



NEW OFFICIAL PLAN Transportation Background Report

DRAFT

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Discussion Paper

This section provides an overview of what an Official Plan is and how it is used. It introduces the Township's new Official Plan process, the discussion papers, and the purpose of this discussion paper.

1.1 What is an Official Plan?

An Official Plan is a comprehensive document, intended for long-term use, that shapes the future of a municipality by establishing how land in the community will be used. It outlines the goals, objectives, and policies for sustainable, efficient, growth within Wilmot Township. All development and public works in the township must conform to the Official Plan.

The legislative ability for municipalities to enact an Official Plan arises from the Provincial *Planning Act*. All policies in the Official Plan must conform to this higher-order Provincial legislation. The Township of Wilmot is in the process of crafting a new Official Plan which will guide growth and development within Wilmot to the year 2051. For the past two decades, growth in Wilmot has been shaped by both the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan and the Wilmot Official Plan. With recent provincial legislation that removed planning authority from the Region of Waterloo, Wilmot has the opportunity to create a "made-for-Wilmot" Official Plan. This will incorporate the best of our past and present Official Plan policies while charting out the future of Wilmot to the year 2051. A new Official Plan is being created to replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans and align with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

The new Official Plan will build on the Township's long-term vision for growth with a renewed focus on complete communities. This will include a range and mix of housing, employment opportunities, schools, recreational amenities, options for servicing, roads, and active transportation while protecting natural heritage features and farmland.

1.2 Township of Wilmot New Official Plan Process

The creation of Wilmot's New Official Plan will occur over a year-long period with several touchpoints for community consultation.



Figure 1: Graphic showing the Wilmot New Official Plan Process

Phase 1 of the project included drafting the Consultation Strategy and early conversations the project team held with Wilmot residents to inform the process. A series of one-on-one conversations occurred between residents and interested members of the public to lay the foundation for the project. Notice of the project initiation was provided to agencies and Indigenous communities. The Township of Wilmot project team hosted a booth at the 2025 New Hamburg Fall Fair, where we began to shape a vision for what Wilmot's new Official Plan could look like. Following those initial early touchpoints with the community, a formal Public Workshop was held on September 23, 2025 to gather thoughts from the public on the vision and fundamental principles that form the foundation of the new Official Plan.

Phase 2 of the Official Plan involves conducting Background Research and Study Preparation, which includes the release of seven draft discussion papers for public and stakeholder review and comment. At this time, a Special Meeting of Council will be held to formally introduce the project to the community and offer tangible research that will help focus community conversations on the themes of housing, commercial needs, employment, transportation, water and wastewater, stormwater management, and urban design. Based on public feedback, the draft discussion papers will be reviewed

and finalized. What we've heard will inform a series of policy directions, which will in turn inform Phase 3 of the project.

Phase 3 of Wilmot's new Official Plan is the drafting of policies and land use maps. These draft policies and maps will be published as draft and shared with Wilmot residents, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities for any further suggestions and input. A copy of the draft Official Plan will also be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their review as part of Phase 3 of the project.

Phase 4 of the project involves the formal adoption of Wilmot's new Official Plan by the Township of Wilmot's Council. Once Council adopts Wilmot's new Official Plan, the Official Plan will be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the Minister's review and approval. After ministerial approval, the Township's new Official Plan will be in effect and replace both existing Township and Regional Official Plans.

1.3 What are the Discussion Papers?

A series of seven background supporting studies have been developed to support the creation of Wilmot's New Official Plan. Each of these discussion papers covers a key theme for the project, including:

- Housing Needs Study
- Commercial Needs Analysis
- Employment Projections and Employment Land Needs Analysis
- Transportation
- Water, Wastewater Servicing Strategy
- Stormwater Servicing Strategy
- Urban Design Guidelines

The discussion papers will form the basis of the first phase of consultation for the project and assist Wilmot Township in developing the preliminary policy directions for the New Official Plan.

1.4 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper examines transportation, traffic calming, accessible design, trails and multimodal transportation, and barriers to pedestrian connectivity. It reviews relevant legislation and strategic plans for the Township of Wilmot to create the foundation for a new Township Roads Hierarchy Plan. The topics covered are intended to generate discussion around policies that can improve the vehicular, multimodal and pedestrian mobility of residents and non-residents alike.

This Discussion Paper also sets forth several considerations and recommendations for the transportation policy framework for Wilmot's New Official Plan to ensure consistency in transportation design and function.



2.0 Legislative Overview

This section provides an overview of the provincial legislative context which informs the basis of creating Wilmot's New Official Plan.

2.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is the overarching Provincial legislation which governs land use planning in Ontario. It establishes the respective roles of the Province and municipalities regarding land use planning and provides the basis for municipalities to create and use various planning tools, such as Official Plans and Zoning By-laws. The Act also sets out regulations for how planning processes are to be carried out, including mandatory dates for the completion of tasks, such as deciding on a planning application and setting the date for a public meeting. Notably, in Section 2, the Act establishes “matters of provincial interest,” which municipalities must have regard to when carrying out land use planning. These matters include (but are not limited to) protection of ecological systems, protection of agricultural and natural resources, conservation of cultural history, provision of a full range of housing, the accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the orderly development of safe and healthy communities. It is important to note that all planning decisions and policies made by a municipality (or other planning authority) must conform to the *Planning Act*, as well as provincial plans, as outlined in Section 2.1 of the Act. Further, Section 3 of the Act requires that all planning decisions shall be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement.

The *Planning Act, Part III – Official Plans* sets out how Official Plans shall be created by a municipality, with respect to content and process.

16 (1) An official plan shall contain,

- (a) goals, objectives and policies established primarily to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic, built and natural environment of the municipality or part of it, or an area that is without municipal organization;*



- (a.1) such policies and measures as are practicable to ensure the adequate provision of affordable housing;*
- (b) a description of the measures and procedures for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect of,*
 - (i) proposed amendments to the official plan or proposed revisions of the plan,*
 - (ii) proposed zoning by-laws,*
 - (iii) proposed plans of subdivision, and*
 - (iv) proposed consents under section 53; and*
- (c) such other matters as may be prescribed.*

Section 17 of the *Planning Act* sets out that “the Minister is the approval authority in respect of the approval of a plan as an official plan” and outlines a prescribed process the Township of Wilmot must follow in the preparation of a new Official Plan.

Specifically, the Township must provide for consultation and a public meeting, an open house, and adequate notice provided for each.

- (15) In the course of the preparation of a plan, the council shall ensure that,*
 - (a) the appropriate approval authority is consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material, even if the plan is exempt from approval;*
 - (b) the prescribed public bodies are consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material;*



- (c) *adequate information and material, including a copy of the current proposed plan, is made available to the public, in the prescribed manner, if any; and*
 - (d) *at least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan. 2006, c. 23, s. 9 (2).*
- (16) *If the plan is being revised under section 26 or amended in relation to a development permit system, the council shall ensure that at least one open house is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the information and material made available under clause (15) (c).*

The creation of Wilmot's new Official Plan must be done in conformity with the *Planning Act* and the legislated process outlined above.

