

Candidate name (first and last):	Jake Wilson
Office the candidate is seeking:	At-large City Councilor
1. How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]	<p>We should be pushing ahead for easy wins where these areas are in alignment, like public transit and high-density housing at transit hubs. For more complex intersections like zoning and road redesign projects we need to be mindful of unintended consequences.</p> <p>Regulating and incentivizing behavior is an important tool at the city's disposal. Additionally, our budget directly reflects our values as a community. As a City Councilor, I'll do everything I can to make sure that our ordinances and spending advance our stated values around these three key areas.</p>
2. Often street projects designed to improve safety and public transit involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. With a new mayoral administration taking over next year, how would you be a strong advocate and leader on the council on transportation issues, even amidst pushback? [1200 character limit]	<p>The tough decisions facing us when allocating space on our sidewalks and streets need to be made in the fairest and most sensible way, then communicated effectively to the public.</p> <p>As a City Councilor I'll be focused on improving mobility here in the following ways:</p> <p>We must reduce automobile cut-through traffic by disrupting this behavior with prohibitions on the routes favored by these drivers and the satellite navigation services. The city should use aggregated cellular phone data to identify driving patterns and address them.</p> <p>I believe public transit should be publicly funded and that no fares should be collected to ride MBTA buses and subways. Cities like ours must push for this at the state level.</p> <p>The development of a bicycle network must move forward with protected bike lanes wherever possible and enforcement of bike lane restrictions elsewhere.</p> <p>We need additional pedestrian safety measures like shortened and highlighted crosswalks and traffic calming measures on our city streets.</p> <p>And all this must happen with our legal obligations to the ADA and moral obligations to our disabled community members in mind, as well as the needs of seniors who depend on car transportation.</p>
1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)	Car, 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.)	Duplex/Triple-decker, 4-to-6-unit building, Over-six-unit apartment building, As a renter, Home ownership, Housing insecure, Single-family home, Urban, Rural
1. Somerville has just initiated a process to create a citywide bicycle network plan which will show how street space will be allocated to create bike infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. How will you work to ensure that this network will be built in a timely manner? [1200 character limit]	<p>This is great news, albeit late. Our neighbors in Cambridge have been working on their bicycle network for years now, and sadly are beating us to the punch in this area.</p> <p>Having a holistic approach to transportation is key. The administration is saying all the right things about involving cyclists and bicycle advocates in the planning process. I'm hopeful this leads to bicycle routes being chosen that align with how people actually bike around Somerville. As a cyclist, I know the importance of flatter routes over routes with a lot of hills. But sometimes the city engages in wishful thinking when it comes to bike routes.</p> <p>Ideally the coming charter reform will give the City Council a more active role in things like transportation planning. In the meantime, as a City Councilor I'd make funding this initiative a priority. I'd also be interested in serving on the Committee on Traffic and Safety, who should be getting frequent updates from the administration on their work in this area.</p>
2. What strategies do you support to improve accessible pedestrian infrastructure, particularly for those with vision impairments or using mobility assistive devices? [1200 character limit]	<p>We need to be maintaining our current accessible pedestrian infrastructure by ensuring that Accessible Pedestrian Signals are operational and tactile warning curb ramps are in good repair. Then we should be expanding these beyond what we currently have.</p> <p>I applaud the city for introducing curb-extending bumpouts that calm traffic and reduce the length of crosswalks. We should be continuing to install these wherever we can in our city.</p> <p>Crucially, we should be consulting the people who rely on this infrastructure. We have a Commission for Persons with Disabilities and they should be involved in planning these projects.</p> <p>The city should be seeking federal and state funding wherever possible to pay for these improvements, but also prioritizing these projects in our municipal budget.</p>
3. SomerVision 2040 mobility goals include reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and prioritizing walking, biking, and transit access. How will you continue to implement the City's Complete Streets Ordinance for both short-term and long-term projects? [1200 character limit]	<p>Having been a part of the SomerVision 2040 process, it's personally important to me to see that community-driven process implemented.</p> <p>Our Complete Streets Ordinance shows a willingness to take a holistic view of mobility into account with future transportation projects, but I'd like to see more detail spelled out. We need to recognize the variety of types of streets we have in Somerville and the different roles these streets play with the different modes of transport. I'd like to see a classification system done on a block-by-block basis for Somerville streets, with different classifications triggering appropriate approaches when streets projects are done.</p> <p>The way the current ordinance is written leaves much of this vague and open to interpretation. Specifying aspects of this -- or at minimum stating that these classifications should be done and automatically trigger the appropriate elements during the project planning would make this ordinance much more effective.</p>
4. Some of the more dangerous roads in Somerville are owned by state agencies, including McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue. How will you work with and push state agencies, such as MassDOT and DCR, to make much needed changes to improve safety along busy corridors? [1200 character limit]	<p>After frustration with MassDOT reached a boiling point this summer, I was heartened to see so many of us at the rally for highway justice in May. And it turned out that calling attention to that issue resulted in some quick action at the state level. There's a lot to do still, and we need to keep this issue visible and continue to keep the pressure on MassDOT and DCR to act.</p> <p>While much of the recent conversation has, rightfully, centered on the so-called "Corridor of Death" near Foss Park, the elevated portion of the McGrath Highway near Union Square is extremely problematic as well. It cuts off neighborhoods from one another, poses a challenge for cyclists and pedestrians crossing that area, and creates a major safety risk to cyclists on the highway by giving drivers a freeway feel that's definitely out of whack even with the too-high 35 MPH speed limit. I want to see MassDOT commit to turning that portion of the McGrath Highway from an elevated freeway to a ground-level boulevard.</p>
5. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Somerville controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit]	<p>We're caught in a Catch-22. We need to reduce the number of automobiles on our streets and increasing bus ridership would be a great way to do this. However, the volume of traffic in our city ensnares buses and results in people being less likely to take public transportation when it's not reliably on time.</p> <p>Putting dedicated bus lanes on Broadway and Mystic Avenue makes sense. I prefer the restricted hours of the bus-only lanes on Mystic Avenue to the 24/7 approach of Broadway. Commuters expect to encounter traffic during rush hour and having a bus blow by them in the open bus lane could cause a re-think of transportation methods. But when drivers find themselves sitting in traffic on a Saturday afternoon on Broadway with the bus schedule limited, this tends to erode support for bus lanes.</p> <p>I'd support some trial programs like discounted or free fares, increased frequency of buses (both during peak and non-peak times), and experimental non-stop connections between hubs (Union Square and Davis Square).</p>

