

How Does Transit Impact Public Health?

Land use and transportation systems in many ways dictate the way people live their lives. People make their mobility decisions such as walking, biking, taking public transit, or driving, based on the system that is available to them and what is convenient.

Unfortunately in the San Diego region, we have built a land use and transportation system that highly favors driving over all other modes of transportation. Indeed, large areas of San Diego County have major arterial roads without bike lanes, sidewalks, or transit routes, which effectively makes driving the only viable mobility option in these areas.

The consequences of such a system are severe for public health, as motor-vehicle based systems are known to threaten public health by:

- Reducing physical activity
- Increasing toxic/harmful air pollutants
- Increasing motor-vehicle related injuries and fatalities
- Increasing unhealthy food choices by promoting access to “fast food” restaurants

Despite the fact that our current transportation/land use system poses a threat to public health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)¹ recently made various recommendations for addressing public health issues with transportation and land use planning, including:

1. Reduce injuries associated with motor vehicle crashes
2. Improve air quality
- 3. Expand Public Transportation**
- 4. Promote Active Transportation**
- 5. Encourage Healthy Community Design**
6. Design to Minimize Adverse Health and Safety Consequences

The CDC recommendations support CNFF’s transit campaign goals, which are to expand public transit and infill development (transit-oriented development) in order to encourage all modes of non-auto transportation to improve the entire San Diego region at the community level. The model for this is the 20-minute neighborhood, within which residents can access all community amenities on foot within 20 minutes.²

Please get involved with the Cleveland National Forest Foundation’s transit campaign and help create a new future for San Diego: one that improves public health for all San Diego residents!!!

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/transportation/recommendation.htm>

² <http://www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/news/121280911730720.xml&coll=7>