2.2 Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 ("PPS") is a guiding policy document that provides direction on a variety of planning and land use matters in the province. The legal basis for conformity to the PPS is rooted in Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, which requires that all planning decisions be consistent with the minimum standards set out in the PPS. The Provincial Planning Statement outlines that "Official plans are the most important vehicle for implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement and for achieving comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning."

The PPS puts forward policy regarding housing, infrastructure, resource management, and public health. Pertinent policies for the new Wilmot Official Plan include adjustments to municipal planning boundaries, regulations regarding employment areas, agricultural protection, and population growth targets. Specific policy guidance is provided by the PPS, as it relates to planning for people and homes.



2.1.3 At the time of creating a new official plan and each official plan update, sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years, but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. Planning for infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas and employment areas may extend beyond this time horizon.

Furthermore, the PPS provides general policies for implementation and interpretation as it relates to the creation of Wilmot's new Official Plan.

6.1.5 Official plans shall identify provincial interests and set out appropriate land use designations and policies. Official plans shall provide clear, reasonable and attainable policies to protect provincial interests and facilitate development in suitable areas.

In order to protect provincial interests, planning authorities shall keep their official plans up-to-date with the Provincial Planning Statement. The policies of the Provincial Planning Statement continue to apply after adoption and approval of an official plan.

Additionally, the PPS outlines direction and policies for planning for transportation in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 which are summarized below.

Section 3.2, Transportation Systems, describes policy directions for transportation systems.

3.2.1 Transportation systems should be provided which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, are appropriate to address projected needs, and support the use of zero-and low-emission vehicles.

3.2.2 Efficient use should be made of existing and planned infrastructure, including through the use of transportation demand management strategies, where feasible.



3.3.3 As part of a multimodal transportation system, connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes should be planned for, maintained and, where possible, improved, including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Section 3.3, Transportation and Infrastructure Corridors, provides further guidance.

3.3.1 Planning authorities shall plan for and protect corridors and rights-of-way for infrastructure, including transportation, transit, and electricity generation facilities and transmission systems to meet current and projected needs.

3.3.2 Major goods movement facilities and corridors shall be protected for the long term.

3.3.3 Planning authorities shall not permit development in planned corridors that could preclude or negatively affect the use of the corridor for the purpose(s) for which it was identified. New development proposed on adjacent lands to existing or planned corridors and transportation facilities should be compatible with, and supportive of, the long-term purposes of the corridor and should be designed to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate negative impacts on and adverse effects from the corridor and transportation facilities.

3.3.4 The preservation and reuse of abandoned corridors for purposes that maintain the corridor's integrity and continuous linear characteristics should be encouraged, wherever feasible.

3.3.5 The co-location of linear infrastructure should be promoted, where appropriate.

Finally, once Wilmot's new Official Plan has been approved by the minister, the PPS sets out a requirement for ongoing monitoring of the Official Plan's implementation.

3.0 Local Transportation Context

Transportation planning and development in the Township of Wilmot is regulated and guided by a range of policy and strategic documents that together set out the vision, direction and priorities for the Township's transportation network.

3.1 Region of Waterloo Official Plan, 2025

The Waterloo Regional Official Plan, 2025 ("ROP") was the Official Plan of the Region of Waterloo, which is an upper-tier municipality that encompasses a federation of lower-tier municipalities, including the Township of Wilmot. Historically, the Region of Waterloo was the approval authority for the Township of Wilmot's Official Plan, and Wilmot was required to conform to that plan.

As of January 1, 2025, the Waterloo Regional Official Plan became a Local Plan of the Township of Wilmot. A new Official Plan is being created to replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans and align with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement. Wilmot's new Official Plan will incorporate the best of the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan policies, while charting out the future of Wilmot Township's growth to the year 2051.

The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan contained high-level policies which promoted walking and cycling, and efficient transportation demand management that aligned with the recommendations of the Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan. These policies spoke briefly to:

1. A focus on supporting a socially and economically urban transportation system to provide affordable, accessible, and effective mobility to all members of the community.
2. Implementing transportation demand management strategies to reduce the total number of automobile trips by providing more sustainable travel choices when it comes to types of travel, such as walking, cycling, transit, carpooling, and other forms of human-powered transportation.

More specific transportation policies took direction from the Region's Official Plan and were implemented through the Township of Wilmot's Official Plan.

3.2 Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan (2018)

The Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is a strategic document that outlines the Region's needs for active transportation, public transit, and Regional roads until the year 2041. The document puts forward a series of Regional policies that promote sustainable travel and encourage economic growth in alignment with good land-use planning. The TMP envisions a prosperous, sustainable, and healthy Waterloo Region, supported by viable transportation options for people of all ages, as well as efficient networks to support the movement of goods to support the Region's economy.

To realize this vision, the Region of Waterloo's TMP has outlined the following goals:

1. Promote travel choice
2. Foster a strong economy
3. Support sustainable development
4. Optimize the transportation system

Through the TMP consultation process, five broad strategies were developed and adopted as umbrella policies. These strategies provide a framework to guide actions and initiatives across various transportation areas. The five strategies include:

1. Build transportation network supporting all modes of travel
2. Promote a healthy community
3. Develop a frequent transit network
4. Enhance inter-regional connections
5. Position the network for new mobility

3.3 Region of Waterloo Active Transportation Master Plan (2014)

The Region of Waterloo Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), titled *Walk Cycle Waterloo Region*, is a comprehensive plan that strives to promote walking and cycling

as viable travel options in the Region. The plan promotes the integration of active transportation modes into the broader transportation network, aligning with the Region's vision for a sustainable and livable Waterloo, as outlined in the Regional Official Plan. The ATMP demonstrates a commitment to establishing a safe, accessible and well-connected multimodal transportation network that thoughtfully balances the needs of both rural and urban communities in the Region.

The 2018 Region of Waterloo TMP established a target to increase the current active transportation mode share from 7.8% during the weekday evening peak hour to 12% by the year 2031. To support the TMP's active transportation mode share target, the ATMP outlines five strategic action plans to guide implementation:

1. **Network action plan** – identifies key areas of improvement for walking and cycling infrastructure.
2. **Strategic signage action plan** – guides the implementation of way-finding signage for the trail and cycling network.
3. **Winter network action plan** – identifies best snow clearing practices to ensure walking and cycling are safe and accessible in the winter.
4. **Behavioral shift action plan** – identifies educational and outreach programs as key avenues to encourage a mode shift to active transportation.
5. **Performance monitoring action plan** – establishes metrics to track progress, evaluate effectiveness, and guide future improvement of the active transportation network.

In addition, the ATMP identifies a walking mode share target of 4.7% for Townships in the Region. To support this goal in the Township of Wilmot, the plan recommends multi-use paths, sidewalks, and dedicated cycling facilities to address missing connections along regional roads, including Snyder's Road. Cycling and walking infrastructure improvements have since been introduced along Snyder's Road, enhancing active transportation connections between communities such as New Hamburg and Baden,

supporting the Region's broader commitment to improving mobility across in the Township of Wilmot.

