



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF WALKING

*"We've had 30 years of pep-talking and selling positive ideas. And I'm sorry, but it doesn't work. Because if it would have, the emissions would have gone down by now. They haven't. And yes, we do need hope, of course we do. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere."*¹

-GRETA THUNBERG

About the Author: Born in Sweden in 2003, Greta Thunberg founded the student strike for climate movement and has engaged more than 1.4 million students in 112 countries. She has been nominated for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

PROBLEM OVERVIEW

Walking is good for the environment because it produces no greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. By contrast, the transportation sector is the largest contributor to GHG emissions in the U.S, representing about a third of total greenhouse gas emissions (29%). Between 1990 and 2017, the transportation sector's GHG emissions increased more in absolute terms than any other sector.²

Within the transportation sector, light-duty vehicles (including passenger cars and light-duty trucks) are the largest category responsible for 59% of GHG emissions.³

Motor vehicles cause air pollution. Ground level ozone is created by chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and volatile organic compounds in the presence of sunlight. Ozone, the principle ingredient in smog, harms human health and the environment. Breathing ozone can trigger health problems, particularly for children, older adults, and people who living with respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis. Ozone can exacerbate these conditions by increasing the frequency of asthma attacks; making the lungs more susceptible to infection and causing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). People who live near busy roads are even more at risk to exposure of these harmful air pollutants.⁴



WALKING: AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SOLUTION

While climate change is a big problem, every little bit helps. Walking is an important part of the solution because it lowers greenhouse gas emissions. Everyone can be part of the solution by walking instead of driving. It is one of the easiest steps you can take to reduce emissions. According to a recent study, pedestrians on average are less exposed to air pollutants compared to persons traveling by car, bus or bike.⁵

According to the most recent U.S. National Household Transportation Survey, 13 percent of all car trips were one mile or less amounting to 16 billion miles annually.⁶

By driving less and walking more you can reduce pollution from motor vehicles, reduce emissions and protect the environment and improve your overall health.

There are many other benefits to walking including lowering blood pressure, reducing depression, and even preventing some cancers.

DID YOU KNOW?

One quarter of car trips are less than a mile in length. Easily exchange driving for walking on trips like these, all the while reducing green house gas emissions and staying fit.⁷

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Walk or bike when you can, take public transportation, ride share or carpool with friends and if your job permits working periodically from home.⁸

Advocate locally to make your community more walkable by adding crosswalks, side pathways and safer road crossings. Get involved in improving the built environment to make it safer and more accessible for persons of all ages and abilities

ABOUT AMERICA WALKS

America Walks, a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit organization, is leading the way in advancing safe, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move by giving people and communities the resources to effectively advocate for change. We provide a voice for walking and walkable communities with federal agencies, provide strategy support, training and technical assistance to statewide, regional, and local organizations, and serve as the convener of the national Every Body Walk! Collaborative.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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