

Candidate name (first and last):	Jon Spillane
Office the candidate is seeking:	At-large City Councilor
Transportation, housing, and climate issues are currently siloed in City Hall. How do you see these issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]	Dense development that helps people get out of their cars and onto (frequent & reliable) trains and buses, and on foot and bicycles is the best way to fight climate change and promote public safety. We have seen city-wide conversations resulting in a set of development and transit priorities set out in law with the recent zoning reform in Somerville. While the exact settlement in Boston would not look like Somerville's, it is a model to look at for how to have a real conversation with a whole city about what we want the future to look like.
1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Boston? (Check the top 3.)	Subway, Bike (bike-share or personal bicycle), Walking
1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)	4-to-6-unit building, Single-family home
1. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Boston controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit]	<p>As a lifelong Bostonian, I am also a lifelong T rider. I took the 32 bus to the 39 bus to get to high school, an hour and a half long commute, but it was cheaper than owning a car. I still don't own a car, and like every other resident in Massachusetts, I have missed appointments and run late for work because of overcrowded buses, late trains, and traffic jams.</p> <p>I have two big priorities, one large-scale, and one small-scale. My big priority is to see more Bus Rapid Transit lanes created as part of the rethinking of the streetscape and traffic systems we are seeing across Boston. My small priority is to upgrade bus shelters across the city, particularly on lines that see heavy ridership. People need a place to stay out of the rain and snow, no matter how reliable and frequent our buslines become.</p>
The MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) makes important decisions regarding MBTA service, projects, and programs. The FMCB is sunseting in July and the MBTA will be without a dedicated governance board. Will you advocate for a new governance board and a seat on it for the City of Boston, and how? [1200 character limit]	I have already been advocating for a seat for the City of Boston. I wrote an op-ed in support of this that was published in the Dorchester Reporter, and have been collecting petitions in support of a Boston seat on the new FMCB. I see this as an important part of getting our community more engaged in creating the change we want to see in our transportation system. Other communities in Massachusetts have pushed the MBTA and the state to live up to their commitments - we are seeing that right now with the Green Line Extension in Somerville and Cambridge and Silver Line Extension to Everett and Chelsea. Boston needs to do the same thing: ensure the Red Line – Blue Line Connection is finally built & force MassPort to aggressively expand non-car options to get to Logan Airport. Boston residents can control our own destiny when it comes to transit, and I am going to be a part of that.
3. The City of Boston's comprehensive transportation plan, Go Boston 2030, includes the implementation of 26 priority Better Bike Corridors and other bike projects. How will you ensure all short-term projects are implemented within three years, and long-term projects are implemented by or before 2030? [1200 character limit]	Increased funding and public advocacy are what's necessary to get both the short and long term accomplished. Increased bike infrastructure has engendered opposition in some parts of the city, and those residents will be heard. I believe that it is possible to expand bike infrastructure in Boston in partnership with residents and businesses across the City with the right approach to community engagement.

