

TRANSPORTATION & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

A POLICY BRIEFING FOR THE NEXT MAYOR OF BOSTON

AUGUST 2013

SPONSORED BY

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INTRODUCTION

STEPHANIE POLLACK

This Briefing Book has been prepared by a group of non-profit organizations, planners and advocates who have been working, separately and together, to make Boston and other Massachusetts communities more livable. These groups work to ensure that the Commonwealth's transportation system and the transportation systems in Boston and its surrounding cities and towns meet the needs of residents, workers, students and visitors – now and in the future. We have prepared this briefing book and are sponsoring the Boston Mayoral Candidate Forum on Transportation & Livable Communities on September 17 at the Boston Public Library, because we believe that Boston's next mayor needs to prioritize improving the City's transportation systems.

Although the City of Boston has not undertaken a comprehensive, citywide transportation planning process since 2000, recent years have seen many important and successful initiatives to improve and expand the City's network of transportation services and options. These include the completion of the "Big Dig;" transit improvements for the Fairmount Line corridor and the growing success of the Silver Line service to the Innovation District and Logan Airport; the creation of Boston Bikes and launch of the Hubway bike share system; and the adoption of a Complete Streets policy and related efforts to reign in highways in favor of neighborhoods, on projects ranging from Rutherford Avenue to the Casey Overpass. At the same time, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – created by state reform legislation in 2009 – has moved to change policy and investment at the state level to embrace sustainability (through GreenDOT), health (through the Healthy Mobility Compact) and "mode-shift," with a statewide goal of tripling the number of trips made on foot, bikes and transit.

The new mayor will have the opportunity to build on this foundation and, we hope, weave these separate efforts into a comprehensive and aggressive effort to provide excellent transportation services, infrastructure and options to Boston residents, businesses, institutions and visitors. We believe that the dozens of policies and proposals in this briefing book can help the mayor achieve this goal. Before addressing these specific issues, however, we want to provide some important overall context with respect to the transportation challenges and opportunities facing the next mayor of Boston.

All residents need better transportation choices: A world-class transportation system that provides residents of all ages and incomes with real options for getting around the City is a critical element in the quality of life for Boston residents. Too often, transportation issues are framed as being about automobile owners/drivers vs. "others", such as pedestrians, bicyclists and transit-users. In fact, most people use different types of transportation at different times and for different purposes. The 60% of Boston households that have access to at least one car – as well as the 40% of households without a car – all benefit from better walking, biking and transit options. The City's residents cannot be divided neatly into drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit-users – they are people who get where they need to go using a combination of walking, biking, transit, and driving. Transportation can and should be an issue that helps connect the city and its neighborhoods and residents, not one that pits people against each other.

Good transportation is an economic development opportunity: Transportation is a critical component of the city's economic attractiveness to business and institutional employers, workers and visitors. The Mayor of Boston is in reality a chief executive of two cities. One is a city with just over 600,000 full-time residents. The other is a city with a weekday daytime population that swells by 40% (the second greatest proportional increase of any city in the US, after Washington D.C.). According to US Census data for 2010, the city's daytime population grows by nearly a quarter of a million workers every day to 840,000 people. If the transportation system does not meet the needs of these workers, their employers will not continue to choose to locate in Boston and developers will not continue to build and rehabilitate buildings to accommodate those companies. The highway network and parking capacity of the city simply cannot accommodate this daily influx unless a substantial number of these workers leave their cars at home and carpool, use transit, or walk or bike to their jobs.

A mayor must be a transportation leader, partner and advocate: Across the United States, the election of a new mayor and the appointment of new transportation leadership has transformed not just transportation but the economic vibrancy and quality of life in the country's major cities. From Antonio Villaraigosa in Los Angeles to Rahm Emanuel in Chicago to Michael Bloomberg in New York, mayors have successfully put exciting new transportation ideas, policies and investments at the center of their administrations. Bostonians deserve the same kind of leadership on transportation, infrastructure investment and livability initiatives from our next mayor. But like most big city mayors, Boston's mayor will not be able to tackle many transportation challenges singlehandedly. The Mayor of Boston does not operate the transit system or even all of the city's major roadways (which are owned by diverse authorities including the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Port Authority). And while recently-enacted state legislation provides substantial new resources to invest in transportation, including the MBTA, there is not enough funding to make all of the needed investments in improved transit and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. So a "transportation mayor" needs to advocate for more resources and better transit service and to partner with state agencies, the MBTA, businesses, institutions, and others to ensure that Boston gets the transportation system it needs and deserves.

