



**Catia Sharp**

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QUESTION	ANSWER
Somerville contains several environmental justice communities, with several neighborhoods impacted by air and noise pollution from highways running through them. What would you do to ensure that transportation priorities, specifically bicycle infrastructure improvements, contribute to improving equity in Somerville?	As transportation and particularly, bike-friendly policies are implemented, it is important that transit justice is front-and-center. While Somerville and our neighbors have been on the forefront of adopting bike-friendly initiatives, many parts of Somerville are disconnected from bikeable infrastructure. Somerville is the only community in Massachusetts with a “Gold” rating from Bicycle Friendly America (BFA), but even here only a quarter of the city’s roads are bikeable. Unsurprisingly, neighborhoods with higher concentrations of non-white and low-income residents are less connected. This includes East Somerville, which has Interstate 93 intersecting it and is a community in need of environmental justice. In fact, the PlacesForBikes City scorecard gives Somerville a paltry 1/5 stars in its evaluation of demographics gaps in the bike network, lower than Boston and Cambridge. This makes it clear that new bicycle infrastructure and investment should be allocated to currently underserved communities like East Somerville. I would also seek to improve not only bike, but pedestrian infrastructure along the I-93 corridor to improve safety and equity; for example, deaths on Mystic Avenue’s unsafe pedestrian crossings are notorious, and access to the retail district at Assembly Row from East Somerville through a highway underpass is unpleasant and downright dangerous, requiring pedestrians to cross two highway on/off ramps. Additionally, I would support adopting BFA’s recommendation for Somerville to “develop bicycle education and encouragement outreach methods and programs that specifically target families, women, seniors, low-income, and non-English speaking communities.”

<p>While almost all streets in Somerville are maintained by the city, several of our most dangerous roads (McGrath Highway, Alewife Brook Parkway) are under state jurisdiction. If elected, what is the first thing that you would do to improve safety on those roadways for people on bicycles and other vulnerable road users?</p>	<p>Roads under state jurisdiction are directly managed by either Mass DOT or the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). For Alewife Brook Parkway, I would support recommendations made in comments to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization like: traffic calming measures, especially at intersections, to promote pedestrian, bike, and bus crossings; clarify authority and roles of MassDOT, DCR, and the City, including as it relates to excluded vehicle types; address the problem of standing traffic, especially during rush hour, which causes significant pollution. For McGrath Highway, I support the current plans developed by MassDOT with community input to lower McGrath into a boulevard with bike lanes and safe pedestrian infrastructure. As a legislator, I would seek to play a critical role in passing funding and other provisions through the legislature related to the MassDOT and DCR projects needed for improving these two roadways, and ensuring communication and information flow between the state agencies involved and our local community.</p> <p>BFA's State Report Card rates Massachusetts as 5th of 50 states overall, but Massachusetts comes 49th out of 50 in terms of "Legislation &amp; Enforcement", largely due to the absence of legal protections for bicyclists and pedestrians. I would support the immediate passage of a Vulnerable User Law and a Safe Passage Law - these provisions are accounted for in House Bill 3092 - An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities. This Bill has already been passed in the Senate, and if elected, I would advocate for its passage in the House.</p>
<p>Federal and state transportation funding typically directs little budget to improving bicycle infrastructure. If elected, what would you do to ensure that a greater share of transportation spending is directed to people on bicycles and other vulnerable road users?</p>	<p>Data indicates that Massachusetts spends approximately \$2.96 per capita on biking and walking programs every year. It is important to expand this dramatically, with the concerted goal of incentivizing cycle and pedestrian travel over motor vehicle use. In addition to the goal of increased connectivity and transit justice, this must be a crucial element of any enacted transportation legislation. The transportation sector is the foremost contributor to Massachusetts' total carbon emissions. If elected, I would ensure that programs like the recent \$50 million to the Complete Streets initiative allocate appropriate resources to cycling and pedestrian projects to encourage comprehensive municipal strategies around biking and pedestrian infrastructure. I will also advocate for increased funding for specific projects in traditionally overlooked, high-priority communities, and work to hot-spot specific dangerous roads and intersections at the state level to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian investment as part of state roadway planning.</p>

<p>What have you done or worked on in the past that shows your record of being involved in bicycle safety, active transportation, or safety improvements for vulnerable road users?</p>	<p>As someone who has commuted via nearly every form of transportation other than personal motor vehicle (and never owned a car while living in Somerville), I understand the need for urgent improvements to cyclist and pedestrian safety. I commuted by bicycle every day from Somerville to the State House while working in Governor Deval Patrick's Budget Office, I worked extensively on the Governor's plan to raise \$2 billion annually in new revenue for transportation and education, while making the tax code more progressive. From that experience, I understand not only how to effectively and progressively raise revenue at the state level, but also specifically what the costs and problems are with our current transportation system. This is why a core element of my platform is not only raising revenue to fund necessary maintenance projects, but upgrading our transportation infrastructure (including public transportation, but especially with regards to pedestrian/cyclist safety) to bring us toward a net-zero carbon future. It is possible to live, work, and play in Somerville without owning a personal vehicle, but we need to make getting around easier and safer to encourage more people to do so.</p> <p>Bicycle advocacy runs in my blood. As a child growing up in Burlington, Vermont, I helped my father in various efforts to promote bike paths and biking, including his advocacy efforts to get the Burlington Bike Path constructed and extended through a bike-only bridge into Colchester</p> <p>(<a href="https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2016/08/22/effort-reconfigure-burlington-bike-path/89003852/">https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/local/2016/08/22/effort-reconfigure-burlington-bike-path/89003852/</a>) This passion for biking infrastructure is one of the reasons I have chosen Somerville as my adult home: Somerville is uniquely situated to be a core hub for a regional non-vehicle economy. I hope to pursue making that vision of dramatically less cars and more pedestrian and biking mobility if elected.</p>
<p>Many crosswalks in Somerville use automatic / timed pedestrian crosswalk signals. However, most pedestrian crossing signals in state-owned intersections are not automatic. Would you support state agencies making all crosswalk signals automatic at state-owned intersections?</p>	<p>Yes: I support this because automated crosswalk signals reduce the number of pedestrians who cross the street against the signal, which is dangerous. Studies show that many pedestrians ignore the button or believe there is a button malfunction when the wait is long for the signal to walk. Importantly, state-owned intersections tend to be intersections on our most dangerous roads, because the state owns the most major arteries like Parkways and highways. So this is an important step to making our most dangerous crossings safer.</p>