



Open Letter from Scientists, Researchers, Doctors & Health Experts to Governors in Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States Regarding Inequitable Exposure to Transportation Pollution

To: Governors of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states working to design a regional transportation program

We, the undersigned 357 scientists, researchers, and health professionals based in 12 Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states plus Washington, DC, write to express our deep concern about the disproportionate exposure to transportation-related fine particulate matter across the region. We hope that you will implement a program to limit pollution from vehicles and invest in clean transportation alternatives.

Communities of color across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states are exposed to 66 percent more fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5})—airborne particles smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter—from cars, trucks, and buses than white residents.¹ PM_{2.5} is one of the most dangerous and widespread forms of air pollution with well documented health impacts ranging from cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses to early death. The particles are small enough to penetrate deeply into the lungs and can even enter the bloodstream.² In the United States, PM_{2.5} is the largest environmental health risk factor, responsible for 63 percent of deaths from environmental causes.³

Inequitable exposure to transportation pollution in our region reflects decades of decisions about transportation, housing, and land use. Decisions about where to place highways, where to invest in transit, and where to build housing have all contributed to a transportation system that concentrates emissions heavily on communities of color.

As you design a regional program to address transportation emissions, it is critical that you commit to prioritizing clean investments and solutions in communities historically and currently overburdened by this pollution. Without equity squarely built into the policy design, we run the risk of continuing the status quo and exacerbating this injustice. We're counting on your leadership to address this large and growing public health threat.

Signed by,

(Please see the following 13 pages of signatures— listed in alphabetical order by last name.)

¹ Pinto de Moura, M.C. and D. Reichmuth. 2019. Inequitable Exposure to Air Pollution from Vehicles in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Cambridge, MA: Union of Concerned Scientists. Online at: <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2019/06/Inequitable-Exposure-to-Vehicle-Pollution-Northeast-Mid-Atlantic-Region.pdf>

² Donaldson, K., R. Duffin, J.P. Langrish, M.R. Miller, N.L. Mills, C.A. Poland, J. Raftis, A. Shah, C.A. Shaw, and D.E. Newby. 2013. Nanoparticles and the cardiovascular system: A critical review. *Nanomedicine* 8(3):403–23. Online at <https://doi.org/10.2217/nnm.13.16>.

³ Tessum, C.W., J.S. Apte, A.L. Goodkind, N.Z. Muller, K.A. Mullins, D.A. Paoletta, S. Polasky, N.P. Springer, S.K. Thakrar, J.D. Marshall, and J.D. Hill. 2019. Inequity in consumption of goods and services adds to racial-ethnic disparities in air pollution exposure. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116(13):6001–6006. Online at <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1818859116>.

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