



## **Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report**

### **City of Newton** **In City Council**

**Wednesday, February 19, 2020**

Present: Councilors Downs (Vice Chair), Malakie, Lipof, Bowman and Markiewicz

Absent: Councilor Grossman, Auchincloss (Chair) and Ciccone

City Staff: Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

**#105-20      Requesting public comment on priorities for transportation planning**  
**CHAIR OF PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE** requests public comment on priorities for transportation planning.

**Action:**      **Public Safety & Transportation voted No Action Necessary 5-0**

**Note:**      Vice Chair Downs stated that tonight's meeting is to solicit residents' input for matters related to transportation before the Committee sets their priorities for the term. You may also send written comments by email to committee clerk, Danielle Delaney, at [ddelaney@newtonma.gov](mailto:ddelaney@newtonma.gov).

#### **Public comment:**

Lois Levin, Green Newton Transportation Committee, stated that Green Newton seeks to prevent pollution through source reduction and reduced consumption. Vehicles that burn fossil fuel are a major source of both air and water pollution in Newton. Green Newton strongly believes that we must increase and strengthen the cleanest forms of transportation, walking, biking and mass transit. Specific transportation recommendations include improving walkability and a sidewalk prioritization plan which will connect routes to key destinations. In addition to creating sidewalks where none exist along priority routes the plan should include adding benches, trees, repairing broken sidewalks and widening sidewalks. The prioritization plan must address dangerous crosswalks by reducing street widths in crosswalk locations to minimize the time pedestrians and drivers are in a shared space. Reducing corner radii to naturally slow turning vehicles and reducing obstacles that block visibility. To improve bicycling, a priority is to create two types of bicycle routes (high speed and low speed stress routes). The Commonwealth Avenue Carriage Lane is a popular low speed route in the City. Both types of bicycle routes need to be well mapped and interconnected. Low stress bike routes need to separate from vehicles. To improve mass transit, a focus should be on the #59 bus route. The #59 bus has the potential to be a model for supporting transit-oriented development by running more frequently ideally every ten minutes with extended hours for working people. The #59 bus travels through the dense areas of the City. The bus connects the Needham commuter rail to the Green Line to express buses on Washington Street, major

shopping areas, Newton North High School, Newton Library, Newton Senior Center and Newton City Hall. Green Newton urges elected officials to work with the MBTA to make the development along bus #59 route truly transit-oriented. Green Newton realizes that all people will not be able to walk, bike or use transit to reach their destination. Improved access to greener transportation will lead to greater use of clean transportation in Newton.

Margaret Albright, 166 Edinboro Street, School Committee member and School Transportation Steering Group member, stated that she wants to ensure that the City Council works with the School Department regarding school transportation. The School Committee has been working closely with Newton Safe Routes to School. Safe Routes to School uses education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement, evaluation and equity to improve safe walking & biking. The Transportation Steering Group is working to promote walking, biking and use of the school buses as well as the #59 and #52 MBTA buses. The Transportation Steering Group is also working on promoting safety around schools using this framework. Specific actions taken by the School Department and School Committee include making elementary school buses free, increasing the number of buses and adopting principles that separate pedestrians, bikes, buses, vans and vehicles as new schools are built and incorporating these principles into policies. Adopting principles encourage active transportation and using the bus putting these principles into the wellness policy. The City is also surveying employees regarding transportation to and from work. The Transportation Steering Group is planning to survey families regarding transportation choices to and from school using a Safe Routes to School survey. The elementary school physical education teachers will be receiving Safe Routes to School training to teach pedestrian safety. The Newton Police Department offers bicycle safety training in the elementary schools. The Transportation Steering Group meets monthly to address concerns and projects including education and implementation of behavior and to improve areas over which the group has control. Changing behavior is difficult. The Transportation Steering Group is currently working to: Put the bus registration system online and using the student information management system to simplify the process for families. Update and enrich the school transportation website with information on safety, blue zone procedures, drop-off recommendations and school zone maps. Working with the City and Bike Newton to add bike racks and shelters. Working with the Department Public Works and Safe Routes to School on snow route maps. Working with the City to update signage in the blue zone to ensure safety and to ensure anti-idling signage is in place. As a resident, Ms. Albright stated that it is difficult to travel to Cambridge, Kendall Square and the Longwood Medical Center by public transit therefore, people drive.

Brendan Keegan, Co-President, Bike Newton, provided a PowerPoint presentation attached to this report. He stated that Bike Newton's plan and top priority is for Newton Neighborhood Greenways (NNG). These are residential streets with low volumes of vehicle traffic and speeds where bicycles and pedestrians are given priority. The goal is to have more people biking, especially the 60% of people who are interested in biking but are concerned about safety and are not comfortable biking on the street with fast moving vehicles. Newton currently has no protected bike lanes. Many bike lanes in the City are in locations where vehicles travel over 35

mph and are only separated by a thin painted line. Newton will get its first protected bike lane when Needham Street is reconstructed with sidewalk-level separated bike lanes. Newton will also see protected bike lanes on Washington and Walnut Streets in the coming years. The Upper Falls Greenway is a well-used considering it is only one mile long. The City is in the process of connecting the greenway to Newton Highlands. A group is working to establish a greenway that would connect Newton Lower Falls, Riverside, Auburndale commuter rail and the Charles River path. This is progress; but does not create a safe network to achieve more people on bikes. encouraging riding within the City and nearby cities and towns. Creating a network of protected bike lanes that would connect village centers, schools, recreation and open space would takes decades and cost millions, this is not politically feasible. Many roads in the City are not wide enough to accommodate protected bike lanes. NNG fills the gaps in the City's bike network. Working with the City, the NNG will identify networks of residential streets that carry low amounts of traffic and low speed to provide safe routes to access open space, recreational places, schools, village centers and libraries. Routes will be identified using the Waze App and an online map. Where residential streets intersect with busy streets the NNG will work with the City to make crossing safer. Bike Newton has begun mapping out these streets and identifying a network. Existing routes already provide vehicle-free or low traffic options. The next step is to connect these existing routes into a network. When you add slow streets, prioritized for biking and walking you begin to see a network taking shape. The effort of Bike Newton coincides the strong interest from Safe Routes to School to make walking and biking to school safer. Providing safe routes promotes independence, also reduces vehicle trips, (a recommendation of Newtons Climate Action Plan). NNG also supports a goal identified in the initial open space and recreation planning meeting to improve connections to parks and open space. Research has shown that people are more likely to utilize open space and recreation locations if they do not need to drive. The NNG plan is to also incorporate open space and conservation land into greenway routes. A similar effort was absorbed in Lexington, MA called "ACROSS Lexington", routes are planned using existing public ways and conservation land to create a network of trails that connect to the town center, historic sites, schools and conservation land areas. Lexington currently has thirty miles of trails. NNG also supports businesses by making biking and walking to commercial centers safer. Studies show that bicyclists arriving at businesses spend more money than people driving.

