

To the editor,

It was good to see the Expositor start to shine some light on the Oak Park Extension bridge project (“Highway to Nowhere?” and “Information meeting planned”, October 28th), but you neglected to provide some basic context for your readers. The city already published a detailed Feasibility Study in July 2019 that lays out the whole project in detail. I urge citizens to download this document from the city’s webpage and review it carefully.

The Feasibility Study makes clear that this will not be a little country road and a quaint bridge over the river. This will be a massive four-kilometer-long, four-lane expressway which will be elevated over substantial sections. It will cut the Oakhill Cemetery in half, restrict access to the Brant Park Conservation Area, destroy the bike trail and tower over existing neighbourhoods at the Colborne end. This will be substantially bigger than either the existing Lorne or Veterans Memorial Parkway Bridges.

Councilman Weaver’s comment that the project will “enhance” the local trail network is laughable. Again, the Feasibility Study renderings show a “multi-use” bicycle path running on either side of the four-lane road. So, imagine the tranquil enjoyment of nature from riding along a sidewalk on either side of Highway 24 towards Cambridge at rush hour. The recreational and environmental value of the area will be degraded beyond recognition. This is in exchange for some theoretical traffic improvements over the next 20 years.

Ultimately, the reasons this project have been repeatedly rejected by the citizens of this city for the last forty years are still the same as they have always been. First the cost will be enormous (at least \$100 million) and deliver benefits mostly to developers who want to continue to build anonymous, low density, car-centered suburban sprawl ever further southwards. This will mean that funds raised by selling Arrowdale and other public assets will be swallowed up long before affordable housing, a new hospital or a long-term care home can ever be built.

Secondly, and most importantly, the unique natural beauty of the Grand River is woven into our heritage and is one of the precious defining features of our city. It is an important part what makes this city a desirable place to live and raise a family. Once it is destroyed to build a massive four lane monstrosity to yet more suburbs, it will be gone forever.

Chris Armour