3.4 Township of Wilmot Trails Master Plan (2013)

The Township of Wilmot Trails Master Plan is a strategic plan that guides the development of trails across the Township. The purpose of the plan is to establish goals and objectives to guide trail development and implementation over the short-, medium-, and long-term.

The Trails Master Plan identifies six goals for trail development in Wilmot, aimed at promoting active and healthy lifestyles while enhancing connectivity between the Township's urban and rural areas. The six main goals include:

1. Planned
2. Connected
3. Diverse
4. Envable
5. Accessible
6. Sustainable

The plan places a strong emphasis on accessibility, aiming to create a trail system that offers diverse recreational and destination-oriented opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities. While certain trail conditions, such as slope, surface type, and location, may limit access for some users, the plan highlights the importance of providing alternative trail options to enhance inclusivity and accessibility where possible. To ensure continued alignment with community needs, the plan is reviewed every five years to assess progress and provide updated standards, network plans, and implementation timelines.

Several trail segments have been constructed since 2013, with enhanced trail construction and integration into the landscape and community remaining a top priority for the Township.

3.5 Township of Wilmot Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan (2021–2025)

The Township of Wilmot Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan is a strategic plan developed in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Ontario Regulation 191/11 (O. Reg. 191/11), the Integrated Accessibility Standards. The purpose of the plan is to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities, while promoting public awareness of the Township's ongoing accessibility initiatives. The Municipal Accessibility Plan focuses on five key areas to reduce barriers in the Township. These areas include information and communication, technology, policies and practices, physical spaces, and attitudes. Each area includes specific goals and actions to guide improvements and support the Township's commitment to building a more inclusive and accessible community.

3.6 Township of Wilmot Road Needs Study (2023)

The Township of Wilmot Road Needs Study provides a comprehensive assessment of the Township's road network and guides long-term investment decisions. The study evaluated existing road conditions, identified future road needs, and analyzed three investment scenarios to determine the optimal outcome in terms of pavement quality and budget requirements over the next decade. Based on the findings, Scenario 3 was recommended, starting with a modest budget and gradually increasing funding over time to provide a balanced and sustainable approach. This strategy allows for predictable costs while achieving long-term improvements in road quality that will support safe, reliable, and well-maintained infrastructure that supports the efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

3.7 Grand River Transit Business Plan

The Grand River Transit (GRT) Business Plan is a strategic roadmap that will guide future transit investment in the Region of Waterloo over the next decade and beyond. The plan focuses on improving service accessibility, frequency, and speed, while responding to regional growth and changing travel patterns.

The GRT Business Plan is made up of three components and supported by a Fares Strategy Plan:

1. Conventional Bus and Train Plan
2. MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan
3. Township Transit Strategy

Proposed transit improvements include expanded fixed-route schedules, new on-demand zones, and upgraded Kiwanis Transit services with increased fleet capacity and extended service hours. These initiatives aim to build a more connected, responsive, and inclusive transit system for the Township and the Region over the next decade.



4.0 Key Topics for Discussion

As the New Official Plan for Wilmot is developed, there are a range of topics to consider, including traffic calming and safety, accessible design, trails and multimodal transportation, barriers and Township road hierarchy classifications.

4.1 Traffic Calming and Safety

Traffic calming and safety within Wilmot's Rural context should consider existing policies, management of high speeds on Township roads, a growing population of vulnerable users, and the adoption of road safety strategies that support Vision Zero and the Safe System approach.

Township of Wilmot Traffic Calming Policy 2024

The Township of Wilmot's Traffic Calming Policy (2024) identifies physical calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds and volumes while also reducing conflicts between road users. The goals of the policy are to create safe and accessible streets while encouraging active transportation. In roads through rural communities, managing speeding vehicles can be challenging. A study found that speed feedback signs, speed tables, speed limit markings, and road diets with paved shoulders can be effective measures and also align with strategies of the Traffic Calming Policy. Where road geometry changes are not feasible, passive-measure alternatives can be considered. This measure is a community-driven effort and includes the installation of resident lawn signs or hosting educational awareness campaigns. Tailoring traffic calming measures based on local context and data can enhance road safety for vulnerable users and mitigates dangerous driving along rural roads.

High Speeds on Township Roads

While the Official Plan outlines a basic road hierarchy, distinguishing highways, Regional roads, and Township roads, it does not further define Township roads based on their function, surrounding land use, or design intent. This contributes to varying speed limits and road conditions, which may encourage speeding on township roads.



The limited presence of dedicated cycling and pedestrian infrastructure on township roads adds an additional layer of safety risks to vulnerable road users. Most Township roads lack active transportation facilities or adequate buffer space for vulnerable road users, forcing them to share the road with high-speed motor vehicles. On high-speed rural roads, this design gap significantly increases the risk of serious injuries or fatalities. Together, these factors highlight the need for a more intentional and inclusive approach to road design, that prioritizes safety, accessibility, and multimodal transportation.

Improved Road Safety, Vision Zero, and the Safe System Approach

To enhance safety and equitable mobility for all, adopting a focus on improving road safety can help the Township of Wilmot prioritize vulnerable road users and reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries on Township roads. Vision Zero is a philosophy that road fatalities and serious injuries can and should be eliminated while providing safe, healthy and equitable mobility for all road users. The Safe System Approach is an integrated and comprehensive process to improve the safety performance of the transportation system that makes allowance for errors, and eliminates predictable and preventable serious injuries and fatalities. It focuses on safe speeds, safe road users, safe vehicles, safe road design, post-crash care, and safe land use planning. Policies in the Township of Wilmot Official Plan should speak to specific commitments that reduce the severity of collisions and prioritize the safety of vulnerable users. Municipalities across the globe, of varying sizes and local contexts, have adopted road safety strategies and action plans informed by the Vision Zero framework and the Safe System Approach. The Region of Waterloo has launched the Safe Roads Waterloo Region campaign dedicated to preventing and reducing injuries and deaths caused by traffic collisions on their roads in line with the global Vision Zero movement.

To develop a Road Safety Strategy, establishing emphasis areas is a critical step in developing traffic safety strategies, as these focus efforts on the most significant risks and priorities of the Township. This may include vulnerable road users, high-risk

locations, or unsafe driving behaviours. Identifying emphasis areas informed through local data, collision history, and community feedback, all with an equity lens, can help municipalities focus on the top safety concerns while ensuring resources are used effectively and improvements reflect community priorities.

Identifying emphasis areas can help to structure action plans that can be categorized through the Vision Zero “five E’s” framework:

1. Evaluation
2. Engineering
3. Enforcement
4. Education
5. Engagement

Together, the five E’s framework and emphasis areas can provide a strong foundation for shaping a Road Safety strategy that transforms safety goals and policies into clear, actionable steps toward safer streets for all.

