

May 6, 2024

To: The Mayor and Members of Council, Town of the Blue Mountains

Re: Bay Street East Reconstruction Project and Force Main Realignment

We are writing as Bay St residents to express our concerns about the Bay St. East Reconstruction project. We currently reside at [REDACTED] Bay Street East in Thornbury and our family of six has owned property on the street since 1989. Our family is continuing to grow and we are anxious to ensure that the quiet enjoyment of our property and the ambiance of Bay St. are maintained.

We love our quiet tree-lined street and wish to maintain the low vehicular volume to allow for safe walking and biking along this peaceful lakefront road. In addition, there are a number of properties, including ours, that will lose both privacy and beautiful trees along the front of our property. Tree removal will also impact shading and potentially groundwater activity – and any replacement trees will take generations to reach the maturity of the pine and other trees currently along the road front.

In addition, if the project proceeds as suggested, we, along with a number of other properties on the north side will lose a number of our current off-road parking spaces, which we have used for decades. Reduced off-road parking will add to the congestion on the road and reduce safety, due to additional on-street parking by our guests and the need to frequently back cars out onto the road, in order to shuffle cars in the laneway. Alternatively, or in addition, landscaping will be paved over to create more parking, significantly impacting the ambiance of the streetscape.

We attended the public information session on April 18, 2024 and have reviewed the various proposals for infrastructure upgrading. We appreciated the detailed explanation of the proposed plans for the upgrading of the town water and sewer lines. We have had many discussions with our neighbours and other town residents and everyone feels that Bay St. has a unique cottage/country feel that must be maintained. The street is a gem in our community!

Based on our conversations and the sharing at the public meeting, it is evident that residents fully acknowledge the need to upgrade the infrastructure under the road, but unanimously wish to maintain the nature of the road and streetscape as much as possible. In order to achieve these goals, any road widening must be minimized. As such, we are requesting that the decision to route the force main down Bay St. be revisited. The idea of routing the force main through the cycle path right of way was shared at the meeting, but “maintenance” issues were cited as being of concern. We trust that staff can develop a viable maintenance plan. We would also be open to a one-way street if it minimizes the road width.

The rerouting of the force sewer main which currently runs down Highway 26 to the treatment plant is the main driver that will negatively impact the ambiance of Bay St. According to the engineers, the force main requires a much wider path, to distance it from other pipes. As noted, this wide path would essentially obliterate the trees and character of our charming streetscape. In addition, a wider road will invite traffic onto the street, as they seek to bypass the increasingly heavy traffic on Hwy 26 to get into town. This is already happening to some extent. No one on our street wants a suburban look (like Lora Bay) for the road. Sidewalks and bike paths are not necessary if we maintain the quiet nature of the road. As discussed at the public meeting, pedestrians and bikers use the road all the time (often in preference to the bike path as it's a lovely stretch) and there have been no known accidents or issues.

In light of all the above considerations and in support of public opinion, we strongly urge the town to revisit the decision to route the force main down Bay St. The Georgian trail cycle route will alleviate many resident concerns, while allowing for the upgrading of existing infrastructure on Bay St. East. The force main could also be routed directly through Cedar Grove Park. This decision would also reduce the proposed 2-year construction period on Bay St., which will be a major disruption to residents. In addition, it could allow the total project to be completed in two phases and spread over a longer period, potentially mitigating budget concerns relating to other options.

Thank you for reviewing our concerns. We appreciate your consideration of alternative options for this infrastructure project.

Sincerely,

Mark Carlin and Gail Kaufman Carlin