<p>6. Through the Bus Network Redesign process, how would you ensure those who need bus service are able to provide feedback and have their needs heard through the process? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>As with so many things, the issue with community input on the Bus Network Redesign is that the views of actual (and potential) riders often aren't collected well, much less taken into account.</p> <p>Riders should be actively surveyed -- perhaps even while riding public transit -- and the community should be fully engaged in this process with good, targeted outreach. Cultural and language barriers need to be overcome by getting out into these communities and ensuring that surveys are translated into the key languages. Additionally, engaging leaders of these communities to help with this process will help greatly.</p>
<p>7. Living near high traffic roadways causes public health issues, such as increased rates of asthma, due to the pollution caused by vehicle traffic. In Somerville, environmental justice communities experience the burden of bordering I-93. How would you work to mitigate and address issues of health equity in these communities that result from car traffic? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>As someone whose family lives about 800 feet from I-93 -- and as the parent of small children whose lungs are still developing -- this is something I live with on a daily basis.</p> <p>We can't wait for electric cars to save us. We need to act now.</p> <p>The sound barriers being sought along the highway not only reduce the noise pollution, but will help keep some of the dangerous particulate matter from I-93 out of our neighborhoods. These are a no-brainer. The combination of these sound barriers with a vegetation barrier would be an optimal approach, as the vegetation barrier would help filter out small particulate matter.</p> <p>Since we know residents of these neighborhoods are at higher risk for asthma and other health problems caused by vehicle emissions, we should be ensuring that neighbors of I-93 get good health screening. For children, it makes sense to have these screenings done at the East Somerville, Healey, and Winter Hill schools.</p>
<p>8. The MA state legislature is considering creating a new dedicated governance board for the MBTA, emulating the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). Given this, how would you utilize the board meetings to advocate on important issues that might be outside the City's control? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Ensuring that representation on this board goes to public transit advocates and actual riders of the MBTA would be a great start.</p> <p>And eliminating fares for riders of the T is going to be a long, hard fight, but a properly constructed FMCB for the MBTA would help matters.</p> <p>The reality is that we let the rest of the state -- and, frankly, the entire Southern New England region -- off the hook when it comes to funding the MBTA. Without a public transit system, the Boston metropolitan area wouldn't be anywhere near the regional economic powerhouse that it is. There wouldn't be anywhere near the same appeal to live or work in this area if we were solely dependent on private vehicle transportation to get around.</p> <p>So when a state representative from Western Massachusetts balks at spending state funds on the MBTA, they need to be reminded that a giant chunk of the revenues collected by the Department of Revenue and spent in their towns and districts are dependent on the MBTA's existence. The T benefits other parts of the state, even if they aren't personally riding it.</p>
<p>9. Somerville is expected to get tens of millions of stimulus dollars from the federal government. How would you prioritize spending those funds, and how would housing and transportation priorities fit into that plan? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>These ARPA funds are a godsend for our city, and we're already seeing a battle for how they'll be spent here. The reality is that there will be rules and regulations about how these funds can be used, and those will guide a lot of this.</p> <p>I think it's only fair that we start by addressing some of the inequities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This would include things like possibly rental assistance to make renters and landlords whole, as well as addressing the outdated physical plants at the Brown and Winter Hill schools that saw their student bodies relocated to other schools when Somerville students returned to classrooms this past April.</p> <p>This is an opportunity for the city to invest on a major scale in things that generally might be out of our reach because of the price tags attached to them. Things that require acquiring large parcels of land and building things like housing (specifically middle-class and low-income housing), transportation projects (like the neighborhood plans already under way), the aforementioned schools, recreational facilities (like the needed community center we hear so much about), and green space.</p>
<p>10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>The \$30M that was extorted out of our city by the state should be used on transit infrastructure and on addressing the housing instability caused by the GLX.</p>