<p>4. Often street projects designed to improve safety involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking and biking. How would you advance safety projects when there is active opposition to narrowing the roadway and removing parking? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Having a collaborative community conversation that puts the costs and benefits up front is essential. The reality is that cars are imposing cost on that specific neighborhood, but those cost and the potential benefits that these improvements can make to the lives of residents and bottom-line of businesses all have to be spelled out. I also believe it is important to listen to the concerns of neighbors about proposed changes - they have good insights into issues that may not seem readily apparent.</p>
<p>5. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) program requires that new developments of 10 units or more include at least 13% of the new units be affordable and income-restricted. There is conversation about increasing the IDP percentage; however, experience and research around the country has shown that setting an IDP percentage too high can actually reduce the total number of new affordable units built. Would you support a new 12 unit building where 50% of the units are affordable over a 60 unit building where 20% of the units are affordable? Why? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>There is vastly more demand for housing than there are available units in our region, so building more units is an essential part of solving the housing crisis. Under this hypothetical, I would support the 60-unit building. In my experience, there is no way the 12-unit building pencils out. In addition, while creating affordable units is important, creating market rate units is also important.</p>
<p>6. Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030 determined that Boston needed 69,000 new homes by 2030. The last public update (Q4 2019) indicated that the city is likely behind schedule. The current lengthy permitting process in Boston is a well-known barrier to meeting this challenge. How would you reduce timelines and unnecessary costs to create more homes for people in neighborhoods across the city? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>There are several things that can be implemented at the City level to help in meeting this goal. One simple thing we could do is expand staffing at BPDA and the ZBA Board. By hiring more project managers and architects at City Hall we can increase the number of projects we can move through City Hall without sacrificing due diligence or quality. Similarly we could increase the number of members on Boston's ZBA board. The increased number of members would increase the number of meetings they can hold a month, and this small increase in city expense would be offset by the increased number of permits which the City would be able to process. Another reform we could implement would be to do a City-wide zoning reform, by increasing the number of projects that can be built as of right, we can reduce the bottleneck we see in our review process.</p>
<p>7. What actions or policies that fall under existing municipal powers (i.e. do not require a home rule petition) do you support to help prevent displacement? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Thousands of deed-restricted affordable housing units in Boston are coming up to the end of their term 'affordable' restrictions in the coming decade. The City has the financial and legal ability and resources to intervene and ensure that these units do not become market-rate and keep their affordability restriction intact.</p> <p>A great example of the City using its financial resources to fight displacement is the Acquisition Opportunity Program. This program provides loans to help responsible investor-owners buy occupied, multi-family rental properties. You can read more about the program at https://www.boston.gov/housing/acquisition-opportunity-program</p>
<p>8. In a new housing development where space is limited, and parking adds substantially to the cost, how would you prioritize space/think about tradeoffs (between more units, parking, open space, etc.)? What would you do in the face of community opposition to developments that seek to balance these priorities? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>I would examine a policy where there is an exchange where we can grant relief from parking minimums and in return we can deed restrict these units so that the occupants cannot apply for resident parking permits. This would solve both the issue of a property not meeting parking minimums while also relieving local residents of their fear of an influx of new cars to the neighborhood competing for already slim parking spaces. This kind of thinking of exchanging parking for a community benefit is something we need to explore particularly when we look at potentially doing city-wide zoning reform.</p>

<p>1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of safety and equity and a lack of effectiveness in improving safety. You can read about these issues in the Boston Vision Zero Progress Report and the Coalition Statement on Gov. Baker Administration's Road Safety Legislation. Do you support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero?</p>	<p>Strongly Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I do not support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero because I believe that police are an essential part of enforcing traffic laws.</p>
<p>2. Police details are often required for construction projects and open streets events -- it would save money and create jobs if community members were allowed to do this work. Civilian flaggers were first authorized in 2008 to help fill these roles in Massachusetts; nevertheless, these projects and events are still primarily staffed by police on overtime, and detail requests often go unfilled entirely. Do you support reducing police involvement in streets-related projects and events?</p>	<p>Strongly Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Putting more officers on the street, including those doing details, is shown to reduce crime by acting as a deterrent.</p>
<p>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). If the State House passes automated enforcement legislation that allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am open to a conversation about the benefits of automated enforcement. I am concerned that the recent successful campaign against expanding the city and state governments' access to security cameras will extend to forbid the use of cameras to do automated enforcement.</p>
<p>4. The Boston Transportation Department's Neighborhood Slow Streets program has been very popular when implemented on smaller neighborhood-level streets, but many injuries from traffic crashes happen on busier arterial roads. Do you support traffic calming for high-crash intersections and roadways of arterials to prevent crashes and save lives, even when it means taking away parking or travel lanes?</p>	<p>Neither Support Nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I support traffic-calming on a case by case basis. Based on conversations I've had with residents, it should be easier to apply to be a part of the slow streets program. Current qualifications should be reformed, so more neighborhoods can access the program.</p>

