

Candidate name (first and last):	Tessa Bridge
Office the candidate is seeking:	Ward 5 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]	Transportation, housing, and climate justice are intertwined and require intersectional solutions. I will consistently bring an intersectional lens to building solutions that meet our community's needs holistically. For example, one limitation to affordable housing is access to parking. We must build higher near GLX T-stops to increase affordable units without parking requirements. By investing in transportation like bus rapid transit, bike infrastructure, and walking corridors, we decrease reliance on parking so we can build more affordable units, reduce energy usage, and create green jobs.
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]	Transportation is the second-highest driver of energy usage in Somerville. In order to become carbon-neutral by 2030, we must aggressively invest in transportation options other than driving, so that people have legitimate options for getting around besides a car. In order to shift our reliance as a city on cars, I will advocate to improve bus reliability and accessibility, expand biking infrastructure, provide free bike lockers around the city and provide free T passes to Somerville residents. Alongside these strong investments in non-car infrastructure, we must also shift the way we think about parking. We need to treat parking as a scarce resource and allocate it equitably so that people who need to drive because they cannot access other means of transportation have priority in accessing parking. This includes educators and other municipal workers who are commuting from towns outside of Somerville. We need to limit the number of parking spaces available across our city, particularly around transit nodes and allocate them equitably so that community members with the highest needs are prioritized.
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, As a renter, Home ownership, Single-family home, Urban, Suburban
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]	Building thoughtful bike infrastructure is an utmost priority of mine. I will work with existing community organizations, including SAAS, and the Somerville Bicycle Safety Commission, to ensure that residents are aware of the plan and to hold the city accountable to implementing it in a timely manner. I will also push for the necessary city departments to have the resources they need to implement the plan in a short timeframe.
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]	We need to make systemic changes to make non-driving modes of transportation - such as walking, biking, and public transit - more desirable, safe, affordable, and accessible. As City Councilor I will advocate for traffic calming measures such as building permanent structures to slow traffic on major roads and to lower the speed limit to 20 mph city-wide. I will advocate building separated bike lanes on side streets in concert with road dividers to encourage cars to drive on major roads and bikes to travel on side roads. I will push for sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb cuts across our city to be upgraded to be ADA compliance, and for the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities as well as the DPW to be fully resourced so that our city has the capacity to register and respond to complaints from residents about areas that are inaccessible. I believe strongly in universal design to make our city accessible to all, and will hold developers and the city accountable.
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]	The Complete Streets Ordinance lays out a goal of "providing for equality in use" between the different modes of transportation. While we have added bike and bus lanes it has not been enough to move away from a car-focused transportation system, which has both dire consequences for our environment and disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities who live along highways and major transportation corridors. I will push for traffic calming measures such as a speed limit of 20 mph, speed humps on major cut-through roads, and diverters to move traffic off of side streets and onto main thoroughfares. We also need to make public transportation more accessible and desirable by providing bike lockers around the city, using city funds to provide free T passes to Somerville residents, and enhancing the bus lanes by implementing transit signal priority. By investing in these types of infrastructure and policies we can make it easier for people to choose other forms of transportation other than cars and reach our goals.
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]	I will use my platform as city councilor to push state agencies to address the unacceptable conditions on these corridors, including working with state agencies and with the Somerville delegation. I will also ensure that residents in Somerville are aware of their avenues to advocate to build change; build power alongside existing community organizations, including SAAS, Sunrise, and Somerville Bicycle Safety; and continually show up alongside my constituents to pressure and advocate state agencies to make needed changes.
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]	I will work with the Somerville delegation to push the T to expand service in Somerville, and then in tandem expand infrastructure. I will also advocate to ensure there are bus lanes across the city with frequent service and frequent stops and subsidize T-passes for Somerville residents.
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]	I would make sure that residents in Somerville are aware and engaged in this process by leveraging multiple avenues such as door knocking; holding community meetings; engaging with existing commissions and councils including the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the Somerville Council on Aging, and with young people by developing a Youth Council; and phone and text banking. As an organizer with a background in community engagement, I have experience in holding robust community processes and will bring that experience to this process.
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]	We must use every tool at our disposal to rectify these injustices, both within our city planning and policy-making and by advocating strongly at the state level. One strategy is to invest in traffic calming measures to make it more difficult for cars to use residential streets as cut-throughs. This includes physical infrastructure such as speed humps, chicanes, and diverters, as well as lowering the speed limit to 20 mph city-wide. This will also make it safer for people who live in Somerville to walk and bike, leading to decreased pollution and better health outcomes. To offset negative health impacts I will push to increase green space in parts of our community abutting the highway. This takes creativity and commitment given all of the competing needs for Somerville's limited square footage. As City Councilor I will advocate to prioritize tree planting and maintenance, require developers to include green space in building plans, and build greenways to provide multi-use spaces for recreation particularly in parts of our community most impacted by environmental injustices.
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]	I would work with the T-riders union to push strongly that the board be composed of T workers and riders. Then I would partner with the new board, as well as the Somerville delegation to push to protect public ownership of the T, expand services in needed areas, and reduce the cost of ridership. The MBTA is a regional service and working with this board would allow us to support region-wide solutions to issues including traffic, pollution, and climate justice.