<p>11. A recent report from the MBTA found that the Green Line Extension (GLX) project will largely benefit higher-income, white residents, after an initial study 10 years ago determined the project would benefit environmental justice communities slightly more. How would you ensure that lower-income residents continue to benefit from transportation improvements and have access to affordable housing near transportation? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>This is a sad reflection of how Somerville has changed over that time. Rents and property values near GLX stops already have seen marked increases relative to the rest of the city, and the start of service along the GLX only is going to make that worse.</p> <p>We need middle-class and low-income housing at T stops. We should try to incentivize private developers to build this. If that fails, this should be done with public funds, potentially with a community land trust. Affordable units are great, but Somerville needs to be thinking much bigger when it comes to building new housing. We need entire developments of housing that people actually can afford.</p> <p>I support co-housing at transit hubs like Davis Square and Union Square. These dorm-style units are hugely popular elsewhere and are a much more attractive option to college students and post-college residents than putting together a coalition of roommates. And by freeing up existing three- and four-bedroom units in our city, we'll be helping keep families in Somerville as well.</p>
<p>12. 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 support the city's policy on removing the off-street parking requirement for new residential developments near transit hubs. In some cases, I would support waiving this for other residential developments elsewhere in the city as well.</p> <p>The clear trend is toward households owning fewer cars or going car-free. Ridesharing is part of this nationally, while locally here in Somerville the prioritization of buses, the coming arrival of the GLX, and the building-out of our bicycle infrastructure all help.</p> <p>A lot of this opposition comes, quite understandably, from seniors and the disabled who rely on cars to get them where they need to be. I support prioritizing handicapped and senior parking in on-street parking spots in business districts with parking restrictions and introducing a senior parking permit.</p>
<p>13. Somerville's inclusionary housing program requires that new developments of over 18 units include at least 20% of the new units be affordable and income-restricted. There is conversation about increasing the program's percentage; however, experience and research around the country has shown that setting the 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>We do keep hearing about how these inclusionary housing requirements are going to scare off developers, but we haven't really seen any signs of that here to date. If we do start seeing developers actually dramatically cutting back on the scale of housing developments to avoid affordable housing obligations, then we can revisit this.</p> <p>I view affordable housing as a small component of sound housing policy. While these affordable units are worth doing because of the difference they make for those fortunate enough to win the literal lotteries required to get them, they don't really move the needle in the big picture. We need to be building large developments of middle-class and low-income housing here, using all tools at our disposal. That's what's really going to make a difference for our city.</p>
<p>14. Increasing density is one of the goals of SomerVision to advance the housing stock and affordability, but Somerville's zoning code restricts how dense housing can be built. There's also pushback because Somerville is already "the densest city in New England" with ~80% of the city made up of two and three family houses. How would you address pushback and ensure that Somerville can meet its density goals set goals in SomerVision 2040? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>I've seen this play out first-hand in my neighborhood here in Winter Hill, where a developer held a public meeting a couple of years ago about a potential project to build a large mixed-use development on the site of the vacant Star Market. But many residents showed up at this meeting and complained about the proposed height of five or six stories. And this development was along Broadway, just blocks away from existing eight-story residential buildings.</p> <p>Somerville is the most densely populated city in New England and we need to be building high at transit hubs and along major corridors like Broadway, Highland Avenue, and Somerville Avenue. Single-story buildings at a transit hub like Davis Square simply don't make sense. Local character is great, but we need to figure out how to maintain that while also constructing buildings appropriate for that area.</p> <p>A lot of this pushback stems from NIMBY attitudes, but the reality is that most of these concerns are for residential areas, not the areas where we need to be building high.</p>

