

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

Candidate name (first and last) *

Samuel Gebru

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

Cambridge City Council

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

Samuel Gebru

Name and EIN of the committee (if applicable)

The Committee to Elect Samuel M Gebru

Campaign email address *

action@gebruforcambbridge.com

Campaign address

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Campaign Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/GebruForCambMA/>

About You

1. Do you personally walk to destinations in your community? If yes, how often do you do so?

Yes

No

Comments

I frequently walk from my apartment on Memorial Drive up to Central Square. Whenever possible, I opt to walk, take public transportation, or rideshare instead of travel by car.

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 regularly take the Red line and bus routes #1 and #47

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

While I personally do not ride a bike in Cambridge, I have many friends and even some senior Campaign staff who regularly bicycle for commuting, exercise, and recreation. My Director of Policy and Research uses a bicycle as his primary method of transportation. I am, as a result, extremely sensitive to the interests, needs, and concerns of cyclists.

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?

I will vote to direct the increased revenues from dynamic meter pricing and increased enforcement of bike lane and other traffic violations to improve our public infrastructure. I will partner with our universities and city nonprofits to implement pilot programs to increase mobility in their neighboring areas. I am open to doubling the parking permit fee from \$25 to \$50, but am hesitant to immediately implement such an increase for the reasons discussed in question #11. I would be open to working with state leaders to find additional funding sources beyond Chapter 90 funding to be directed toward local and regional transportation infrastructure, one example being regional ballot initiatives for transportation. I am intrigued by the possibility of working with existing business associations to implement a Business Improvement District to direct funding toward necessary improvements in key areas. Most of all, I would like to work with regional and state leaders to explore the possibility of implementing income- or wealth-proportional traffic violation fines, looking to successful examples in Finland, Denmark, the U.K., and other European nations for guidance.

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

I will work with the MBTA to increase service on the neglected Kendall Square bus routes and to implement transit signal priority on high-traffic streets like Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street. I will partner with neighboring local governments to encourage a feasibility study on regional Bus Rapid Transit. I will pressure the state legislature to allocate funds toward improving the MBTA regionally, and fight privatization efforts to ensure that public transportation remains public.

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?

As Councillor, I would make it a top priority to finally convene the Council's Transit Committee, so that this and other transit issues can get the attention they deserve. We should implement the plan that is already on the table as quickly as possible, focusing on areas historically underserved by bicycling infrastructure. I will use the time between the construction of any new lanes and their completion to identify new areas to target for expansion. Areas like Magazine Street that have been identified in the Bicycle Plan as requiring decreases in traffic volume and speed should be reexamined for additional bicycling infrastructure like shared-priority lanes.

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 will reach out to housing developers and push them to provide repair equipment and sheltered bike parking in newly constructed housing. As we implement the Bike Plan and expand our network of bike lanes, I will ensure that none of our neighborhoods are left behind, with a particular focus on Area Four/The Port. I will work with the Cambridge Housing Authority to look into the possibility of subsidizing Hubway memberships for residents of public housing, and I will work with developers to ensure that as new developments are built they are fully integrated into existing and planned bicycling infrastructure.

5. How will you increase funding for biking infrastructure?

Please refer to my answer for question #1. Bicycling infrastructure is a key part of my holistic vision for safe and inclusive streets.

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)

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 absolutely support Vision Zero. Traffic-related fatalities are often entirely preventable by simple, common-sense design measures. Despite our high walkability, Cambridge is home to two of the most dangerous intersections for pedestrians in Massachusetts. Any death on our streets—whether motorist, cyclist, or pedestrian—is unacceptable. An inclusive Cambridge is a safe Cambridge for all, regardless of means of transportation.

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 approve of the decrease of the default citywide speed limit to 25 mph. I am in favor of further lowering it to 20 or 15 mph on smaller residential streets. I absolutely support traffic calming measures at the level of engineering, education, and enforcement. It's important to note that bike lanes are themselves traffic calming, and should be the first such measures implemented wherever possible. I would vote in favor of a resolution to bring Neighborhood Slow Streets to Cambridge and determine the best ways that we can make our communities safer and more welcoming. Besides reducing pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist fatalities, slow streets are an excellent way for people to get to know their neighbors and build a sense of community. Residents with children are already taking matters into their own hands and deploying visual warning signs to remind drivers of the lives at stake. I want to institutionalize this concern for safety and community and make such ad-hoc measures unnecessary.

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

Despite their unpopularity among motorists, traffic cameras have been proven to decrease traffic-related fatalities by up to 30%. I support the language of the bill cosponsored by Senator Brownsberger, and would like to see whether this enabling legislation accomplishes its intended goals before moving forward to expand it citywide.

