



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: Cyrus Dahmubed

Office Sought in Election: Councilor At-Large, Ward 4

Campaign website: <https://www.cyrus4newton.org/>

Campaign social media accounts:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61580642888755>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cyrus4newton/>

Tell Us Your Story

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

- **Car**
- **Green Line**
- **Commuter Rail**
- **Bus**
- **Bike**
- **Mobility Device**

- **Walking**
- **Ride Share**
- Moped/Motorcycle
- Scooter
- **Carpool**

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?

- No, as someone who frequently bikes around our city, I do not think we have sufficient safe cycling options. I have also led bike tours of Newton for local designers and, while enjoyable, these felt neither as safe nor as comfortable as similar tours I have done in major large cities around the world.
- We have a number of challenges: a pervasive car culture both nationally and locally paired with poor integration of other active and public transit modes, and an incomplete “last mile” network around transit hubs and village centers.
- Another challenge, and perhaps the biggest one, is community opposition to increased and enhanced bike infrastructure due to a lack of understanding about how safe bike infrastructure benefits us all through calmer traffic, safe sidewalks, improved accessibility, cleaner air, and other factors. This means we have more listening to do around our neighbors’ concerns and a need to design better policies while also advancing improved education around our bike infrastructure and its benefits. This also means encouraging patience and inviting our neighbors to become accustomed to changes; as an old choir instructor once told me “you can’t tell me you hate this piece, until you know it by heart”.
- It’s also key to understand that bike infrastructure is an equity and accessibility issue, and creating not just comfort - but real safety - for people who chose to commute without polluting our air or have no other choice than to should be a shared community priority.

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

- Lead walking and biking tours that encourage even bike-sceptical residents to get out and explore the city and its history on two wheels.
- Lead real community engagement focused on ensuring that more people are comfortable with bike lanes and shared use paths, and understand how everyone benefits through increased street safety and increased transit options.
- Advance the implementation of the Walk, Roll, and Bike Network Plan
- Advocate for more housing in Village Centers that encourages people to get out of their cars, use active transit more, and generate revenue for the completion of our bike network.

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, I strongly support the completion and implementation of Newton's Walk, Roll, and Bike Network Plan.
- The most important thing we can do to support this is grow revenue through targeted, flexible, sustainable growth in and around transit, village centers, and commercial areas so that we can fund infrastructure improvements.
- I'd prioritize creating safe routes to school so that students can safely and comfortably enjoy their travels, and parents can feel confident in the knowledge that their kids are moving around the city safely.
 - This will also have the benefit of reducing morning and school pickup traffic, further making the streets safer for everyone.
- I'd work with our DPW, Transportation Division, and through the special permit process, as relevant, to align construction with our Community Improvement Plan for road paving and reconstruction, and with our Climate Action Plan for introducing more and better green infrastructure. This will help reduce and shorten road reconstruction periods through some strategic efficiency, and may also help unlock additional funding sources.
- I'd work with the MBTA and MassDOT, as well as Lyft/BlueBikes to understand their plans and priorities and seek to align strategic investments with theirs, so that Newton is getting the most bang for its buck.

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

- As someone who has always dreamed of having a bike lane that ran along/parallel to the Pike so that I could easily bike to and from Boston, I'm enjoying having a much safer bike route along Washington St.
- I'd love to see Newton learn from our Washington St. pilot, refine it, and implement more of these efficient routes through the city. In addition to those in our WRB Network Plan, I'd prioritize north-south connections to link our east-west corridors, improvements to safety along the southern stretch of Washington St., and other opportunities to connect village centers with transit via bike, such as between Riverside Station and Auburndale Village Center.
- I'd also prioritize inter-municipal connections, creating better opportunities for people to commute to and from Newton via bike; this will help reduce traffic on our roads.

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?

- In order to be able to support a budget like this, we really need to grow our revenue and through strategic growth in and around our village centers and public transportation. Luckily, many of these areas are already bike friendly or conducive to increased biking infrastructure. So yes, in the right fiscal environment I would support this kind of allocation of funds.

