

# The Boston Globe

## Packed transportation forum touches on the T, parking, and ‘cycle tracks’

By Martine Powers  
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Who knew transportation fanatics could pack a house?

At a Tuesday night candidate forum at Boston Public Library on transportation and livable streets, more than 450 people filled an auditorium — and more were turned away from the overflow room — to watch eight of the race’s 12 candidates spar on issues ranging from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, minimum parking requirements, Seaport District traffic, speed limits, bus lanes, the state’s transportation finance plan, and, of course, the oft-discussed separated bike facility known as the “cycle track” — perhaps the most popular topic of the night.

It started with City Councilor John Connolly, who named the cycle track on Allston’s Western Avenue, a stretch of bike lane physically separated from cars, as one of his favorite places in Boston: “I have biked it,” he said, “and it was a very enjoyable 45 seconds.”

City Councilor Felix G. Arroyo hopped on the bandwagon, declaring that “cycle tracks are not a choice; they are a need.”

And pretty soon, cycle tracks were fodder for some of the night’s funniest Twitter jokes, with one audience member declaring, “If #CycleTracks had been in the #BosMayorDrinkingGame, we’d all be dead.”

Candidates Charlotte Golar Richie, Robert Consalvo, Daniel F. Conley, and David James Wyatt did not attend the forum, which was sponsored by more than two dozen local organizations dedicated to transportation and development issues.

State Representative Marty Walsh promised to lower the speed limit on Boston streets, declaring that 30 miles per hour is too fast for a densely populated city.

John Barros lambasted him — and, indirectly, current mayor Thomas M. Menino — for failing to pass a more extensive transportation finance package that could have dispensed more money for better MBTA service in Boston.

“Boston didn’t have a plan. We didn’t have a voice. We didn’t really say anything about it,” Barros said.

Connolly and City Councilor Michael Ross agreed on their willingness to lower minimum parking requirements in some neighborhoods, and most said they would consider instituting a modest fee for resident permit parking passes.

Ross went on to declare that he would revive the Night Owl, the MBTA late-night bus service that operated for a few years in the early 2000s before it was shut down by budget cuts.

“I promise you, I will bring that back,” Ross said.

Charles Clemons, a local radio show host, said improving the community decision-making process for new developments and transportation infrastructure was one of his goals.

“The Clemons administration will be totally transparent, we’ll bring everyone to the table, and when it comes to bicycle lanes and pedestrians, we’ll put them number one,” he said.

Bill Walczak, who co-founded the Codman Square Health Center, also railed against the State House’s moves on transportation funding — “it’s a lousy bill,” he said — and said he would use a position as mayor to eliminate food deserts, offer more green space, and keep out casinos.

“We do a terrible job in the city of Boston in regard to master planning,” Walczak said.

And City Councilor Charles C. Yancey proclaimed that he, more than any other candidate, would be successful in lobbying for more state funds to pay for late-night T service and improved service on the Fairmount commuter rail line that runs through Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. It was a bold claim, considering that Richard A. Davey, the state’s secretary of transportation, sat smack-dab in the middle of the front row in the audience.

“Every time I see Secretary Davey,” Yancey said, “he leaves with \$10 million less in his pocket.”