

Pass the Cumulative Impacts Bill

SF 4676 & HF 4627

PROBLEM

Major highway projects have a storied history rooted in systemic racism that continues to harm marginalized communities today, dividing and polluting minority and low-income neighborhoods at disproportionate rates

Highways have many severe negative health impacts, including increased rates of asthma, dementia, cancer, and stunted lung growth.

Currently, there are few protections in Minnesota law that require the Minnesota Department of Transportation to prioritize public health, environmental justice and racial equity when planning highway projects through environmental justice communities.

SOLUTION

Legislators must act this session to address this issue by passing a new cumulative impacts law that applies to major highway projects in designated environmental justice communities.

MnDOT is planning a highway expansion project in Brooklyn Center, doubling pollution in the state's most racially diverse city. Urban highways have contributed to asthma rates in Brooklyn Center being among the highest in the state.

HIGHWAYS HARM MINNESOTANS

HEALTH ISSUES

Air pollution near highways is significantly worse than what is deemed unhealthy by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA.) Highway traffic is the biggest source of this pollution. Highway noise increases risk of hypertension and dementia. Highway air pollution has contributed to the increased rate of asthma hospitalizations near I-94, nearly double the Hennepin and Ramsey County average. Electric cars still produce particulate pollution from brakes and tires.

TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

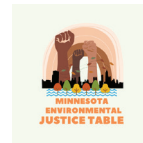
A disproportionate number of residents neighboring highways do not have access to a car and don't benefit from the highway.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Urban highways across the state disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous and people of color.

DIVIDED NEIGHBORHOODS

Highways divide neighborhoods and restrict walkable access to daily needs and neighborhood amenities.



SOURCES

Nichols, Mark. ["Highway traffic pollution puts communities of color at greater health risk, data analysis shows"](#). ABC News. 20 Sept. 2023.

Coffin, A., Ouren, D., Bettez, N., Borda-De-Água, L., Daniels, A., Grilo, C., Jaeger, J., Navarro, L., Preisler, H., & Rauschert, E. (2021). [THE ECOLOGY OF RURAL ROADS: EFFECTS, MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH PUBLISHED BY THE ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA.](#)

Our Streets. (n.d.). [I-94 Harms Minneapolis and Saint Paul Communities – Twin Cities Boulevard](#). Our Streets. Retrieved September 14, 2023, from [HUMAN TOLL: A Public History of 35W by the Hennepin History Museum](#).



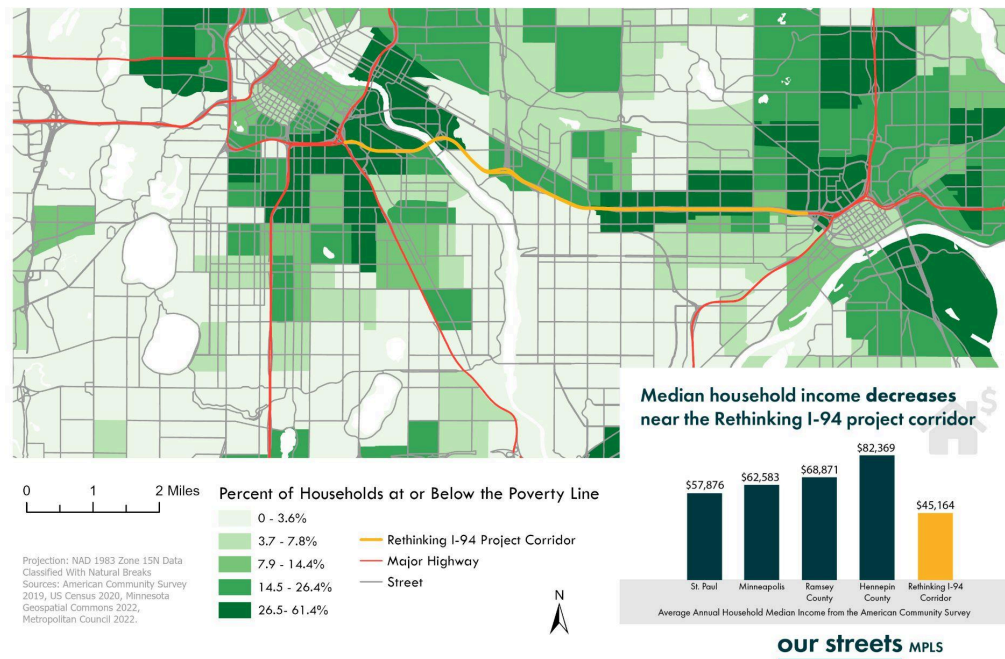
Maps of Targeted Harms

Overview:

These maps allow you to see data from the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan region. Highway construction and associated land use policies are one of the most visible legacies of historic and ongoing environmental racism in our region.