Vulnerable Users

According to the 2021 Statistics Canada Census, the average population age of the Township of Wilmot is 42 years old, making it the oldest population group within the Region of Waterloo. Notably, 21% of Wilmot’s approximately 21,000 residents are aged 65 and older. This demographic trend highlights the need for targeted strategies to improve safety for the Township’s most vulnerable road users, including seniors, persons with disabilities, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Things to Think About

1. Adopting traffic calming measures based on local conditions can mitigate dangerous driving and create safe travel conditions for vulnerable users.
2. Consider all users, such as pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in developing road infrastructure and hierarchy plan.



3. Designing with a people-first mentality supports vulnerable users in mixed traffic.
4. A tailored Road Safety Strategy can eliminate and reduce traffic-related serious injuries and fatalities.

4.2 Accessible Design

An accessible transportation system ensures that all members of the community, regardless of age, ability, or mobility, can move freely, access key destinations, and fully participate in community life. In support of the Township's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Official Plan should consider accessible and inclusive design principles into all aspects of road planning and development. Roads are more than just corridors for vehicles. They also serve as critical community connectors that can shape how an individual moves, interacts, and engages with their community.

The Official Plan can play a vital role in enhancing accessibility by identifying and prioritizing roadways where inclusive design features can be improved. This may include considerations of tactile paving to assist individuals with visual impairments, as well as audible crossing signals at key intersections to support safer navigation for users of all ages and abilities. In areas with higher pedestrian activity, the provision of wider sidewalks and clearly defined pedestrian zones can further improve safety and comfort for vulnerable users, such as those using mobility devices, parents with strollers, children, and seniors. By evaluating existing accessible infrastructure, the Township of Wilmot can identify gaps and prioritize areas where improvements are needed the most.

By removing design barriers and ensuring that all modes of transportation are inclusive and accessible, the Township can better support residents to access key destinations. This is particularly important along Township roads that connect residential, commercial, institutional, and employment areas, where safe and equitable access is essential to daily life. Integrating accessible design principles into the Official Plan provides an

opportunity for Wilmot to actively promote a barrier-free community that advances equity, inclusion, and active transportation. Through the adoption of a universal design approach, the Township can build an accessible transportation network that meets the diverse needs of all residents in the present, and in the future.

Furthermore, accessibility and equity should extend beyond the design of physical infrastructure. These values should also be reflected in social infrastructure and engagement processes that inform transportation planning in the Township of Wilmot. Inclusive engagement should be encouraged to ensure that all user groups are represented in the feedback that is incorporated into projects and decision making. Special emphasis can be given on whose perspective is missing from Township transportation conversations, so that key planning decisions can appropriately reflect the needs of the community as a whole.

Things to Think About

- Roads can be viewed as social infrastructure as they shape how individuals move, connect, and interact with their community.
- Safe and equitable access for all plays a vital role in community health and well-being.
- Viewing accessibility as a commitment to inclusion rather than a matter of compliance helps create communities where everyone can participate fully in society. This should be a consideration when undertaking engagement as well.
- Incorporating design elements, such as tactile paving or audible signals, can enhance safety and confidence for persons with disabilities navigating public spaces independently.

4.3 Trails and Multimodal Transportation

The Township of Wilmot's Transportation Impact Study Guidelines provide a consistent framework for evaluating how new developments affect the local transportation network.

By assessing multimodal impacts, the guidelines help ensure that roads continue to operate safely and efficiently for all users.

The Township of Wilmot's transportation network is made up of its road system, public transit services, and active transportation infrastructure, including the Township's extensive trail network. This multimodal system moves people and goods, connects communities, and supports economic and social activity. Considering these elements as a whole is essential in informing the development of the Official Plan, ensuring that future transportation planning is integrated, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all users.

Transit

Public transit in Wilmot is delivered through the Region of Waterloo's Grand River Transit (GRT) and Kiwanis Transit, providing essential transportation alternatives for residents. GRT's Route 77, connecting New Hamburg and Baden to the City of Waterloo, began as a pilot project and has since become a permanent service in response to strong community demand. The route provides service approximately every 40 minutes on a fixed route from the No Frills grocery store in New Hamburg to the Boardwalk shopping centre in the City of Kitchener. The terminus in north-west Kitchener offers riders convenient connections to additional GRT routes, connecting to the broader Region of Waterloo transit network.

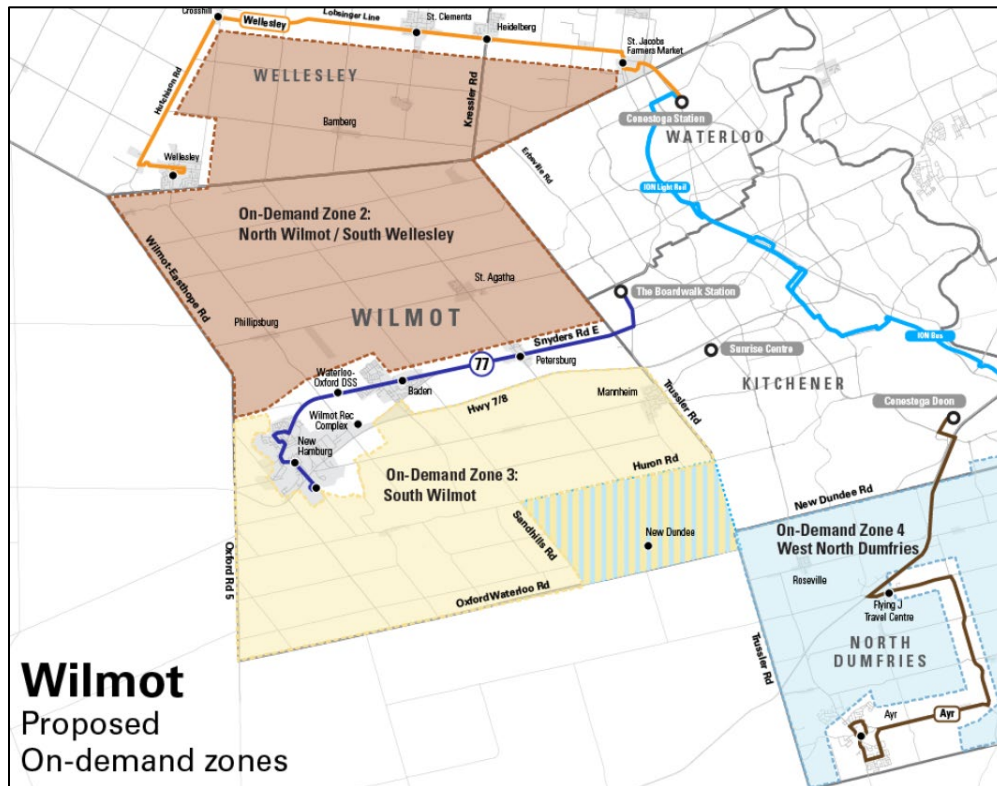


Figure 2: Grand River Transit Business Plan - Wilmot Proposed On-demand Zones

Kiwanis Transit complements this service by offering specialized, door-to-door transit for seniors and individuals with disabilities, offering pre-booked trips to assist residents in attending medical appointments, employment opportunities, or social activities. Both transit services operate accessible vehicles, including kneeling buses and wheelchair ramps, to accommodate passengers with diverse mobility needs.

