



*FREEDOM TO TRAVEL  
FREEDOM TO CHOOSE:*

# TRANSPORTATION CHOICES FOR GREATER CINCINNATI



## HIGHWAYS AND SPRAWL **HURT US ALL**

Years of bad transportation planning and investments that rely on highway construction to the neglect of other transportation choices trap Cincinnati residents in their cars and pollute the environment.

Highways are the number one cause of sprawling development, which forces us to drive further and further to work, school, shops, recreation and entertainment. Poorly planned sprawl destroys green space and farms, worsens air and water pollution, crowds our schools, and drives up taxes.

No wonder Greater Cincinnati has the worst traffic congestion in the state of Ohio, and has become one of the worst sprawling metro regions in the nation (4th according to the Sierra Club, and 11th according to USA Today).

## **COSTS** OF CONGESTION



Over-dependence on highways has serious consequences for public health and safety.

- ▶ From 1994-2000 in the seven-county Tristate region, there were 475,074 car crashes, resulting in 1,102 deaths and 214,621 injuries.
- ▶ Traffic congestion is not only dangerous; it also wastes our time, energy, and money. In our region, the amount of time that the average local driver sits stuck in highway gridlock has increased by a whopping 900%, from 4 hours per person per year in 1982 to 43 hours per year in 2000, more than a full work week idling in traffic.
- ▶ The estimated cost of this congestion in wasted fuel (44 million gallons) and time is \$505 million every year, enough to pay for a new downtown stadium each year!

## DRIVING US SICK

Smog. It looks bad. It smells bad. Cars and trucks produce 103 lbs. of smog per person each year in the Tristate. Smog-filled air causes difficulty breathing, asthma, allergy and bronchitis attacks, chronic lung disease and even premature death.

➤ Greater Cincinnati is the only Ohio metro area that fails to meet federal air quality health standards for smog, and the American Lung Association (ALA) gives our air a failing grade.

➤ The health effects of our dirty air are alarming. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says that smog in the Tristate “poses a significant health risk,” especially for people with asthma, children, and the elderly. The ALA estimates that our region is home to more than 25,000 children and over 115,000 adults who suffer from asthma, and more than 59,000 sufferers of chronic bronchitis.



➤ Each year in the Tristate, dirty smog causes an estimated 390 hospital admissions due to respiratory conditions, 1,170 emergency room visits, 57,000 asthma attacks, and 760,000 minor symptoms.

## BIGGER HIGHWAYS ARE **NOT** THE ANSWER

Building more highways will not solve our traffic problems. Adding road capacity doesn't just meet the current travel demand; it spurs additional driving. Since new roads and interchanges drive additional sprawling development, we end up with more traffic in just a few years than we had before road expansion.

Transportation planners call this cyclical phenomenon, “induced traffic.” A recent EPA study said that up to 43% of current highway traffic in Cincinnati is the result of simply building and widening highways.

Trying to build our way out of traffic congestion is like dealing with a weight problem by buying bigger pants. In the long run, it only makes the situation worse.

## MORE CHOICES, CLEANER AIR, SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS

The sensible solutions to the problems of sprawl traffic are expanding our transportation choices and managing over-development.

Transit can reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, promote neighborhood economic opportunities, and help to control sprawl. It can also help to build safe, walkable, vibrant, and connected communities.

Cincinnati's public transportation agency, SORTA, has proposed a regional transit system, called MetroMoves. Their plan will give urban and suburban residents shuttle bus, transit bus, streetcar, light rail, and commuter rail options.



## THE BENEFITS OF COMMUTER TRAINS

Imagine riding a train to work, reading the newspaper and preparing for the day without the headaches, cost and delay of rush hour. Or going to universities, downtown events, and the airport without the hassles of parking and gridlock.

- ▶ Passenger trains are commuter-friendly, safe, efficient, and quiet. An attractive transit system will help to revitalize and strengthen our city centers and suburbs. Transit can link residential, business, retail and entertainment districts together, and provide economic stimulus to our older neighborhoods.
- ▶ Commuter trains serve everybody, including those without adequate and reliable transportation. Transit allows workers to get to jobs throughout the region, and it's accessible to people with strollers and bicycles as well as those with disabilities.