These roadways play a role in creating geographies of inequality in the Twin Cities, contributing to environmental justice concerns, economic and racial segregation, and hazards to public health. Marginalized communities along highway corridors do not benefit from the highways and bear a disproportionately higher burden from transportation infrastructure decisions. These maps organize demographic, economic, housing, community health, and transportation data to explore the region's geographies of inequity, underscoring the importance of creating an equitable transportation system for everyone.

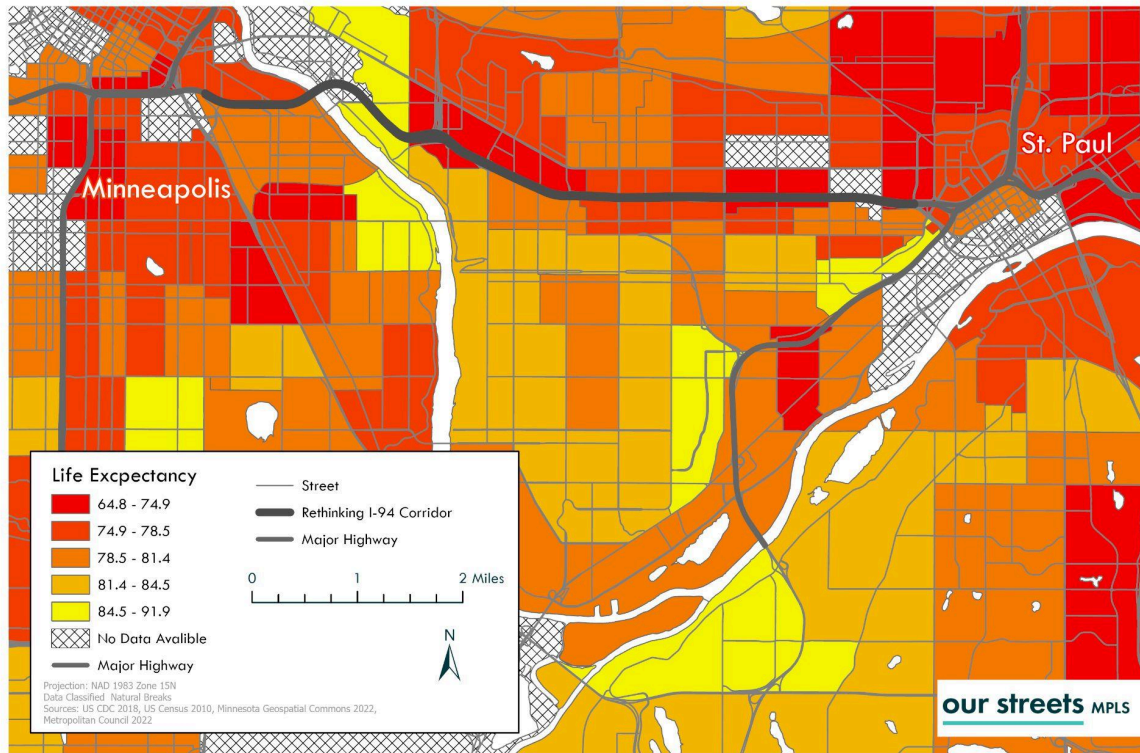
Households in Poverty by Census Tract 2019



This map displays the percentage of households living at or below the poverty line in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan region. The data source is the 2019 American Community Survey and data is aggregated by 2019 census tracts. Poverty thresholds are determined by the Census bureau based on income and other measures for metropolitan areas.

Data Source: American Community Survey 2019, US Census 2019, Metropolitan Council 2022.

