

Hi [Bike Newton],

Thank you very much for your outreach and questions. I would prefer to give a general statement below that I hope addresses the primary questions you pose with respect to the purview of a school committee member.

First, I am very glad that Bike Newton is advocating for increasing awareness, safety, and accessibility for biking and other green forms of transportation in our community. In my personal life, I love to be active, and prefer getting places on foot or by bike when it is practical. Although my current company is largely virtual and I primarily work from home, in past I biked to work for many years, and since moving to Newton my primary mode of commute was train (Framingham/Worcester line commuter rail into Boston).

Talking to those in our community, Newton's neighborhood elementary schools are seen as a foundational part of our city's character -- and I believe a big part of that is how that footprint facilitates walking or rolling to school for our youngest students, enabling neighbors to see, meet, and greet each other, establishing enduring relationships among our community. Nevertheless, I have heard from parents across many of the schools in the city that they have concerns about walking and rolling safety -- so I am very supportive of efforts to reduce risks (e.g., cross-walk visibility, reducing sidewalk discontinuities, etc.).

From the perspective of school committee, generally I will be very supportive of any economical means of encouraging fewer car trips for caregivers that do not impact accessibility for all students. Similarly, as mentioned above, I am very supportive of walking and rolling safety, and will be glad to be an advocate for those issues. Regarding the specific concept raised in your questionnaire of eliminating drop-off loops, I thank you for bringing that idea to my attention. Without having studied the concept, I see the appeal of prioritizing alternative modes of transport, but believe such elimination would need to be evaluated from a range of perspectives (e.g., potential impact on accessibility for all students, alternative plans for inclement weather) before moving forward. Equally, to the extent crossing guard staffing gaps impact safety, I would certainly advocate for potential solutions in that area (acknowledging that they currently are outside of the direct purview of schools and school budgets).

Thank you again for your questions and advocacy! Please feel free to reach out in the future if you see specific areas that the school committee can play a role in support.

Kind regards,

Jason