



June 16, 2020

Director Kate Gordon  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Keep SB 743 Implementation on Track to Support Clean Air and Healthy Communities**

Dear Director Gordon:

On behalf of the American Lung Association in California, I am writing to express our support for the ongoing efforts to achieve the clean air, climate and public health benefits of sustainable community planning.

***In order to reduce the burdens of transportation pollution – and to support healthier communities with safe, healthy transportation options – we urge you to ensure the long-planned implementation of Senate Bill 743 continues on schedule.*** The revised land use and transportation analysis included in SB 743 (Steinberg, 2013) will help to ensure California grows in ways that do not bring continuous growth in vehicle traffic that threatens our health, safety and a sustainable future. This law – *enacted 7 years ago* – is now the target of a renewed lobbying and advertising campaign seeking to capitalize on the COVID-19 pandemic to delay scheduled July 1, 2020 implementation.

On track implementation will benefit community health by ensuring developers account for Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and mitigate against projects that result in excessive growth in traffic. Currently, projects are screened for the auto-centric “Level of Service” that focuses on the ease by which cars can move through a community, at the expense of infill and safer, healthy options for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. VMT is a central variable that will play a large role in whether California continues to make progress on meeting our clean air and climate standards.

Californians face the most significant air pollution challenges in the United States, with climate change impacts making the job of providing safe, healthy air much more difficult. The American Lung Association’s *State of the Air 2020* report found that 98 percent of Californians live in communities impacted by unhealthy air. Transportation sources are the leading contributor to the pollution burdens that impact Californians’ health and quality of life, including through increased risk of asthma attacks, emergency room visits and hospitalizations, lung cancers, heart attacks and strokes and premature death. Growing evidence shows that pollution levels along busy highways may be higher than in the community as a whole, increasing the risk of harm to people who live or work near busy roads, often lower income communities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Lung Association. *State of the Air 2020*. [www.lung.org/sota](http://www.lung.org/sota). *Living Near Highways and Air Pollution*. <https://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/outdoor/air-pollution/highways.html>; *Disparities in the Impact of Air Pollution*. <https://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/outdoor/air-pollution/disparities.html>.

Transportation also represents the dominant source of climate pollution in California that drives climate impacts ranging from increased ozone pollution and heat stress to major particle pollution episodes that follow the increasing scope and scale of catastrophic wildfires.

Beyond the respiratory and cardiovascular health impacts of traffic pollution, transportation and land use decisions can have major impacts on many other elements of our health.<sup>2</sup> In short, land use and transportation decisions are public health decisions. When communities are designed in ways that increase VMT and dependence on motor vehicle travel for even the most basic of daily needs, public health can suffer. Therefore, the planned implementation of SB 743 remains a critical public health tool.

Potential impacts of auto-oriented development can include increased rates of chronic illness, such as obesity and diabetes, certain cancers, increased risk of pedestrian and bicyclist injury, lack of access to nutritious food and recreational opportunities. The negative impacts can add to the already high burden of health inequalities caused by unsustainable planning decisions. Conversely, the California Department of Public Health's Climate Change and Health Equity program notes that a wide range of health benefits can accrue via changes in land use patterns and reductions in VMT, including improvements in physical activity, mental health, access to needed services and safety, along with reductions in chronic disease rates and local air pollution burdens.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, efforts to delay and undermine SB 743 implementation join a long list of industry efforts attempting to use COVID-19 – a lung health pandemic – as justification for delaying life-saving clean air and climate pollution rules. We simply cannot afford to allow unfettered sprawl and business-as-usual planning that increases traffic burdens on our air, health and climate.

The American Lung Association urges you to ensure SB 743 is implemented as planned to guarantee that as California grows, it grows healthier.

Thank you,



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<sup>2</sup> Institute for Local Governments. How Planning and Community Design Affect Health. <https://www.ca-ilg.org/hn-online-guide/how-planning-community-design-affect-health>

<sup>3</sup> California Department of Public Health Climate Change and Health Equity Program website. Accessed March 6, 2019. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/Pages/CCHEP.aspx#>