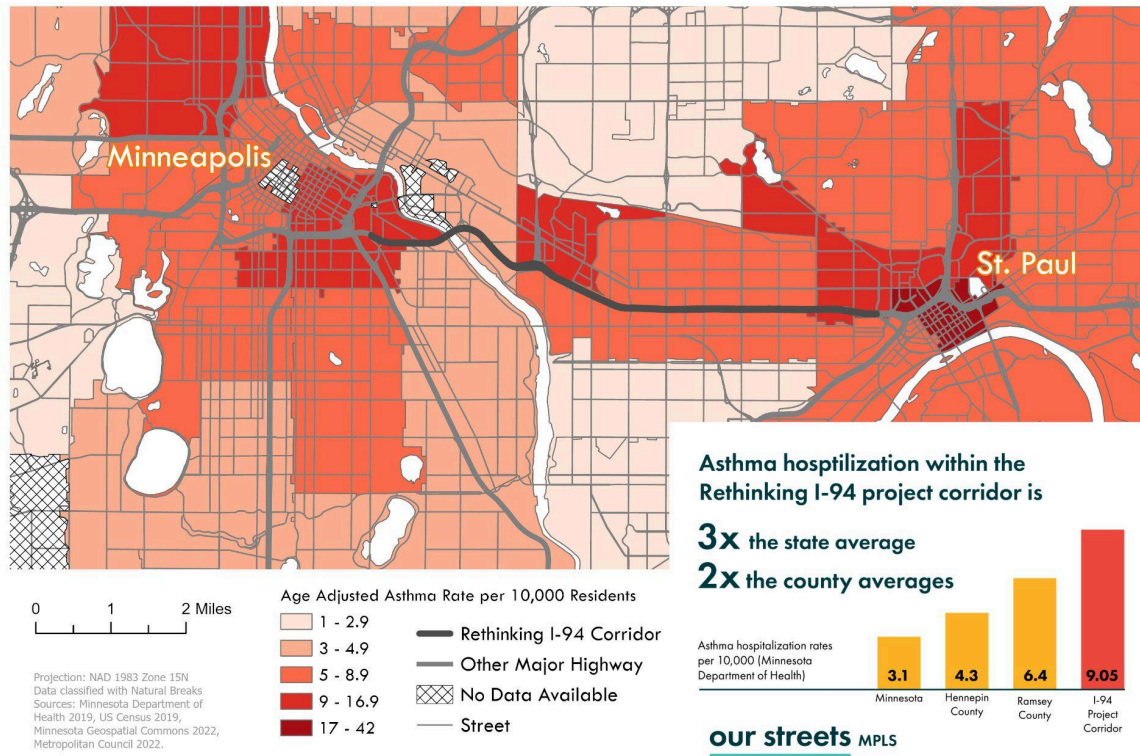
Life Expectancy at Birth by Census Tract 2010-2015



This map displays 2015 life expectancy at birth from the United States Centers for Disease Control. The data is aggregated by 2015 census tracts. For some census tracts, life expectancy could not be computed due to no population within the tracks or for other factors. In these cases, areas appear with a cross hatched symbol meaning “no data available.”

Data Source: CDC 2015, US Census 2015, Metropolitan Council 2022, Minnesota Geospatial Commons 2022.

