Candidate Questionnaire: People-centered Streets

Basic Information
If you would like to review a PDF of the entire questionnaire, you may find it here: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/livablestreetsalliance/pages/1689/attachments/original/1503520202 /Candidate_Questionnaire_BostonPeople-centered_streets.pdf?1503520202
Candidate name (first and last) *
Michelle Wu
Office that the candidate is seeking (include district number if applicable) *
Boston City Council At-Large
Name of person completing the questionnaire (first and last) *
Michelle Wu
Name and EIN of the committee (if applicable)
The Wu Committee

2017	Candidate Questionnaire. People-centered Streets
Campaign email address *	
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About You

1. Do you personally walk to destinations in your community? If yes, how often do you do so?
Yes
○ No
Comments
Daily
2. Do you personally travel by/ use public transit to get around? If yes, which trains and buses do you routinely use?
Yes
○ No
Comments
I commute to work with my two sons primarily via Orange Line between Forest Hills and State Street or Haymarket. A few times per week, we will change to catch the Commuter Rail from Back Bay Station to Roslindale Village on the way home. Less frequently but still regularly, we take any of the several bus lines that run from Roslindale Square to Forest Hills (e.g. 34, 34E, 36).
3. Do you personally bike in your community or commute by bike to other communities? If no, would you be willing to give it a try periodically, e.g. once or twice per month?
Yes
○ No

Comments

I had a little hiatus towards the end of my pregnancy and in the few weeks since baby was born, but I consider myself a cyclist and keep my bike in the City Hall garage. If I didn't need to commute with my kids to drop them off at City Hall Child Care, I would bike everyday from home to work, but the stretch between Roslindale Square and the Southwest Corridor currently feels too dangerous to bring my young boys on a regular basis. Instead I keep my bike at work and regularly use it to get to meetings across the city during the day. This is my favorite mode of transportation!

Policy proposals

Please articulate concrete and feasible policy and budgetary proposals to advance the following goals. If you would like to submit supporting materials, please submit them on page 6 at the end of the questionnaire or email your proposals to info@visionzerocoalition.org.

Note that there is a glossary available at www.visionzerocoalition.org/glossary_for_2017_candidate_questionnaire

*indicates a definition available in the glossary

1. How will you work to establish funding for the infrastructure changes needed to slow traffic on your community's streets, and improve crosswalks and intersections to make them safer for people who are walking and using mobility assistive devices?

From my perspective, a City Councilor can best advance infrastructure changes for safe streets through a combination of advocating vigorously and consistently to raise awareness of the urgency of VisionZero; providing information and public education to help dispel misconceptions and highlight benefits of streets for people; amplifying advocates' feedback on specific proposed development projects; and identifying opportunities to provide funding through legislative proposals, the annual budget process, and mitigation from community process around development. Over the last term, I've worked at all of these fronts, from establishing the City Council's first-ever policy briefing series, with a focus on transportation policy, to advocating with a focus on safe streets infrastructure during the budget process, to speaking out on transit issues and calling out areas for improvement.

My efforts have been geared at building political will and urgency for funding such improvements. Every neighborhood deserves access to traffic-calming treatments so that residents can take back their streets as safe, public space for Bostonians of all ages. The demand for infrastructure improvements is as clear as the shortfall in our current funding — this year the City saw 47 applications for the Neighborhood Slow Streets program, with budget capacity to accept only five even after budget negotiations increased the line item. Boston has seen an unacceptable increase in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and serious injuries from carrelated incidents, and the number of people using our streets is only projected to grow. We cannot afford to ration safety among neighborhoods.

I will push to continue increasing funding for infrastructure changes in the City of Boston budget, particularly in the capital budget. In the report summarizing the Council's transportation policy briefing series, we recommended funding cycling infrastructure investment at \$20 per resident per year in the capital budget, or \$13M per year to establish a connected, low-stress cycling network.

