

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: Brenda Noel, Ward 6 Ward Councilor

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 work closely with my Ward 6 Colleague Alicia Bowman and am convinced now more than ever that a bicycle master plan is necessary. We have been progressing towards improving the biking experience in the city since 2012, but time is of the essence to act fast and make a stronger commitment to safer biking.

I recently took Bike Newton up on their offer to participate in a guided bike tour throughout the city and was stunned to experience first-hand the large portion of our city that is simply not safe for biking. It became clear to me that a Master Bike Plan is necessary. Investing the resources to create a Master Bike Plan and funding the plan going forward would legitimize what best practices tell us- biking is a necessary and encouraged mode of transportation. My efforts to support a master plan would include but is not limited to; dedicated bike lanes, protected bike lines in areas of high traffic and high speed and creating a network of safe bike lanes that can get commuters across the city, fortifying high traffic routes with flex posts and protected bike lanes.

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.

To meet our climate action goals we must reduce our dependency on cars. I have been advocating for "car light" community since being elected in 2017- this prioritizes other modes of transportation including bikes, instead of being 100% car dependent. Eliminating our dependence on cars through transit orientated housing, safe alternatives to cars including

biking, walking, ride share, and public transportation makes our community not only more accessible to older individuals and individuals with disabilities, encouraging walking and biking is healthier for our community.

I am a proponent of Safe Routes to School and would like to see this program supported with a paid position to help coordinate walking to school throughout the city. Foster walking to school at a young age contributes to healthy lifelong habits and decreases car exhaust and traffic surrounding our school buildings in the morning and afternoon.

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 would-

Folks are not going to bike if it is scary or unsafe. We have a limited amount of time to address climate change before circumstances become irreversible. When we have the facts on how we are destroying the environment we need to assimilate the facts and create a solution. We know emissions from cars is destroying the environment. We need to present a safe, convenient, fun transportation alternative to cars to get people out of their cars. To present an alternative to cars we need to prioritize the alternative, biking and walking.

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-

As referenced in question 1- commitment to safe biking. In addition, continued support for New-Mo, supporting housing and density near our village centers, bike share/scooter share, (I miss the lime bikes), publicly supported car charging stations, safe and reliable sidewalks.

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

Question 6)

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

I'm unclear by the question what the existing balance is- but I am in support of anything that discourages single vehicles being used to drop kids off at school. In the May budget process, I championed the elimination of school bus fees for among other reasons- charging kids to take a bus does not comport with our climate action goals. (I was not successful, but I will be back at for this budget season.) I would support all the ways for kids to get to school other than being driven by a parent or caretaker.

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 need to learn more about this before I weigh in.