John McElduff, 46 Lafayette Road, Newton Lower Falls Improvement Association Riverside Committee representative, stated that it is necessary for the MBTA and MassDOT be present for the Riverside project transportation issues. Riverside construction begins the same time as the Allston interchange project. The developers will probably reduce the parking spaces at Riverside to about half which is 500 parking spaces. That is 500 parking spaces that commuters could use when they do not want to squeeze onto the Pike while the viaduct is being rebuilt. It is the wrong time to do these projects. It is necessary to preserve the number of parking spaces during construction at Riverside. The other large project called the Green Line Transformation Project, is a multi-million-dollar, ten-year project. The Green Line Transformation Project will bring more ridership to Newton with very limited planning. Mr. McElduff then stated that he met with a Green Line transportation project manager discussing the needs of additional

parking at Riverside. He asked the project manager how many more parking spaces would be required at Riverside and how many parking spaces would be needed to support the capacity for the new trains? He said that the project manager answered that these questions were never reviewed. Mr. McElduff said that parking is necessary for the anticipated increase of ridership. When Riverside is built, there will be no where to link to Regional Rail or existing commuter trains to Boston. Two studies were conducted depicting that urban rail would come into Riverside, but the written studies do not state this information, this information should be explained to the City. Traffic flows during the evening rush hour will prove to be congested and limit the ability to exit Riverside therefore, decreasing ridership. As a personal perspective, Mr. McElduff stated he met with Mayor Fuller and Fred Salvucci, the former Secretary of Transportation, to discuss the Allston Interchange Project and how it would affect Newton's main arteries including Washington Street, Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street. Serious challenges are ahead, MassDOT should come and discuss the Riverside project with the City Councilors.

Rebecca Evans, 17 Eliot Avenue, stated that she would like to make recommendations on dangerous intersections around the City including the intersection of Eddy Street and Eliot Avenue. At this location, there have been fifteen crashes in the past five years. The mapping apps have made Eddy Street a cut-through street. Mapping apps should be prevented from using cut throughs on neighboring streets. The City conducted a traffic study on a quiet summer day determining the City would install traffic calming in September 2018. Flex-posts were installed several months ago, on Watertown Street delineating the two travel lanes. Painting was conducted on Eddy Street hoping to make the intersection narrower. These changes throughout the City are too little, too late and too subtle for distracted drivers. She then suggested installing speed limit signs on neighborhood streets, enforcement, solar polar LED stop lights and mini round-a-bouts to slow traffic.

Charles Stover, 72 St. Marys Street, Riverside Committee member, stated that it is frustrating to hear about the Riverside project transportation issues. He asked if a City employee is responsible for building connections with MassDot and the MBTA. This may be beneficial to the City to determine where MassDOT and MBTA plans are with their projects in order to be more transparent.

Barbara Bix, 98 East Side Parkway, stated that mass transit should be this Committee's top priority. Transit should be more frequent and reliable. It is difficult to get around without a vehicle. There is no transit into Boston from the north side of the City in the late afternoon through the early evening hours. People commute by vehicle because it is difficult to make an early morning meeting due to public transit. The MBTA has suspended their Sunday commuter rail service. If driving trips could be eliminated, all would benefit. Without additional transit, vehicles will idle on the east and west thoroughfares. This is not good for the planet, walkers and bikers. Mass Transit will become a great necessity when the Mass Turnpike is partially closed next year or the following year for an estimated eight years. A frequent reliable bus service will be necessary because the rail infrastructure is limited to the number of trains it can

support. It may be necessary to dedicate a bus and bicycle lane on Washington Street. Ms. Bix then asked if new developers should be required to provide transportation to and from town, Newton Green Line or Kenmore Square and if the City should finance the necessary mass transit with a broad base local tax in the City? It is in Newton's interest to provide transit to support all developments. Vice Chair Downs asked Ms. Bix to provide written comments to the Committee Clerk.

Nathaniel Lichtin, 53 Pine Crest Road, stated that it is very important to work with the MBTA and MassDOT. Public transit problems will not be resolved without their assistance. A section of the #52 bus route has been recently eliminated. It is important to have this bus reinstated. Private shuttles should be publicized when they are available for public use. This Committee should be involved with the Zoning Redesign Plan to ensure transportation matters are addressed for major projects. Parking and traffic should be considered in the Zoning Redesign Plan process. He then suggested addressing dim streetlights, installing streetlights at crosswalks and enforcing parking on sidewalks.

Molly Shafer, Bike Newton member, stated that she supports the low stress bike routes. This Committee and the City should set a goal in the next few years to encourage walking, bicycling and to reduce vehicular contribution to climate change as well as congestion which helps with quality of life. The City should encourage bicycling and walking which have zero greenhouse gas emissions. The City should adopt a bike plan and implement the plan by working with Bike Newton. To make biking safe, the City should encourage reducing speeds and use conservation land to connect trails. She suggested keeping bike lanes clean of debris and repair potholes for bikers and to set a timeframe and budget to accomplish these suggestions. Ms. Shafer encourages the City to work with the DCR and the MBTA to access their land for bike lanes.

Bob Jampol, 17 Upland Road, stated student biking should be a high priority. If the City had more internal electric transportation options, fewer people would have to drive. Today, people must drive to reach commuter rails. The vision of bicycling and walking is great, there must be a way for people to get to and from work and school.

Lucia Dolan, 20 Devon Road, stated that the City could address the impact of cut-through traffic. She suggested setting speed limits, determine the road widths and whether enforcement is necessary. Google maps and the Waze App are supposed to follow the speed limits when planning routes.

Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer thanked everyone for their comments and presentation. Tonight's meeting has been helpful on receiving public comments. The City looks forward to working with the City Council, organizations and residents to determine how the City can move forward. The City will be addressing items in the upcoming Budget process and in the Capital Budget in the fall. The City will engage with the City Council and residents moving forward.

The PowerPoint and correspondence received are attached to this report.

