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: *Bill Humphrey*

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.

The city is currently developing a comprehensive bike and pedestrian plan, which I support. A plan is a first step toward building a network. This network will be geared toward less experienced riders (and pedestrians), more than toward very experienced riders. We need to bring in other groups as well, such as those representing seniors and people with disabilities, not just bike and safe routes activists already involved in this.

Question 2)
Newton's Open Space and Recreation Plan, Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan, l, 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 support establishing more options for mobility and transportation, so that people have a safe, comfortable, and pleasant alternative to driving they can choose in more situations. We need to understand the various types of trips people are taking within Newton and ensure options are available.

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.

One of the most frequent concerns I hear from residents when knocking on doors is that they worry about speeding making streets unsafe. Family friends and relatives have been killed in various speeding crashes where they were not the one speeding (or in some cases were not even in vehicles). I hear this concern more than even concerns about traffic congestion or slow speeds. A calmer streetscape with less sudden accelerating and decelerating of automobiles would almost certainly actually reduce congestion because of how start-stop traffic patterns cause congestion to build up. We could probably increase the through-put of vehicles around the city with calmer speeds and lane design decisions to foster that. Although I can see why drivers can be frustrated with very minimal bike infrastructure, that is partly because it's less safe than more serious bike infrastructure such as protected (segregated) lanes and connectivity, rather than intermittence that is hard to predict. I would argue that in many cases, investing in real bike infrastructure would make the streets safer for vehicle drivers, too. (However, there is also plenty of evidence that even just painted lane lines for bikes improve driver safety because people instinctively slow down.) And if your concern as a voter is the poor condition of the current roads, the good news is that narrower and safer driving lanes would require less paving costs to maintain and therefore we could get more roads repaired faster and more widely around the city.

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.

I do support that, and I think we would need to identify a source of ongoing funds we can set aside for this.

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?

I supported the Vision Zero resolution and still do.

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?

Every student should have a safe way to walk or bike (or scooter) to school if they and their parents choose that option, although in some cases students live quite far from the destination school and this can be logistically difficult even with safe routes. For the longer distances, I think the emphasis should be to get as many kids on the buses as possible, including upper class high-

schoolers. That means reviewing the bus pass policy introduced when I was in middle school and our parking policies and figuring out what re-balancing needs to be done to achieve those goals.

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 have privacy and constitutional concerns about this, and I would have to review any proposal carefully before I could agree to it. That being said, I obviously also have concerns about the existing enforcement mechanisms and the dangers they bring, especially with the human subjectivity factor. So, I understand the arguments in favor of automated camera enforcement.