We are excited to help educate mayoral candidates and voters about these important transportation challenges that are so vital to Boston's residents and economy. We look forward to publicizing candidates' answers to our transportation and livability questionnaire and to the September 17 forum as opportunities to ensure that transportation and livability are central issues in the mayoral election and for the next mayor of Boston.

PROVIDE RESIDENTS AND COMMUTERS WITH MORE & BETTER **TRANSPORTATION CHOICES**



Because of the MBTA transit system, the city’s compact size and walkability, and the inconvenience and costs associated with car ownership in many Boston neighborhoods, Bostonians drive far less than residents of other Massachusetts cities and towns. While the average Massachusetts household drives over 43 miles daily, the average Boston household drives just under 23 miles daily. All Bostonians rely on a transportation system that provides as many transportation choices as possible.

For most residents, a good transportation system is one that allows them to get where they are going on transit, on foot, or on a bicycle. And at time when the City and its residents are focused on the need to live healthier lifestyles in order to reduce the epidemic of obesity that affects one in five Boston residents, getting out of cars is one way for Bostonians to embrace healthier lifestyles.

A growing number of Boston residents are choosing to live car-free or “car light”. Nearly 40% of households in Boston do not own a car. One-third of Boston residents are between 18 and 34 years old, and are increasingly likely to take advantage of the many alternative means of transportation they are offered. According to data released by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the number of registered vehicles in the city has dropped from 59 vehicles per 100 residents in 2008, to 49 per 100 residents today.

While the majority of city residents need or want a car for at least some of their transportation needs, many of them also want – and want their children, parents and neighbors – to have better transportation choices. And everyone – especially those who drive around the City of Boston – benefits when more of their fellow travelers are on the T, sidewalks and bike lanes rather than on already congested streets and highways.

Boston’s last citywide transportation planning process took place in 2000 and the resulting Access Boston plan was designed to cover the period through the year 2010. It is long past time for the City to launch a comprehensive, inclusive and innovative effort to rethink its transportation future and to reorganize city government to be able to deliver on the results of such a process.

PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Reorganize the city's transportation governance** to address the full range of transportation-related activities, including creating an Office of Transportation Innovation and appointing a Complete Streets Coordinator to ensure that the city's policies are carried out through all of its agencies and work.
- **Establish citywide policy principles** to govern all transportation policies, investments and planning, such as San Francisco's strategic goal of making "transit, walking, bicycling, taxi, ridesharing and carsharing the preferred means of travel" in the city and Chicago's "pedestrians first" policy which states that "the walking public will be given priority in the design and operation of all [transportation] projects and programs."
- **Launch a transportation master planning process that addresses the needs of all residents and neighborhoods**, as well as the business and institutional community, and seeks to redefine and reimagine the city's transportation system (like the recent Chicago Forward Plan.)
- **Use multiple, innovative strategies for engaging the greatest number of Boston residents and stakeholders** in the transportation visioning/master planning effort (like the still-ongoing moveDC effort in Washington, D.C.)
- **Establish performance measures** for the city's transportation system that address the convenience and safety of all of the system's users (such as New York's "Measuring the Street" metrics for 21st century streets.)
- **Use the process currently underway to reconsider century-old taxi regulations** to address the growing number of "taxi alternatives" which, if measures are taken to ensure that they are safe and provide service fairly, can help make it easier for Boston residents to choose car-free or car-light lifestyles.
- **Implement the specific recommendations to improve walking, transit and biking presented in this Briefing Book.**

ENGAGE ALL BOSTONIANS IN DECISION- MAKING ON TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES & PROJECTS

2

Everyone uses the transportation system and therefore everyone can participate meaningfully in efforts to shape transportation plans, policies, and projects. Community participation can help both to ensure that transportation planners and engineers correctly understand the problems to be addressed and generate creative solutions to those problems. In short, transportation planning and projects benefit from real community input through an active and transparent community process. When the public is given an opportunity to learn about and engage in the development of transportation projects, they are more connected to the outcome and have greater ownership over the project, ensuring public satisfaction.

