



Bike Newton Candidate Questionnaire

Questionnaire Intro:

Bicycling concerns are inextricably linked to a number of issues, including transportation and recreation generally, but also to concerns of climate, housing, land use, health and wellness, healthy aging, affordability, commuting, and mobility justice. This Candidate Questionnaire, developed by the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition and Bike Newton, is designed to explore how candidates for public office view and approach these interconnected issues.

Candidate Name: Brittany Hume Charm

Office Sought in Election: Councilor At Large, Ward 5

Campaign website: <https://www.charmfornewton.org/>

Campaign social media accounts:

- **Instagram:** [@CharmforNewton](#)
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/CharmforNewton>

Tell Us Your Story

1. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly?

- **Car**
- **Green Line**
- Commuter Rail
- Bus
- Bike - neither of my kids knows how to bike yet, and they are young, so we are not yet to the stage where this is a viable regular means of transport for my family.
- Mobility Device
- **Walking**
- **Ride Share**
- Moped/Motorcycle
- Scooter

- Carpool
- **ADDED: Walking with stroller and/or wagon (presents similar mobility challenges in many ways, e.g., disrupted by broken or vanishing sidewalks, lack of cut curbs, etc.)**

2. Do you think Newton has sufficient safe cycling options in our city? If not, what do you see as some of the biggest challenges related to safe bicycling in Newton?

Newton's new Walk, Roll, and Bike Plan, released just last month, is filled with years of thoughtful research on the challenges to safe cycling in our city. They include:

- **Fragmented network and high-stress roads:** Major arterial streets are considered **high-stress** (LTS 3 or 4) due to high vehicle speeds and traffic, which deter most potential riders. This is the case, for example, with my family: we live just off a major arterial road, and I don't feel comfortable riding with my young kids on that road.
- **Infrastructure barriers:** Major highways like I-90, I-95, and Route 9 bisect the city, creating limited and challenging crossing points for cyclists.
- **Intersection safety:** A significant portion of non-motorist crashes involves conflicts with turning vehicles at intersections.
- **Inconsistent infrastructure:** The existing network suffers from poor pavement quality, bike lanes that abruptly terminate, and narrow roads that make installing new, continuous facilities difficult.
- **Operational Issues:** Excessive vehicle speeds and a general lack of wayfinding signage for bike routes reduce rider comfort and safety.

3. What specific actions will you take to address these challenges?

I would support many of the steps in the Walk, Roll, Bike Plan to build a connected, safe, and comfortable network:

- **Target safety improvements at the most dangerous intersections,** for example, with "no right on red," dedicated right arrow lights, adjusted pedestrian crossing (parallel to traffic, with a three- to seven-second lead time for pedestrians), and painted bike lanes across intersections to guide cyclists and alert drivers to the likelihood of their presence.
- **Integrate bike network recommendations into routine City road repaving and maintenance projects** to consistently build out and upgrade bike facilities with minimal additional expense and road disruption..
- **Manage vehicle speeds:** Utilize design strategies and operational changes, such as traffic calming, to lower vehicle speeds and reduce risk for pedestrians, cyclists.
- **Enhance wayfinding:** Develop a **wayfinding sign plan** to help cyclists navigate lower-stress routes.
- **Fill important gaps in protected trails** to divert as much bike traffic as possible off of higher traffic, more dangerous roads. For example, we should continue exploring ways to connect the

end of the Upper Falls Greenway to Newton Highlands so that pedestrians, cyclists, and other Upper Falls residents and workers and visitors to the shops along Needham Street can access the T with minimal conflict with the cars on Needham St.

- **The hardest steps to take will be those that would require widening roads to create new traffic patterns, such as with protected bike lanes.** That level of investment will likely need to wait until the city has more funds available.

4. Do you support the completion and implementation of Newton’s Walk, Roll and Bike Network Plan? If so, how will you work to support the completion of this plan??

Yes, as noted above. We should start with the low-hanging fruit: high-impact, low-cost steps that involve signs and paint. Infrastructure or traffic pattern improvements can be layered in as we have road maintenance in those spots over the next several years. This can help maximize the benefits of the new plan (including safety, environmental, and lifestyle) while minimizing incremental costs, getting parties to “yes” as quickly and easily as possible.

5. If you could choose where to place protected bike lanes or separate trails, what would be your top priority locations?

I defer to the Walk, Roll, and Bike Plan, but one gap in the network I would love to fill is to connect the Upper Falls Greenway to the Newton Highlands T Station (the intersection of Walnut and Lincoln). This would have myriad benefits for Upper Falls residents (including in the new Northland community), workers and shoppers in businesses along Needham Street, and cyclists, pedestrians, and other user groups who seek a safer and more comfortable route down Needham Street’s commercial center.

6. Bicycle infrastructure and safety improvements cannot be implemented without adequate funding. Would you support an annual allocation from the City of Newton budget of at least \$1 million per year dedicated towards implementation of the Walk, Roll, and Bicycle Network Plan?