Vice Chair Downs stated that the input received tonight, will be considered as this Committee forms their priorities for the new term. The committee anticipates choosing one or two items to be accomplished, with priority on those with the most benefits and impact. The Committee can be an advocate for transit with the MBTA. Mayor Fuller has made the MBTA a very high priority on how their actions affect Newton and affect its transportation.

Councilor Lipof stated that MassDot will be attending the Land Use Committee meeting scheduled for February 25, 2020 to address the Riverside project.

Committee members made the following comments:

The City should look at the inter-relationships on these suggestions to determine if there is a sequence of items to work through so that the City receives the benefits without having to redo the work. As you look at traffic, circulation, safety and the environment is there an order of precedence to solve what should be corrected first.

It is necessary to make our community more walkable and bikeable. It is necessary to make traveling within the City more pleasant, easier and safer. Hopefully, the City will see positive changes in the next few years.

Safety is a top priority in transportation. If the City prioritizes travel for Newton residents, the City could be made safer and traffic patterns made better, but the reality is the City has zero control over vehicles. The City cannot change the number of vehicles. The City must be made safer to encourage safe walking and safe biking. Children are afraid of bicycling and walking due to traffic speeds and volumes.

Committee members made the following suggestions:

The City must clean up some of the parking rules to be productive.

Perhaps restoring the eliminated buses will be a quick fix.

Perhaps the City Council can review the neighborways and mobility lanes as a strong project the City Council can support.

Please provide information observed on locations if you see something working well in other cities.

Traffic calming, lighting and signage are necessary to make the City safer.

Without further discussion, Councilor Bowman made a motion to vote No Action Necessary on this item. Council members agreed 5-0.

At approximately, 8:10 p.m. Councilor Lipof made a motion to adjourn. Council members agreed 5-0.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Andreae Downs, Vice Chair**

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 3:44 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Request for PS&T priority item

**From:** The Remis Family <>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2020 8:31 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Request for PS&T priority item

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Hi Danielle,  
Saw the committee was seeking public input on what items to prioritize and wanted to make a pitch for my top wish list item....Crosswalk beacons!

I'm talking about the lights that go on the crosswalk sign that can be triggered by a pedestrian pushing a button on the sign, thereby alerting drivers that someone is standing in the crosswalk. (I'm not talking about the kind of traffic light such as was installed on Parker St at a crosswalk.)

I have seen many close calls with cars vs. pedestrians at crosswalks, especially in Newton Centre, although that may just be it is where I spend the majority of time.

Many towns with much lower pedestrian traffic seem to have installed these. (I used to live in Framingham and work in Westborough, and they are common in both towns, and Newton should be way better than them with respect to pedestrian safety!)

I noticed Newton recently installed these on crosswalks on Homer between the library and City Hall, but MANY more are needed. From previous discussions with one of my councilors I understand there is a plan to eventually install more of these, but not sure if funding is in place or what the timeline is, or where they will be going.

I'm also not sure what Newton paid for those by City Hall, but a couple years ago when I asked Westborough, they got their signs from Carmanah Tech (1-844-412-8395 Model R920 [Carmanah Traffic](#)). A couple years ago they quoted me a price for a pair (two units to go in one crosswalk) of \$6000. That price did not include the sign or the pole, but this unit can be retrofitted onto existing signs and poles. Also, I'm guessing if the city were to install many of these they could negotiate a much better price than me just calling and asking about it.

Here is my top 11 list for where I would love to see these beacons installed in Ward 6:

1-3. The three crosswalks on Centre St in Newton Center (two near CVS and one at TD Bank). These have terrible lighting and even driving slowly through these I still worry I am not going to see someone in the crosswalk.



- 4. Crosswalk across Beacon in Newton Center where Bank of America is (near Union Street entrance). Very hard to see people here, I have seen near misses between pedestrians and cars twice in the past 6 weeks.**
- 5. Centre St right where Cypress branches off (near NWW committee for community living)**
- 6. Lake/Pleasant and Beacon (where lots of kids cross to Mason-Rice)**
- 7. Hyde and Centre (where lots of pedestrians cross for Newton Highlands T, very poorly lit at night)**
- 8. Cushing and Centre (where lots of people cross for Crystal Lake)**
- 9-10. Lincoln St in Newton Highlands**
- 11. Union St crossing Langely in Newton Centre (near where Terry O'Reilly's used to be, now Baramor or whatever)**

**Thanks so much for seeking feedback! It feels good to vent about crosswalks and hopefully progress can be made before someone is injured in what seems should be a preventable problem. I appreciate you sharing this email with any relevant members of the committee.**

**Thanks, David Remis**

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 3:44 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment for Public Safety & Transportation Committee Meeting - 2/19/20

**From:** Scott Oran >  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2020 9:06 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Cc:** Jacob D. Auchincloss <jauchincloss@newtonma.gov>; Andrae Downs <adowns@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Public Safety & Transportation Committee Meeting - 2/19/20

**[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]**

Chair Auchincloss, Vice Chair Downs and members of the Public Safety & Transportation Committee:

I am unable to join you in person on February 19 but please be sure to take action this year to create the Commonwealth Bikeway in 2020. Unfortunately #193-19, that would have legalized two way bike traffic on the Commonwealth Avenue carriage lane, died without action taken last year. We can't afford to let that happen again.

This is surely the most cost effective project that the City can handily complete in one year with the single largest impact toward meeting its sustainability and transportation goals.

With just road paint and street signs, for considerably less than \$500,000, we can create a safe, separate and continuous six mile bikeway that can link to projects under consideration in Boston, Weston and Natick creating a 20-mile bike path for commuters, recreational riders and families.

As I describe in more detail below (from a letter to the editor published in the Newton Tab in September 2018), this will be truly transformational for the City. All that is lacking is political will.

Let's make this year, the year of the Commonwealth Bikeway.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration.