My top priority for finding new revenue for safe streets infrastructure is to introduce reasonable fees for resident parking. This would incentivize those with access to off-street parking to free up on-street spaces and reduce time and emissions from residents circling to find a spot in their neighborhoods. Not only would this system better match parking demand with pricing to save time, but it would reduce emissions that contribute to asthma and public health challenges in urban neighborhoods, and the revenue from permit fees could be used immediately for infrastructure improvements. In addition, I support the Fair Share Amendment at the state level that would generate more funding for education and transportation

infrastructure.

Where intersections and transit corridors are already slated for redevelopment or reconstruction, I will advocate for a full complete streets approach to include gold-standard pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

Finally, there are many examples of changes to enhance the pedestrian experience that do not require significant cost, such as lengthening the time of pedestrian walk signals to give people more time to get through the crosswalk, or assessing turn signals' interaction with pedestrian needs.

2. How will you improve the reach, frequency, and quality of public transit in Boston?

Although the public transit agency is a quasi-state entity that doesn't report to city officials, there are still many actions within municipal jurisdiction that could dramatically improve Boston commuters' public transit experience. The potential is especially great for local action to improve bus service, which defines public transit for the many residents of Boston who do not live within walking distance of a subway stop. I'm proud to have advocated for the successful creation of a City-MBTA working group focused on bus service. From timing and priority of signals and placement of bus stops, many of the changes needed for Bus Rapid Transit depend on municipal infrastructure and policy. I will continue monitoring the implementation of transit signal priority for the Green Line trolleys, Silver Line buses, and other MBTA bus lines, as well as dedicated bus lanes where possible. My top priority is moving forward with the proposed dedicated bus lane on Washington Street between Roslindale Village and Forest Hills, which MBTA data identifies as the corridor having the most potential and need for transit improvements based on share of commuters, number of vehicles, and average length of delays from traffic (and is the most stressful part of my last mile home). I will also continue to support the private efforts to establish an Arboretum Gateway path to connect Roslindale Square and Forest Hills. This next term, I plan to dive into the data on how to prioritize changes in bus service to improve connectivity and equity in Boston, building the clear case for better bus connectivity.

We also need to realize the potential for water transportation to connect the neighborhoods of Charlestown, East Boston, South Boston, and Dorchester, and especially to relieve congestion in the Seaport, where the only public transit available is the Silver Line bus, already struggling to serve the area's rapidly growing commuter base. I will continue working with Boston Harbor Now to assess and plan a feasible water transportation system in partnership with stakeholders such as MassPort, the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, area businesses, and residents – making sure there is priority for affordable, public access and not just privatized service for large companies.

The City of Boston can expand the reach of public transit by expanding partnerships, such as increasing the eligibility for discounted student MBTA passes for Boston students and working with businesses to offer incentives for employees who choose to commute by public transportation rather than car.

I will also ramp up my advocacy directly to the MBTA and MassDOT. I will continue to support the push for a late-night transit option, such as the Transit Matters proposal to run certain bus lines seven days a week. I also plan to focus on the issue of unfair commuter rail fair pricing in certain neighborhoods because Boston is split between multiple pricing zones — no Boston

residents should have to pay upwards of \$6 for a short commuter rail ride to connect to the subway system with no other reasonable way to access the public transit system.

3. How will you ensure fast-tracked implementation of a city-wide network of off-street paths and protected bike lanes* on major thoroughfares and connecting streets that are comfortable for people of all ages and abilities?

I frequently share the video recording of our first ever City Council policy briefing (https://www.cityofboston.gov/citycouncil/cc_video_library.asp?id=11126), which features Northeastern Professor Peter Furth describing his analysis of exactly how to develop a connected, low-stress cycling network in Boston. Thanks to his research, we know exactly where the major gaps in a low-stress network exist, and also have recommendations for a "Bikeways for Everybody" program that would increase home-work connectivity from 1.3% to 58.1% on low-stress cycling streets. In the next term, I will focus on advocating for improvements to the intersections and corridors identified in this plan, as well as highlighting other opportunities for cycling infrastructure with specific developments or road reconstruction projects.