<p>5. The Go Boston 2030 plan was released in 2017. Do you support updating the plan and working to advance the plan's goals?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>A lot has happened since 2017. Updating Go Boston 2030 with information from the proposed city-wide parking study and the lessons learned from recent experiments in Boston and MA around fare-free buses, open streets, and COVID impacted T ridership is important.</p>
<p>6. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support the City's Go Boston 2030 goal of reducing car trips by 50% by 2030?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am one of the Bostonians who has chosen other ways of getting around - I do not own a car, and I never have.</p>
<p>7. Do you support reassessing the plans and viability of major capital projects, such as the Northern Avenue Bridge or the Rutherford Avenue redesign?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Seaport District is congested with cars, and putting cars on the Northern Avenue bridge won't improve that. Making it pedestrian-only takes folks off of the crowded Seaport Ave Bridge and goes a long way toward connecting the whole district to the public waterfront and the Rose Kennedy Greenway.</p>
<p>8. How curb space is managed can impact many different city functions, including bus service, commercial delivery, and residential parking. When used effectively, curb space can speed up bus service with dedicated lanes, create safe biking infrastructure, and/or allow businesses to quickly and safely receive deliveries. Do you support conducting a city-wide parking study to evaluate how effectively curb space is being used?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>This is a great idea. Gathering data to create a picture of how our streets are currently being used is essential to having an informed debate about the future of our roadways.</p>
<p>9. Do you support charging an annual fee for residential parking permits?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	
<p>10. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Free fares make sense- fares represent only 17% of the T's annual budget, the T spends \$1MM for every \$3MM in fares collected, and we have seen the benefit of free buses in Worcester's and Lawrence's experiments.</p>
<p>11. Boston has many traffic signals that do not work well for pedestrians. Do you support making signal timing safer and more convenient for people crossing at all speeds, including those walking and using mobility assistive devices?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>

<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>As an able-bodied person and as someone who has never owned a car and often walks to meetings, pedestrian safety is important to me, and improving signal timing to improve accessibility is an important equity issue.</p>
<p>12. Do you support ensuring large-scale developments (including Sullivan Square, the Allston I-90 Interchange, and Suffolk Downs) incorporate the community's desire for walkability, connectivity, open space, and resilience?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>New development needs to be forward thinking taking into account the reality of climate change and make real progress to providing multi-modal travel safe and reliable. Bostonians should have an active voice in these city-impacting developments.</p>
<p>13. Do you support prioritizing and advancing the housing production goals outlined in the 2018 update to Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>MA is facing a housing crisis because housing production has not kept pace with economic growth. I have helped Boston meet its housing production goals working at DND working to create more than 1,000 affordable housing units, and will continue to push to meet those goals as a City Councilor.</p>
<p>14. Lawsuits filed against two much needed, 100% affordable housing developments in Jamaica Plain have recently underscored how mandatory parking minimums can be weaponized within the legal system to significantly slow or prevent affordable housing. Do you support the proposal by Councilors Matt O'Malley and Kenzie Bok to update the zoning code to eliminate mandatory parking minimums for affordable housing?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>As someone who worked for DND and Councilor Bok, I know the importance of prioritizing affordable housing and the careful consideration that went into this. Affordable housing developments work on narrow margins, and any relief the City can provide will create more affordable units in Boston.</p>
<p>15. Given the affordability crisis, many are critical of the perceived large amount of new "luxury" construction and would like to see more moderately priced housing options being built. Yet, the city's zoning code mandates strict parking minimums for any new housing development, and parking is expensive (a single structured parking space adds an average of \$50,000 in per-unit costs). This substantial cost often pushes otherwise moderately priced new housing into the "luxury" price range. In order to increase the amount of moderately priced homes in the city, would you support reducing mandatory parking minimums for all new development city-wide?</p>	<p>Somewhat Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>As previously discussed, I think there is an opportunity to reduce parking minimums in exchange for deed-restricting units to prevent owners or tenants from getting resident parking stickers.</p>

