Transportation Planning and Environmental Justice
September 8, 2020
Air Alliance Houston believes everyone has a right to breathe clean air and where you live, work, learn, and play should not determine your health.
The Houston Region is saturated with industrial pollution and chemical safety risks.

- **5-6 million lbs.** of “illegal” air pollution released each year (on average)
- Unknown adoption/implementation of best available control technology among “bad actors”
- **97%** of violations not enforced in Texas
- **800,000** children live or go to school within chemical danger zones
- There is one chemical accident in Houston every six weeks with no systematic toxic alert notification system in place
- Fossil-fuel dominant economy and industry is expanding
- Inadequate land use policies that allow the siting of hazardous facilities near vulnerable groups
- More toxic pollution is released annually in the Houston Metropolitan area than the top five Metropolitan economies combined

Smoke rises from a fire burning at the Intercontinental Terminals Company in Deer Park, east of Houston on March 18, 2019. © Jaimie Meldrum/Handout via REUTERS
The Houston Region continues to embrace irresponsible development and transportation planning practices that prioritizes cars.

- Harris County has the highest vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Texas and the population is growing.
- Majority of emissions are already from transportation sources (automobiles).
- Public transit (and other modes of transportation) is limited throughout the region.
- Allocation of transportation funding is heavily skewed toward highway infrastructure.
- Minimal adoption of electric vehicles among governmental and organizational fleets.
- 80,000 Houston-area children attend schools in traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) zones.
Communities of color and low-income neighborhoods continue to bear the brunt of the public health and safety risks posed by an unchecked industrial complex.
The Houston Region continues to perpetuate short sighted “planning” decisions that favor developers while cementing our reliance on cars and accelerating climate change.

Widening I-45 will be a disaster for Houston [Opinion]

By Jeff Speck | Sep 6, 2019 | Updated: Sep 9, 2019 11:43 a.m.

Cars travel across the Pierce Elevated south of downtown Houston. The area could significantly change if current plans for redevelopment of Interstate 45 proceed.

Photo: Mark Mulligan, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

Displaces Businesses

Air Quality Will Be Worse

Makes Flooding Worse

Waste of Taxpayer $

Destroys Parks

Erases Culture
Building health from the ground up.

- Coalition
- Research and Education
- Media Advocacy
- Mobilizing
The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Air Alliance Houston
Avenue CDC
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Bayou Preservation
Bike Houston
Buffalo Bayou Partnership
Citizens' Transportation Coalition (CTC)
Downtown District
Eastwood Civic Association
Freedman's Town Preservation Committee
Friends of Woodland Park
Galveston Bay Keeper
Germantown Historic District
Greater East End
Greater Heights Super Neighborhood 15
Greater Northside Management District
Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis
Heritage Society
Hermann Park Conservancy
Housing for Houston
Houston Parks Board
Kinder Foundation
LINK Houston
Lower Brazos River Watch
Montrose District
Montrose District Association
Museum Park Super Neighborhood 66
Saint Arnold Brewing Company
Scenic Houston
Trees for Houston
Memorial Park Super Neighborhood 22
White Oak Bayou Association
Winlow Place Civic Club
Woodland Heights Civic Association
...and you!
Evidence matters...but it’s not enough.

NHHIP Health Impact Assessment

NHHIP Freeway Expansion

Social & Environmental Impacts

Mediating Factors
- Demographics
- Behavior
- Land Use & Design

Health Outcomes +/-
Children at risk.

Proximity to highway

Physiology of children

Immature blood/brain barrier

Higher respiratory rates

Larger body surface area

Thinner skin

Rapidly-dividing cells

Higher metabolic rate

Immature immune system

Community characteristics

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<th>HISD</th>
<th>YWCP</th>
<th>HAIS</th>
<th>Bruce Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary DAEP</th>
<th>Jefferson Elementary</th>
<th>Roosevelt Elementary</th>
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Traffic-related air pollution & public health

Proximity to busy roadways is associated with many health issues.

Research has consistently found that living closer to and going to school near heavy traffic is associated with:

- childhood asthma
- reduced lung function
- impaired cardiovascular health and mortality
- the development of autism
Bruce Elementary
HISD Pre K - 5th Grade

Current VMT Within 150m of Campus
40,797

Asthma Rate
No Data Available

Campus Demographics 2016-2017
Total Enrollment: 563
Total Minority: 99.3%
African-American: 68.7%
Hispanic: 29.1%
Economic Disadvantage: 94.7%
Recent Immigrant: 3.7%

Community Connection
Community Connection Here

Note: Although this campus currently falls just outside the 50m buffer of the existing freeway, it would fall well within the 50m buffer of the projected expansion extent.
Will the I-45 expansion make our air worse? [Opinion]
And will it impact low-income communities the hardest?

Bakeyah Nelson | April 10, 2018

Though TxDOT's draft environmental impact statement suggests that air quality will improve as the freeways are expanded, that conclusion is drawn from some problematic assumptions.
The world is before you and you need not take it or leave it as it was when you came in. – James A. Baldwin

Candidate Forum

We held a forum for candidates running for Houston Mayor, Houston City Council, and Tx148 to present their positions on NHHIP.
AAH & Make I-45 Better Coalition Summary of Activities

Note: this timeline does NOT capture ALL of the activities of AAH & the Make I-45 Coalition on this issue.

July 2017
- Coalition letter to TxDOT

Early 2018
- Five Issue-Based Briefings by Coalition and Other Community Stakeholders to TxDOT Houston District

July 2018
- Coalition to TxDOT, RE: NHHIP – Technical Reports Review

August 2017
- 10 elected officials submit letter to TxDOT

April 2018
- Meeting of Coalition, TxDOT Houston, and Commissioner Ryan
- AAH receives funding for the HIA

September 2018
- HIA stakeholder “kick-off” meeting
AAH & Make I-45 Better Coalition Summary of Activities

Note: this timeline does NOT capture ALL of the activities of AAH & the Make I-45 Coalition on this issue.

Spring 2018 - Spring 2019
AAH conducts HIA in partnership with and significant help from LINK Houston, Texas Housers, and LSLA

June - July 2019
HIA Report press conference at City Hall
City of Houston launches I-45 stakeholder workgroup meetings
Op-ed released in the Houston Chronicle by local engineer
All groups launch the “Delay the Vote” campaign

August 2019
Harris County Commissioners Court unanimously passes the “NHHIP Resolution”

Spring 2018 – Spring 2019
Ongoing and regular meetings with elected officials, TxDOT, and other decision-makers
Stop I-45 Coalition is formed

July 2019
H-GAC TPC approves $100 million TxDOT funding request for Segment 2
H-GAC TPC approves $50 million for community mitigations
Mayor Turner and other elected officials submit letter to H-GAC

August – December 2019
City of Houston launches community engagement meetings
APA peer review of I-45 design and recommendations for improvement
Advocacy groups and concerned residents push for the establishment of a memorandum of understanding with TxDOT.

Transportation Policy Council (TPC) establishes the MOU Subcommittee to outline the MOU with key stakeholders including TxDoT, H-GAC, Harris County, City of Houston, HC Flood Control District.

TxDOT will release the FEIS…next steps TBD.

Note: this timeline does NOT capture ALL of the activities of AAH & the Make I-45 Coalition on this issue.
According to these data, life expectancy ranges from 65.7 to 89.1 years - an inequity of nearly twenty three and a half years between neighborhoods in Houston.

Social Context:
There are major decisions that impact how WELL we live... and how LONG we live.
Questions?

Bakeyah Nelson
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