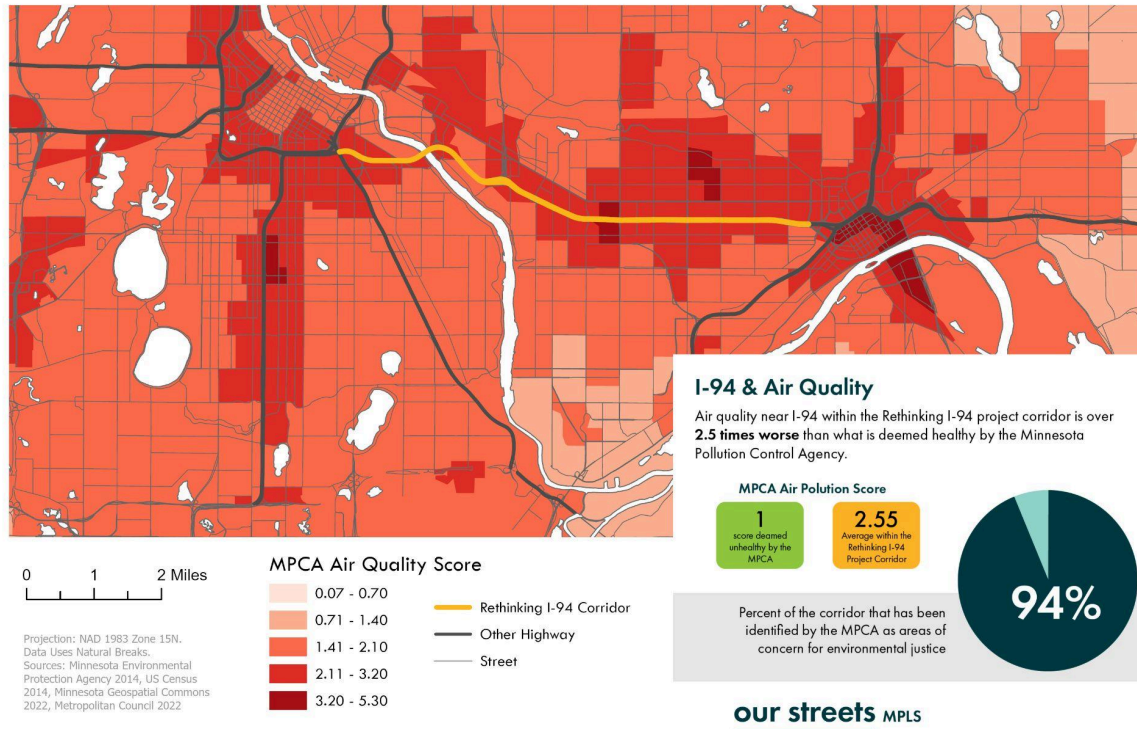
Asthma Hospitalization Rate by Zip Code 2015-2019



This map displays 2015-2019 Age-Adjusted Asthma Hospitalization Rate per 10,000 residents from the Minnesota Department of Health. The Data is aggregated by Zip Code and provides both the age-adjusted asthma hospitalization rate and the total count of asthma hospitalizations. Traffic pollution from highway corridors contributes to degraded air quality in nearby communities. Traffic pollution is associated with higher rates of health impacts like asthma, cancer, heart disease, birth defects, dementia and premature death (University of Southern California Environmental Health Center). Children who attend schools near freeways have lower test scores due to fine particulate pollution (PM 2.5) from car tires. Noise pollution is also linked with health impacts like stress, anxiety and hearing loss (University of Southern California Environmental Health Center).

Data Source: Minnesota Department of Health 2019, US Census 2019, Minnesota Geospatial Commons 2022, Metropolitan Council 2022, University of Southern California Environmental Health Center 2014.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Air Quality Scores by Census Block Group

