

## 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:** Alicia Bowman, Ward 6 Councilor At-Large

### 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.

**A bicycle master plan is a must do.** While the plan in 2012 was an important stake in the ground, it did not have the level of detail required to make it actionable. This is why I have been working for the last nine years to get a more detailed plan developed. A good plan would identify not only the roads where biking infrastructure should be installed, but it should detail what type of infrastructure ideally should be in that location (fully protected lanes, parking buffered, paint and flex post or just paint) and prioritize projects for the next 5 years and set a timeline for completing the entire network. We are the last major community in the region to not have such a plan. Look to the work done in Salem if you want to see what Newton should have: [https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3756/f/uploads/2018-11-02\\_salem\\_bike\\_plan\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://www.salem.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif3756/f/uploads/2018-11-02_salem_bike_plan_final_1.pdf)

I championed a budget resolution this year that was unanimously adopted by the council to fund a Bike, Ped and Accessibility Master Plan. In the coming year, the administration will be developing a Bike and Ped Master Plan. **I encourage cyclists of all abilities to be part of the process and help Newton become a world class bike city.**

### 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.

**I support efforts to reduce dependency on motor vehicles in Newton.** This is key to meeting climate goals, reducing congestion, making a safer and healthier city and being an age friendly

community. We should be measuring this as both reductions in vehicle miles traveled and a reduction in car ownership rates.

We should continue to **support the efforts of Safe Routes to School**, which I co-founded in Newton thirteen years ago. Efforts include increasing the safety of routes students use to walk and bike to school, improve safety education for students walking and biking, and continue work during the design of new or renovated schools to be more walkable and bikeable.

Expand bike parking at key locations including schools, village centers, any business and housing complexes. Implement new bike parking standards that require covered and more secure bike parking especially for residents of housing complexes. Bike parking should also accommodate a range of vehicle types including carbo bikes, trikes, electric bikes, and scooters.

**Develop a low stress bike/mobility network** so that people can get from their homes to places they want to go without feeling like they are risking their lives. This is what is going to be truly transformative and get more people out of their cars. This should be measured by the % of residents that are connected via this low stress network as defined by Professor Peter Furth. <https://peterfurth.sites.northeastern.edu/2014/05/24/connectivity-of-low-stress-bicycle-networks/>

I also **support developing more 15-minute neighborhoods**, places where people can get from their home to the places they want and need to go within 15 minutes by walking or biking. Key places include the grocery store, daycare and schools, restaurants, coffee shops, and more. A more bikeable city will make this goal much easier to reach. This would likely be measured using an update of the Walk Score algorithm. Here is an interesting app that attempts just that: <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2020/10/21/can-this-app-tell-you-if-you-live-in-a-15-minute-neighborhood/>

### **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.

We are not going to be able to get more people to bike more frequently if we do not give them safe routes to ride on. It does not matter if most of the way is safe. If they have periods where they are forced to merge with fast moving or turning vehicles, they are put at risk and will be less likely to use ride. **Let's focus on how to accommodate all modes but prioritize people walking, biking and rolling for their safety.** The impact to driving time over the length of a trip should be minimal and if we do it right, offset by overall traffic reduction because of course all those people walking and biking are no longer driving.

**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.

As I stated in Question 2, **I support the development of a low stress bike/mobility network.** This should be a **key goal of the Bike/Ped Master Plan** being developed this year. It needs a **dedicated funding** stream.

**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?

Yes. The **Vision Zero Resolution was developed by Councilor Downs and myself.** More on Vision Zero and the resolution the Council adopted is [here](#). The next step of course is to make it actionable. Much of this currently rests in the hands of the administration. But I am ready to work with Newton's new Police Chief to see elements implemented quickly, including the sharing of crash data.

**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?

Anecdotally, it seems that more students than ever are walking, biking and taking the bus to school. But in my opinion, too many students are still being driven or driving to school. **I support efforts to create safer routes to school with protected bike lanes and safer crossings.** I am very encouraged by communities that have adopted school streets. Fewer vehicles near schools, means routes are safer and air quality is improved.

**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 attended the hearing at the State House where advocates presented testimony on the many bills before the Senate and House on automated enforcement. I was encouraged to hear the strong support from the police organizations for this change as they saw this constant enforcement necessary to reduce dangerous speeding that occurs routinely in our communities. I worked with DPW last year to measure speeds on our streets and people are

speeding. Not as frequently as maybe some residents think, but enough that we should be concerned.

For fears of “inequitable ticketing and punishment” as stated in the question, it seems to me that automated enforcement is far superior to officers pulling people over. Much data was given in testimony by advocates about racial disparities is who is pulled over for speeding and who receives a ticket vs. a warning. Per [report by WGBH](#) black people in Boston accounted for 70% of police stops despite being 25% of the population.

The key to a successful automated enforcement program will be designing it to encourage people to drive safely to avoid getting ticketed.