As mentioned, in the GRT Business Plan, proposed transit improvements include expanded fixed-route schedules, new on-demand zones, and upgraded Kiwanis Transit services with increased fleet capacity and extended service hours. These initiatives aim to build a more connected and inclusive transit system for the Township. Furthermore, improving connectivity of the transit system with the Township's expansive trail network can enhance first- and last-mile access and expand the reach of public transit within Wilmot.

Active Transportation

Cycling infrastructure in the Township is limited, with most cyclists travelling in mixed traffic. The Township of Wilmot's Cycling Route Map 6.2 in the Official Plan identifies existing routes along Erbs Road, Gerber Road, and Nafziger Road. These routes are paved shoulders with no physical separation from vehicle traffic.

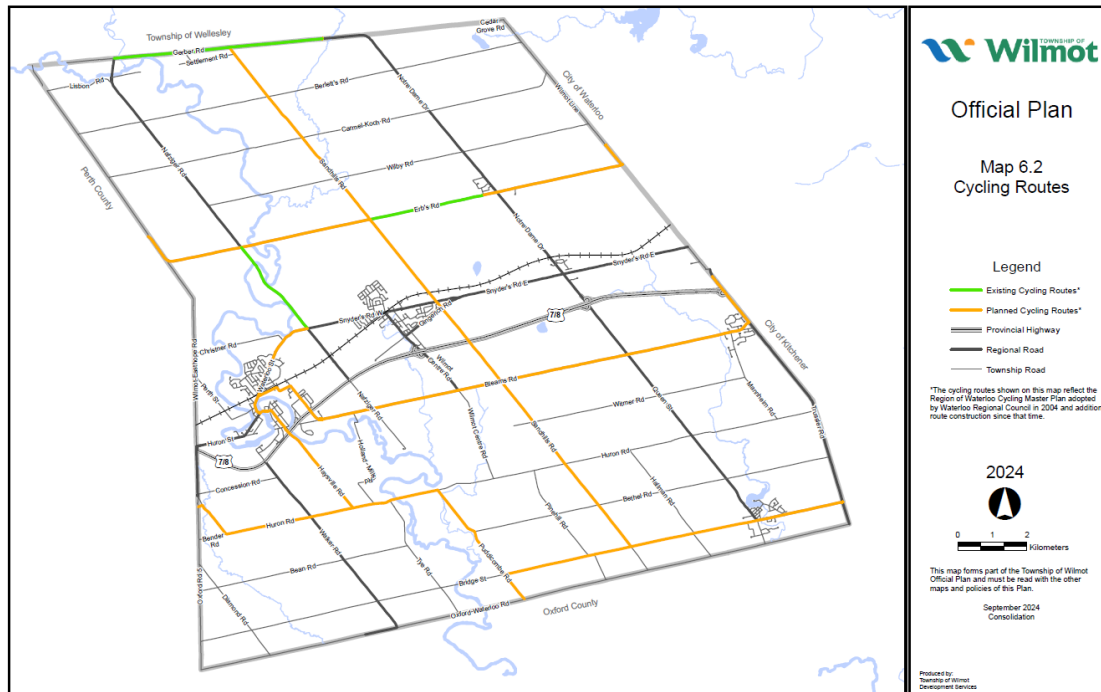


Figure 3 Wilmot's Official Plan Map of Cycling Routes

As these cycling routes are located on Regional corridors with higher speed limits, they are not suitable for all ages and abilities, which can discourage use and limit their effectiveness as part of the active transportation network. The Official Plan should consider opportunities to integrate cycling infrastructure on routes where lower traffic speeds and suitable rights-of-way can support safe and comfortable travel for cyclists.

A key policy in the 2018 Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is to increase physical separation between vehicles and cyclists wherever feasible, as this enhances comfort and safety for cyclists. The TMP was informed by the Active Transportation Network Strategy (ATNS), which reviewed progress made since the

2014 Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP). Since 2014, several cycling infrastructure projects have been completed in the Township of Wilmot, including paved shoulders along segments of Erbs Road and bike lanes on Snyders Road near Baden. Building on these improvements, the 2018 TMP developed an active transportation network map envisioning cycling infrastructure upgrades in the Township to the year 2041 (see Figure 4).

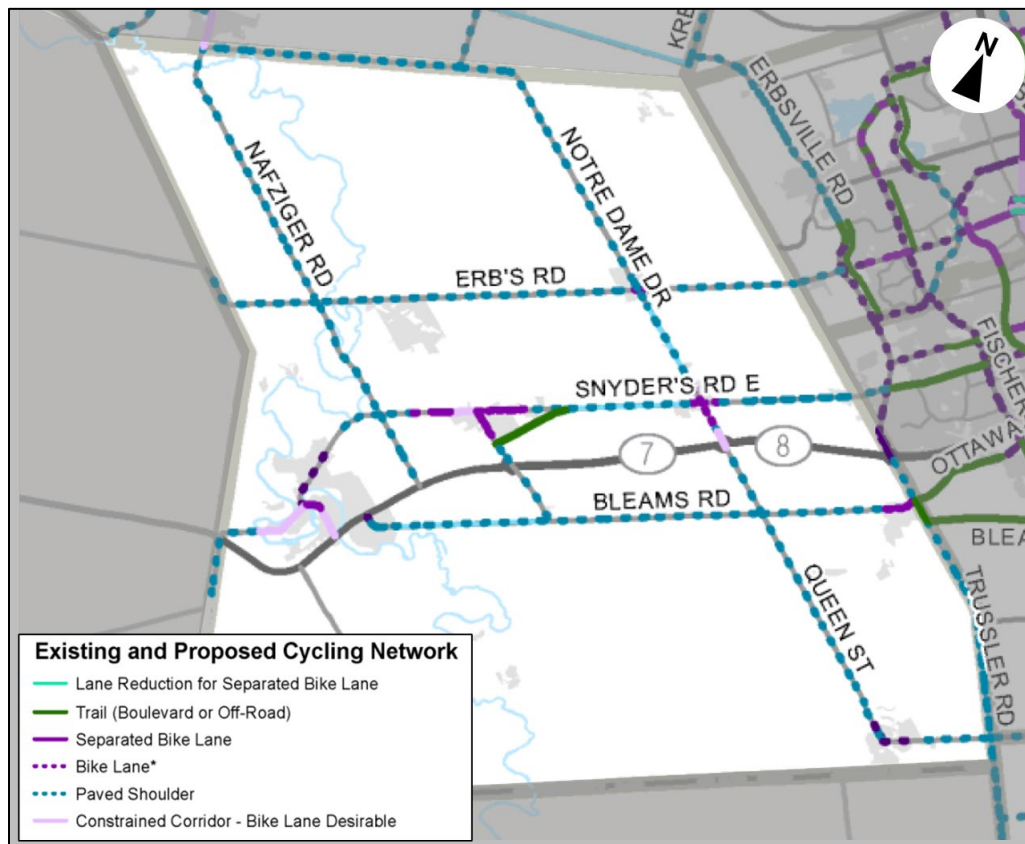


Figure 4: 2041 Waterloo Region Active Transportation Network

The map identifies key corridors in Wilmot for future cycling network development, identifying opportunities to upgrade existing bike lanes near communities such as Baden and New Hamburg into protected cycling facilities. It also identifies constrained corridors that are considered desirable for future bike lane implementation. These corridors can be considered for future upgrades to improve cycling connectivity and safety across the Township's active transportation network.