In recent years, the City of Boston has taken steps to ensure that transportation projects involve community input. An effective community process is based on respect for people's time and ideas, and respect for the community as a whole. When people see that they are being dealt with fairly and honestly, they will work hard to make the process work, which will result in a better plan and a better project. The next Mayor should continue to improve on community process and participation.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Create clear parameters for projects**, ensuring that the community understands what is feasible and knows the budget and the timeline for each project.
- **Create clarity around decision-making** by explaining to residents whether they will be able to make the decision or simply provide input. Explain the ways that community input will influence the final outcome.
- **Create ground rules for participation** that set clear expectations for the decision-making process, including meeting formats and how communication will occur.
- **Provide adequate notice for public meetings** and hold meetings at times and locations that make it easy for community members to attend. Advertise meetings through a wider variety of formats, including social media to reach younger residents and flyers in neighborhoods for residents who don't regularly use the internet. Ensure that there is competent translation for community members who don't speak English.
- **Provide adequate time** for community members to comment on proposals.
- **Ensure that public meeting facilitators are objective**, skilled, and open.
- **Engage with communities to better understand needs**. Reach out to residents on the sidewalk, at bus stops, at churches, and community centers to determine neighborhood priorities. Focus on walking and transit-dependent populations.
- **Promote inclusive, direct community processes** to engage a diverse community of cyclists, especially those who are dependent upon bikes for daily transportation.
- **Engage community groups as well as bicyclists and pedestrians on ways to increase biking and pedestrian transportation options** and keep bike riders and walkers safe. Engage a diverse community of both cyclists and walkers, reaching out to them on the street and sidewalk, and using creative strategies to engage those who may have difficulty or hesitation in attending planning meetings, such as persons with disabilities and non-native English speakers.
- **Increase funding for planning, especially community engagement**. All kinds of planning, from the most comprehensive master plan to the smallest transportation improvement, could benefit from more robust community engagement.

PROTECT & ENHANCE BOSTON'S LEGACY OF **WALKABILITY**

3

Boston is a compact city – at just under 50 square miles it is the second smallest major city in the U.S.– and therefore walking is a convenient and popular form of getting around town. Boston's WalkScore® is 79, making it the third most walkable city in the country behind New York and San Francisco. The Boston Transportation Department estimates that 30% of all trips made in the city are completed on foot, making walking Boston's first and most fundamental form of transportation and an important source of physical activity for people of every age, income or ability.

Walking is part of every single trip we take – every transit trip, for example, begins and ends with a walking trip. While roughly one in seven employed Boston residents walk to work, a full 48% of Boston residents walk at least part of the way to work each day.

Walking is a critical element of healthy and sustainable communities. Yet walking is frequently given inadequate attention in transportation planning, and designs for streets and sidewalks often lack elements that would make them safe, convenient, and attractive for pedestrians. Over the last five years, the City of Boston has begun to give greater attention to walking. In 2009, Mayor Menino convened the Boston Complete Streets Advisory committee, laying the groundwork for better sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure. Now is the time for the city's new mayor to accelerate efforts to make walking an even bigger and better part of the lives of all of Boston's residents.

PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Create the position of Boston Walks Director** (similar to the current position of director of Boston Bikes) to improve pedestrian safety and enhance city walking conditions.
- **Re-time traffic signals to provide safe and convenient street crossings** for walkers. Boston currently has many traffic signals that do not function well for pedestrians, including very long waits, short crossing times, and requiring pedestrians to push a button to get a WALK. Increased funding is needed to re-engineer signal timings and replace outdated signal infrastructure.
- **Slow traffic speeds and calm traffic** in busy retail areas, on residential streets, near transit stops, and on routes that connect residents to schools and open spaces.
- **Make all of Boston's streets and sidewalks comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and all local and state accessibility requirements.
- **Improve sidewalk snow clearance**, including a municipal commitment to clear a targeted set of crucial sidewalks, curb ramps and intersections, and a vigorous public information campaign about homeowner responsibilities.
- **Work with the MBTA to provide striped crosswalks at all bus stops** and to promptly clear snow at T stops.

WORK WITH THE MBTA TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

4

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA or T) is the fourth-largest public transportation system in the country and operates the oldest subway system in the U.S; it is the only transit system that offers daily transit service via heavy rail, light rail, commuter rail, bus, trolleybus and ferry. Public transit use in Boston and the metropolitan region has been growing in recent years, with the T consistently serving 1.3 million riders each weekday. The Urban Land Institute and Dukakis Center have projected that ridership will likely grow to 1.4 - 1.7 million weekday trips by 2021, requiring the already bursting-at-the seams system to serve an additional 100,000 to 367,000 daily riders within a decade.

Boston residents are heavily dependent on their transit system, with one-third (33.1%) of employed Boston residents using public transportation as their primary means of commuting to and from work each day. The system is equally important to non-residents commuting to jobs in the City and to many of the more than one million annual visitors to Boston. In addition, the transit system anchors private and institutional real estate and economic development throughout the City. From Fenway Center to Fan Pier and Jackson Square to Bulfinch Triangle, billions of dollars have been invested in transit-oriented developments that have created millions of square feet of commercial and retail space and thousands of new housing units. With transit so critical to the economy of Boston, it is not surprising that 83% of City of Boston voters in a July Suffolk University/Boston Herald Poll strongly or very strongly agreed that “public transportation is a high priority as an issue related to economic development in the city of Boston.”

Although the MBTA is a crucial linchpin in keeping the city of Boston vibrant and connected, it is also one of the most financially stressed public transit systems in the US. Even after the recently-passed transportation legislation, the MBTA remains the most indebted transit agency in the country, with over \$8 billion in debt. This massive debt load makes it difficult for the T to invest in maintaining and improving existing services while also expanding service to underserved areas.

Many Boston residents want and need more and better transit services that remedy significant disparities between those who have access to light or heavy rail and those who only have access to a bus, extend service hours to support a 24/7 urban lifestyle and otherwise better meet the needs of youth, seniors and others who rely on transit.

The new mayor, while not responsible for operating the MBTA, needs to engage residents and businesses to understand Boston’s transit investment and service needs and act as a champion for local, state, federal and private transit investment to meet those needs.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Ensure that every resident is within a 5-minute walk** to a bus or subway station by promoting expanded transit service, transit-oriented development and Complete Streets projects that improve pedestrian and cyclist access to MBTA stations and bus routes.
- **Ensure adequate transit funding** by working with the Legislature and the Governor to ensure the MBTA can meet its maintenance backlog, upgrade bus stations and improve service, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color.
- **Work with the MBTA to improve bus service, including creating dedicated lanes for buses** in particularly congested corridors and exploring bus rapid transit (BRT) options for Boston.
- **Help grow MBTA ridership and revenues by supporting a “universal pass” program** to provide transit passes to all undergraduate students attending Boston colleges and universities, and exploring promotional programs with the Boston Red Sox and other major cultural destinations to encourage visitors to ride the T.
- **Give priority to buses and light-rail vehicles at traffic signals**, reducing idling time in intersections and increasing on-time performance.
- **Ensure that the MBTA continues to invest to improve accessibility** for disabled MBTA riders, while also ensuring that The Ride remains an effective, affordable option for those who cannot use the regular MBTA system.
- **Work with the MBTA to implement new fare** structures that meet the needs of low-income passengers, youth and seniors.
- **Plan for a 21st century transit system** by exploring new routes and new technologies for addressing unmet needs, such as the need for circumferential transit to connect the “spokes” of the existing “hub and spoke” radial transit system.
- **Ensure safe street crossings** at all bus stops and transit stations, and work to coordinate traffic signal timing for buses and pedestrian crossings.