15. 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]	Extending the eviction moratorium buys us time to try to mitigate the looming eviction crisis. We need to be making the most of this time to make sure that we're getting renters who are behind on rent any rental assistance they're entitled to. Additionally, the Office of Housing Stability needs to be fully staffed with the resources required to work with tenants and landlords to try to prevent evictions.
1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of equity and a lack of effectiveness in improving safety. You can read about these issues in the Vision Zero Somerville 2020 Report Card and the Coalition Statement on Gov. Baker Administration's Road Safety Legislation. Do you support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I agree we should be looking to reduce traffic enforcement-related interactions with the police.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Given the current conversation around policing in this country, this seems like a great step forward.
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). The MA Vision Zero Coalition is specifically supportive of the following bills due to their strong protections around equity and data privacy, H.2426, H.2532, S.1545. If the State House passes this automated enforcement legislation and allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	This is a great way to increase compliance while lowering enforcement-related interactions with the police.
4. Do you support filing a home rule petition for the City of Somerville to implement automated enforcement within the municipality if legislation is not passed at the state level? If you are supportive, please describe how you would ensure the crucial equity and data provisions are included in the petition.	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I do have concerns about how the data is being used, especially given our immigrant community and the general climate of the conversation around immigration in this country. On the equity side, it will be important that citation notices are translated appropriately.
5. 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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Some things are more important than a parking spot or a slightly longer travel time.
6. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support the City's SomerVision 2040 goal of reducing vehicular traffic so that 75% of work commutes are made via non-car mode by 2040?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	The new trend toward remote work will help, as will the coming start of service on the GLX, the prioritization of bus service on key routes, and the exciting bicycle infrastructure projects under way.
7. To achieve many of Somerville's stated goals in Vision Zero and SomerVision 2040, additional curb space will need to be reallocated from parking to create safe bike infrastructure, bus lanes, and pedestrian improvements. The current price for residential parking permits in Somerville is approximately \$3.33 a month, while the market rate for off street parking is much higher. Do you support raising the annual fee for residential parking permits?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	By keeping that resident parking permit price at \$40 a year, we're effectively subsidizing everyone in a city increasingly comprised of affluent residents. We need to get smarter about how we're charging for parking, and I support a sliding-scale fee for residential parking permits.
8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I support no fare collection on MBTA buses and subways and subsidization of Commuter Rail fares and passes to encourage ridership.
9. Are you supportive of an ordinance similar to Cambridge's Cycling Safety Ordinance which would require protected bike lanes designated in the upcoming bike plan to be built on city streets when they are being reconstructed?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	We also need to spell out specific streets that we want to see targeted for this.
Adding parking to housing developments is expensive and increases the cost of housing. Mandatory parking minimums for new developments near MBTA train stops have been eliminated. Do you support eliminating parking minimums city-wide?	Somewhat Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	There are some cases where you'd want these minimums in effect, in residential areas where a large development is going in and on-street parking already is limited. But in general I'd be supportive of this.
11. Improvements to affordable housing in Somerville requires not only increasing production and allocation, but also increasing the amount of housing that will maintain its affordable status in perpetuity. Do you support the goal of making 20% of Somerville's housing stock affordable in perpetuity by 2040?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	While I support this, I want to say I think this will be extremely difficult to implement, just based on rates of construction and the existing numbers.

12. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) adds a 1.5% surcharge on net property taxes and qualifies the city to receive matching funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund to help support affordable housing in Somerville. It received a 76% approval as a ballot question in 2015. Do you support increasing this surcharge to further support affordable housing as part of CPA?

Strongly Support

Please explain. [300 character limit]

I do have concerns about how these funds are being allocated currently and would like to see more guidelines put in place about how these CPA funds are to be spent if we're going to be ramping up the program.