Best,

Scott Oran

*The Commonwealth Bikeway: A Common Sense Idea*

*To the Editor:*

*It's time we re-purpose Commonwealth Avenue's 19th century Carriage Lane for the 21st century by creating a dedicated Commonwealth Bikeway with nothing more than road paint and street signs.*

*Commonwealth Avenue's Carriage Lane runs almost six miles across the width of Newton from the Charles River in Auburndale over Heartbreak Hill to Boston College in Chestnut Hill. Separated across a grassy landscaped median from Commonwealth Avenue, it is currently used by walkers, bikes, and some very light local traffic. Over 50,000*

*Newtonians live within a 5-minute bike ride or 10-minute walk. Yet it remains perhaps Newton's most heralded yet underutilized resource.*

*While the Carriage Lane is used informally now by cyclists who seek to avoid the car traffic on Commonwealth Avenue, this creates its own problems without adequate signage and traffic control with pedestrians and vehicles often confused by unexpected cyclists.*

*Adding appropriate signage and painting a two-way dedicated and separated Bikeway while maintaining existing one way westbound vehicular access is a readily realizable goal. In fact, it would be a quick win for bicycle enthusiasts and casual riders alike attracting kids and families with a safe place to ride as well as bike commuters.*

*An eventual goal would be to work with the City of Boston to extend the Commonwealth Bikeway through Brighton and Allston to provide a safe, dedicated 12-mile connection to and from Boston's Fenway, Back Bay, Financial District, and Seaport neighborhoods.*

*It would be a great addition to Newton's nascent bike share efforts and complement the current longer-term Washington Street and Needham Street complete streets planning. It has the added benefit of being quick and easy to design and relatively inexpensive to implement with just traffic signs and roadway paint needed.*

*Given its ease to design and build and broad support, it could be designed this fall and winter and built next spring.*

*The Commonwealth Bikeway is a common sense idea whose time is now. Its realization would make the Garden City even greener.*

**Scott Oran**  
**West Newton**

*For information, please visit [www.commonwealthbikeway.org](http://www.commonwealthbikeway.org).*

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 3:45 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Public Safety and Transportation Committee

-----Original Message-----

From >  
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 10:31 AM  
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
Subject: Public Safety and Transportation Committee

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Dear Ms. Delaney,

I heard that the Public Safety and Transportation Committee is "Requesting public comment on priorities for transportation planning". I appreciate the fact that this committee is reaching out to the citizens of Newton for input for their agenda. I will not be available to attend Wednesday's meeting but I heard that are accepting emails with our thoughts.

My first request is that more attention should be made to enforce the existing Traffic and Parking Regulations to improve safety at our schools at drop-off and pick-up times. With the two recent accidents that occurred near schools, the City needs to immediately address safety concerns. For many years, I have been trying to bring this matter to the attention of the Police Department and Ward 1 City Aldermen/Councilors as it pertains to the Underwood School area, with little response. The work of the crossing guards is compounded by the lack of respect by those who illegally park while dropping off or picking up children at the school. The safety of everyone involved is compromised.

My second request is to provide the DPW Department with the resources needed to ensure that utilities and contractors who excavate our streets and sidewalks but walk away without restoring these streets and sidewalks to a condition that is better or as good as it was before they started their work. I have discussed this situation with Commissioner McGonagle but perhaps additional resources or a push from your committee would help. The poor condition of our roads and sidewalks is a hazard to pedestrians and drivers. The contractors and utility companies need to be held accountable.

My third request is for the City of Newton is to put more pressure on our State Legislators to prioritize improvements to the Mass Pike Exit 17 interchange and the surrounding roadways that feed and are fed by this interchange. I will not call this area "The Circle of Death", but the interchange needs help and it is only getting worse. From the long line of vehicles heading East lining up to exit the Pike to the steady stream of fast moving vehicles going East and West using Church Street as a bypass to avoid or modify their use of the rotary, something needs to be done BEFORE there is a very serious accident. I know that the State is "working on" this, but their efforts need to be expedited.

Sincerely,

Steve Carter  
234 Church Street

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 3:55 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: TAG's suggested legislative priorities for PS&T  
**Attachments:** vision-zero.pdf; yellow-buses.pdf

-----Original Message-----

From: David A. Olson <dolson@newtonma.gov>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 11:52 AM  
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
Subject: FW: TAG's suggested legislative priorities for PS&T

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael Halle <m@halle.us>  
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 11:24 AM  
To: City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>  
Cc: Jonathan Yeo <jyeo@newtonma.gov>  
Subject: TAG's suggested legislative priorities for PS&T

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Dear Councilors,

In response to the Public Safety and Transportation Committee's call for legislative priorities, the citizen members of the Transportation Advisory Group have agreed on two suggestions for discussion:

- \* adoption of "Vision Zero", an international effort to eliminate fatalities and reduce serious injuries on our roads,
- \* expansion of the use of yellow school buses to meet broader city transportation needs and goals.

Thank you, as always, for your thoughtful consideration of public safety and transportation needs in our city.

Michael Halle

Chair, TAG

Newton Transportation Advisory Group

To: Public Safety and Transportation Committee  
Newton City Council

February 18, 2020

RE: 2020 Legislative priority: "Vision Zero" safety-oriented transportation focus

Councilors,

Thank you for soliciting the public for priorities for the current legislative session.

The recent pedestrian-related crashes in Newton and the resulting public outcry demand a new safety focal point for our existing transportation, planning and public works efforts.

That focal point is Vision Zero, an international effort to end tragedies on our roadways and improve people's lives.

"Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all."

- <https://visionzeronetwork.org/>
- <https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/>

Newton should consider adoption a Vision Zero plan that complements our existing Complete Streets effort. While the two efforts overlap in their general approach, Vision Zero adds an explicit safety emphasis and a clear goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries. It thus provides an understandable and universally appealing metric for safety. It provides a rallying point for a public that feels increasingly helpless and vulnerable when they hear about crashes in their community (particularly near school zones). It thus provides a constructive outlet for community anger and activism, while also providing a measure of accountability.

Newton can adopt Vision Zero by approving a Vision Zero plan as policy. A Newton Vision Zero plan could include several elements beyond the city's current Complete Streets plan:

- Proactive planning for lower speed routes and zones, including creation of a slow street network of universally accessible, pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly streets.
- More explicit involvement of Newton Police, Fire, and EMS in planning, crash evaluation, outreach, and enforcement.
- A clear public process for addressing crashes when they do occur,
- Clearer integration with Newton Public Schools regarding school zones, blue zones, Safe Routes to School, and education.
- Explicit public outreach and community engagement,
- Explicit statement of the importance of equity as part of transportation planning,

These additional elements are exceedingly important in building trust in government's ability to enhance public safety. Safe neighborhoods, neighborhood schools, local village centers, family friendliness, and community involvement are all deeply interwoven in Newton's civic identity. Vision Zero Newton knits them together with a common, equitable goal: travel in Newton should be safe for everyone.

Several local communities have already created their own plans that we can build upon:

- <https://www.boston.gov/transportation/vision-zero>
- <https://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/sustainabletransportation/visionzero>
- <https://www.somervillema.gov/visionzero>
- <https://www.visionzerocoalition.org/> (Massachusetts)

Newton's semi-suburban, human-scale, village-based character represents an opportunity for the city to become a regional leader in Vision Zero planning.

