

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: Vicki Danberg, Councilor at Large, Ward 6

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.

Expanding Newton's bicycle safety infrastructure is very important to me. I led the effort to create Newton's first bike path on Beacon St. from Hammond Pond Parkway to Newton Centre. The Council needs to work with the traffic Department, Commissioner Freedman, who is on board with expanding the bicycle network, the Public Safety and Transportation Committee, the Bike and Pedestrian Task Force, Bike Newton and the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) to pressure the Administration into providing greater funding to move the plan forward.

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, 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.

Yes, I absolutely agree that we need to increase mobility options that will reduce dependency on motor vehicles. First, we need to expand the bicycle infrastructure as discussed above. Providing a safer bike experience for riders of all ages and abilities is a must as part of the plan to expand bike use. We need to insist that larger developments provide free shuttle service to and from public transportation nodes and village shopping so that people can either live without cars or leave them home more often. Car sharing options need to expand to encourage giving up car ownership. Businesses should be strongly encouraged (or required, in the case of larger employers) to provide free T passes for employees. Some of this can be done as part of the Land Use process when negotiating with developers building projects.

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, I support all the above. Any roadway that benefits from Chapter 90 funding must now include bike lanes as part of the improvements. I support the “complete streets” model for all roadways capable of handling it and believe that everyone benefits from reduced speeds on streets. We have shown with expanded outdoor dining that reduced parking helps rather than harms businesses and that reduced auto lanes such as those on Washington Street and on Beacon St. near Hammond Pond Parkway allow a good constant slower flow of automobiles while allowing for dedicated bike lanes.

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, I believe that multi-modal access to many destinations within the City would encourage and allow for reduced use of the automobile to get to these destinations. Built into the special permit for Northland, for instance, are free shuttles paid for by Northland, to transportation modes and other popular locations. These shuttles will be available to anyone who wishes to use them regardless of any connection to Northland itself. A strong case could be made for using some of the City’s ARPA funds to implement infrastructure needed to enable safer cycling, scooters and pedestrian movements.

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 councillor, or continue to support if re-elected?

The Vision Zero resolution is a statement of what needs to happen, not just the ideal. I supported the resolution when we passed it and will continue to support it and work to see it a reality if re-elected to City Council.

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?

We have made considerable progress in children getting to school without coming by car in the past decade but much more work needs to be done to get greater participation in walking, biking and scootering to school. "Safe Routes to School" has been a great jump-starter and continued influence in encouraging children to walk to school with their friends and families. I think we need to continue our efforts and talk more about walking to school in classrooms and with parents.

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?

I understand the safety vs. privacy concerns. This is an issue discussed nationally. While I need to know more about the pros and cons of automated enforcement using cameras with the goal of reducing speeds and increasing safety, I would say it is worth considering in some places. The City's use of "Your Speed Is.." apparatus always makes me check my speed. I think anything that can result in slower speeds and greater public safety is worth looking into.