<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>I will prioritize spending these funds to invest in much-needed infrastructure including traffic calming measures like diverters, chicanes, and speed bumps; water and sewer systems; repaving roads; and bringing sidewalks up to ADA compliance. I will also use these funds to launch a cahoots-style public safety program as well as build a much-needed youth and community center. This is also an opportunity to engage in a participatory budgeting process with Somerville residents to learn what residents' priorities are and bring those into our budgeting process.</p> <p>I will prioritize spending these funds to invest in much-needed infrastructure including traffic calming measures like diverters, chicanes, and speed bumps; water and sewer systems; repaving roads; and bringing sidewalks up to ADA compliance. I will also use these funds to launch a cahoots-style public safety program as well as build a much-needed youth and community center. This is also an opportunity to engage in a participatory budgeting process with Somerville residents to learn what residents' priorities are and bring those into our budgeting process.</p> <p>I will prioritize spending these funds to invest in much-needed infrastructure including traffic calming measures like diverters, chicanes, and speed bumps; water and sewer systems; repaving roads; and bringing sidewalks up to ADA compliance. I will also use these funds to launch a cahoots-style public safety program as well as build a much-needed youth and community center. This is also an opportunity to engage in a participatory budgeting process with Somerville residents to learn what residents' priorities are and bring those into our budgeting process.</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>I propose that these funds are used to mitigate displacement and address the concerns outlined in a recent study that shows that white wealthy people will benefit most from the Green Line Extension. Some specific actions I will push for are to fund the right to counsel for tenants, build social housing around T-stations, fund programs for small businesses along the T-line, support worker-owned co-ops to open around T stations and make the T free.</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>It is a top priority of mine to ensure that the benefits of the GLX are directed towards working people in Somerville. There are two T-stops opening in Ward 5 and residents and local businesses have borne the brunt of years of construction. In order to ensure that the Green Line does not lead to more displacement and does not only benefit high-income white residents, I have made strong commitments to build affordable and social housing around T-stops, subsidize T passes, advocate for grants and loans to small businesses along transit lines to mitigate rising rents and property values, and support unions and worker-owned coops so that workers in our city are earning good wages. Somerville has benefited financially from the incoming Green Line already. Developers are anxious to build here and companies are excited to open offices in our community. The revenues that come from this development must be directly invested in working people. We can do this by subsidizing rents, creating first-time homebuyer programs, buying land via the Community Land Trust, and building social housing. We have the resources to do this, and I will be a stalwart advocate to make this a reality.</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>We need to develop a comprehensive plan around parking city-wide that supports equitable access to parking. As part of such a plan, I will push for below-ground parking to be incorporated into new development. Throughout the planning and implementation process, I will engage the community in meaningful ways and work to mitigate the impact of changes through creative alternative solutions to parking, including micro-route transit systems funded by the city.</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>Somerville is a thriving city that is a highly desirable place to work and live. We must value ourselves and our community highly in negotiations with developers. This includes requiring developers to create Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) with neighbors and workers to ensure that large-scale new developments reflect and meet the needs of our community. It also includes prioritizing affordable housing in new development. As such I will push for the highest percentage of affordable units including increasing the percentage of affordable housing above 20%.</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>Part of Somerville's culture is that we are a very dense city - density is part of the vibrancy of our community. In order to meet the needs of our community we need to continue to build, and build up, to create more housing and to support working people to remain in the city. And we need to build in an equitable way so that density is distributed across the city and there is integration in housing stock in all neighborhoods. We also need to build family-sized and ADA-accessible units so that all people in our community have access to quality housing.</p>
<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]</p>	<p>Beyond the many solutions outlined above, I would also expand housing stabilization services through the Office of Sustainable Housing. Including creating a fund to cover moving costs for lower-income residents, extending the eviction moratorium, and fully funding tenants' right to counsel for residents so that anyone facing eviction has access to a lawyer. I will also advocate for rent control at the state level.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I believe strongly in decreasing the footprint of policing while building life-affirming institutions that center those most impacted by systems of oppression and that is grounded in community health and wellness.</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 Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>It is not necessary or cost effective to have armed police officers at traffic details, construction sites or street events. This makes members of our community feel less safe, and although oftentimes the municipality is not directly responsible for paying for these details.</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). 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?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	

<p>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.</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<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 SomerVision 2040 goal of reducing vehicular traffic so that 75% of work commutes are made via non-car mode by 2040?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Somewhat Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>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?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support