CONTINUE TO BUILD MOMENTUM FOR BIKING

5

Boston's reputation for bicycle friendliness has changed substantially in recent years, with the City catapulting from being considered one of the worst cities for bicycling to one of the best. The visibility of bicycling in Boston has been on the rise since Mayor Menino launched the Boston Bikes initiative in 2007.

Between 2008 and 2013, over 50 miles of dedicated bike lanes have been added to city streets and thousands of spaces of bicycle parking have been installed (as of 2013, the amount of added bicycle parking spaces numbers at least 3,000.) The Hubway bicycle-sharing program was launched in 2011 and as of July 15th the program has 8,100 annual members and has served 130,000 one-time riders, with 20 new Hubway stations set to be installed in Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and South Boston by the end of the summer.

These changes have catalyzed changes in the city's bicycle-friendliness and in the amount of bicycling and bike commuting. Boston's Bike Score (as measured by Walk Score®) is 67.8, making it the fifth most bikeable city in the US. Bike commuting has increased by 15% since 2009.

Much more remains to be done, to promote a bicycle-friendly culture in the city, address ever-present concerns surrounding the safety and security of bicyclists, and to expand investment in bicycle infrastructure in order to fully incorporate bicyclists into the city's transportation network. There is much for the next mayor to do in order to reach Boston's mode share goal of 10% of trips made by bike by 2020.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Adopt the City of Boston’s Bike Network Plan** and promote implementation both opportunistically (every time a road or intersection is being worked on) and strategically in order to create seamless connections across and between neighborhoods to make our bike infrastructure safer and more user-friendly.
- **Promote more protected spaces for bicycles and use traffic calming measures that reduce vehicle speeds in order to increase ridership**, building on the growing body of evidence that bike paths, cycletracks and calm streets foster increased rates of biking and improve safety for all road users.
- **Undertake a comprehensive effort to redesign Boston streets with safety for pedestrians and bikes in mind**, with a goal of adding at least 10 miles a year of new protected bike lanes, focusing on key bike/pedestrian corridors for commuting, recreation and everyday trips.
- **Expand the Boston Bikes program and staff** to enhance city programs that support and expand biking and increase the share of trips in the city made by bicycle.
- **Expand the Hubway Bicycle Share program and continue to offer subsidized Hubway memberships** to low-income residents, working with low-income and underserved communities to determine how Hubway can be part of a comprehensive strategy to improve transportation options.
- **Change zoning and housing regulations for existing buildings to increase bike parking** and make cycling accessible for all residents, including those who rent or live in multi-unit buildings. The Massachusetts Travel Survey shows that residents of multi-unit buildings are three times less likely than someone in a single-family home to own a bicycle. Good bike storage is necessary for keeping bikes secure from theft and weather. Require existing as well as new buildings to install bicycle parking facilities so all residents have access to secure bike storage at home and at work.
- **Design programs and infrastructure to encourage female cyclists** and bring the gender ratio into balance with Boston’s overall population.
- **Support safety education efforts for all road users** and increased access to affordable bike safety accessories (helmets, lights, bells), prioritizing education and better infrastructure, rather than the criminalization of cyclists, to reduce crashes and to prevent injury.

PROMOTE TRANSPORTATION **EQUITY & UNIVERSAL ACCESS**



Environmental Justice is the right and access to affordable, safe and meaningful choices and opportunities for all communities in the neighborhoods and areas where we live, work, play, learn and pray.

Transportation equity refers to a range of strategies and policies that aim to address inequities in the nation’s transportation planning and project delivery system. Across the country, community-based organizations of low-income and minority residents are organizing to improve their communities, and they are recognizing the significant role played by transportation in shaping local opportunities and disinvestment.

A neighborhood’s level of transportation access contributes to resident and business quality of life and well-being. Despite best efforts, urban transportation systems are far from perfect – and the MBTA is no exception. Poor public transit access and service translates into a host of hardships, especially for underprivileged and underserved populations, including the low-income, minority, disabled, and elderly communities.

