



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: Victor Lee

Office Sought in Election: School Committee

Campaign website: victor4newton.com

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

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?

I appreciate your question and the importance of the issue raised, but as this extends beyond the core remit of the School Committee (Superintendent oversight, policy making, budget approval, collective bargaining on behalf of the district, and representing the voice of Newtonians in school issues), I will respectfully decline to answer in order to stay focused on educational issues.

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

Please see my response to Question 2.

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??

As a general principle, I support efforts to improve the safe travel of students to schools. How best this should be accomplished is something I believe is better addressed by transportation and municipal finance experts with community input.

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

Please see my response to Question 4.

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?

Please see my response to Question 2.

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?

Please see my response to Question 2.

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?

Please see my response to Question 2.

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?

Please see my response to Question 2.

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:

Please see my response to Question 2.

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:

Please see my response to Question 2.

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?

The situation across our numerous schools varies, but there certainly are issues of significant congestion. Part of this challenge is the limited number of access roads for some locations. For example, if we think about our largest high schools, Newton South is largely constrained by Brandeis Road. Newton North has theoretically more potential campus access points with Elm Road, Walnut Street, Lowell Avenue, and (to a lesser extent) Hull Street, but congestion is still a real concern.

I would defer to transportation experts for guidance on potential solutions, but options already available include encouraging carpooling and utilizing bike lanes where applicable. Future options for additional exploration could include phased drop-off time windows and establishing "temporary park and walk" locations (perhaps the parking lot near Star Market in Newtonville?). These come with tradeoffs, though, and need to be discussed with the community first.

I do not believe there is a single solution that will solve the problem for all schools.

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??

Please see my response to Question 4.

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?

If elected to the School Committee, I would want to explore the most recent data regarding the relative prevalence of such incidents and where they occur most. I would also want to hear what avenues have already been explored by those with more expertise in this area (e.g., the Newton Police Department) and what the biggest challenges to hiring more crossing guards are at that time (e.g., compensation, hours of service, training, legal/liability concerns). This would be something to discuss in partnership with the new Mayor and City Councilors who have near-universally endorsed me.

Perhaps there is a discussion to be had about reviving the Newton Auxiliary Police to assist in discouraging school campus violations, though I understand this may be complex and challenging given the Massachusetts Police Reform Act of 2020, as well as a potential disconnect between when auxiliary volunteers are most available and when deterrence would be most needed. Auxiliary Police also have no ticketing powers, so that would have limited impact on those who are truly determined to violate rules.

If and where applicable, partnering with local towing companies to remove cars of repeat offenders (e.g., those illegally parking in school blue zones) might be another recourse to explore.