Transportation Policy:
The Impacts and Opportunities for Building Healthy, Equitable Communities

Shireen Malekafzali
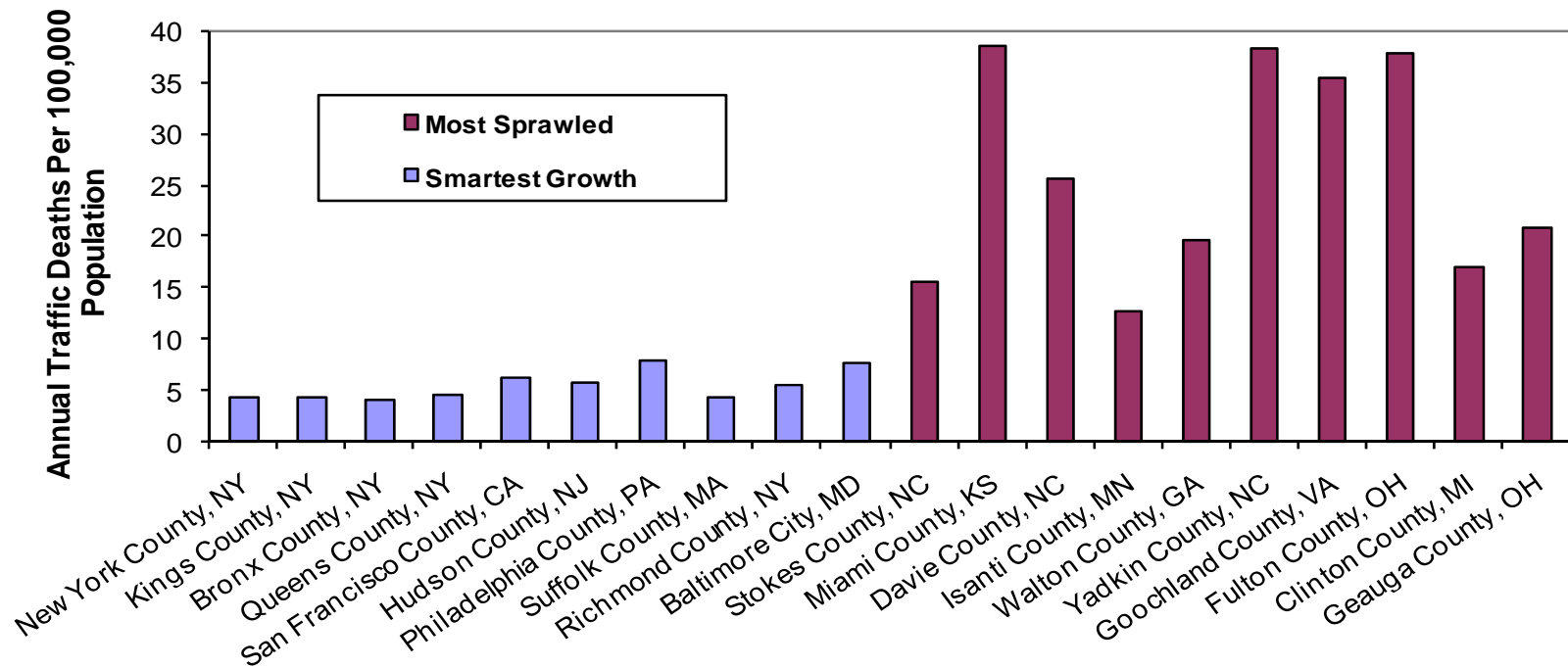**PolicyLink**

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- Impacts of transportation on health
- Challenges with existing policy
- Opportunities for new policy
- Defining community health

Impacts on Health: Air Quality

- Pollutants from autos are hazardous to health

- 8,800 premature deaths a year in CA

- Majority of children live in areas that exceed air quality standards for ozone.

- Disproportionally impacts children of color.

- Air pollution is a known trigger for asthma attacks.

- Emerging evidence that pollution may be associated in the onset of asthma.

Impacts on Health: Physical Activity

- 60% of adults do not meet recommended levels of physical activity.

- Driving can increase the risk of obesity by 6%

- Walking reduces obesity

- Public transit riders are more physically active

- Public transportation, walking and biking are the most practical ways to be physically active

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- Leading cause of death for people ages 5 to 34
- People of color are disproportionally impacted
- Smart growth promotes safety

Source: Reid Ewing et al (2003); as reported by Todd Litman, Victoria Transportation Institute 2009

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Impacts on Health: Access

- Transportation is access.

- In an auto-centric, and sprawled society, many are left out.

- People of color have limited access to cars:
  - 19% of African Americans, 13.7% of Latinos, and 4.6% of whites lack access to automobiles.

- Poverty compounds the problem.

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- Elderly and disabled populations drive less
  - More than 1 in 5 Americans age 65 and older do not drive.

- Transportation costs create a barrier for many
  - Low-income families spend approximately 37% of their income on transportation, while the average U.S. household spends about 18%

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Challenges: A Broken System

- Health impacts overlooked

- Focus on highways vs. transit & bike/ped

- Siloed into modes of transportation and specific programs –limited integration

- Lack of linkage between housing, jobs, public infrastructure, and transportation

- Few incentives for innovation or conservation

- Limited accountability to any outcomes

- Lack of adequate community engagement

Transportation:
A Huge Health & Equity Opportunity

- Transportation investment drives land use

- Walkable, bikeable, compact transit oriented neighborhoods

- Mixed-income, mixed-use communities

- Connect people

- Access for transit-dependent

- Affordable transportation options

- Safe active transportation

- Better health outcomes

- Better environmental quality

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- Transportation not as mobility in an of itself –but as access.

- A holistic approach to transportation policy that recognizes its impacts on multiple outcomes –such as health, environmental quality and economic viability– and plans accordingly.

- Vision: Healthy Communities of Opportunity

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Resources:

- The Transportation Prescription: Bold New Ideas for Transportation Reform in America

- Healthy, Equitable Transportation Policy: Recommendations and Research

- www.convergencepartnership.org

Shireen Malekafzali

shireen@policylink.org

www.PolicyLink.org

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- **How do you define community health?**

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Community Health

- Not just individual health

- Community health includes numerous factors such as:
  - Environmental stewardship
  - A healthy economy
  - Healthy and affordable housing
  - Social cohesion
  - Access to goods and services
  - Sustainable and safe transportation systems

Source: SFDPH, the Healthy Development Measurement Tool

- *"A Healthy City/Community is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential."*

Source: Leonard Duhl, UC Berkeley

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- **How familiar are you with ways in which health has been incorporated into transportation planning and community planning efforts?**

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