Such a plan would also allow Newton to be in line for possible future federal funds for Vision Zero programs:

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2019/10/24/congress-sets-sights-on-vision-zero/>

We urge the City Council and City Administration to consider adoption of Vision Zero as a legislative priority and city policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Halle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Halle  
Chair

Newton Transportation Advisory Group

To: Public Safety and Transportation Committee  
Newton City Council

February 18, 2020

RE: 2020 Priorities: Enhanced use of yellow school buses

Councilors,

Thank you for soliciting the public for priorities for the current legislative session.

We suggest that the city research more flexible models of school transportation, including wider use of yellow school bus service for a broad range of student and family activities.

One of the most important qualities of transportation policy is the availability of good transportation choices. With school-related activities generating a large bulk of Newton's local traffic, it makes sense to make this kind of transportation as efficient and flexible as possible.

Currently, however, Newton Public Schools has a fixed, narrow, and limited mandate for bus transportation, primarily designed to transport students two or more miles from school. If we thought more broadly, however, school buses could provide a wider range of transportation options, including some of the following ideas:

- Maximize bus service to reduce private car trips to school, reducing congestion and improving safety.
- Provide bus service to registered after-school activities (relieving the pressure on school-housed afterschool programs, providing a wider range of options for families, and reducing dismissal traffic at schools).
- Provide "*à la carte*" or pay-per-use bus service for students who primarily walk or bike (would require increased service capacity). Such a service could encourage healthier transportation options while still allowing for bad weather and transportation of bulky items such as band instruments.
- Provide late and early bus service for high school students, a currently unmet need that forces many students (or parents) to drive to school.
- Change the transportation incentive structure by reducing or eliminating school bus fees.
- Provide simplified options for Newton-affiliated sports teams to provide transportation to home and away games. Currently, these games produce huge increases in local traffic and parking demand and, in many cases, result in pedestrian safety hazards.



All of these opportunities align with city goals and increase family convenience, but are outside the narrow mandate and funding of Newton Public Schools. One option would be to move yellow bus funding out of the NPS budget, while shifting operational control of the bus system's expanded scope to city or private staffing.

The yellow school bus fleet is Newton's largest self-controlled mass transit system. With creative thinking, we can use this resource to its full capacity to help meet our city's broader transportation goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Halle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Halle  
Chair

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 6:05 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Commonwealth Bikeway Proposal

**From:** Warren Brown <>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 4:36 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Commonwealth Bikeway Proposal

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

I'm writing to express my support for the Commonwealth Bikeway proposal.

As a long time Newton resident and active bicycle rider, I view this proposal as prudent, safe and reasonable and hoping this gets approved tonight. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Warren L. Brown  
124 Day St.  
Newton  
Cell

[bostoncommercialproperties.com](http://bostoncommercialproperties.com)  
[www.linkedin.com/in/warrenlbrown](http://www.linkedin.com/in/warrenlbrown)

.....

This e-mail message including any attachments may be legally privileged and confidential under applicable law, and is meant only for the intended recipient(s). If you received this message in error, please reply to the sender, adding "SENT IN ERROR" to the subject line, then delete this message.

Thank you.

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 6:05 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Public Safety & Transportation Committee Public Hearing 2/19/20

**From:** Kathy Pillsbury <  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 5:52 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Cc:** Jacob Auchincloss <jake@jakeauchincloss.com>; Andreae E. Downs <andreaedowns@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Public Safety & Transportation Committee Public Hearing 2/19/20

**[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]**

To Councilors Auchincloss, Downs, Ciccone, Malakie, Markiewicz, Bowman, Grossman, and Lipof,

Given the urgency of acting now to prevent even worse climate changes and that transportation is one of the largest sources of carbon pollution, the City should prioritize actions that the City can take to reduce carbon pollution.

Since emissions from cars in the City are significant portion of transportation emissions, the City should focus on actions that will get the most people out of their individual gas consuming cars such as public transportation and the use of school buses.

Here are a number of ideas that could be taken in Newton to help people be less dependent on fossil fuel burning cars.

Work with the Green Line Transformation project, to push them to move faster on their plans.

- When I went to a public meeting held at the library last fall, they stated that their objective for the Green Line is to increase capacity by only 50% with a target date of 2040. Newton needs more capacity and we need it much sooner than 2040.
- When pressed as to what was holding up the improvements for the Green Line, they said that they were constrained by the amount of time that they could work on the line not by the finances. They felt limited by only night and weekend work. They are planning on doing some more intensive work on some other lines this summer, but not the D Line.
- They have plans to get "Supercars" for the D Line that would double capacity of trains however their time frame for accomplishing this is quite far in the future. Again, the work needed to make the Green Line ready for "Supercars" should go much faster.
- Given the capacity questions for the D Line, The MBTA should be asked to consider more bus routes, especially express bus routes into Boston. Express buses, dedicated bus lanes and other changes to bus service could happen much more quickly than the work on the Green Line.

Working to make MBTA buses a better option.

- Installing benches and/or bus shelters and benches at bus stops to make taking the bus more appealing.
- Working with towns west of Newton to get priority lanes on the Pike for buses.
- Figuring out ways for buses to travel through Newton more quickly such as installing systems so that buses can have priority at stop lights.

Work with the School Department to increase the use of school buses by students. Making it less expensive to take the bus,

- Figuring out ways that students could pay for only part-time use of the bus,

- Setting aside priority parking spaces for EVs and hybrids at the schools,
- Increasing parking fees for students at the high schools,
- Ensuring that the number of students on a route doesn't exceed the capacity of the bus which discourages kids from taking the bus. (This was a problem on my kids' high school and middle school routes.)
- Looking at ways to make school buses seem more possible and appealing for parents of elementary school kids or conversely making it seem less convenient for parents to drive their kids to school.

The City can model and incentivize the use of EVs or hybrids.

