



## INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES *Staff Report*

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REPORT NO: IS-2024-36

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Jeff Molenhuis, P.Eng., Director of Infrastructure Services

PREPARED BY: Autumn Hergott, B.Eng., Operations Technician  
Chad Woodhouse, C.E.T., Manager of Public Works

REVIEWED BY: Greg Clark, Acting CAO

DATE: 2024-10-07

SUBJECT: **Oxford Waterloo Road Bridge 37/B-OXF – Option 2 Follow-up Report**

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council endorse alternative 2, a gravel surface multi-use trail beginning just east of the existing driveway access to property 966637 Oxford Waterloo Road, Plattsville continuing over the bridge and terminating before the intersection of River Road with a proposed turnaround for road maintenance purposes located just west of the beginning of the trail section on the west side of the bridge.

AND THAT the financial considerations of \$100,000 capital and \$5,000 operating costs be carried forward to Budget 2025 for consideration.

### SUMMARY:

This report examines two potential options for the future plan of the 37/B-OXF bridge based on Council's direction to explore the option to convert the bridge primarily for pedestrian and bicycle usage. It provides a comparison of both alternatives, considering factors such as financial implications, environmental concerns, and community impact.

## BACKGROUND:

Bridge 37/B-OXF, a metal truss bridge crossing the Nith River on Oxford Waterloo Road, located approximately 30m west of River Road, was closed in 2022 to prevent detours around the Bridge Street Bridge reconstruction project. In 2022 there were planned minor repairs budgeted, but these works were deferred for future consideration once Bridge Street bridge was re-opened and a long-term plan for Bridge 37/B was Council endorsed.

At the May 27th council meeting, Township staff presented a follow-up report (IS-2024-15) reviewing three options for the bridge's future. Council carried the motion below, directing staff to explore Option 2, which focuses on converting the bridge for pedestrian and light vehicle use.

*THAT Council endorses in principle Option 2 Remain Open to Light Vehicle and Pedestrians Only;*

*AND THAT Staff be directed to investigate further impacts, communicate with local residents, various stakeholders and provide a follow-up to Council during the 2025 Budget Process related to anticipated costs needed for the endorsed option.*

Township staff have engaged with local residents in the immediate vicinity and the bordering Township of Blandford-Blenheim to inform them of Council direction and further review of Option 2. In addition to direct communication, a public notice letter has been posted on the Township's Engage website to ensure broader public awareness and transparency. This letter is outlined in Attachment 3: Oxford-Waterloo Bridge 37B-OXF Public Notice Letter. Staff have also been in contact with the Heritage Committee for their input, and while comments are expected prior to the October 8, 2024 Heritage meeting, they are not anticipated to impact current plans, as Option 2 does not propose substantive changes to the bridge structure.

As a result of the Council direction, Township staff have since completed preliminary designs for two alternatives that align with the objective of Option 2, outlined below.

## REPORT:

### *Summary of Public Engagement*

Following the May 27, 2024, Council meeting, Township staff received numerous emails from residents expressing concerns primarily about safety, accessibility, and community cohesion. Many emphasized the bridge's vital role in daily commutes and farming operations, and voiced frustration over their increased commutes due to the restriction of vehicle traffic on the bridge.

Additional concerns were raised about the increased reliance on the Oxford-Waterloo Road and Puddicombe Road intersection, which residents believe have sightline restrictions and vehicles travelling through at high speeds. Blandford-Blenheim have installed hidden intersection signage within this area as a counteractive measure.

Further concerns were expressed regarding emergency vehicles and the potential of the bridge closure to impede and affect response times during critical situations.

Residents conducting farming operations have raised concerns about having to travel main roads, citing potential safety risks for themselves and other travelers. In addition to this, residents have voiced frustration over vehicles frequently using their driveway to turn around when navigating the closed road.

Township staff have responded to and engaged with these residents by acknowledging their feedback addressing their questions and providing updated information and reports on the matter.

### *Summary of Options*

1. A gravel surface multi-use trail/path beginning east of the existing field entrance to property 966654 Oxford Waterloo Road, Plattsville and ending on the east side of the bridge, terminating before the intersection of River Road. A traffic turnaround for road maintenance purposes will be established on the west side of the bridge, just west of the start of the proposed trail and east of the field entrance to the adjacent property as depicted in Attachment 1: Oxford-Waterloo Road Turning Circle Option 1.
2. A gravel surface multi-use trail/path beginning just east of the existing driveway access to property 966637 Oxford Waterloo Road, Plattsville continuing over the bridge and terminating before the intersection of River Road. As shown in Attachment 2: Oxford-Waterloo Road Turning Circle Option 2, a proposed turnaround for road maintenance purposes will be located just west of the beginning of the trail section on the west side of the bridge. This option would provide a lengthier path in comparison to the first alternative.

With both alternatives, two vehicle barricades will be implemented, one on the west side of the bridge, at the west end of the trail and another on the east side of the bridge west of the River Road intersection. The barricades would allow for active transportation and to continue to cross the Nith River at this location. These options have been provided to prolong the bridge's serviceability, while reducing major capital needs and expected annual maintenance and repair needs.

### *Summary of Recommendation*

Staff recommend prioritizing alternative 2 as it is more feasible in comparison to alternative 1. alternative 1 entails costs associated with fill placement for the construction of the road maintenance turnaround. The fill would be placed within the Nith River floodplain, potentially

requiring a hydraulic analysis and a Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) permit, adding complexity and potentially higher associated costs as opposed to alternative 2.

#### ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

This initiative supports the goals and strategies of enhancing Responsible Governance through Active Communications, Fiscal Responsibility, and Infrastructure Investments.

#### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The estimated project cost ranges from \$40,000 to \$65,000 for bridge and pathway works, \$40,000 for bridge structure repairs, with an additional \$5,000 expected annually for maintenance and structural inspections of the bridge. It is also anticipated that capital repair needs will incur further annual costs, however amount and timing are not entirely known at this time. Furthermore, alternative 1 may be associated with higher costs as fill will be required to construct the road maintenance turnaround just west of the beginning of the trail section on the west side of the bridge.

For information, if Council decides to reopen the bridge to traffic, staff recommend a full replacement of the structure. This would require conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) and budgeting approximately \$3-5 million for construction.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1: Oxford-Waterloo Road Turning Circle Option 1
- Attachment 2: Oxford-Waterloo Road Turning Circle Option 2
- Attachment 3: Oxford-Waterloo Bridge 37B-OXF Public Notice Letter
- Attachment 4: Public Engagement