

RE: Middlebrook/Weisenberg Bridge Closures

August 19, 2021

From A [REDACTED] Francq

- President, Waterloo Cycling Club (2012-2016)
- Community and Club Builder Award (2013 & 2016)
- Ontario Cycling Association, President's Award Recipient (2016)

Dear Council of Woolwich and Friends of Weisenberg/Middlebrook bridge.

As President of the Waterloo Cycling Club from 2012-2016, I presided over a time of great expansion and engagement for cycling in the Region of Waterloo. And it was done in partnership with the municipalities, councillors and police to make cycling accessible and safe for all road users.

We worked closely with Councillors (Me in green jersey) to develop policies on how to open cycling to the community and ride safely.



We collaborated with Regional Councillors and Police to collaborate in the "Thumbs Up" Campaign which we led through the Cycling Club to raise awareness for the need of cycling infrastructure and positive municipal policy to enable cycling across the region.

The largest, fastest growing group of cyclists in the region is that of the “Urban Trail and Gravel Road” cyclist. These cyclists use the Spur Line, Iron Horse, G2G and many travel on the region’s rural, gravel roads to commute, explore and move throughout the region.



We ride 12 months a year and rely entirely on the many bridges in the Region to form a connected network of calm, safe routes. The Weisenberg/Middlebrook/Winterbourne Peel Street and West Montrose Bridges are central travel ways for over 500 member cyclists.



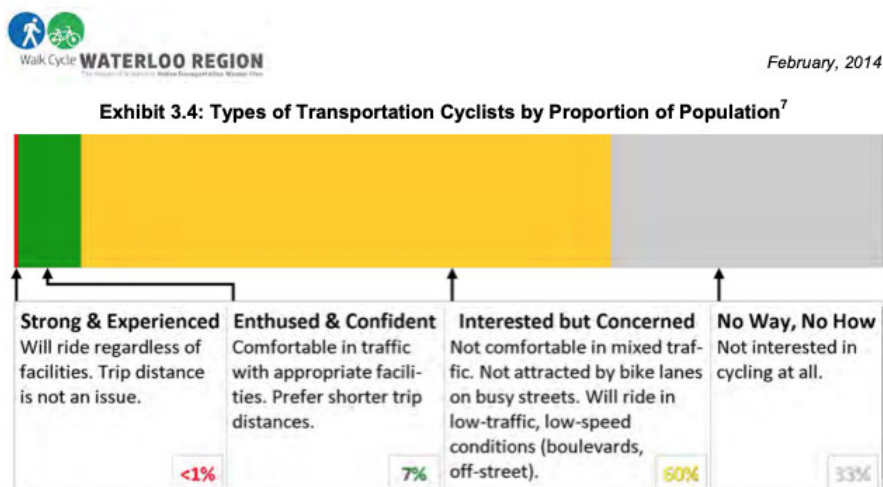


In particular, the closure of the Middle Brooke Place bridge is a critical pathway for many of us in the Region, with no alternative to circumvent the route other than traveling on faster highways and competing with vehicular traffic.

Since the closure of Middlebrooke bridge some club members carry “water shoes” so that they can wade across the river below the bridge with their bikes above their heads, as it is the only way across now that this central corridor bridge is armored shut.



Over the past decade, Waterloo Region has become a destination of choice for families and active people who choose to cycle as an active mode of transportation, exercise and community building. Cyclists want to get off the busy roads. They want to be safe, environmentally conscious and support the businesses who offer refueling and respite along the way.

At 500+ people, our Cycling Club is only a small reflection of the greater society. In the Region's Active Transportation Plan, we are less than 1% of the population. However we are the leaders of the other 99%. The club teaches people how to ride safely and explore the region's roads, bridges and communities. However, closing the bridge directly affects the ability of the more important 60% of the population who are "Interested in Cycling, but Concerned" (see below) due to high-speed traffic, and lack of off-street options. Closing these bridges runs counter to the very plan and people that the Region are hoping to support.



I am aware of the structure issues and required investment to upgrade the bridge to support heavier vehicular traffic. But, I ask that you consider opening the bridge immediately to pedestrian and cycling traffic.

Please keep this vital bridgeway open and seek out support from the cycling community. We are active, engaged and will support policies that are cycling friendly and lead to better, safer alternatives to cycling on road ways that are dangerous due to high speed, vehicular traffic.

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