- For all new city vehicles require comparison of the lifecycle costs of electric vehicles and fossil fuel consuming vehicles. Even if the initial outlay seems higher look at the full cost over time and consider the cost to our climate of not purchasing EVs.
- EVs are now available for Police cars and cars used by the Fire Departments. For example, Ford now offers both [a pursuit rated utility vehicle](#) and [sedan hybrids](#) configured for administrative use or for local patrol and response.
- Using EVs in the Police and Fire Departments would be a great example of the benefits of EVs. For example, EVs respond more quickly and accelerate faster. Wouldn't these be cool to see at the "Touch a Truck" event held by the City?
- Exhibiting the City's EVs at outdoor events to show off the EVs to familiarize people with EVs.
- Advocating the use of EVs for those people planning to buy new cars for example based on excise tax information, targeting outreach to people with older cars.
- Determining ways to incentivize switching to EVs for individuals and commercial use.
- Prioritizing parking for EVs and hybrids in municipal lots with clear signage that references climate change or cutting carbon pollution.

Thank you,

Kathy Pillsbury  
34 Carver Rd.  
Newton Highlands

Kathy Pillsbury  
Researcher, Consultant

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 6:07 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation  
**Attachments:** Newton Neighborhood Greenways 20200219.pptx

**From:** Brendan Keegan >  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 6:02 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Presentation

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Hi Danielle,

Attached is the presentation I'll be giving on behalf of Bike Newton tonight, in case there are issues displaying it from my computer.

Thanks,  
Brendan Keegan

# Newton Neighborhood Greenways

Presentation to Public Safety and  
Transportation Committee

February 19, 2020



1

What is a neighborhood greenway?



2

Newton has no protected bike lanes.



Beacon St. eastbound near Hammond Pond Parkway



Centre St. northbound near Ward St.

3

Needham St. sidewalk-level bike lanes coming 2021.



#### Bike Lane Cross Section



Shared Use Path  
(bikes & pedestrians)



Raised Bike Lane

4

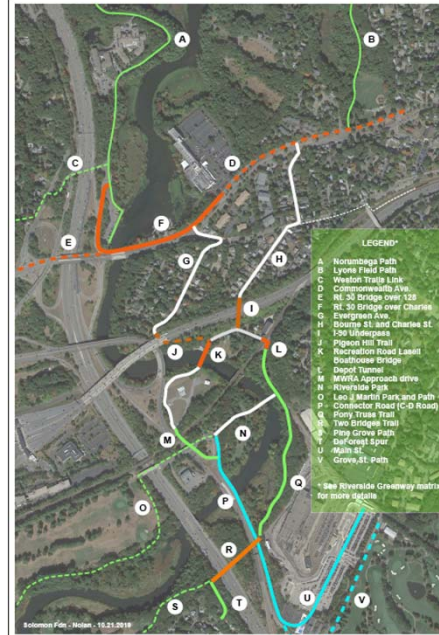




Upper Falls Greenway



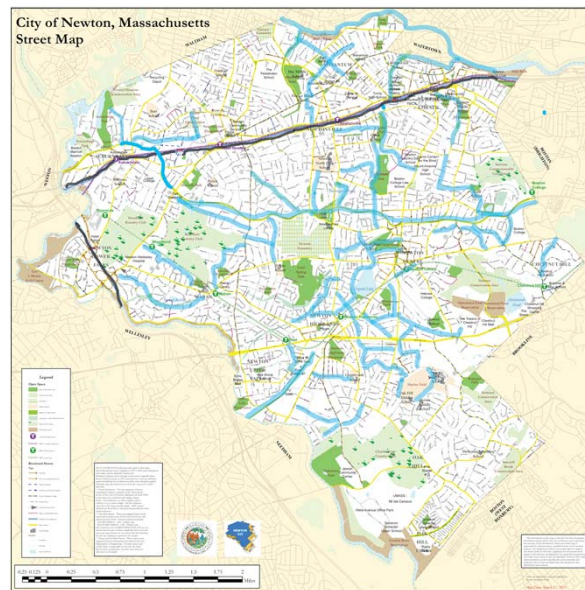
Washington St. Vision Plan



Riverside Greenway trail network

5

## Newton Neighborhood Greenways



6



### Wayfinding

- Identify the street as a Neighborhood Greenway so people know what to expect
- Help people walking and biking find their way



7

### Safer Crossings

- Easier for seniors and kids to cross busy streets
- Make drivers more aware of people walking and biking



### Walking and Biking Priority

- Speed humps to calm traffic
- Stop signs for side streets crossing the greenway



8

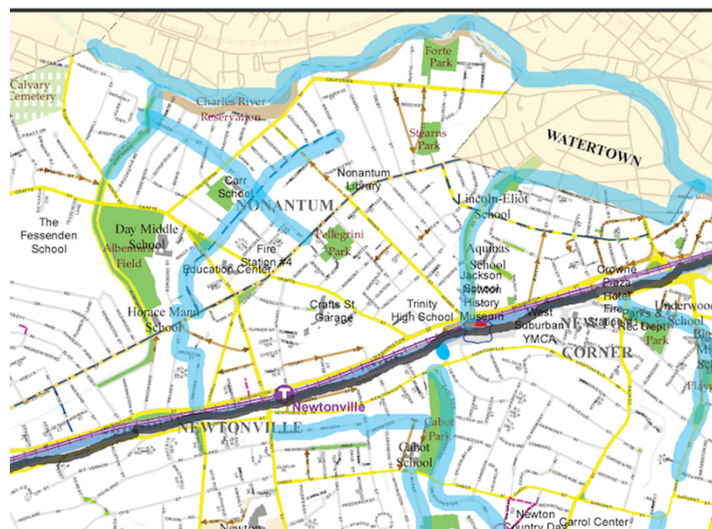
## Slow cars and add greenery.



Ballard Street Greenway  
Seattle, WA

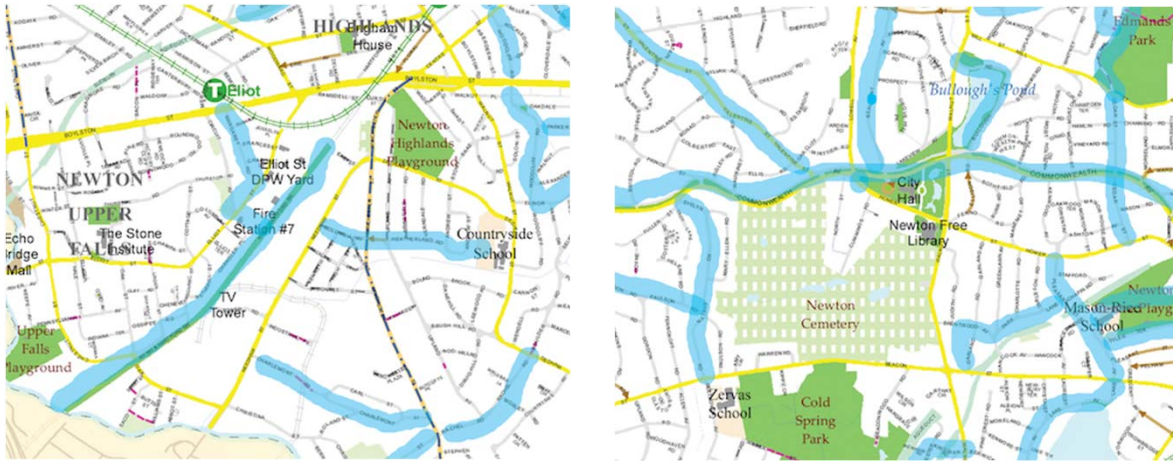
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## Connections to Existing Bike Paths



