

Get The Facts

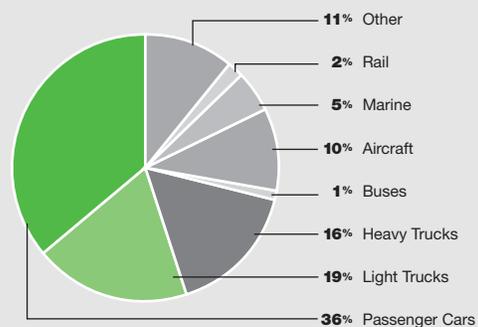
Critical Connections: Transportation, Climate Change and Public Health

Science has firmly established that climate change is a public health issue and that human activity is causing climate change. International and domestic policy negotiations are under way to decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, in particular CO₂, a major contributor to climate change. The transportation sector accounts for 33% of U.S. GHG emissions, second only to utilities such as power plants. Improving our transportation system will not only decrease GHG emissions, but also improve the public's health.

How is the Transportation Sector Contributing to Climate Change?

- Increased reliance on cars—roads and communities are built to favor the automobile. Communities are built away from town centers and public transit.
- Decreased use of rail and a heavier reliance on trucks to transport goods.
- Energy-inefficient vehicles add unnecessary GHG emissions.

U.S. Transportation Emissions by Sector



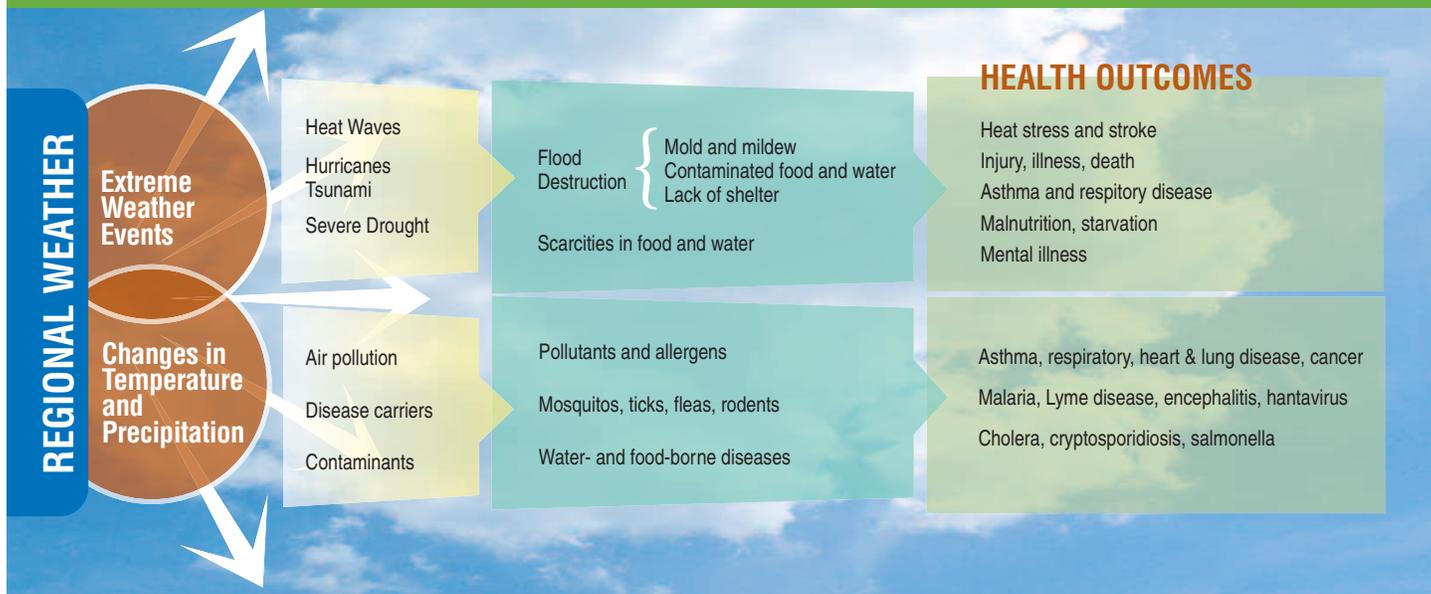
Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2002

Vulnerable Populations Will Bear the Burden

Populations already at increased risk from death and disease such as communities of color, the elderly, young children, and the poor, will bear a disproportionate burden of disease and death from climate change. The existing conditions that already cause poorer health among these populations—lack of clean air, water and unhealthy living conditions—will be exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change.

Communities located in particularly sensitive areas within the United States—Alaska and arid western states—are also uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Many of these communities are not only at increased risk for disease, they are also the least able to prepare for effects of climate change as well as respond and recover.

How Can Climate Change Harm the Public's Health?



Adapted from Climate Change Science Program SAP 4.6, 2008

APHA Supports “Win-Win” Solutions

Win-Win Solutions = Decrease GHG emissions + Benefit health

Support funding for public health climate change activities:

- Support allocation of adequate funding for the Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Fund as provided in the House and Senate climate change bills.

Transportation policies should:

- Support the development of communities based on "Smart Growth" principles
- Encourage land-use decisions that help decrease vehicle miles traveled
- Support transportation options such as walking, biking, or public transportation that are accessible and affordable
- Encourage affordable housing that is close to work or public transportation
- Increase use of rail to transport goods
- Promote more affordable energy efficient vehicles