Complementary to the cycling network, the Township also maintains a robust network of trails that supports active transportation and recreational use. The trail network, featuring 11 routes, connects residents and visitors to neighbourhoods, key destinations and natural areas, and can be strategically planned to link directly to key transit nodes and road corridors. Consistent with Township of Wilmot's Trails Master Plan, strengthening the off-road trails and on-road transit connections can complete important links between destinations. Integrating these connections can develop a robust multimodal network that can decrease the need for short vehicle trips and make alternative modes of transportation such as public and active transportation as a viable mode for daily or recreational travel.

Developing a Multimodal Network

Planning roads, public transit, and trails as a single, connected network creates a strong foundation for effective movement of people and goods in the Township of Wilmot. When these elements are designed to work together, they form a seamless multimodal transportation system that links neighbourhoods, employment areas, community facilities, and natural spaces. This integrated approach enhances mobility while supporting economic growth and active lifestyles.

In rural areas, road networks can be integrated with trails and future transit incrementally. This can be planned in a way that realistically supports recreation, while creating opportunities for connections to be built out in the future. A phased approach can begin with safe connections between existing trails, parks, and centres, and expanding as growth occurs. This step-by-step approach allows transportation links to be added alongside new housing, community facilities, or tourism developments, ensuring each project contributes to a broader multimodal network. Over time, this creates a connected system that supports active lifestyles, improves access to recreation, and strengthens links between rural and urban communities in the Township of Wilmot.



Things to Think About

- A robust multimodal network can enhance rural and urban connectivity in the Township.
- Providing connections between the off-street trail system to public transit can make walking a more attractive mode of transportation, boost transit ridership, and extend the reach of transit services.
- When upgrading infrastructure, consider design improvements that make spaces more accessible and inclusive for all users.
- Plan GRT transit with future expansions in mind to extend service in Wilmot, building ridership gradually alongside community growth and active transportation.

4.4 Barriers

Physical and natural barriers are present throughout the Township of Wilmot, including the CN Guelph Subdivision railway, Provincial Highways 7/8, and the Nith River. The CN railway passes through the cores of both New Hamburg and Baden, while Highway 7/8 runs east–west through the Township. These barriers bisect through communities and create challenges for pedestrian connectivity. They can also limit accessibility. Physical barriers such as Highway 7/8 present hazardous crossing conditions due to higher design speeds and limited crossing points, while railway lines typically offer sparse crossing opportunities, which can fragment neighbourhoods and reduce overall connectivity.

Waterbodies, including the Nith River, adds to these challenges with few pedestrian crossing structures and increased flood risks, further restricting access. The historic Hartman Bridge in New Hamburg, provides a notable example of how rehabilitation projects can serve as an opportunity to strengthen the multi-modal transportation network in the Township. Originally constructed in 1936, the bridge crosses over the Nith River, allowing both vehicles and pedestrians to overcome this natural barrier. In 2006, the Hartman Bridge underwent a major rehabilitation that included widening its



original cantilevered sidewalks. This upgrade increased the physical separation between vehicles and pedestrians, significantly improving safety for pedestrians crossing the bridge. The project highlights the value of integrating pedestrian enhancements into infrastructure rehabilitation, especially in locations where natural barriers such as the Nith River limits connectivity.

Looking ahead, integrating features such as sidewalks, cycling lanes, or multi-use paths into bridge and road upgrades can strengthen active transportation networks, improve safety, and expand mobility options for all users. Considering these elements early in the planning process ensures that rural infrastructure investments maintain essential connections while also creating new opportunities for active, accessible, and sustainable travel.

In locations such as New Hamburg, where the Nith River, CN railway, and Highway 7/8 intersect, these barriers create layered obstacles that significantly limit pedestrian routes, reduce walkability, increase travel times, and contribute to social fragmentation. Addressing these constraints through safe, well-designed, and strategically located crossings will be critical to improving network cohesion. The Official Plan should therefore prioritize areas impacted by overlapping barriers and integrate strategies that support the development of complete communities. Neighbourhoods separated by barriers should be designed as complete communities, with a mix of land uses that give residents convenient access to daily needs. This means providing local services and amenities, supporting active transportation, and creating well-connected streets that enhance quality of life.

Things to Think About

1. Identify areas where major physical and natural barriers fragment communities and limit connectivity to identify important crossing opportunities.
2. Consider opportunities for enhancing active transportation infrastructure when rehabilitating roads or infrastructure projects.

3. Future proofing infrastructure by integrating active transportation in infrastructure investments can adapt to future growth and needs.
4. Planning complete communities ensures that neighbourhoods divided by barriers have nearby services and amenities to meet daily needs.
5. Consider opportunities to incorporate active transportation crossings of barriers where road crossings are not possible.

4.5 Township Road Hierarchy Plan

The 2024 Wilmot Official Plan outlines a basic road hierarchy which includes Provincial highways, Regional roads, and Township roads. However, it stops short of identifying subcategories for Township roads, leaving a gap in understanding about how different township roads serve the community. Establishing defined Township road sub-categories can clarify transportation roles more effectively, identifying whether roads serve a purpose to connect with Regional routes or manage local traffic within rural communities or both.