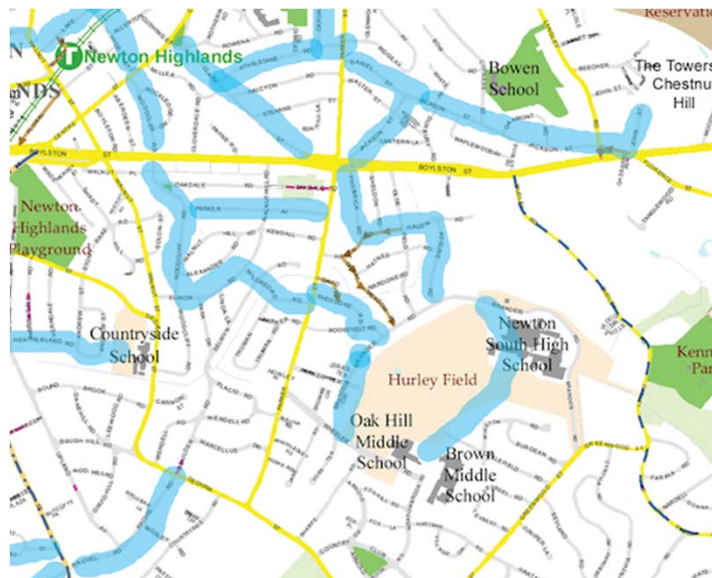
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## Connections to Existing Bike Paths



11

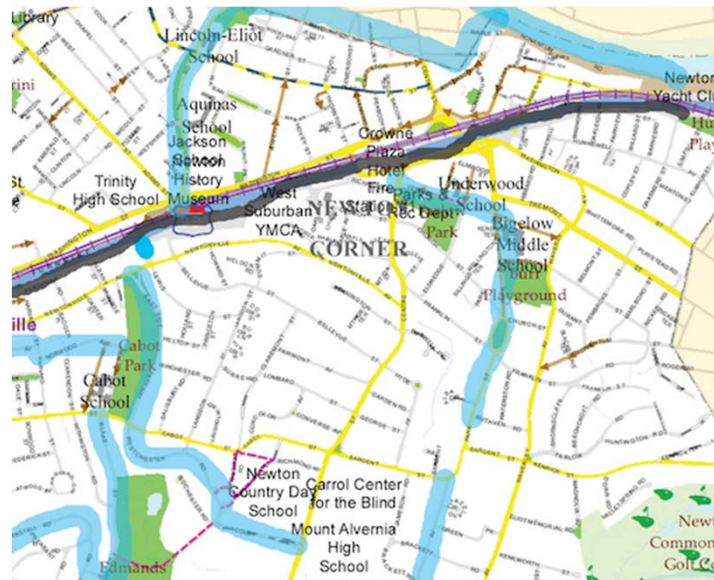
## Connections to Schools



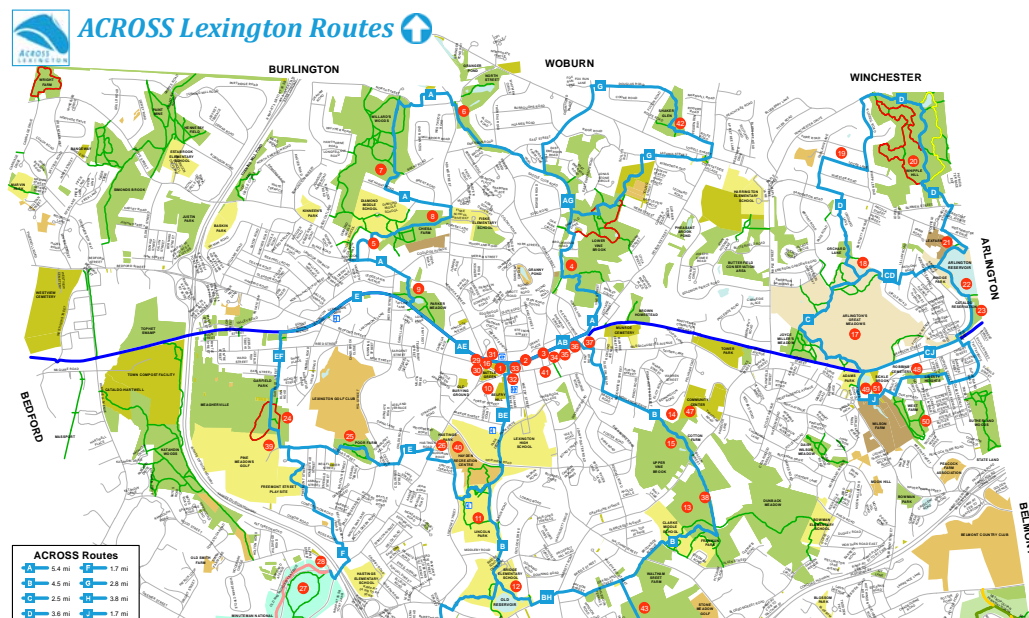
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## Connections to Schools

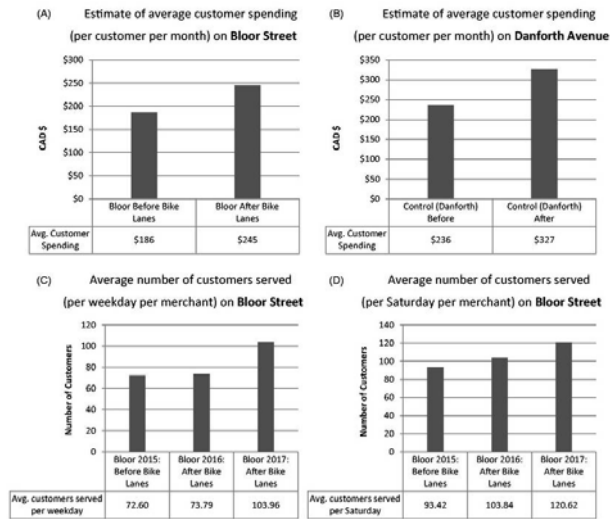


13



14

# Bikes bring business.



**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2020 8:50 AM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on transportation planning

**From:** Dina Gorelik < >  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 11:00 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Comment on transportation planning

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]

Hello Danielle,

I hope it is not too late to provide public comment about transportation planning, and I hope you can forward my comment to the councilors on the Public Safety and Transportation Committee.