I will also continue to experience Boston's cycling infrastructure conditions as a regular user, reporting on my observations and working with neighborhood cycling groups to advocate for improvements. I've had the chance to join some groups on neighborhood rides, but this next term I will look to go on a bike ride in every single neighborhood and ask others to join for broader awareness of how to improve cycling infrastructure throughout the city.

Perhaps my most important responsibility is to ensure that community experts and advocates have a voice. As part of this last year's budget negotiations, I pushed for the VisionZero Coalition to have feedback through a formal advisory role in Boston's major road reconstruction projects funded through Parking Meter Fund appropriations. I look forward to following these projects closely to maximize the inclusion of cycling infrastructure improvements. I will also continue to convene opportunities for feedback from the coalition, whether in formal Council hearings or regular forums.

4. How will you increase access to biking in every neighborhood equally? What do you see as the major obstacles to encouraging ridership, and how will you address them?

The fastest way to increase access to biking in every neighborhood is to build safe cycling infrastructure across the city. I will approach this goal with a focus on equity, understanding that making cycling a feasible option is not just sound transportation policy; it is important economic policy. Research has shown that the factor most closely linked to economic mobility is commute time, so the more people have access to the affordable and healthy option of commuting by bike, the stronger our city will be. I've been excited to celebrate the expansion of Hubway beyond downtown into neighborhoods like East Boston and Roxbury, and with discounted pricing for low-income residents, but providing bikes alone won't increase ridership without safe ways to ride to work and school.

Over the next term, I commit to going on a neighborhood bike ride with local cyclists and advocates in every single one of Boston's neighborhoods. This will allow me to see experience the cycling infrastructure (or lack thereof) in each neighborhood, and more importantly, to meet the people who can identify the specific obstacles and potential solutions to increase ridership in each neighborhood.

Across the city, one major obstacle to safety is blocked bike lanes, whether from delivery trucks or other cars. Of course, the ultimate solution is separated infrastructure to replace painted lanes, but in places where only painted lanes are possible, Boston needs to better enforce blocked bike lane violations. I propose adding this category to the 311 app so that even if it would be difficult to catch a violator in real time, the City has data on frequent trouble spots and can station enforcement there on a regular basis to ticket violators. Another challenge is the shortage of places to lock a bike -- I've seen some streets with multiple bikes chained to every sign post and parking meter during the day. In this past budget, I pushed for an increase in funding to triple the number of bike racks that will be maintained and added this year compared to past years. I will look to draw on the cycling community's feedback as BTD decides on the placement of these racks.

We also need to continue supporting community-building events that connect cyclists to each other. I've learned so much from Boston's bike community and gained much confidence as an urban rider thanks to everyone's tips and support. I will help support these activities however possible, especially in traditionally underserved neighborhoods.

5. How will you increase funding for biking infrastructure?

As mentioned above, I will continue to push for an adequate capital and operations budget to fund these improvements through the budget process, specific development proposals, and other revenue sources such as fees for resident parking, congestion pricing, or a carbon fee on off-street parking facilities.

The more voices are heard, the greater the political will for change. I will continue to make the case, as a legislator and as a cyclist, for the citywide safety, public health, environmental, and economic benefits of making cycling accessible through safe infrastructure. I will convene regular opportunities for feedback from the cycling community, through public hearings, informal meetings, and neighborhood rides in each neighborhood.

Finally, what gets measured, gets managed. I disagree with the philosophy stated at this last year's Transportation Department hearing that the City would no longer be counting (or publicly sharing the count of) the number of miles of protected cycle tracks in the city. It is true that no single metric can adequately capture all the work ongoing, but we need to be accountable with regards to the scale and pace of progress. I will propose to change the performance measures listed in Boston's budget book to include metrics that direct summarize cycling infrastructure improvements, such as miles of cycle tracks. We should also continue and expand the automated bike trip counts to have rigorous data on ridership that can inform our level of investment.