<p>16. The City of Boston has devoted significant resources and conducted extensive community processes to develop neighborhood-based plans (i.e. PLAN: JP/Rox, PLAN: South Boston Dorchester Ave). However, the city has failed to incorporate these plans into the zoning code, perpetuating a system of parcel-by-parcel discretion and diminishing public trust in the planning process. Do you support codifying these and future plans into the city's zoning code within a reasonable time frame (six months of a plan's release)?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>We plan to build communities, not just develop properties. I participated in the creation of Plan Nubian Square while at DND, and understand the value of collaboration. These processes point to the importance of city-wide zoning reform, which is one of my top priorities as a City Councilor.</p>
<p>17. The City of Boston and Boston Housing Authority have recently launched a city project-based housing voucher program. Do you support continued funding for this program, and do you support expanding it to include additional funding and/or a mobile voucher program?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Flexibility and mobility is important for families. Expanding the mobile voucher program, in addition to project-based vouchers, will provide that.</p>



Commentary: Boston needs to have a seat on the T's management board

By Jon Spillane

June 10, 2021

Amid the suddenly open Boston mayoral race and the precipitous decline in Covid-19 cases, a long-awaited decision on Beacon Hill about whether Boston residents will have a seat at the table on major public transportation decisions has disappeared from the public debate.

A plan for what comes after the existing Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) was supposed to be made last year, when the T board was originally scheduled to close. Instead, with the pandemic raging, a last-minute deal extended the term of the existing FMCB for another year. That extension is coming to an end on June 30, and there has been no information released about what is next for MBTA governance.

Since the collapse of the T during the winter storms in February 2015, the FMCB had been directly supervising the T, meeting weekly with a goal of improving Greater Boston's public transit system. Last year, a bill proposed by Sen. Nick Collins to set one seat aside for the city of Boston to appoint was put forward, but didn't happen. Beacon Hill needs to continue on the path they began last year and give the communities that support and use the MBTA seats on the new FMCB - one for Boston and one for the surrounding communities.

The next version of the FMCB is going to have a major impact on how our city and our state experience the return from Covid. Making big investments like finally constructing the Red Line-Blue Line connection during MGH's massive planned expansion and electrifying the Commuter Rail line would improve the experience of many residents, whole neighborhoods and huge numbers of suburban commuters.

Smaller decisions, like new dedicated bus lanes, new bus stops, and whether those new Orange Line cars are ever going to see consistent service, will also have a big impact on people's lives.

As a Boston City Council At-Large candidate, I have been talking to voters on zoom, over the phone, and in-person more and more over the last several months, and a major issue that has re-emerged for them is traffic. After a few months of little traffic last March and April, it is now taking even longer than before Covid to get from one end of most neighborhoods to another and it feels even more dangerous to ride your bike through much of the city.

The voters I talk to expect traffic to get worse as pandemic concerns leave most people's everyday lives and workers return to their offices.

As someone who has grown up in Boston and never owned a car, I have spent the last few months masking up and riding on buses and trains to get to campaign appointments. I do not have a lot of company while I do that; ridership is way down. Getting it back up must be a top priority for the next FMCB.

When at month's end, the MBTA moves out of the emergency governance structure it has been under for the last six years, the interests of the communities whose residents rely on the agency, and whose scant local budget dollars pay for its operations, must be directly represented in the new governance setup.

The legislative proposal last year recognized the outsized contributions and interest Boston has in the MBTA and proposed giving our city one seat. Now we need that proposal to become law. In addition, the MBTA Advisory Board that represents the 175 communities that contribute to the T's budget also needs a seat.

In order to make sure that this issue gets the attention it deserves before the annual end-of-session scramble, I am launching a petition drive calling on Boston's Beacon Hill delegation to fight for our city's voice in MBTA governance. Last Saturday, I started canvassing in neighborhoods and at train and bus stations across Boston to ask folks to sign the petition and tell their legislators they want to see one seat for Boston, and one seat for the other MBTA communities. Those who want to sign can also do so on-line at jonforboston.com/representBoston.

The Legislature is going to take some kind of action by the end of the month. I hope other candidates for City Council and for mayor will join me in asking our Beacon Hill representatives to ensure that we have a voice in how the T is run.

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