereby creating a stormwater problem that doesn't currently exist.
- **Lastly, the aging town sewer & water infrastructure extends east past Grey St to Bayview Ave. However, this section is not included in the proposed upgrades despite that infrastructure replacement being needed there as much as it is west of Grey St. Cost effectiveness and operational effectiveness would suggest that renewal of the aging facilities in their entirety from Mill St to Bayview Ave, should logically be undertaken at the same time. The proposed sidewalk budget for Elgin to Grey could be put to including Grey to Bayview in the infrastructure upgrade. Elgin to Grey road-width expansion would be minimized; Grey to Bayview would get much needed improvements. Win-win.**

2. The Forcemain

- The decision to locate a forcemain along BSE was not subject to notice to BSE residents independently of the matter of the renewal of the aging s & w infrastructure.
- It was presented that the Bay Street East (BSE) Alternative D route for the forcemain was identified as the most cost-effective route based on a preliminary cost analysis, and because it further addresses the aging-out sewer and water (S & W) lines on BSE in one project.
- However, the 4 alternatives have not been subject to a detailed cost analysis, or public comment, nor have other factors been given due consideration, from BSE residents perspective.
- Alternative D is not the shortest route.
- Alternative C has potential to provide an overall enhancement of the Georgian Trail through the wider Cedar Grove Town property where it would ultimately better serve heavier recreational traffic.
- That area would appear to be a more desirable location for active transportation enhancements, as opposed to what any on the one very short stretch of BSE from E to G could provide the general public.

3. Active Transportation Infrastructure

- The consultants presented that: “*Bay Street East was identified through the Town's recently completed **Transportation Master Plan (TMP)** as an area with an opportunity for active transportation infrastructure to be added”.*
- The Town's ±200-page, town-wide TMP was not a document that the average citizen could easily review, or easily find which aspects of the plan would apply to their streetscape.
- As such, the potential to having active transportation infrastructure added to Bay Street was not something virtually every resident of Bay Street was aware of, or could reasonably comment on, at the time.
- Full urban design road cross section is not defined in the TMP. Cottage road is not defined in the TMP. This adds to the difficulty of understanding why a full urban design is proposed for BSE.
- Pedestrian traffic levels from G to E are relatively low given its' predominately part-time/cottage tenancy and the very nearby availability of the Georgian Trail.
- Traffic volume is also very low between E to G. Residents from Grey St to the terminus of BSE/Bayview Ave use Grey St to access their properties. There is very little through traffic from E to G.
- According to the TMP '**active transportation facilities**' are meant to have an origin and a destination. The bulk of pedestrian traffic originates from the more populated parts of town and ends at the Park. The Park is the destination. Sidewalks, as proposed, to accommodate pedestrian traffic from the Park/Elgin St to Grey St would serve little purpose now, and realistically even into the future.
- The sidewalks and bike lanes would end abruptly at Grey St, providing no destination or connectivity, and returning users to the remaining very long stretch of the road, with the perceived same safety improvements that this proposal is stated to improve on the short E to G stretch.
- This illustrates that this proposal is not really about providing
- active transportation infrastructure, but is mainly about obtaining a route for the forcemain.
- Sidewalks around the Park from Elgin to Mill St may be of far more usage and a reasonable safety measure.

Urban design road vs Cottage road

- A “full urban design” roadway complete with sidewalks, verges, bike lanes, double road lanes and gutters is just that – an **urban** design.
- Such an urban streetscape is suited to built-up downtown streets and their associated steady vehicle & pedestrian traffic, but is not in the least suited, or necessary, for, by comparison, a lightly-travelled cottage lane-road.
- A full urban design unnecessarily imposed on a perfectly functional cottage road is unfathomable. It would destroy the cottage character of this lakeside neighbourhood and reduce the charm and attractiveness of this element of the Town.
- The resultant annihilation of virtually the majority of decades-old trees along BSE, E to G, is also unfathomable. Mature trees add so much natural, aesthetic and ecological value to the streetscape and to individual properties and therefore to the overall Town character as well.
- The wider the road the faster cars will go. It’s simply an unfortunate fact. Reduced speed limits are rarely observed. Enforcement is minimal, if at all. Narrow roads are self-calming simply by virtue of being narrow.
- **To provide sidewalks and bike lanes that don’t lead to a destination and in fact end abruptly a mere one block down BSE from E to G, for a very small full-time population and/or for some occasional higher weekend-type and seasonal traffic does not seem justified, when balanced against the substantial removal of trees, the expense, the lack of apparent current or future need, and the stark urbanization of a now-appealing tree-lined lakeshore cottage roadway, and the destruction of a currently charming traditional cottage neighbourhood.**

4. Conclusion

The Town of The Blue Mountains has a variety of residential areas. The unique and traditional lakeside cottage areas are one of the various elements of our town that contribute so greatly to its character and charm. We feel this lakeside character should be preserved just as much as the downtown core’s cultural and architectural heritage, or other areas unique to the Town’s character. Doing so will maintain the current well-known charm and appeal of the various parts that make up the whole of the Town of Thornbury. **Let’s show that Thornbury’s tagline of “Four Seasons of Charming” is not just hype.**

The Consultants’ report is based on documents the Town has adopted to guide infrastructure renewal across the municipality. These documents are focused on providing highly urbanized facilities in intensively used areas, rather than preserving traditional cottage or rural character elements. However, there should be room in any policy for considering unique circumstances as expressed through residents’ positions, and adapting accordingly. Otherwise, why consult with the public at all.

Council has seen repeatedly, and most recently, in the short Elma-to-Bruce stretch of Louisa St that is lined with beautiful mature trees, the importance of trees and traditional character to a community. Council has agreed to respond to Louisa St residents’ concerns as much as possible. We ask the same here.

We respectfully request that Council:

- **review its consideration of the route of the forcemain,**
- **proceed with the renewal of the aging infrastructure services independent of the inclusion of a forcemain, and to include the renewals to the terminus of these facilities along BSE to Bayview Avenue**
- **and additionally grant relief from the imposition of the highly urban-oriented active transportation guidelines on this small but precious part of Thornbury, to preserve the treed streetscape and the lakeside character of BSE, Elgin to Grey Streets.**

Thank you.

Lynne Richardson
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