

Dear Councillors,

I appreciate you have an extremely challenging week ahead. There are many big spend projects and ongoing work ahead including ongoing road maintenance, and it appears this has ultimately now resulted in many valuable smaller spending items facing scrutiny and cuts. I request that some of our bigger cost items are scrutinised, and that some proposed road safety additional items are exchanged for a budget to develop a **detailed plan of action**, which could support a meaningful harm reduction goal. Like our Road Safety Framework 2018, this can be led by experts in their field - professionals with actual experience in harm reduction.

The ability to achieve fiscal sustainability will mean reexamining our biggest annual costs, reconsidering big expenditure items, and revenue diversification - doing the groundwork prior to budget week to avoid a disaster. It is distressing to see many valued smaller expenditure items and essential services now proposed to be cut because of these larger expenditure projects and costs deemed "essential", but not dragged under the microscope in the same manner as bike lanes, which continue to be used as a scapegoat for more spending despite accounting for (so far) a miniscule amount of our overall expenditure.

Big-spend items and projects need to be re-examined, especially the **ongoing major financial burden of resurfacing wide urban and suburban roads**, which in my area can be twice as wide as required, also downtown. Alternatives that could be revenue producing may be possible, including the sale of surplus road width for housing development or other functions - much like Cogswell but with a lower cost process achieved through policy direction.



Image: Surplus road space at Willett Street, Clayton Park

Alternative ways to reduce annual costs, increase safety and reduce car use on our roads must be found without reliance on more expensive and long term road redesigns. Policies and approaches elsewhere have been brought to your attention - we should complete jurisdictional scans and thoroughly re-examine what we do and why.

Road Safety additions - a Vision Zero goal and detailed plan of action must be prioritised

[Five pedestrian fatalities in the first half of 2025, including a small child, really should be a wake up call for all of us.](#)

I write to provide feedback on the road safety additions proposal, or my understanding of it from [Sam Austin's blog under the heading Additions \(Road Safety\)](#). Over the years I and Norm Collins have submitted feedback on Public Works list of road safety items, which invariably does not match what the annual road safety report states very specifically what is causing harm. I did not bother this year, as previous years in-person advocacy had no apparent impact.

It is clear that our decision-making current process is not geared towards meaningful harm reduction, and in our [Road Safety Framework 2018](#) we were told why:

- "Facilitating collaboration with other road safety stakeholders is the most important function of this Plan" - an approach that has been abandoned due to staff preference.
- systemic road safety plans must be developed, including one proposed to address the "top ten" causes of crashes involving pedestrians, never developed.

Over and over we have seen the list of items proposed by staff in PW budgets have no relation at all to the key causes and locations of harm. As a result, no harm reduction has occurred. This old way of doing things never worked, hence the proposal for changes in how road safety budgets are developed.

It's tempting to front another list such as the one being proposed now, however simply funding more road safety items cannot and will not make a meaningful difference. Rapid flashing beacons are definitely helpful on wider basic crosswalks, but prior to 2024 they never accounted for more than a handful of injury crashes. Staff must know this, which is why they proposed such a weak goal - despite Vision Zero goals being adopted widely throughout Canada. We cannot be "doing Vision Zero" without a goal which aims to achieve zero fatalities, or strip Vision Zero down from a methodology to a mere "philosophy".

Though it maybe seem like doing more to be funding actual items, the consistent trend we have seen every year (except over COVID) of gradually increasing injury and fatal incidents involving vulnerable road users will not change with some more RRFB's, consultants for redesigning intersections at a large cost per location, etc.

That process of selecting items to fund needs to be rolled back, with the basics of Vision Zero methodology achieved first:

- developing high injury network mapping (already visible from our open data incident mapping)
- developing an action plan detailing what specifically should happen to switch to a systemic approach to harm reduction - including a toolkit of low to mid cost countermeasures which addresses the worst harm and key locations - essentially our wider intersections.
- reinvolving stakeholders meaningfully and fully in the decision-making process.
- changes to the road safety budget development process.

This must happen alongside an absolute annual serious injury and fatal crash reduction goal, including a specific goal to reduce serious injury and fatal crashes involving vulnerable road users, who account for an appalling 22% of all fatal and injury crashes (per our [2024 Road Safety Strategy](#)) despite comprising just 4% of overall crashes.

I hear some councillors' passion regarding harm reduction for all, especially those disproportionately impacted (seniors, children, people with disabilities) - so adopt a serious harm reduction goal which orientates staff appropriately. Without it we will continue to see expensive localised proposals which will put us under more financial pressure without achieving the desired result of incremental harm reduction, annually. We cannot blame staff whilst leadership have set and approved an extremely weak injury+fatal reduction goal.

Developing an impactful and detailed plan of action which moves us from localised, high cost per location changes to systemic change/Vision Zero ([targeted lower cost changes implemented widely where data shows a need](#)) remains the best possible course of action for last minute funding proposals for this budget year.

I beg that you may consider this, based upon the evidence of previous years.

With best wishes

Martyn Williams (Clayton Park)