Several recent studies by the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy have demonstrated the existence of racial disparities in public transit service. One study showed that even when traveling by the same mode, it takes black workers significantly longer to get to and from their job than white workers, cumulatively adding up to 70 hours per year to black workers’ commutes. Another study, in partnership with Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts, found that low-income Latino families in Boston and across Massachusetts are significantly cost-burdened as a result of inadequate transit options in their neighborhoods.

While unsurprising, these results are far from acceptable. All Boston residents should have full access to all that our city has to offer. The next mayor of Boston must work to make Boston more equitable, by committing to eliminating disparities between any population groups with regard to transit access and the quality of transportation service that is offered.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Ensure that as improvements are made to our transportation infrastructure, we protect low-income residents** by continuing to keep housing costs affordable and neighborhoods safe.
- **Work with the MBTA to improve transparency and accountability** and ensure that our public transportation remains publicly funded, planned, and accountable.
- **Work with the MBTA to keep public transportation safe, reliable, and affordable** in every neighborhood in Boston and to make safety improvements at bus and subway stations, including improved lighting, trash removal, and safe stair access.
- **Establish grants and organizing opportunities** to increase access to bikes, bike shops, and bike mechanics in dense urban areas and expand programs that promote healthy transportation options, including the City of Boston’s Roll It Forward and Youth Cycling Programs.
- **Continue to improve the Fairmount Line** by working to keep fares low, promote ridership and support transit-oriented development around Fairmount Line stops.
- **Give priority to the safety and access of wheelchair and handicapped citizens** when selecting sidewalk and crosswalk surfaces and when designing intersections.
- **Aggressively enforce snow clearance ordinances** for clearing sidewalks in order to improve and increase accessibility, and create a plan to ensure that major bike routes are among top priorities for snow removal.
- **Enforce traffic calming measures** to lower speeds, particularly in dense urban neighborhoods.
- **Create and enforce a comprehensive freight policy** to ensure that our businesses receive goods while minimizing safety and air quality impacts on residents.

CREATE MORE LIVABLE NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH **ZONING & PLANNING**



Historically, Boston has embarked on large and complex transportation projects without fully exploring questions of land-use and quality of life for residents. In many cases, the city must then take on additional projects to reverse past mistakes. For example, the city is currently working to reintegrate the North End with downtown Boston, demolish the Casey Overpass, and reinvent Rutherford Avenue to become part of the community again.

In addition, there are a number of ways in which Boston’s zoning code is outdated, leading to a high rate of variance between projects – in essence, the exceptions are becoming the rule. Land use and zoning regulations should be updated to help build communities where residents and local businesses can thrive, where cars and parking do not dominate, and where people can choose between many transportation options. The next Mayor should take a “people-first” approach to planning and zoning.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Develop comprehensive master plans for the city and its neighborhoods** to guide future projects and developments.
- **Put Boston on a “road diet,”** scaling back overbuilt roads and reintegrating them into our urban landscape in order to slow traffic, improve safety, strengthen local business districts, and make neighborhoods more vibrant, bikeable and walkable.
- **Ensure that buildings front the street edge and contain active uses on the ground floor,** with many entrances and windows, rather than blank walls or parking lots.
- **Reduce or remove off-street car parking minimums** for new developments and require new car parking areas to be behind a building or underground in order to promote active uses on the ground floor.
- **Require all new or renovated buildings to include short-term outdoor and long-term indoor bicycle parking and car sharing** for residents, employees and visitors; both types should be protected from the weather, secure, easy to find and conveniently accessible.
- **Reduce the size and number of curb cuts for driveway and garage entrances** to prioritize pedestrians.
- **Use zoning and planning** to create more diverse neighborhoods with a mix of homes and businesses, where development is not driven by outdated parking requirements.
- **Update existing zoning laws** to reflect transit-oriented development priorities by updating parking ratios and allowing higher-density development.