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

Despite their unpopularity among motorists, traffic cameras have been proven to decrease traffic-related fatalities by up to 30%. I support the language of the bill cosponsored by Senator Brownsberger, and would like to see whether this enabling legislation accomplishes its intended goals before moving forward to expand it citywide.

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

I have been pleased with the effects of existing curb extensions on our neighborhood streets to improve pedestrian safety and calm traffic flow. My priority would be to focus this effort on the most dangerous intersections (e.g. Mass Ave and Norfolk St. and then proceed from there. Another effective stop-gap measure that I have noticed working well in Huron Village is signal flags for pedestrians. However I feel that pedestrian hybrid beacons (such as those on Oxford St. by Harvard Square) are more effective at getting motorists' attention. I will work with MassDOT to further roll out high-intensity activated crosswalks (such as those at Sixth Street & Binney Street and near the Longfellow Bridge) at dangerous intersections where curb extensions are not otherwise feasible.

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

I am completely behind the full and rapid implementation of the Cambridge Bicycle Plan. I firmly believe that increasing number of Cantabrigians using bicycles for work, recreation, exercise, and transportation will help to reduce local motor vehicle usage and . If we can correctly implement the measures already included in the current Bike Plan, then there is no reason why we cannot replicate such efforts for all future road reconstruction projects in the city. As soon as a road is repaved, it should also be repainted with dedicated or shared-priority bike lanes, counterflow lanes, and high-visibility bike boxes. Now that the Concord Ave Sewer Separation project is nearing completion, Garden St. is an ideal location for a priority bike lane, not merely the shared-priority lane identified in the Bicycle Plan, and one should be implemented as soon as possible.

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

I support efforts to create a safe and environmentally-friendly commuting and recreation corridor for bicyclists and pedestrians, and see Council mandates and resolutions as the best way to accomplish this. I would want to do so in way that does not preclude the possibility of future passenger rail service. A potential connection of the Worcester line of the commuter rail to North Station, as has been proposed in recent years, could make good use of that right of way, and I would want to make sure that the Grand Junction Path does not preclude potential expansion of our mass transit network that could take more cars off the road.

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

Efforts should include installing benches alongside existing shade trees and planting further shade trees on streets that sorely lack them; repairing and maintaining existing sidewalk infrastructure to prevent falls and other accidents; and installing curb extensions at dangerous intersections and particularly wide streets. Pedestrian hybrid beacons, as I mentioned above, are another key measure to be implemented at dangerous crossings that lack traffic signals. Huron Ave and Appleton St. is one such intersection that comes to mind, though there are many others throughout the city.

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

I support the idea, and would look to Massachusetts Avenue and Mount Auburn Street as likely locations. However, in terms of implementation I want to be careful that the loss of metered parking spaces does not drastically decrease revenues that could be used to fund bicycling infrastructure and other transit-oriented projects. I would want to ensure that any lost revenue is made up for elsewhere from some of other sources I've mentioned.

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

Please see again my answer to question #1 from the question set on Page 3.

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

Yes

No

Please explain your choice

Yes, eventually and gradually. Given that this is a flat fee, immediately raising it would primarily impact car-owning low- and middle-income residents. My first priority is to build a Cambridge that encourages alternatives to automobile transportation, in which the need for cars is much lower. Making public transit more convenient and accessible must be a cornerstone of this agenda. Besides increasing the efficiency and availability of transit service by partnering with the MBTA and neighboring local governments, I will explore sources of funding to subsidize T passes for low-income residents, and ensure that new transit will serve all of our neighborhoods. I will work to facilitate business membership in Transportation Management Associations to promote alternative modes of transportation through initiatives like commuter shuttles and the MBTA Corporate Pass. As our zoning regulations are overhauled, I will work to lower required parking minimums and ensure that new zoning facilitates transit-oriented development. Once we have broader and more efficient MBTA service, as well as an expanded network of bike lanes, then I will fully support increasing the fees for residential parking permits.

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 realize that this may be an unpopular policy among business owners (despite the increase in store traffic it would result in) and among motorists (despite the increase in space turnover), but it is one I will stand behind nonetheless. I see the best way to roll this out with the least backlash is with a corresponding marketing campaign to educate the public on the benefits of dynamic pricing. Similarly, I see this as requiring the conversion of remaining "dumb" meters in these districts to smart meters amenable to dynamic pricing, and work to integrate them into the existing Passport mobile app to help motorists find empty spaces. In this respect, I would look to the pilot programs in the Back Bay and Seaport as models on how we could implement such efforts in Cambridge. I realize that this project requires large capital outlay to be correctly implemented, but in the long run it will more than pay for itself.

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

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Google Forms