



# 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: K. Garrett (Garry) Miller**

**Office Sought in Election: Ward 5 Ward Councilor, Newton**

**Campaign website: [Miller4Newton.org](http://Miller4Newton.org)**

**Campaign social media accounts: Facebook - [Garry Miller for Newton City Council | Facebook](#), Instagram - [Garry Miller for Newton City Council \(@gmiller6719\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)**

## Tell Us Your Story

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

- Car
- Green Line
- Walking
- Ride Share

**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?** There continue to be challenges with safe cycling options, particularly where they intersect with major roadways like Rte 9, Beacon St, and Needham St. We also need to work with neighboring communities like Needham, Watertown, and Waltham to ensure that safe cycling routes that Newton designs are connected to safe routes in these communities as there is not enough interconnectedness today.

**3. What specific actions will you take to address these challenges?** What I would do is take a specific portion of the transportation budget and dedicate it to improving biking infrastructure, particularly as it concerns separated biking infrastructure and improving safety at major intersections.

**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. This plan needs dedicated funding and prioritization to increase usage and safety.

**5. If you could choose where to place protected bike lanes or separate trails, what would be your top priority locations?** I will focus on Ward 5 as it is the area I know best.

- 1) Connectivity of Upper Falls to Countryside School. Students in Upper Falls go to Countryside but it just doesn't feel safe for kids to bike or walk there on their own.
- 2) Extending the Greenway into Needham to make it a true transit corridor for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 3) Connectivity between village centers and the MBTA. Eliot and Waban station connectivity to Upper Falls is particularly problematic. No bike share program exists here and Rte 9 and Chestnut St are barriers for cyclists.
- 4) Along Beacon St, a major transportation corridor but one which doesn't seem particularly safe for cyclists.

**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?** Yes.

**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?** They absolutely are. The only real way to solve the congestion problem in the state is to create convenient, safe and easy ways for people to get around without using their cars. I recently returned from a trip to Amsterdam where they have extensive bicycle and mass transit options, and very little traffic congestion. We should take inspiration from other cities and counties that have implemented solutions that work.

**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?** Even today, I don't believe our elected officials have truly grasped the challenges we face regarding the resiliency of our infrastructure as climate change accelerates. In Newton, I will work to ensure that resiliency amidst climate change are considered in every transportation project we fund. At the state level, I will work with our elected officials to create a similar policy at the state level.

**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 worked on the court conditions report for the Friends of Newton Tennis this spring and it was sad to see how inaccessible many of our public courts are for people with disabilities, so this is a pervasive problem with many facilities and destinations across Newton.

Some ideas for improving access:

- Offering mobile recreational programs, to bring them to people rather than requiring travel.
- Increasing bike share programs and safe bike lanes in more areas of the city to improve access for those without cars.
- Creating shuttle or other public transportation on certain occasions – special events, weekends, holidays – to provide better access.

**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

**Explanation:** Safety should be job #1 for our transportation network. When it isn't, people gravitate towards using cars for transportation, increasing traffic, congestion, and the rate of fatalities and injuries, and creating a negative cycle of more traffic, more congestion, and less safe streets.

**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?**

- Somewhat Support

**Explanation:** I will support this if it comes with strong privacy protections to ensure that this information is not used for other purposes. This would include both legal and technical controls to ensure that privacy is protected.

**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? No, this is very sub-optimal. There are two specific areas I would want to address to help with this.**

- 1) Reduce or eliminate school bus fees at all grade levels and increase car parking fees at the high school to encourage the use of other transportation methods and reduce congestion.
- 2) Improve safety of bike infrastructure on routes between major concentrations of residents and the schools they attend. For example, Upper Falls and Countryside, separated by Needham St.

**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? Yes. There are still too many car drop-offs and I would support incentives to reduce the amount of car drop-offs.**

**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**