HARNESS TRANSPORTATION POLICY TO ACHIEVE **PUBLIC HEALTH & CLIMATE GOALS**



After smoking cessation and wearing seat belts, the two most important influences on public health are good nutrition and sufficient physical activity. Our transportation system can make it either harder or easier to be physically active throughout our lives.

Transportation policy can promote greater physical activity and health by supporting walking and biking. In addition to health benefits from physical activity, increased walking and biking reduces emissions that impact respiratory health; reduces injuries and fatalities from traffic accidents; ensures greater access to jobs and essential goods and services; and connects residents to public health resources such as healthy food stores and health care facilities. Equitable access to reliable and affordable transportation is essential to address profound disparities in health outcomes based on race/ethnicity, income and neighborhood.

According to the Boston Climate Action Plan, 25% of Boston's greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation. The city's Climate Plan goals include reducing transportation-generated greenhouse gas emissions 28% by 2020 by promoting the use of public transportation, walking and bicycling. The Menino administration has taken important steps towards meeting these goals, including launching the Boston Bikes program, developing the Complete Streets Initiative, reducing parking minimums for new developments and dis-incentivizing car ownership through increased permit fees and expanded car-sharing.

As the Briefing Book on Climate Protection, Clean Energy, Innovation, and the Environment points out, the progress Boston makes in greenhouse gas reduction translates directly into financial savings for the city: "Through a targeted focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from buildings (heating/cooling and lighting), transportation and solid waste, Boston stands to achieve greater than \$2 billion in net savings by 2020."

The next Mayor should prioritize improving public health by prioritizing transit, walking and biking.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Incorporate the existing greenhouse gas reduction targets** into all of the city’s action plans.
- **Expand the “Health In All Policies” approach** to more clearly require every public agency and program to make increased walking and cycling a factor in their plans and evaluations.
- **Encourage all clinicians to write “walking and biking prescriptions,”** and expand access to bikes for low-income families and in dense neighborhoods with few other transportation options.
- **Ensure climate preparedness by shoring up transportation systems** and other critical emergency infrastructure to promote resilience through 2020, 2050 and beyond, focusing on projected sea-level rise and other climate impact vulnerabilities.
- **Set limits on diesel pollution** by passing the pending Diesel Emission Reduction Ordinance, which requires a limit on the diesel emissions allowed from construction vehicles used on project sites in Boston and by enforcing the state anti-idling law in Boston.

RETHINK PARKING POLICIES & EFFORTS TO ADDRESS TRAFFIC CONGESTION



Parking—and the perceived shortage of it—is a hot-button issue in Boston. Fears of parking shortages are one of the top reasons that residents oppose new development, and a reluctance to remove on-street parking thwarts efforts to improve bike and pedestrian facilities. At the same time, requiring developers to build large amounts of off-street parking increases the price of housing and commercial rents; encourages driving over transit, biking, and walking; worsens traffic congestion, air quality and climate pollution; and sacrifices good architecture and urban design. Fortunately, there are solutions: the City can guarantee that every neighborhood has parking spaces available not by increasing supply, but by changing the price.

Since 1976, a city-mandated parking freeze has limited the number of parking spaces for new developments in Downtown Boston, South Boston and East Boston. City administrators have also limited parking elsewhere in the city. While some residents fear that a loss of dedicated residential parking spaces will result in congestion and conflicts over parking, city officials – and some developers – have cited the benefits of a limited-parking strategy. Such benefits include increased open spaces, increased ridership on public transportation and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

However, parking shortages in the city have created a situation where a single space in Back Bay was auctioned for \$125,000 in mid-August. There are clearly inconsistencies in the city's approach to parking, both residential and metered, that must be resolved – and quickly.

At the same time, the Urban Mobility Report, published by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, indicates that the average driver in Greater Boston spends 53 hours per year stuck in traffic. The time that is lost is equivalent to over a week of work, and the gas that is consumed is worth an estimated \$1,100. Boston drivers and visitors spend too much time needlessly in their cars, when they could be enjoying the city. While improving public transit service and access will help improve traffic congestion, the city's Transportation Department also has an important role to play. Innovations in signal timing, improvements in signage, and proper and efficient maintenance of the city's streets and thoroughways must be elevated to a higher priority to help keep cars moving efficiently and safely.