Yes/no questions

Note that explanations for your responses are not required, but provide useful context and are strongly encouraged.

*indicates a definition available in the glossary (available here: http://www.visionzerocoalition.org/glossary_for_2017_candidate_guestionnaire)

1. Do you support the adoption of Vision Zero* and funding for its rapid implementation? Vision Zero is an approach which aims to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 and has been adopted by several communities, including Boston and Cambridge. *

	Yes
\bigcirc	No

Please explain your choice

The goal of VisionZero is achievable, urgent, and fundamental to Boston's future as a city of opportunity for all. We need to ramp up our speed and capacity for providing slow streets treatments for every neighborhood.

2. Do you support lowering design speeds* through traffic calming measures* on downtown and neighborhood streets as a means of enhancing the safety of people walking, using mobility assistive devices, biking, and driving? This may involve the expansion and enhancement of programs like Neighborhood Slow Streets* (Boston) and Neighborways* (Somerville). *



Please explain your choice

This may be the most frequent constituent request I get in neighborhoods across Boston -- that families worry about cars racing down streets where their kids and neighbors live and play. Traffic calming measures such as raised crosswalks, speed humps, narrowing lanes and removing lanes, or bumping out curbs make a big difference in livability.

3. One key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states and countries is automated enforcement (i.e. speed cameras and red light cameras). Do you support state legislation that authorizes the use of automated enforcement in Massachusetts, per the July 2017 recommendation of the National Transportation Safety Board*? *

•	Yes
\bigcirc	No

Please explain your choice

I will work with VisionZero advocates as well as advocates such as the ACLU to ensure that we can implement this in a way that improves safety, removes racial bias in traffic enforcement, and protects civil liberties.

4. Do you support redesigning space on the street in order to improve safety for people biking by creating protected bike lanes? *

	Yes
\bigcirc	No

Please explain your choice

Please see my July 2016 Boston Globe op-ed, "The road to fear-free biking in Boston." I believe creating protected bike lanes is one of the most important priorities for Boston's safety, public health, economy, and environment.

5. Do you support the increased use of curb extensions* to improve safety
and visibility at intersections, even if it requires the removal of one to two
parking spaces? *



Please explain your choice

There are many places where this is necessary! Data has shown that businesses along areas where parking spaces are turned into safe pedestrian and/or cycling infrastructure actually see sales increase afterwards, because more people are likely to stop when they can visit by foot or bike compared to just the single passenger that can take up a parking spot for two hours.

6. Do you support implementation of all of the Better Bike Corridors* and other bike projects in the Go Boston 2030 Plan, and commit to making sure all short-term projects are planned and implemented within three years, and long-term projects are implemented by or before 2030? *



Please explain your choice

The demand for these bike projects is already booming across our city, and we can't afford to wait for a 2030 timeline for all projects. Boston needs to adopt more of a tactical urbanism approach of using low-cost ways to introduce protected infrastructure on a rapid timeline, which is then codified in reconstruction projects when funds are available.

Will you address age-friendly walking in your community an issue raised
by many seniors as critical to their ability to "age in community"? If yes,
how? *

•	Yes

	Ν	0
-		

Please explain your choice

I will work with WalkBoston and solicit feedback on where we need to adjust the timing of signals, placement of crosswalks, or other infrastructure to make neighborhoods walkable from ages eight to eighty.

8. Boston has many traffic signals that do not work well for pedestrians. Will you work to make signal timing safer, easier, and more convenient for people walking and using mobility assistive devices at all paces? *

Please explain your choice

As mentioned above, I will work closely with WalkBoston on this issue. We also need to codify policy that increases priority for pedestrians in signal timing and street design. I look forward to engaging the Transportation Department on how they currently judge signal timing (e.g. how much vehicular delay is acceptable) and encourage them to adjust the default choices to better serve pedestrians.