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, these issues are inextricably linked and solutions to each should be regarded as solutions for the other.
- I would work to encourage use of more environmentally sustainable modes of transportation, including and especially biking and public transport, through the implementation of our WRB Network Plan and prioritizing “last mile” biking connections in and around transit.
- I’d also work to make our school buses free again so that we are not encouraging students and parents to drive, especially during rush hour and, over time, I’d encourage us to move to clean electric buses.
- I’d work with my Council colleagues to require that the climate impact, whether positive or negative, of every decision we make be taken into consideration.
- I’d seek to use our parking policies and requirements, where they exist, to encourage the adoption of EVs.
- I’d seek to align roadway improvements with green infrastructure investments so that we are expanding our tree canopy, improving biodiversity and habitat connections, and creating newer and safer transportation options.
- I’d seek for us to take a close look at our municipal parking lots and determine if they are serving their highest and best use, whether that might be hosting solar panels or new trees, doubling as community space, or being considered for growth opportunities.

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?

- I would like to work in partnership with the MBTA and MassDOT to understand what it will take to get meaningful investments in finally transforming Auburndale and West Newton stations from the system-wide embarrassment they are today to the accessible, safe, and regionally transformative transit hubs they could be, inclusive of excellent bike infrastructure.
- I’d also work with the MBTA and MassDOT to study a free express bus pilot, similar to the ones recently undertaken in Boston, in an effort to encourage people to use the bus.
- Achieving our climate goals will also mean creating housing near transit, and I’d work with trusted partners in the State Senate Housing Committee to advocate for common sense reforms, such as the elimination of unnecessary second stars in small and medium sized buildings, that can facilitate the creation of less expensive housing, more quickly.

- I'd seek to align State funds around building performance and historic preservation to encourage the retrofit, rather than replacement, of historic buildings in our village centers and neighborhoods. As I learned in architecture school, the greenest building is one that already exists.
- I'd also work to advance efforts to transition Newton away from natural gas and toward an all electric future, and seek funding sources that can help residents afford this transition at the time of their choosing.
- I'd encourage the use of available state funding to renaturalize our open spaces and waterways to create more resilient systems that can survive on their own, but thrive with a bit of investment and care.

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'd prioritize creating green links through our city that double as safe and accessible active transit routes, and provide connections to open spaces and major public sites like schools, community centers, libraries, and transportation nodes.
- I'd look for us to build on the recent success of the Newton Centre plaza, which has provided a cost-free, safe, accessible, and fun destination for many people to be in community together.
- I'd support the implementation of all the accessibility recommendations in the WRB Network Plan, and would seek to be an advocate so that all residents can understand how these improvements benefit us all.

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:

- We should be doing everything we can to improve safety for each other, including adopting existing frameworks that save us time and money in the pursuit of community safety.

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 support this idea with a bit of a caveat: I am very concerned about the risk of policing that relies too heavily on AI, which can make its own racial bias-informed mistakes. I believe this could be implemented thoughtfully and appropriately in specific areas, like school zones and along safe routes to school, and would seek to avoid overreliance on this leading to excessive policing or constant community monitoring. .

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?

- A good first step we could take here is to stop charging families to use the school bus. Charging the prices we do only encourages parents, students, and other caregivers to drive students to school, and makes it more enticing to send students to private schools, which also increases traffic.
- Schools could also provide ample covered or indoor bike parking to encourage students to bike to school.
- Implementing safe routes to school that give students safe options and parents peace of mind is also crucial to addressing this part of our traffic and safety issue.

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??

- As noted above, eliminating the cost families pay for school buses would be a good first step.
- Yes, I'm generally supportive of implementing remote drop-off locations, as is safe and age-appropriate, and considerate of varying accessibility needs.

- Remote drop-off points should be chosen because they have existing safe routes for students to easily get to school, or the routes should be augmented to ensure safety and accessibility.
- Providing high quality covered/indoor bike parking would also help extend/improve these efforts.

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?

- I am not running for School Committee.
- Nevertheless, I'd strongly support better use of our policing resources, and would seek new strategies for ensuring we always have the crossing guards we need.