I am student at Newton North High School. I walk, bike and take the bus, the commuter rail, and the T to get around Newton, as I do not have access to a personal vehicle. I would highly encourage the committee to remember that not everyone has access to a car at every single moment of the day. Sometimes, people need to walk or bike to get somewhere. I ask that the city pave the roads and sidewalks adequately, widen the sidewalks, and add protected bike lanes where possible. Newton currently does not have a single protected bike lane. I bike down Washington St to get to school; it is riddled with potholes, and there is no dedicated space for cyclists, so I often have to choose between hitting a pothole and potentially getting a flat tire or swerving around it and into traffic.

I have plenty of peers that would love to bike to school but do not feel safe doing so. I really hope that in the coming years this can change.

Best,  
Dina Gorelik

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Friday, February 21, 2020 8:46 AM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: Bike lanes

**From:** Andrew Balson <>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2020 2:23 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Bike lanes

**DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]**

Chair Auchincloss, Vice Chair Downs and members of the Public Safety & Transportation Committee:

I am unable to join you in person on February 19 but please be sure to take action this year to create the Commonwealth Bikeway in 2020. Unfortunately #193-19, that would have legalized two-way bike traffic on the Commonwealth Avenue carriage lane, died without action taken last year. We can't afford to let that happen again.

This is surely the most cost effective project that the City can handily complete in one year with the single largest impact toward meeting its sustainability and transportation goals.

With just road paint and street signs, for considerably less than \$500,000, we can create a safe, separate and continuous six-mile bikeway that can link to projects under consideration in Boston, Weston and Natick creating a 20-mile bike path for commuters, recreational riders and families.

As I describe in more detail below (from a letter to the editor published in the Newton Tab in September 2018), this will be truly transformational for the City. All that is lacking is political will.

Let's make this year, the year of the Commonwealth Bikeway.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration.

Best,

Andrew Balson

**Danielle Delaney**

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**From:** Danielle Delaney  
**Sent:** Friday, February 21, 2020 8:45 AM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney  
**Subject:** FW: For Andreae Downs and the Public Safety and Transportation Committee

**From:** David A. Olson <dolson@newtonma.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2020 7:01 PM  
**To:** Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: For Andreae Downs and the Public Safety and Transportation Committee

**From:** Barbara Bix <>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2020 6:59 PM  
**To:** David A. Olson <dolson@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** For Andreae Downs and the Public Safety and Transportation Committee

**[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]**

Thank you for soliciting public comment yesterday on priorities for Public Safety and Transportation. Andreae requested that I submit my remarks to the town clerk. Here they are:

I believe that mass transit needs to be this committee's top priority, with increasing levels of traffic and all the development planned for Newton. While mass transit has been a "nice to have" in the past, it has become the "must have" that parking regulations used to be. My biggest concern is that "transit-oriented areas" actually get transit that is frequent and reliable. Without additional mass transit, we will have cars stuck idling on Washington Street, and other east/west thoroughfares. This is not good for our planet, for walkers, for abutters, for the cars, etc. Mass transit will become an even greater necessity when the Mass Pike is partially shut down in a year or two—for an estimated 8 years. For example, we are talking about developing Washington Street—but right now it would be hard for anyone to do without a car.

- There is no transit into town, from the North side of Newton, in the late afternoon through the early evening (See bus and commuter rail schedules).
- Getting to Cambridge by public transit requires first going into town—or stringing together multiple bus trips with waits between each.
- Far too many people in Newton commute by car into Boston because they can't get to a 7a meeting—or because if they miss a 5p train they are stuck for another hour (see bus and commuter rail schedules)
- More recently, the MBTA eliminated the commuter rail on Sundays—when the 500 series buses already don't run. For some reason, the MBTA shuttle that will ferry



people-- to and from Wellesley and the western suburbs--while the commuter rail is down, will not serve Newton. (See last week's email from Mayor Fuller.)

Newton is very close to the city and if we can eliminate car trips that occur because there is no other option, everyone will be better off.

I suspect the service will need to be some sort of bus or minibus because the rail infrastructure is limited in how many trains it can support (between one way platforms and limits on turning around trains at South Station). My guess is the largest expense will be drivers. If we can get frequent reliable bus service, it may make sense to have a lane dedicated to buses and perhaps bicycles.

Will the MBTA add buses to fill gaps in the 553/554 and 556/558 schedules? Or, should the new developments be required to provide transportation to town or to the Green Line in Newton or Kenmore? Should we, instead, finance the necessary mass transit with a broad-based local tax (as we do for our schools), since everyone is affected by traffic?

Smarter people than me will be needed for the solutions. That said, it seems that it is in Newton's interest to provide the transit needed to support its development aspirations.

Here is additional input:

At the end of the meeting, the councilors stressed the need to confine goals to what could be accomplished in the next term. One councilor said we couldn't do anything about the cars on the road, but I disagree. The cars are on the road (both Newton cars and cars from other towns) are there because they don't have feasible alternatives.

I think this is a time for leadership. We need to think "big" and integrate this committee's plans into the plans of other initiatives taking place in Newton—as well as the MBTA's plans.

With an aging population, climate change, the goal of dramatically increasing the number of residents, and more required trips—transit needs to be the top priority. Newton needs to step up for its citizens if the region won't. Most people in Newton cannot practically walk to, or bike to, all their destinations—especially in the winter.

Parking, while important, is secondary and may resolve itself if we get good transit—and can eliminate the need for second cars, visiting cars, etc. Furthermore, more open streets (fewer cars, fewer parking spaces) makes it safer for pedestrians and emergency vehicles to complete necessary trips.

Julia asked for ideas. I've noticed that some of the larger companies are contracting with private buses to provide service to their facilities. It will take political will to finance, but perhaps Newton can run buses (or contract with private companies to run buses) to hubs such as Boston and Cambridge to fill the gaps in the MBTA schedule.