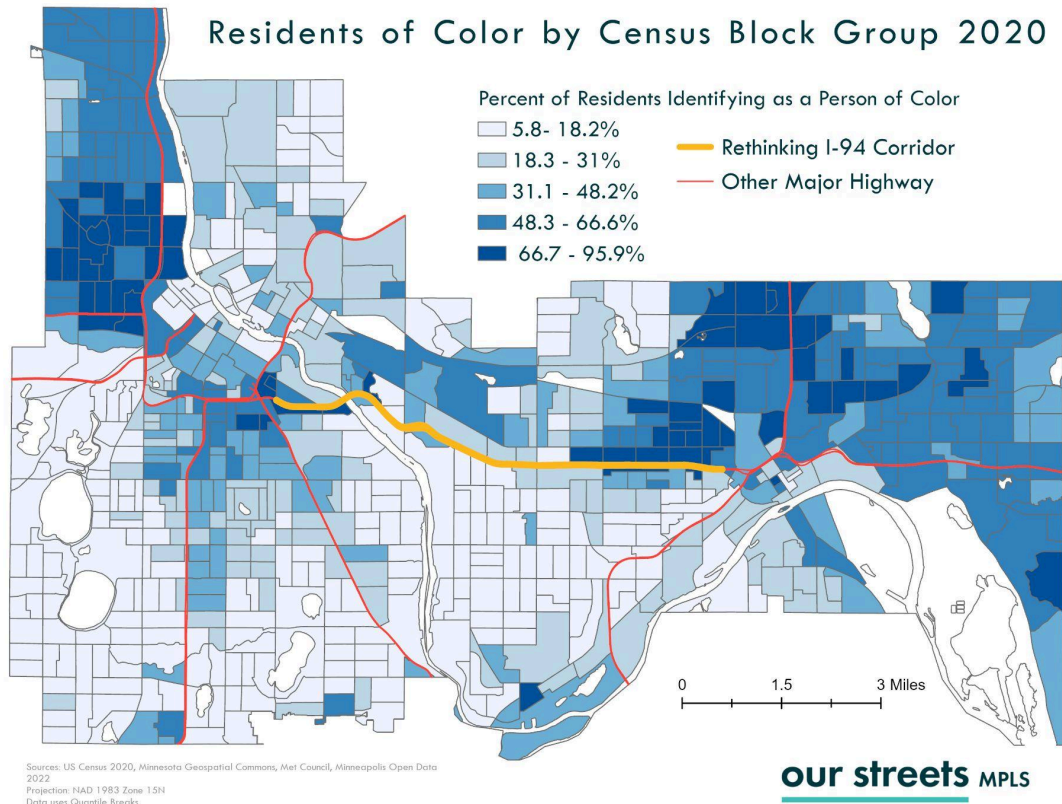


This map displays MPCA Air Quality Score with Environmental Justice Areas highlighted. The MPCA scores are quality measures to assess the impacts of pollution from traffic emissions, permitted facilities, and other sites.

In all communities, residents can be exposed to air pollution from vehicle exhaust, smoke, road dust, industrial emissions, pollen, gas-fueled yard equipment, household chemicals, and other sources. “Both short-term and long-term exposure to air pollutants can