

Bike Newton Candidate Questionnaire

Housing, transportation and climate are inextricably linked together to create healthier, people-centered cities, yet these issues are often addressed separately. This Candidate Questionnaire was adapted from the Vision Zero Coalition for Mayoral and City Council candidates in Boston, Somerville and Cambridge. Bike Newton would like to understand your approach to these interconnected issues. Survey responses will be posted onto the Bike Newton website, and a link will be shared with our email distribution list of over 1750 people.

Name:

Alison Leary

Question 1)

Improved bicycle infrastructure will increase bicycle use and increase safety. A proposal for a Bicycle Network Plan was developed in 2012, but Newton has yet to adopt or implement most of its recommendations. If you believe Newton should have an official Bicycle Plan, please list the concrete steps you will take to create one, or summarize why you do not think a plan is necessary.

I strongly support an official bike plan. I am happy that the mayor has recommitted to fully funding our Transportation Network Improvement Program. I think this will help us make more progress for bike lanes and traffic calming efforts across the city. Recently, it was announced that ARPA funds will be used in creating a first-ever Bike/Pedestrian Plan for next year. This is great news! I think it will still be important for the city council and bike advocates to make sure we include the resources for the implementation of the plan. We are much too car centric and have too many unsafe roads for bicyclists. This will be one of my priorities in our budget discussions.

Question 2)

Newton's Open Space and Recreation Plan, Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan, I, Complete Streets Policy, Newton 2040: A Transportation Strategy, the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG), Safe Routes to Schools and Bike Newton all recommend providing mobility options that reduce dependency on motor vehicles. Do you agree with this recommendation? If so, please identify steps you would take to help make it happen, including criteria.

I support all the recommendations to reduce car dependency. We must prioritize these goals and have a plan for funding them. This is critical to meet climate action goals and for the health and sustainability of our community. Bike/Ped plan is a good start. I will advocate for greater funding for safe streets for all, including protected bike lanes and work with Nicole Freedman, the Director of Transportation, Safe Routes to School, TAG and other advocates.

Question 3)

Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety may involve streamlining roadways for automobiles so that bicyclists will be able to safely negotiate roads and intersections. Would you support compromises for bicycle infrastructure, even if that results in lower speeds for cars, reduced parking in certain locations and reduced auto lanes in some places? Please explain your rationale for this response.

Yes. We need to make our city safer and comfortable for bicyclists, pedestrians and other non-motorized transport. These compromises need to happen in order to meet multiple goals. There is a lot to gain by building this type of infrastructure. This includes improved safety, better health, less air pollution and more vibrant, active village centers for people to gather. Lets build our city for people and not just for cars.

Question 4)

Would you support multi-modal access to popular destinations within Newton, such as village centers, schools, shopping, transit and municipal buildings? If so, please suggest ways Newton could fund the implementation of contiguous infrastructure to access our city via walking, cycling, scooters, cars, and the like.

Yes. Multi modal access transportation is essential to our climate action goals. It is also essential to making our city livable, safe, and healthy. Infrastructure improvements including road redesign, road diets, safer crossings and protected bike lanes are important this vision. We do budget general funds for these programs but more resources are needed. I would advocate for ARPA funds as well. Any redevelopment must also include funding for these types of public benefits. Chapter 90 funds from the State are also appropriate.

Question 5)

In 2020 the Newton City Council unanimously passed a Vision Zero resolution which states that our city goal is to have no roadway deaths or injuries. Would you support this as a newly elected councilor, or continue to support if re-elected?

Absolutely! A zero-vision goal is important and it is a realistic goal.

Question 6)

Children in Newton walk, bike, take the bus, or use another form of non-auto transport such as scooters in order to get to school. Do you think the current balance is correct? If not, what do you think should be changed?

I am in favor of significantly reducing or eliminating the bus fees to encourage more participation. Too many students still get driven to school. We must make our infrastructure safer for multimodal transport including biking, walking and scooters. It's especially important to have safe crossings in school zones. I also would favor car free buffer zones around schools.

Question 7)

Automated enforcement (using cameras) has reduced speeding and improved safety in states where it has been implemented, but there are privacy and constitutional concerns, as well as fears of inequitable ticketing and punishment. If the Commonwealth of MA passes automated enforcement legislation that allows cities and towns to opt-in to a speed or red light camera program, would you support doing this in Newton?

Yes, I would. This technology is important to improving public safety and has shown to be effective. I think we can make it work here.