

Centers for Disease Control Report Finds Sprawl A Threat to Public Health
New Report Describes Health Impacts On Seniors And People With Disabilities,
Increasing Obesity, Worsening Air Pollution, Increasing Traffic Deaths

Austin - A report released today by the federal Centers for Disease Control links sprawling development to a host of public health problems. The report, "Creating A Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health," found that sprawl inhibited seniors and people with disabilities from seeking medical attention and other important services, discouraged walking thereby increasing the incidence of obesity, contributed to air pollution leading to respiratory disease, and increased pedestrian-auto traffic accidents.

"Land-use decisions are just as much public health decisions as are decisions about food preparation," writes Dr Richard Jackson, Director, CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. "We must measure the impact of environmental decisions on real people, and we must begin, in earnest, to frame those decisions in light of the well being of children, not only in this country but across the globe."

The physicians who wrote the report evaluated data from multiple sources and examined the effects on health from factors such as housing, urban development, and transportation. The Centers for Disease Control reports that land development that increased the number of miles traveled to get to work, school and services increased air pollution resulting in elevated incidences of asthma and respiratory diseases. The CDC found that in communities where walking was discouraged, the incidence of obesity increased. This same pedestrian-unfriendly design also increased the number of pedestrian-auto traffic accidents and deaths.

"The CDC's clarifies that sprawl can not be dismissed as a fringe environmentalist concern. Sprawl is a public health concern. It traps children, isolates seniors, excludes people with disabilities, and limits Texas' poor. Well-planned community development that allows Americans to take public transportation or walk to work, school, the doctor, and other services isn't just a pleasant community amenity - it's healthier," said Glenn Gadbois, Texas Citizen Fund's Director of Transportation Programs.

Our mission is to organize people with disabilities, seniors, low-income individuals, and other Texans for equitable transportation through local and statewide alliances.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends designing communities around people, not automobiles. If planners make it possible for people to walk or viably use public transportation to go to work, shopping, and school, rather than drive for each of these trips, the incidences of asthma, obesity, and automobile-pedestrian accidents should be reduced.

"Public priority is being given to traffic itself, not to protecting public health or improving the communities through which it moves," said Gadbois. "The CDC's report should serve as a wake-up call to officials and decision makers in Texas that transportation and community design are too important to be left up to traffic engineers."

A copy of the report can be found at <http://www.sprawlwatch.org/health.pdf>, www.justtransportation.org, or by contacting the Just Transportation Alliances (512 451 2634).

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