cause a variety of health problems. For people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD/emphysema or chronic bronchitis), air pollution can make it harder to breathe, trigger asthma attacks, or cause wheezing and coughing. Air pollution also increases the risk of respiratory infections, heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer, and more severely affects people who are already ill” (MPCA).

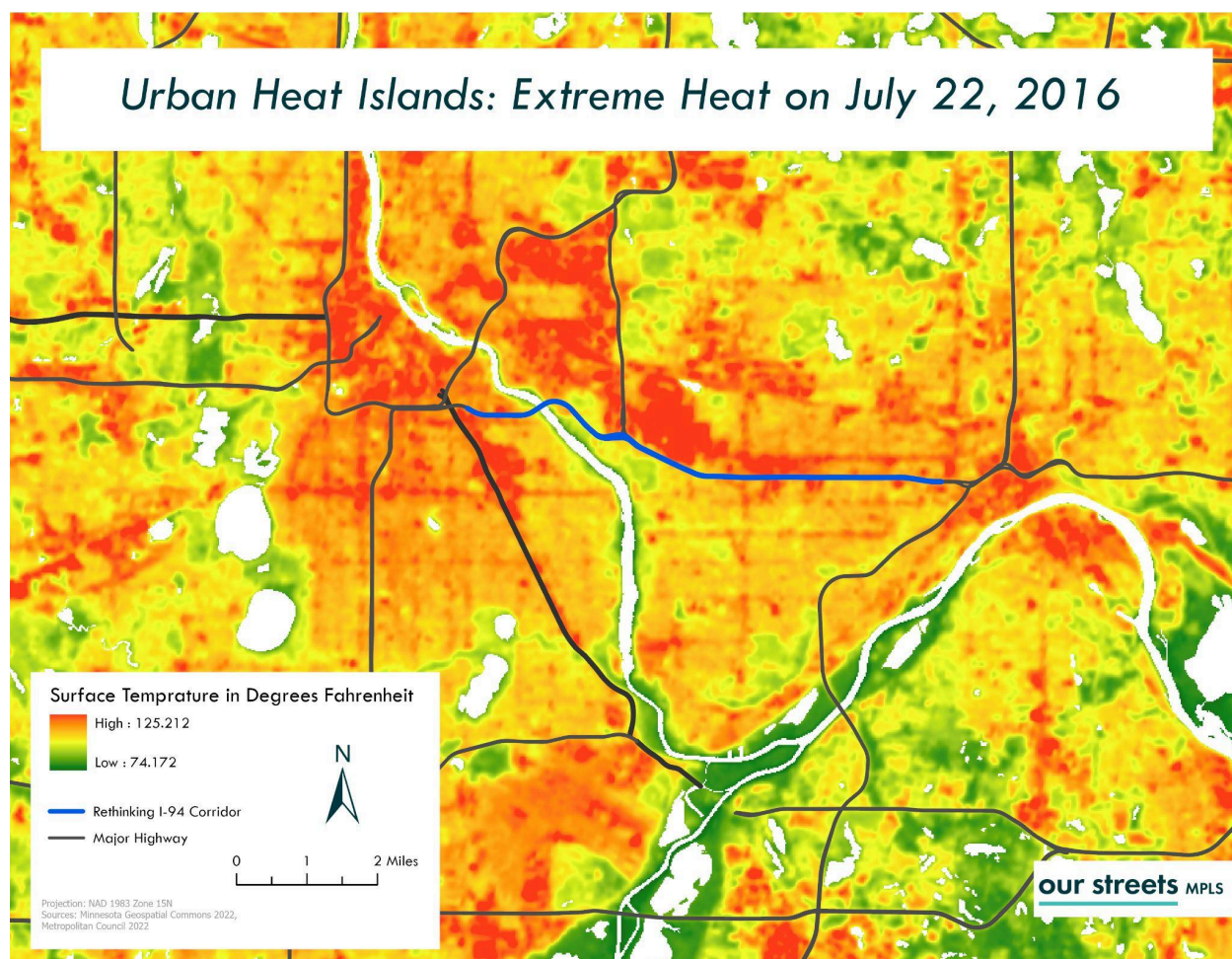
An air quality score of above 1 is deemed unsafe by the MPCA.