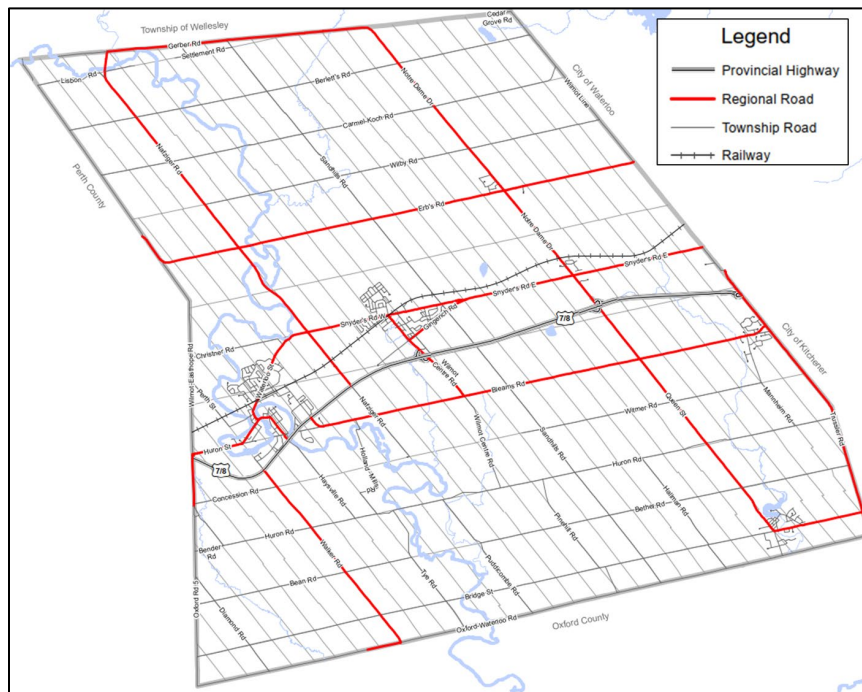


Figure 5: Township of Wilmot Official Plan 2024 Map 6.1 Transportation

Developing Context-Sensitive Transportation Corridors

The Region of Waterloo's Context Sensitive Regional Transportation Corridor Design Guidelines (2013) can serve as a reference framework, demonstrating how roads can be designed and classified based on their surrounding land-use contexts and intended purpose. While these guidelines pertain to Regional roads, which are not under the jurisdiction of the Township of Wilmot, it offers valuable principles that can inform the development of the Township Road Hierarchy Plan. Applying a similar context-sensitive approach can establish a detailed classification system for Township roads in Wilmot that appropriately reflects the adjacent land uses and community needs. The following sections present a preliminary recommendation for classifying Township roads within Wilmot. These classifications apply exclusively to Township Roads and do not include Regional roads.

Rural Roads

Rural roads are located outside urban areas and provide access to agricultural lands, rural residences, and natural landscapes. Infrastructure of rural roads can vary widely, from basic gravel or dirt surfaces to fully paved roadways. With typically lower traffic volumes, these roads should be designed to ensure appropriate travel speeds that reflect their rural context while maintaining safety and accessibility. Rural roads in the Township of Wilmot can be classified into two distinct types: rural arterials and rural connectors.

Rural Arterials

Rural arterials typically accommodate higher traffic volumes and function as a main spine road within the Township of Wilmot. These corridors facilitate through-movement across the Township and connect key destinations and communities. Their design generally includes wider cross-sections to support a variety of users and vehicle types typically span across the Township, and connects key destinations. An example of a

Township road that can be classified as a rural arterial is Sandhills Road, and a typical cross-section is illustrated in **Figure 6**.

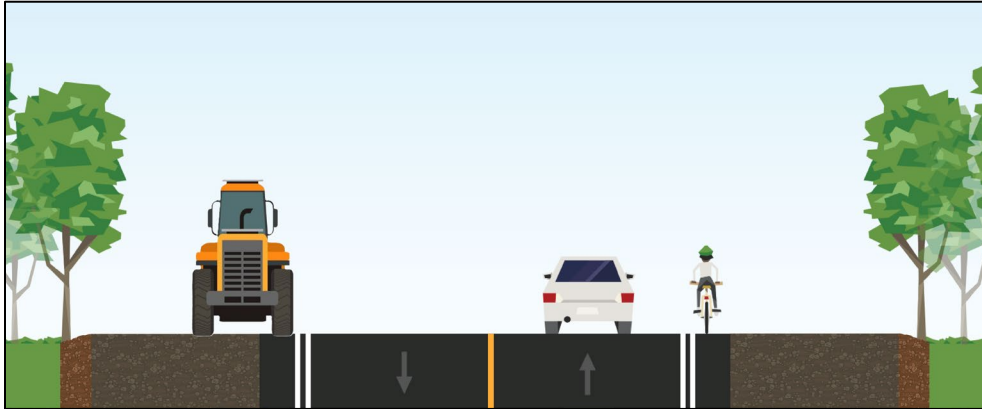


Figure 6: Cross-Section Example of a Rural Arterial

Rural Connectors

Rural connectors, as identified in the Regions' Guidelines, can be applicable to Township roads. Rural connectors provide connections between communities, and typically feature smaller cross-sections and lower traffic volumes compared to rural arterials. Their design emphasizes connectivity over capacity, supporting local travel and access between settlement areas. An example of a Township road that can be classified as a rural connector is Holland Mills Road, and a typical cross-section is illustrated in **Figure 7**.

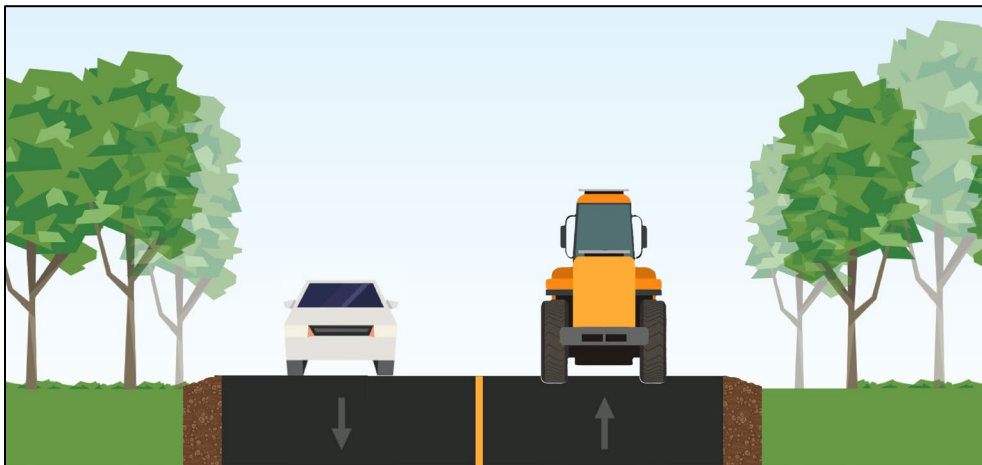


Figure 7: Cross-Section Example of a Rural Connector



Local Roads

A local road's primary function is to provide direct access to adjacent properties such as residential homes, community facilities and employment areas. These roads are internal connectors within the Township and typically support lower traffic volumes and slower speeds. The design and planning of local roads should integration with surrounding land uses to create a comfortable and accessible environment. As such, local roads in the Township of Wilmot can be further classified into three distinct road types based on their surrounding contexts: local collector, local residential and local industrial.

Local Collector

Local collector roads serve a mix of land-uses and are typically designed to accommodated higher traffic volumes compared to local residential roads. Local collector roads typically include on-street parking on both sides and may incorporate active transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks on both sides and dedicated cycling facilities. A few examples of a Township road that can be classified as a local collector is Union Street and Burns Street, in the community of New Hamburg.

Local Residential

Local residential roads are lower-volume streets which facilitates access to residential neighbourhoods. These roads are typically narrower and may permit on-street parking on one side. They often include active transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks on both sides of the street, though dedicated cycling facilities are generally not provided. These roads should be designed with a strong emphasis on the safety and comfort of local residents. An example of a Township road that can be classified as a local residential road is Schneller Drive, in the community of Baden.

