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2024 State Primary Election – Somerville Bike Safety Questionnaire

1) How do you get around Somerville?

Locally in Somerville, I bike most often to get around. The only time I use the MBTA or a car is when I have to wear more formal business attire for the State House. At some point, I want to make the plunge and get an ebike so that I can wear business attire and still ride my bike into the State House. I mainly use my car to travel to prisons throughout the state.

2) A number of people have been killed in the last few years while crossing the street on state-owned roads like McGrath Hwy and Mystic Ave. How will you work with the Mayor and City Council of Somerville to ensure that state agencies like MassDOT work to make their roads safer for all users?

I have consistently met with advocates, fellow state legislators, city electeds, and city administration about some of the most dangerous roadways throughout Somerville and strategized on how we can improve them. I've worked closely with all stakeholders on how we can best convey and persuade MassDOT to make these direly needed changes. This includes requesting more public hearings to elicit input from residents most impacted by these dangerous roads and intersections, as well as supporting walking tours, rallies, and community events to raise awareness, build community power, and make clear demands. We have also worked with the federal delegation to push for funding to ensure these improvement projects can move forward and be completed.

3) The MBTA has been providing substandard service for Somerville residents for a long time and especially since 2022 when the federal government mandated slower service due to safety issues. As state representative, how will you advocate for better quality of service from the MBTA for Somerville residents? What should the MBTA or other state or city agencies do to help mitigate impacts on Somerville residents while efforts to fix public transit are happening?

Our city is deeply interconnected with our state's public transit infrastructure in that we have the Orange, Red, and Green Lines, and many major bus lines all running through Somerville. In order for people to fully utilize these modes of public transportation, we must continue to work on the decades of repair backlogs to reduce slowdown times and increase the amount of on-time trains. This can only be done through increased funding for the MBTA. I have been a vocal advocate for funding over \$1.6 billion more annually into the MBTA so that we can have a safe, reliable, and free public transportation system that will reduce the number of cars on the road. Until these repairs are completed and we have to impose temporary changes to train service, the MBTA must inform residents of upcoming repairs and shutdowns with advance notice and provide shuttle service that



runs consistently and on time and is fully staffed. This is why I am very pleased that through our advocacy, the Healey administration under Phillip Eng's leadership has grown its depleted workforce of bus operators for the first time in years and has authorized a more competitive labor contract with the union, which included a \$30 per hour starting wage for bus drivers (\$8 higher than the previous contract).

4) What specific issues that advance safe streets for vulnerable users would you prioritize for state legislative action?

I think the three most important issues are: 1. fully funded, reliable, and free MBTA, 2. reducing involvement of law enforcement in traffic stops, especially pretextual traffic stops, and other forms of street safety enforcement involving pedestrians and cyclists (such as jaywalking or cyclists running a red light), and 3. safe, protected infrastructure for bus, bikes, and pedestrians.

Since taking office, I have fought for more funding for the MBTA and will continue to push for a fully funded rail system. I want to see the MBTA continue to make the vital repairs that it has been and remove all slowdowns throughout the system.

Traffic stops are the most common way residents come in contact with police and cause harm to our community from racial profiling to police brutality disproportionately targeting Black and Brown people. In just the last five years, police officers killed more than 400 people during traffic stops who were not armed. Yet, there is growing evidence that traffic stops do not effectively reduce serious and fatal crashes and they have not been proven to improve public safety. As such, I believe we must pass legislation that reduces the involvement of law enforcement in traffic stops, such as automatic traffic enforcement, replacing law enforcement's role with civilian alternatives and other ways to reduce pathways of residents involvement in the criminal legal system. As an example, last session we passed the Work and Family Mobility Act as a step towards reducing the risk of family separation and so that a routine stop is less likely to lead to arrest and to ICE detention for immigrant neighbors.

Rather than traffic enforcement, the root solutions require investing in infrastructure improvements. People often do not take the bus because it can be slow and unreliable. The more bus lanes we have, the faster buses become while increasing the number of on-time arrivals. We also must continue to build out fully protected bike lanes and make intersections safer for all users including pedestrians and cyclists. These improvements have a compounding effect because when people have safe, reliable, and cheaper alternatives to cars, they are more likely to use them and this reduces the number of cars on the road, further reducing congestion and our carbon footprint, and making it even safer for those choosing alternatives to personal vehicles.