A regional rail transportation system will allow us to take full advantage of the commuter and high-speed rail lines now in the planning stages to connect us with Dayton, Columbus, Cleveland, Louisville, Indianapolis, Chicago, and beyond.

## EFFICIENT TRAINS CLEAN OUR AIR AND SAVE ENERGY

- ▶ One set of rail tracks carries the same number of people as 16 lanes of highway, and a single train car removes 60-125 cars from the road. As a result, trains use 35-45% less energy than cars, thereby reducing toxic air pollution.
- ▶ Public transportation generates 95% less carbon monoxide, 92% less in volatile organic compounds, and about half as much carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide, per passenger mile, as private vehicles. Transit in the U.S. currently saves more than 45 million barrels of oil a year, equivalent to about one month's oil imports from Saudi Arabia.
- ▶ MetroMoves' commuter train network is projected to decrease global warming gases by more than 125,000 tons, hydrocarbons by 419 tons, and carbon monoxide by nearly 7900 tons over 30 years.



## PUBLIC TRANSIT: A WISE INVESTMENT

Commuter trains are a more responsible use of public transportation dollars than highway expansion. SORTA estimates that it is less expensive to build rail than to add a lane in each direction on I-71 and I-75 from I-275 to the Ohio River in Hamilton County. [Consider that it costs approximately \$70-\$90 million per mile to add a lane on I-71.]

Research predicts that these new highway lanes would again get clogged in just seven years after construction. In contrast, train capacity can be increased by simply running trains more frequently, and no additional right-of-way tracks are needed.

By keeping travel times down, reducing the number of car accidents, limiting air pollution and fuel use, and curbing other costs associated with automobiles, public transportation is a smart investment of transportation tax dollars.

- ▶ A cost/benefit analysis by independent economists projects that the MetroMoves transportation plan's economic benefits exceed costs by \$4.6 billion, a rate of return of over 8.5%. The system is expected to generate \$2.7 billion in residential and commercial development, and create over 36,000 new, full-time jobs over a 30-year period.

## THE CHOICE: MOVING FORWARD OR GETTING LEFT BEHIND



Commuter train systems are now running in over 20 major metropolitan areas throughout the country. In recent years, successful passenger rail systems have opened in Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City, St. Louis, Portland, San Diego, Pittsburgh and elsewhere.

- ▶ St. Louis, much like Cincinnati, is a historic river city, straddling two states, but plagued by sprawl, a deteriorating urban center, and traffic congestion. Faced with these problems, St. Louis residents made the bold and wise choice in the early 1990s to invest in commuter trains.
- ▶ St. Louis' Metrolink rail system, which opened in 1993, attracted 40,000 weekday riders within the first two years, much sooner than projected. 68% of the rail riders own at least two cars and 79% are new to transit (not former bus riders). Commuter trains in St. Louis, as in other transportation choice cities, have sparked new investment near transit stops, improving neighborhoods and local economies.
- ▶ Many other nearby cities—including Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, Louisville, Kansas City and Minneapolis—have either built or are planning to build rail systems.

Residents of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky have a choice. We can invest in transportation alternatives today and reap the benefits, or we can watch as our neighbors link together and pass us by.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Support public transportation plans such as **MetroMoves**
- ▶ Oppose more sprawl-inducing, air-polluting highways
- ▶ Join the Sierra Club's Transportation Choice Campaign and other pro-public transit organizations
- ▶ Contact your public officials at the local, state, and national levels and urge them to balance funding between transit and highways

For more information and to find out how to get involved with the Sierra Club's Transportation Choice Committee, call 513-861-4001 or email at [glen.brand@sierraclub.org](mailto:glen.brand@sierraclub.org).

# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION INTERNET RESOURCES

- [www.metromoves.com](http://www.metromoves.com)
- [www.protransit.com](http://www.protransit.com)
- [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)
- [www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/transportation](http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/transportation)

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- "The Dark Side of the American Dream: The Costs and Consequences of Suburban Sprawl," Sierra Club, 1998 ([www.sierraclub.org/sprawl](http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl))
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- "Conserving Energy and Preserving the Environment: The Role of PublicTransportation," American Public Transportation Association, 2002
- "The Value Proposition Of A Light Rail Network In Greater Cincinnati," HLB Decision Economics Inc., Silver Spring, MD, June 25, 2002
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