

“Traffic presents a unique public health threat due to the toxicity of its emissions and its extensive integration into our lives and communities. The stakes are high including excess cancers and children’s asthma rates occurring at epidemic proportions. This threat can no longer be ignored; it must be clearly understood and addressed.”

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A critical consequence of sprawling development and reliance on highways as a principal means of transportation is tailpipe pollution. Evidence is increasing that air pollution from vehicles increases a wide range of health risks. This report summarizes more than 24 peer-reviewed studies that document health hazards caused by pollution from cars, trucks, and other vehicles. It also describes current debates over major highway projects occurring in more than ten communities around the country.

### **Key Findings from Scientific Studies:**

- A Johns Hopkins study shows association between traffic and curbside concentrations of cancer causing pollutants.
- The Journal of the American Medical Association study links soot in diesel exhaust to lung cancer, cardiopulmonary disease and other causes of death.
- A Denver study shows children living near busy roads are six to eight times more likely to develop leukemia and other forms of cancer.
- A Journal of the American Medical Association study finds that increasing public transportation along with other traffic control measures during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics reduced acute asthma.
- The California South Coast Air Quality Management District did a Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study-II, the most comprehensive study of urban toxic air pollution, showing that vehicle exhaust is the source of cancer-causing air pollutants in Southern California.

A significant body of scientific evidence is emerging that links pollution from motor vehicles to a range of human health problems including asthma, lung cancer and premature death.

US Federal transportation policy has long focused on expanding the highway system as its principal goal. Approximately 80 percent of federal transportation funding is spent on highways. But by designing communities to reduce reliance on vehicles and giving people more transportation choices like trains and clean buses, we can diminish the health risks associated with highway pollution. Crucial public policy changes must include a more balanced transportation policy, greater emphasis on public transportation

systems and other options such as walking and bicycling. In addition, we need to limit development near new roadways.