

# 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/1503520440/Candidate\\_Questionnaire\\_Cambridge\\_-\\_People-centered\\_streets.pdf?1503520440](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/livablestreetsalliance/pages/1689/attachments/original/1503520440/Candidate_Questionnaire_Cambridge_-_People-centered_streets.pdf?1503520440)

Candidate name (first and last) \*

Nadya Okamoto

Office that the candidate is seeking (include district number if applicable) \*

Cambridge City Council

Name of person completing the questionnaire (first and last) \*

Nadya Okamoto

Name and EIN of the committee (if applicable)

Committee to Elect Nadya Okamoto

## Campaign email address \*

contact@votenadya.com

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## Campaign address

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## Campaign phone number

6172999661

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## Campaign website

www.votenadya.com

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## Campaign Twitter

https://twitter.com/votenadya

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## Campaign Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/votenadya/

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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

As an activist, student, and community member within Cambridge, I often find myself walking around the city daily – to class, community events, and often to frequent local businesses for a cup of coffee in the morning. As a candidate, I have been walking at least 4 miles a day around the city of Cambridge for canvassing every afternoon and early evening.

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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 use the Red Line on the T very often, especially to get into Boston to go to meetings for my work with PERIOD.org (I am the Founder and Executive Director), and to meet with other students and community members in Kendall Square (I always work if the weather is permitting to Central Square).

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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 also skateboard around Cambridge as well!

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## 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](mailto:info@visionzerocoalition.org).

Note that there is a glossary available at [www.visionzerocoalition.org/glossary\\_for\\_2017\\_candidate\\_questionnaire](http://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?

In efforts to make streets safe, especially for pedestrians, I will advocate for more funding opportunities from corporate franchise taxes, business license fees, and vehicle-related fees (includes parking fees and rental/lease fees). I am open to allocating funds from corporate franchise and business license revenue because much of the foot traffic around Cambridge is on behalf of transporting people to and from work and businesses here. As a longer-term solution, I will also advocate for funding to come from sales tax on motor vehicle-related expenses. With higher frequency, there is also the opportunity of building more revenue from advertising fees for spaces integrated onto public transportation.

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

If elected, one of my top priorities will be improving public transportation available in Cambridge because I see it necessary to have a safe, convenient, and affordable service to support economic diversity in our city. One of the first things that I would work to implement first is access to user information to better understand the statuses of public transportation available. To make public transportation more accessible, I will fight for more affordable options especially for students and low-income residents. To increase frequency (which is very much-needed, especially on the Red Line and some busses during peak hours) I think that City Council, in addition to advocating for more routes and longer operating hours, should consider reallocating road space to transit and biking.

As a short-term solution, I hope to explore the option of opening up university transportation to allow use for all residents especially during peak hours. There are multiple other campuses that have done this, and it has shown to work well since the campus shuttles run very frequently around heavily populated areas.

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### 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 think that protected bike lanes, although an ideal goal, is a longer-term fight. A faster solution would be to push for designated bike lanes that can be integrated directly into resurfacing and repaving projects that are constantly happening in Cambridge. I would like to see dedicated pedestrian streets happen in this next term, and I think that this is very possible especially on some current one-way streets in Cambridge. These pedestrian streets would not include access for any cars, but would be safe areas for people on foot or wheels to comfortably travel around without concern.

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### 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?

I think that the best way to increasing access to biking in every neighborhood is making it as easy as possible for people to safely hop on a bike -- this includes plans to providing more open bike racks especially in areas of high foot traffic (this will allow for easy integration of travel), and programs to make helmets and bike lights as affordable as possible. Bike racks should also be built around frequently-used transit stops. I think that the City Council could play a larger role in encouraging more affordable programs for people to get their own bikes and secure helmets and bike lights as well.

Of course, adding more dedicated bike lanes and ensuring that biking is a safe option will also encourage more biking in the city (especially for the younger residents). We have seen that this works even now with the increased number of bikers on weekends when the Memorial Drive path along the river is closed off during the summer! There is ample opportunity to publicize biking as a healthier and efficient mode of transportation for residents in Cambridge. If elected, I commit to working on marketing and educational programs to promote biking for all residents.

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## 5. How will you increase funding for biking infrastructure?

I hope to increase funding for biking infrastructure through revenue from parking fees, potential adopt-a-path programs for private funds to be invested into building more protected bike lanes especially, and potential property tax sources as well (especially since the new developments that are both residential and commercial will be bringing in more foot traffic, hopefully by bike).

There are multiple cities who will implement cooperative biking programs between planning departments and redevelopment agencies in the city to cover related costs to fast-track the process of building more bike lanes (this involves splitting costs, perhaps between the actual racks and the installation costs).

