



Jenny Bard, Regional Air Quality Director

Comments for Board Retreat of ACMA and ACTIA Dec. 11, 2009

“Our growth in vehicles miles traveled is far outstripping our efforts to reduce either GHG or air pollution. We are not going to get where we need to go unless we get people out of their cars and there are a lot of health benefits to doing that.”

Linda Rudolph, MD, MPH, director of department of chronic disease prevention, California Department of Public Health, July 14, 2009

On behalf of the American Lung Association in California, I would like to thank all the members of the boards for your thoughtful deliberation today of what will be needed to reduce vehicles miles traveled to help our region achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Vehicle miles traveled can be considered a “health indicator” because they are directly tied to injuries and death. Car crashes are the leading cause of death in California for ages 1-44 (4,300 annually and 300,000 injuries). Air pollution, the majority of which comes from vehicles emissions, causes 2,600 premature deaths in the Bay Area annually due to lung and heart disease.

Asthma is the leading cause of school absences, and child hospitalizations. There are huge inequities in asthma rates here in Alameda County, as you know, which are highest among children who live next to freeways and roadway sources of emissions. Nearly one in four children has asthma in this county.

Communities designed to reduce the need to drive enjoy:

- **Increased Safety** – reduced auto injuries
- **Active transportation** – increased physical activity and reduced obesity, diabetes, depression
- Improve air quality – **reduce asthma/CV disease**
- Decrease commute - increase **social/civic** time
- More equitable **Access** to nutritious foods, essential goods & services – Increase **Social connections**

A 2006 study published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* found a 5% increase in community walkability to be associated with a per capita:

- 32% increase in time spent in physically active travel (from 18 minutes to 28 minutes)
- 1.25 to 2.0 lb reduction in body weight
- 6.5% fewer vehicle miles traveled
- 5.6% fewer grams of oxides of nitrogen emitted and 5.5% fewer grams of VOC emitted.

With 80 percent of health costs related to chronic illness, we have a huge opportunity through your agency's planning processes to not only reduce greenhouse gases, but improve community health.

The public health community is extremely concerned about the health impacts that will be caused by global warming. The Health Network for Clean Air, a statewide coalition of health and medical associations, including the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, California Medical Association, American Lung Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, supports strong actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst public health consequences of global warming. Without such efforts, global warming will continue to pose a wide range of health threats including increased air pollution, longer and more intense heat waves, smoke pollution from increasing wildfires, increased potential for infectious disease and other health challenges. The public health stakes could not be higher. We urge you to consider supporting the strongest possible greenhouse gas reduction targets as part of the SB 375 process.

Reducing vehicle trips are critical to achieving our goals to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases. We commend you for your discussion today and hope you will let us know how the public health community can assist in your efforts to educate the public about plans that will provide the greatest public health benefits to increase walking, cycling and transit to improve health, reduce air pollution, and create healthier communities.