



# 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: Susan Albright**

**Office Sought in Election:  
City Councilor-At-Large Ward 2**

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

**Campaign social media accounts:**

## 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

Car and Walking

**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?**

**We don't have enough continuous bike routes in the city and people drive too fast. We have a pilot road diet on Washington st and some people are angry that we have slowed traffic down. THAT WAS THE POINT! No one should be traveling at 45 or 50 mph on a city street. We need a campaign to make people understand that life is safer for everyone if we slow down a little bit. (BTW I'm guilty of rushing in my car as much as the next guy but I try to have a message in my head that I too should slow down). Pedestrians have a hard time crossing streets even at crosswalks. I cross Comm Ave to get to city hall and often stand at the crosswalk as 10 cars speed by before I can cross. On the other hand bikers also need to pay attention to the rules of the road as well. I've seen too many bikers run red lights. The biggest challenges are adding protected bike lanes and getting people to slow down.**

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

**I will ask for the addition of bike lanes as roads are repaired as appropriate. Getting people to slow down is part of a question asked later about automated enforcement. I think this can be useful if done selectively and carefully.**

**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 support the completion and implementation, but I haven't read the final version yet. I've docketed an item to have a plan presentation at Public Facilities and Planning will be coming to present the plan on October 22. I'll know more after I've read the plan. That being said, I agree with the goals in the 2023 postings and work on the plan. There are many more bikers in Newton than there used to be; a good sign.**

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

**I would love to have safer connections to village centers and to schools. I would love to have safer connections across intersections to parks. The planned paths from the newest Riverside Proposal look wonderful.**

**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 don't know if 1 million is the right number or not. I support annual improvements to the bike infrastructure.**

**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 - climate is effected by emissions. More electric cars is the way to go. We also need to make sure we have walkable village centers with housing in proximity. I'm thrilled at the housing in Newtonville – with two more projects on the way. Walkable to a supermarket, a drug store and many other shops and restaurants.**

**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?**

**As Chair of the Public Facilities Committee, I've been working with National Grid and Eversource to plan for non-gas pilots and a non-gas future for Newton. This is a difficult and complex task. We already know that there are things we need the DPU to do and the legislature to do to facilitate this planning. I hope to continue this work in the next term.**

**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?**

**The Public Facilities Committee reviews site plans for all new city buildings and schools. I will make sure to discuss accessibility every time we do one of these reviews.**

**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 strongly support Vision zero. Newton departments are doing things that mesh with Vision Zero; complete streets planning, safe routes to school are two of these. Better enforcement throughout the city is difficult recognizing the size of our police force. While the police department website has a section on statistics it is not up to date and doesn't provide the data on crashes in an impactful way. I'm waiting to see the data on the impact of the Washington st pilot on crash rates and safety. A better crash dashboard would help communicate the problems.

**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:***

We should have automated enforcement with safeguards built in for privacy – for example no facial recognition. I've watched so many British detective series to see how effective camera surveillance at key intersections could be! We could start with a modest pilot to build trust and transparency in its use.

**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?**

When my kids were at the Cabot School, I used to drive them to school as our home is on the border of Cabot and Mason Rice District. I have to admit that this gave me the opportunity to meet other Cabot parents and the Cabot staff – which led me to take on leadership positions in the parent community. So – giving parents the opportunity to meet each other is a good thing. That being said – giving the kids the opportunity to take the bus to school and de-clutter our streets is also an important goal. Both goals are important – creating a parent community and decluttering the streets. It is possible to do both things but it takes effort and thinking creatively. We should do this.

Letting kids walk to school is a good goal. As a kid growing up in Newton we had kid crossing guards. (I was one). I know this is no longer legal – but the principle remains. By providing kids a safe route to walk to school we can declutter the streets as well.

**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??**

Providing drop-off locations near the school but not at the school on all sides of the school is an important way to reduce congestion.

**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'll pass on this one as I'm not a candidate for School Committee.