

December 1, 2025

Mayor Ben Hendriksen and Members of Council

City of Yellowknife
4807 52 Street
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N4

Re: Feedback on the 2026 Draft Budget – Transportation Plan Capital Projects

Dear Mayor Hendriksen and Members of Council,

On behalf of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce and its membership, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the City of Yellowknife's 2026 Draft Budget. We appreciate the City's continued efforts to balance long-term planning, fiscal responsibility, and community priorities during a period of significant change and economic pressure.

After reviewing the Draft Budget, the Chamber wishes to highlight specific concerns related to the Transportation Plan capital projects identified for 2026, and the implementation of separated bike lanes and related infrastructure.

Premature Capital Commitments in Advance of Final Transportation Plan

The Draft Budget includes approximately \$957,500 to implement components of the Transportation Plan. But according to the City's website, the Transportation Plan final report will not be presented to Council until summer 2026. It should not be assumed that Council and other stakeholders like the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce will agree with the report's findings.

Traditionally, niche studies and strategies like the Transportation Plan, the Arts and Culture Master Plan, the Tourism Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy follow a multi-step process in which the study is completed, debated publicly, perhaps amended, and then either adopted or rejected by Council. Only after adoption are specific capital projects brought forward in the subsequent budget cycle.

In this case, the budget commits to capital spending in advance of this established process, limiting the public and Council's ability to properly assess the recommendations, financial implications, or business impacts.

The Chamber respectfully recommends **deferring Transportation Plan-related capital spending to 2027**, allowing the proper sequence of study completion, public review, Council debate, and then capital budgeting.



Potential Impacts of Separated Bike Lanes on Franklin Avenue

The project notes identify the construction of separated bike lanes along Franklin Avenue to Old Town. Previous studies have shown that such a project would require the removal of on-street parking along this corridor.

For many businesses, street-level access and parking availability are already at the premium, and eliminating any additional parking spaces could have major economic impacts, including unintended negative effects on business viability, customer access, overall vibrancy, and the City's own parking revenue, which is already dependent on a limited supply of downtown spaces.

Accordingly, the Chamber recommends that Council require Administration to clearly demonstrate the final design of the proposal, the quantitative and qualitative impacts on parking and business activity, the operational costs of maintaining separated lanes year-round, and a full cost-benefit analysis of snow clearing, equipment requirements, and staffing implications before any decisions are made.

The Chamber is unable to support advancing this project until the above information and analysis have been fully addressed.

Conclusion

The Chamber supports the goal of improving transportation safety and accessibility for all Yellowknife residents. However, these decisions must follow due process, include the business community in meaningful consultation, and fully consider economic and fiscal impacts.

We respectfully request that Council amend the 2026 Draft Budget to:

1. **Defer Transportation Plan-related capital projects to 2027**, pending completion and adoption of the Plan.
2. **Ensure the planned second round of public and stakeholder consultation in early 2026 is fully completed and inclusive**, including engagement with the Chamber, before advancing major street redesigns.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome continued dialogue with Council and Administration as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,



Mark Henry
President
Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

