

Testifying in Support of the Sustainable Transportation Act

Transportation Finance & Policy Committee

Emily Neuharth

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Thank you Mr. Chair. My name is Emily Neuharth and I am an environmental public health graduate student at the University of Minnesota and a volunteer with MN350.

Before I started my graduate education, I worked as a pharmacy technician at two different locations, one was in my hometown of Woodbury and the other was at the edge of St. Paul, barely a 15 minute drive from my house. I noticed that we were dispensing far more asthma and allergy related medications to patients living in St. Paul compared to those in Woodbury. I found this confusing until I started studying environmental health. I learned that the negative impacts of air pollution on our lungs and even our hearts are seen more clearly in concentrated areas such as cities like St. Paul^{1,2,3}.

This concerns me no matter where I'm living in Minnesota. My husband has a family history of heart disease. Both of his grandpas passed away far too young from heart attacks and his grandma passed away earlier this fall from heart failure. My mother-in-law is in the early stages of heart failure as well. I want to do everything I can to protect the heart and lungs of my husband. This was at the forefront of my mind as we searched for a house this spring. I was surprised to see how many houses are located near highways, even in suburbs such as Maple Grove and Plymouth. Living closer to heavy traffic is associated with higher cardiovascular mortality, childhood asthma, and even the development of autism⁴.

I support this plan for the Met Council to transition to an entirely electric fleet of vehicles as transportation is Minnesota's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions⁵. I hope the increased use of electric vehicles and related infrastructure not only makes the air that my husband and I breathe better but also makes electric vehicles more accessible to residents like us. Around 10% of all deaths in Minnesota each year have air pollution as a contributing factor⁶. Approximately 1,300 Minnesotans are sent to the hospital every year with air pollution-related lung and heart problems⁶. I don't want my husband to be among these deaths and ER visits therefore, I ask you for your support of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

References:

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