Data Source: MPCA 2014, US Census 2014, Metropolitan Council 2022.



This map displays the percentage of residents that identify as a person of color in the Twin Cities Seven-County Metropolitan Area. The data is aggregated by 2020 census block groups.

Data Source: US Census 2020, Metropolitan Council 2022.

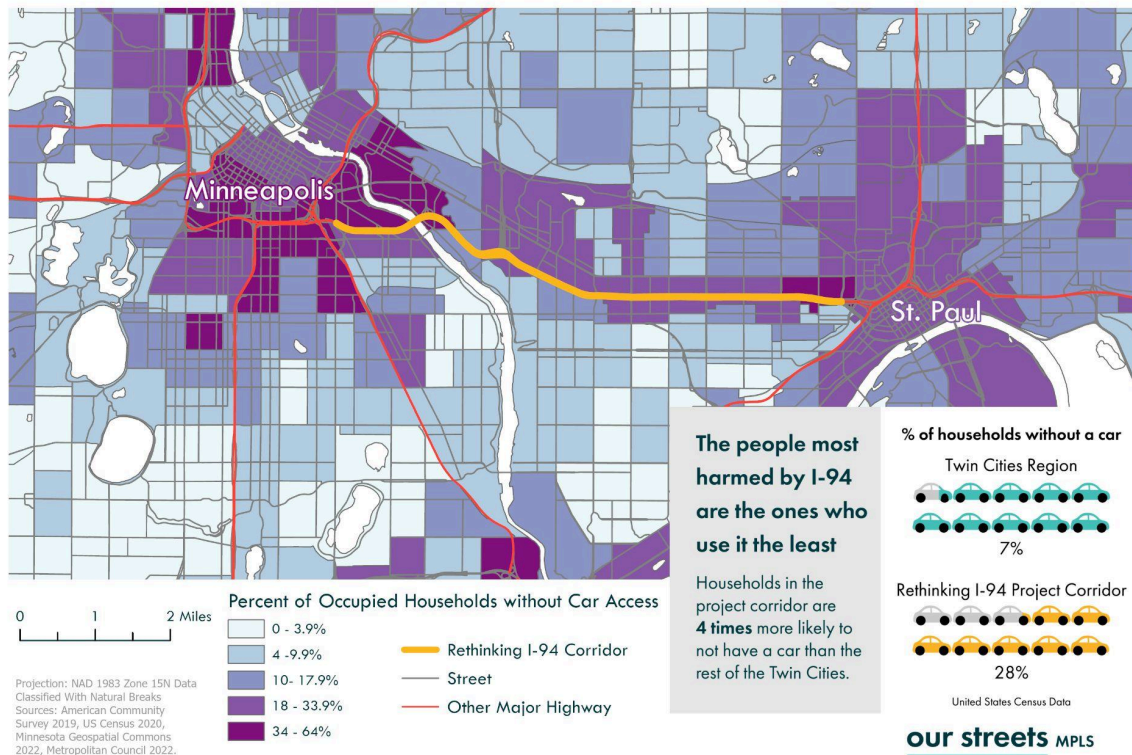


This map displays Extreme Heat data from the Twin Cities. This data was collected during a July 2016 heat wave in the Twin Cities by the Metropolitan Council. Local land use decisions and low tree canopy cover create urban heat islands, areas with relatively higher surface temperatures (Heat Island Effect, EPA). These areas have significant impervious surfaces that absorb heat and low tree cover, which provide ecosystem services such as air and water filtration, noise and temperature reduction, and increased biodiversity and pollination.

Heat Island effects have impacts on human health with burdens disproportionately falling on marginalized communities due to the past and continuing legacies of racist and exclusionary urban policy and planning decisions (Heat Island Effect, EPA). Between 2004 and 2018, an average of 702 heat-related deaths occurred in the United States, not including deaths from other causes that were exacerbated by extreme localized heat and not explicitly counted (Sinha et. al 2021).

Data Sources: Metropolitan Council 2022, Minnesota Geospatial Commons 2022, United States Environmental Protection Agency 2022.

Households Without Car Access by Census Tract 2019



This map displays the percentage of households who do not have access to a personal car. The data source is the 2019 American Community Survey and is aggregated by 2019 census tracts. The data is available for the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan region. Personal vehicle ownership is an access issue in a transportation system that heavily prioritizes land use and development geared toward cars. Many residents living in marginalized communities along highway corridors have lower rates of personal car ownership. These residents include immigrants without access to a driver's license, people who are unable to drive due to disability, and the many people who can't afford the increasingly high cost of car ownership. The Twin Cities will spend nearly \$90 billion on transportation by 2040 but only one-third of spending will be invested in pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit infrastructure (Metropolitan Council 2040 Transportation Policy Plan). Now is the time to advocate for less spending on car-oriented infrastructure only accessible to some residents. We need to develop a more equitable transportation system for all residents of the Twin Cities.

Data Source: American Community Survey 2019, US Census 2019, Metropolitan Council 2022.

MPLS

4/3/2024

Dear Chair Hornstein and Members of the Transportation Finance and Policy Committee

Our Streets Minneapolis stands alongside other members of the community to express our strong support for Minnesota House File 4627, which seeks to protect environmental justice communities from racist policy decision making in the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Our Streets Minneapolis is a grassroots organization that works to put people first in transportation projects and advance a community where everyone thrives. We are deeply committed to environmental justice and equitable policies that will protect our communities, especially those disproportionately impacted by transportation planning.

Throughout history, transportation planning in communities of color has often been characterized by harmful decision-making that prioritizes expediency and cost effectiveness over the well being of residents. From the construction of highways that bisect neighborhoods to the placement of polluting infrastructure in low income areas, communities of color have borne the disproportionate burden of transportation-related harm.

Decades of discriminatory practices, such as redlining and urban renewal, have resulted in the systematic disinvestment in and neglect of these communities, leaving them vulnerable to the negative impacts of transportation projects. As a result, residents of environmental justice communities often face higher levels of pollution, increased exposure to harmful emissions, shorter life spans, and limited access to transportation options, and essential services.

The need for legislation like HF 4627 is a direct response to the history of deadly decision-making in transportation. By ensuring that transportation projects do not disproportionately overburden communities of color, this bill will help prevent further displacement, promote clean air and sustainable communities for all Minnesotans.

It is imperative to address and rectify the injustices of the past by supporting policies that prioritize true equity and restorative justice in transportation planning. We know that every person has the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment, free from the negative impacts of pollution and this law would enact these long overdue protections.

We urge you to support Minnesota House File 4627 and make its passage a priority.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

José Antonio Zayas Cabán
Executive Director, Our Streets Minneapolis