Local Industrial

Local industrial roads are situated adjacent to industrial land uses. These roads typically feature wide pavement widths and do not permit on-street parking. Active transportation

infrastructure is generally limited on local industrial roads, with sidewalks provided on one side of the road and no dedicated cycling facilities. A few examples of a Township road that can be classified as local industrial is Arnold Street, Victoria Street and Neville Street.

Things to Think About

1. Creating sub-categories for Township roads will help guide transit and active transportation planning.
2. Clear road classifications support planning for appropriate travel speeds based on road function and context.
3. Road classification will provide guidance on how to plan for all users across the Township road network.



5.0 Emerging Policy Directions

There are several emerging policy directions which should be considered based on the analysis in this discussion paper.

Traffic Calming and Safety

1. Traffic calming and safety measures can be guided by local data and collision history records, and then tailored to the specific road geometry and risk levels within the area. In locations where geometric traffic calming measures are not feasible, passive safety measures, such as public education programs, can be implemented to improve road safety awareness among all users.
2. The Township may encourage the use of active transportation and increased awareness of vulnerable road users through educational campaigns that highlight the health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling and also address unsafe driving behaviour.

Accessible Design

Road Safety improvements can be implemented to eliminate and reduce traffic-related serious injuries and fatalities through the lens of Vision Zero and the Safe System Approach.

1. Improve accessibility for persons of all ages and abilities during all seasons of the year by addressing built-form barriers that may limit these individuals' full participation in society.
2. Continue to incorporate accessibility policies and regulations in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
3. Prioritize improving connections and conditions in areas of high need, including areas with physical barriers, difficult topography, or significant grade changes to enhance accessibility.

Trails and Multimodal Transportation

1. Prioritize providing safe trail connections needed in the existing Township trail network by identifying missing links to parks and key destinations to enhance connectivity between the natural environment and communities.
2. All infrastructure upgrade projects can incorporate opportunities to improve and expand the active transportation network, with the goal of enhancing accessibility and multimodal networks.
3. Provide and maintain consistent and clear wayfinding/signage throughout the trail network to support user navigation and promote recreational use in the Township.

Removing Barriers to Mobility

1. Promote the development of complete communities by identifying opportunities to create compact, vibrant, and connected communities that reduce physical barriers and can support residents in meeting their daily needs.

Township Road Hierarchy Plan

1. The Township Road Hierarchy Plan could establish a road classification system that reflects local character, land use context, and geometric design. The system can support consistent speed limits and contribute to the development of a safer road network.
2. The design and development of the Township Road Hierarchy Plan can recognize and accommodate the needs of all users, including cyclists, and pedestrians.

Additions, deletions or revisions to this list may occur through public engagement on this initial **DRAFT** Discussion Paper



6.0 Next Steps

This Discussion Paper is one of seven papers that are being completed as part of Phase 2: Background Research and Study Preparation of the Township of Wilmot New Official Plan process. These papers establish a foundation from which the Township will develop policy directions and generate discussion about transportation policy issues and recommendations for the Town's Road Hierarchy Plan.

The Discussion Papers are being released in **DRAFT** form to inform public engagement in the fall of 2025. The Discussion Papers will be updated to reflect additional insights or items arising from public engagement and will include thematic summaries of input received (with a companion engagement report also being prepared). Those **FINAL** reports shall include recommended policy directions that will inform the development of the Township's new official plan.

The **FINAL** reports and policy directions shall be presented to Township Council as part of the meeting required under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*. This meeting is an open session to discuss revisions that may be required to the Township's Official Plan. It is one of several opportunities throughout this project where public input is needed and welcomed.

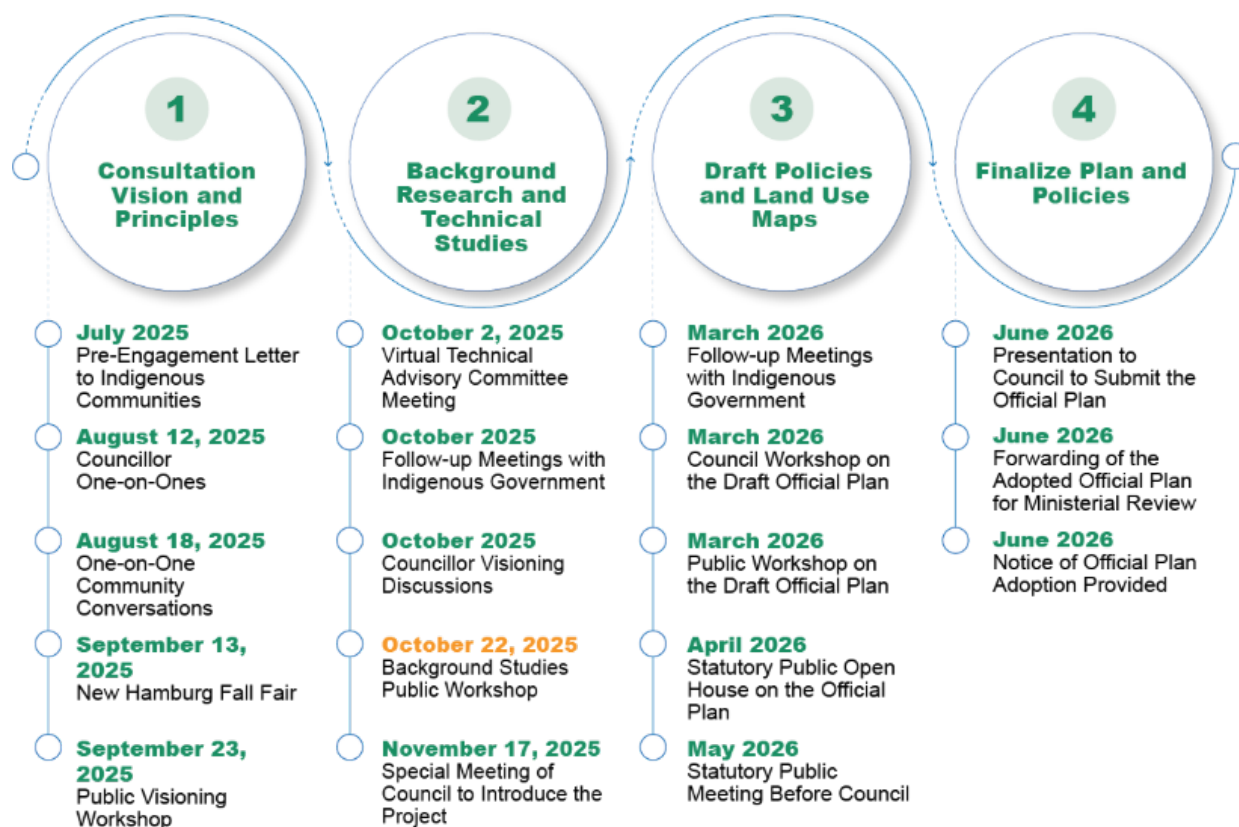


Figure 8 Study Process and Engagement Opportunities

The reports, together with public input, will serve as the basis for developing a new transportation policy framework for Wilmot's New Official Plan. The draft New Official Plan will be released for review in 2026 and includes public events in addition to the statutory *Planning Act* process.