Taken together, re-thinking parking and congestion woes in the City of Boston will improve our air quality and unlock economic development opportunities, as less time is wasted in traffic or circling for parking.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Meter all non-residential spaces**, setting a citywide standard for occupancy (such as 85%) with adjustable prices to achieve that rate. San Francisco and other cities have shown that it's possible to price parking in a way that guarantees open spaces at all times and eliminates the thousands of vehicle miles traveled each day by drivers cruising for underpriced on-street parking. This has often been achieved with surprisingly minimal increases in price.
- **Use newer technology** to enable parking price adjustments for different times of day and different neighborhoods. Employ innovative solutions such as congestion pricing, signal timing, and travel time estimates to make more information available to drivers before they get on the road.
- **Establish a citywide system for residential permits**. Cap the number of permits in each neighborhood at the actual number of spaces, in order to calm residents' fears of parking shortages caused by spillover from new developments. Charge an annual permit fee comparable to Cambridge and Somerville (\$25-30), and use the revenue to invest in sidewalks, bike facilities, and other streetscape improvements.
- **Create a "parking benefit district" pilot program**, where revenue is reinvested in the neighborhood from which it was generated. Revenue from business districts can help fund Business Improvement Districts or Main Street organizations.
- **Encourage shared parking**. Residential and daytime uses (office, retail) can share parking spaces in new mixed-use developments. Private lots in retail areas should be opened to the public (with validation for customers of the business that owns the lot, if needed), and excess capacity can be leased to nearby businesses for employee parking.
- **Require parking cost to be unbundled from rent** or purchase price of residential units, to lower housing prices and encourage informed transportation choices.
- **Work closely with MassDOT and the Department of Conservation and Recreation** to directly address problems at congested intersections throughout the city.

IMPROVE LIVABILITY BY **ENHANCING** **PARKS & OPEN SPACES**

10

As noted by Boston Park Advocates on its Open Space Needs and Recommendations website, “parks are the central feature of a ‘green city’ and often the first connection residents make to environmental issues.” Boston is home to a wealth of parks and green spaces, which provide a welcome respite from hectic urban life. These open spaces are also a major draw for many of the tourists who visit the city. However, budget and staffing cuts have made it difficult to maintain our open spaces, and many of our park assets are falling short of their potential.

According to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, 16% of Boston’s land is dedicated open space. Encouraged by trends in other cities, three “parklets” - parking spaces that have been converted into mini-parks - are currently under construction in Allston, Jamaica Plain, and Mission Hill. However, funding for innovative open space designs is limited in Boston, and future parklets will not be funded by the city.

Since 2002, the city has sought community input in drafting multi-year Open Space Plans that assess and evaluate the city’s inventory of parks and green spaces. The Open Space Plans include action plans with targeted goals, but there is little transparency in terms of how well the city is meeting its objectives.

Maintaining and increasing the open spaces offered in the city will enhance quality of life and livability and promote walking and biking through more attractive, greener spaces. The next mayor should actively work to protect and promote Boston’s parks and open spaces.



PROPOSED POLICIES AND ACTIONS:

- **Improve access to parklands** by creating underpasses, bridges, and high-quality on-street bike and pedestrian facilities to allow for safe access, while improving traffic calming at the edges of urban parks in order to make a safe transition from street to parks.
- **Ensure that neighborhood parks are well-maintained** and in safe condition.
- **Work with state and federal partners** to take advantage of opportunities to fund parks and open spaces, including creating better connections between Boston and nearby islands and beaches.
- **Increase funding for park programming, including youth engagement and employment initiatives.** Funding should also be provided for tree maintenance and replanting costs.
- **Develop master management plans for parks** and coordinate park and open-space-related tasks and activities between agencies.
- **Modernize park permitting processes** and establish a user-friendly, interactive online presence for the Parks Department.

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