9. Do you support the restriction of on-street parking during rush hour on major thoroughfares in order to provide lanes for the exclusive use of buses? *
Yes
○ No
Please explain your choice
Dedicated bus lanes will help us move more people on our streets. As mentioned above, I am particularly eager to do this close to home, on the Washington Street corridor between Roslindale Square and Forest Hills.
10. Do you support the creation of a staff position within the Transportation Department solely devoted to managing transit in the City of Boston? *
Yes
○ No
Please explain your choice
I was proud to push for and secure two new positions within the Transportation Department, focused on engineering and on outreach in this last budget cycle. We need more staff capacity in-house to be able to implement projects with the scale and speed needed for VisionZero.
11. Do you support exploring new ways of raising revenue to provide the City of Boston with more tools to improve conditions for people walking, using mobility assistive devices, and biking (e.g. congestion pricing)? If yes, please give examples that interest you. *
Yes
○ No

Please explain your choice

Fees for resident parking permits and neighborhood parking benefit districts, carbon fee on offstreet commercial parking, congestion pricing, Fair Share Amendment

12.	Do you support charg	ing an annual fe	e for residential	parking permits? *
	Yes			

No

Please explain your choice

This would encourage those with off-street spaces to use them, freeing up spaces on the street so that residents won't have to spend as much time circling around and around looking for a spot after work (and reducing the emissions from such unnecessary driving). More importantly, it would generate needed funding for safe streets infrastructure improvements.

13. Do you support the rollout of dynamic parking meter pricing* (i.e. increasing meter rates during periods of increased demand) in business districts to free up on-street parking and reduce cars "cruising" for open spaces? *

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

The ideal way to reduce cruising for open spaces is if off-street garage spaces cost less than on-street spots right next to the store. Dynamic parking meter pricing helps to balance supply and demand of parking and recognizes that public streets are public assets. Not only does this reduce emissions from circling vehicles, but removing the headache of needing to circle for spots ends up encouraging people to visit business districts and shop local.

14. Will you help the community of Charlestown work with the City to develop a consensus design for Rutherford Ave and Sullivan Square that balances the community's desire for walkability, connectivity, open space and resiliency with vehicular traffic? (See context in the glossary under 'Rutherford Ave.') *





No

Please explain your choice

The neighborhood badly needs a redesign for this area, and especially as the casino will dramatically increase travel through the area. We can't waste the opportunity to introduce complete streets infrastructure with the federal funding that is available for the project.

Supporting materials

If you would like to submit supporting materials, please include them in the answer field below or email them to info@visionzerocoalition.org

Op-ed on protected cycling infrastructure: https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/07/11/the-road-fear-free-bikingboston/UBnj30slkPwBlzggL70uwJ/story.html

Op-ed opposing MBTA fare hikes: https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/02/28/raisingmbta-fares-not-leadership/5GH3FQlzlej0AwiSgT08QK/story.html

Report of Recommendations from Boston City Council Transportation Policy Briefing Series: http://michelleforboston.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Transportation-Policy-Briefings-Report-3.2017_3.pdf

I will email over two examples of advocacy letters as well. Thank you!

This form was created inside of LivableStreets Alliance.

Google Forms



MICHELLE WU BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Commissioner Gina Fiandaca Boston Transportation Department One City Hall Square, 7th Floor Boston, MA 02201

Dear Commissioner Fiandaca,

April 3, 2017

Thank you for your efforts and that of your staff in elevating active transportation and Vision Zero in Boston through the Go Boston 2030 planning process and this past year's Neighborhood Slow Streets pilot. Over the past few weeks, many constituents have contacted my office asking for letters of support to be selected for the expanded Slow Streets program, seeking Vision Zero treatments and traffic-calming improvements for their neighborhoods. I am writing to confirm that I did not submit any specific letters of support, because I would like to express support for all requests as well as convey some objections to the current application process.