I would need to see what’s in the \$1M plan and where there are synergies with plans already prioritized/in place that relate to this (e.g., sidewalk maintenance, traffic calming improvements, road maintenance) that are already budgeted.

7. Emissions: Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts (40%). At the same time, congestion rates have quickly returned to pre-pandemic highs. Do you see the issues of climate and transportation as connected, and if so how would you work to align them?

Yes, I see the connections between climate and transportation. I ride the Green Line to work every day. If we want more people to exercise that option vs. driving, we need a MBTA service

that runs more frequently, reliably, and quickly—which requires greater ridership. More transit-oriented housing (at market rate, mixed-income, and affordable levels) is a big step in the right direction, as it can also help to house more employees who work in Newton (e.g., teachers, police officers, fire fighters, city employees, retail workers) who can't afford to live in Newton now. We could help to shorten or eliminate their long commute times, which are contributing to congestion and pollution, not to mention stress.

8. Resiliency: Infrastructure in Massachusetts needs to be built to withstand our climate future — our bridges and roads, as well as bus and transit service, are crucial in the event of climate emergencies and in meeting long term climate goals. What specific actions will your office take to influence local and state agencies to improve our climate resiliency and meet our climate goals?

In the current environment, there will likely be minimal federal support and many demands for diminishing state resources. Local officials will have to do the hard work of prioritizing what should get done with the resources that are available, then advocating—ideally as a united voice across Newton's local government (city councilors, mayor) and in concert with our neighboring communities—to help state agencies fund what is most urgent and important.

9. Access to Health and Wellness: Walking and biking improve mental and physical health; however many recreational destinations are out of reach for people with disabilities, or for people without a personal automobile. How will you work to provide access to recreation for all people?

I will advocate that we follow the well-researched recommendations in the Walk, Roll, and Bike plan, combined with the many recommendations in the Newton Open Space Plan, which collectively lay out a plan for equitable access to Newton's open, green spaces. I would use a similar approach as I noted above to roll out improvements, looking for the lowest cost, highest impact improvements first; ways to layer improvements into concurrent city activities to minimize incremental cost at a time when city resources will be tight; and advocating collectively at the city (city council and mayor) and/or regional level with neighboring communities for clear priorities for state-level or outside funding.

10. "Vision Zero" is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. Do you believe that Newton should adopt Vision Zero?

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- **Neither Support nor Oppose**
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

Explanation:

I have not seen a Vision Zero plan for Newton but look forward to hearing more about it, including how it has been adopted in other communities, what other effects the Vision Zero plan had (perhaps unintended), and what lessons those communities have learned to make it work optimally.

11. Automated Enforcement (i.e., speed cameras and red-light cameras) is one key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states. Would you support automated enforcement legislation that allows Newton to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program?

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- **Neither Support nor Oppose**
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

Explanation:

I would need to learn more about and consider the pros and cons, including cost, “false positives,” police department reaction, and which intersections have the most consistent and/or dangerous incidents and might be worth piloting red-light cameras.

12. The school trip by car in Newton contributes roughly thousands of trips per day to Newton's streets. This contributes to substantial auto congestion around drop-off and pick-up times. Is this an optimal configuration for our schools, roads and sidewalks? If not what would you propose?

As a parent who makes two dropoffs at my kids’ schools before work and two pickups in the afternoon on already-rushed timelines (with car seats, bags, weather, etc.), I bring empathy and curiosity to this topic. The vast majority of Newton parents are just trying to do their best.

We can learn more about the reasons behind those car trips—e.g., during cold/wet weather and during the darkness of winter before/after school hours, it’s not reasonable to expect young kids to walk unattended to/from elementary school or for older kids to bike to school, especially the far distances (including crossing Route 9) that is required for many middle and high school students on the southern side of the city.

That said, to reduce school trips by car, we should explore incentive-based programs and practices. For example, we should make our school buses free for middle and high school students to encourage more bus ridership vs. car ridership. We could explore a fast-track dropoff lane for carpools to the middle schools and high schools, given their additional distance from homes. We could encourage sports teams of all ages to carpool from school to afterschool

practices. We could encourage “bike buses” to help larger numbers of students (e.g., late elementary, middle school age) get in the habit of biking to school by having a schedule, route, music, and a few chaperones to help with tricky intersections.

13. Safety around schools has been a top priority for city transportation planners. Many of our new schools have been designed to protect children walking and biking to school, and additional changes have been made around existing schools--particularly eliminating drop-off loops for parent/guardian cars. Do you support these changes? If so, do you have any proposals to extend/improve these changes??

Before coming to any conclusions about these changes, I would want to learn more about the before/after of how school transport has worked at these schools and understand what the impacts have been on key stakeholders, including parents, kids, school administrators, and neighbors.

14. A significant safety concern is drivers of private vehicles who violate school campus rules or city and state traffic ordinances. Our police department is unable to enforce because officers are often covering crossing guard locations (hiring remains an issue). How can you as a member of the School Committee help to alleviate this issue?

N/A, as I am not running for School Committee.