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## 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\\_questionnaire](http://www.visionzerocoalition.org/glossary_for_2017_candidate_questionnaire))

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

No

## Please explain your choice

I believe that Vision Zero's mission is crucial to creating a safer and more livable Cambridge. Safety when doing something as simple as trying to get to work in the morning or cross the street should be of utmost importance to city councillors. We know that from January 2015 to December 2016, 3602 total crashes have been reported to Police Department, and out of those, 385 may have involved cyclists. These numbers are unacceptable. It's my priority to reduce these accidents dramatically and to lay the groundwork for zero traffic fatalities in Cambridge.

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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). \*

Yes

No

## Please explain your choice

I fully support steps taken by the city council to reduce speed limits to 25 mph on city-owned streets, but I believe that more steps need to be taken to study areas that need lower design speeds. The expansion of Neighborhood Slow Streets and Neighborways provides ample opportunity to listen to the community and implement solutions in places where it is most necessary. Some examples of traffic calming measures I would support include: textured pavements, more speed tables, raised islands to create slow points, and narrower road lanes.

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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

No

Please explain your choice

The power of automated enforcement cannot be overstated. Even in casual conversation, residents in Cambridge and in other urban areas often reference both speed cameras and red light cameras as main deterrents to speeding and other unsafe driving practices. Therefore, I support the expansion of this technology to support a Cambridge that is fair to and safe for all.

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

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

Yes, but I think that the City Council needs to be careful about which streets they are prioritizing when it comes to building these, and also makes the construction of these bike lanes a very transparent process for all residents. We have seen that these protected bike lanes make an extraordinary difference. When protected bike lanes were protected in New York City, crashes and injuries were reduced by more than 17%, pedestrian injuries reduced by 22%, and there was a significant increase in the volume of bikers and pedestrians traveling on streets. Since the bike lanes were implemented, the total number of injuries dropped by 20%.

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? \*

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

The benefit of the space and visibility provided to any given pedestrian greatly outweighs the loss of a couple of parking spaces.

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6. Do you support full implementation of the City's Bike Plan in all current and future road reconstruction projects, including but not limited to the five year street and sidewalk plan? \*

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

Absolutely. Along the last few months, my campaign team and I have been canvassing all around Cambridge, knocking on hundreds of doors almost every day talking to constituents about what issues they care about. Bike lanes and the need for safer streets continues to come up naturally in conversation. In hearing the demand for a better bike infrastructure in Cambridge, I as a potentially City Councilor, absolutely support full implementation and more for the City's Bike Plan.

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7. Do you support the creation of the joint biking-pedestrian Grand Junction Path and Somerville Community Path through mandates, resolutions or zoning ordinances targeted at adjacent property owners? \*

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

Yes, I do support working in partnership with adjacent property owners because there are so many residents who live in Cambridge but shop and work in Somerville, and vice versa. There are also many graduate students who attend school and work in Cambridge, but because of a lack of quality and affordable graduate student housing available, are living in adjacent cities as well. I definitely believe that we should invest in supporting these residents transporting back and forth in a sustainable manner.

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8. 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

No

Please explain your choice

Yes, absolutely. I care deeply about making sure that every resident, regardless of their age (young or older), feels safe walking around their home city of Cambridge. If elected, I would push to make streets safer by senior citizens especially by extending pedestrian crossing times and more pedestrian safety islands, especially around areas with older residents, to accommodate for walking speeds. I think that for all residents, we could create safer streets by also looking at where in Cambridge it would be beneficial to decrease the speed limit, install speed cameras, and potential speed bumps.

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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

Absolutely, I think that Cambridge should encourage the use of public transportation and sustainable modes of transportation. With a higher number of residents riding busses during rush hour and with an aim to increase frequency of trips and stops, it is definitely an effective option to provide lanes for exclusive use by busses.

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10. Do you support exploring new ways of raising revenue to provide the City of Cambridge 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

Some examples of revenue raising that interest me include: utilizing revenue from dynamic parking meter pricing, vehicle levies on registering cars with the city, land value captures, and hosting community fairs to raise funds. Of course, for any one of these options, I would want extensive research into their effectiveness specifically applied to Cambridge before any next steps.

11. Do you support raising the annual fee for residential parking permits? \*

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

I support this in the cases where there is not an overwhelming need for residential parking. In talking to thousands of constituents across the city, there are some areas where residents have expressed the need for more parking, but where we can, the City Council should definitely discourage car ownership when possible (includes raising annual residential parking fee) in efforts to accelerate more biking in the city. This can also act as a revenue stream to support the building of more bike lanes and safe street infrastructure.

12. 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

I believe dynamic parking meter pricing can be an effective way to raise revenue for other initiatives aimed at protecting cyclists and pedestrians (like those mentioned above). In San Francisco and other major cities, pilot programs have had positive results, boding well for implementation in Cambridge. I most definitely would want to hear from more residents and local businesses on what they believe is most effective for the community.

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## 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](mailto:info@visionzerocoalition.org)

[www.votenadya.com](http://www.votenadya.com)

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