Although I fully endorse ensuring safer streets in Boston, I am concerned that the new process could allocate resources to neighborhoods based on political support or level of civic engagement. We should not be rationing safety in Boston. Safe streets treatments should be available to every neighborhood, and we should increase the resource allocation to make this possible. I supported the Slow Streets pilot phase and the rationale that starting off in a limited number of areas would help fine-tune processes, establish necessary contracts, and test out interventions. However, once this phase of the program is complete, all neighborhoods should have unimpeded access. Allocating resources based on letters of support might favor politically connected groups at the expense of equity and the fundamental right to safe streets for everyone across the city. I do not want to further a system that settles for scarcity, and I did not want to provide support only to petitioners who knew to ask or have a relationship with my office.

Therefore, in line with advocating for infrastructure and safety improvements for all neighborhoods and residents, I will not be offering individual letters of support. I hope that we can work together to adjust this process and the overall level of investment in order to deliver safe infrastructure resources everywhere they are needed in Boston. Please let me know if you have any questions on my position. Thank you for your consideration and your leadership.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu

President, Boston City Council



MICHELLE WU BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Bradford Rice, General Manager Intercontinental Hotel Boston 510 Atlantic Avenue Boston, MA 02210

November 4, 2016

Dear Mr. Rice,

Earlier this week, I was disturbed to encounter a dangerous situation at your property while commuting by bicycle along Atlantic Avenue from City Hall toward Seaport Boulevard. At approximately 1:00PM on Monday, October 31st, there was a vehicle parked partially in your hotel's valet loading zone and partially into Atlantic Avenue, completely blocking the bike lane.

This is a violation of Boston parking regulations that carries a \$100 fine for obstructing a bicycle lane. More significantly, this creates a life-threatening condition for cyclists who are forced to ride around the parked vehicle and dart into vehicular traffic on Atlantic Avenue, or worse, risk being "doored," i.e. struck by a car door as the driver moves to exit the vehicle. Dooring is a major and preventable cause of serious injuries, and just a few months ago the Greater Boston cycling community mourned the death of a cyclist from this situation.

Your valet staff did apologize when they saw me taking a picture and said they would move the car immediately. However, since I posted the image on social media, I have heard from numerous other cyclists who attest to this situation happening on a regular basis at your hotel. Here is a small sample of the messages I received:

"I bike through there every day and it is a problem on a daily basis. The attendants pay no attention to cyclists."

"Every day I commute down Atlantic Ave to get to Seaport Blvd. And every day, I nearly get hit by a valet or taxi who either turns without looking, is stopped in the bike lane, pulls out abruptly, or in the case of today, nearly doors me when they're parked on the sidewalk and open a door into the bike lane...It is by far the most dangerous part of my commute every day, and it's a rare week when I don't get into a near accident in that area. I'm not an inexperienced cyclist either. I am an elite racer, obey the rules of the road, and am courteous and smart when riding to those around me. While I fear for myself, I fear more for those who are new to city biking or commuting, and may not have the bike handling skills to avoid a crash or the awareness that comes with riding experience to be able to predict what inattentive drivers may do."



"I watched someone get doored at this spot this past spring."

"I used to bike by there every day on my way to work. Almost every morning, there are cars, valet or otherwise, delivery trucks, and taxis in that lane. This has forced me to go out into traffic or on the sidewalk. Additionally, just as (if not more) dangerous, there are lots of cars pulling into/out of driveway without looking in bike lane. I've had lots of close calls. It would be fantastic if doormen and doorwomen could help mitigate that."

The valet staff and attendants at your hotel have the ability to greatly improve the safety of cyclists riding in front of your property. All staff should be trained to recognize the severity of danger associated with leaving valet vehicles parked in the bicycle lane, and should prioritize their actions accordingly.

Please let me know how you intend to ensure that this regular, dangerous, and illegal obstruction of the bicycle lane from valet parking operations will be corrected. I look forward to receiving your reply and sharing it with the many residents who share my concern. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu

Boston City Council President

Cc: City of Boston Transportation Department