Transportation, Climate Justice, Human Rights
Future Interstate Study
Transportation Research Board
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US HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
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About USHRN:
The US Human Rights Network is a national network of organizations and individuals working to strengthen a human rights movement and culture within the United States led by the people most directly impacted by human rights violations. USHRN works to realize human rights by:

• Engaging, connecting and mobilizing communities to uphold and defend human rights and hold government accountable
• Building the capacity and leadership of grassroots groups
• Facilitating effective collective action to secure the long-term structural change to achieve justice and fully realize human rights
• Raising the visibility of local human rights concerns nationally, and internationally
Human Rights

Human Rights Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, as recognized and protected by the core international human rights instruments (treaties, etc.).

They encompass civil and political rights, such as the rights to life, liberty and freedom of expression, to worship, to own property, and to be treated equally before the law.

They also include economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to family, to education, to culture, to health, to subsistence, to residence and movement, and to inviolability (sacredness of home) of the home.

These rights are universal and fundamental, and states have the duty to ensure their realization.

International human rights law has established several mechanisms to monitor compliance with and ensure observance of human rights.
HUMAN RIGHTS

Natural
- It comes from the fact that we are humans

Inalienable
- Nobody can transfer or give up their rights

Dynamic
- They are life-long

Global
- HHRR do not depend on States

Universal
- All people have the same rights regardless their differences

Indivisible or interdependent
- They should be treated as a group
Climate Justice

• The impacts of climate change threaten the most basic human rights.
• Climate Justice recognizes and addresses that those least responsible for climate change experience its greatest impacts.
• Climate Justice is an ethical issue rooted in moral actions and consequences.
• “Justice” must be the basis of genuine, systematic and transformative solutions that tackle the real causes of climate change.
• Climate Justice is a vision to lessen and dissolve the unequal burdens created by climate change.
Transportation & the Climate Crisis

• **FACT:** Transportation is a significant source of US greenhouse gas emissions.

• **FACT:** The largest sources of transportation GHGs are passenger cars, light duty trucks, motor cycles which together make up 63% of transportation global warming emissions.

• **FACT:** Motor vehicle pollution also contributes to the formation of acid rain and adds to the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

• **FACT:** The pollutants in vehicle emissions are known to damage lung tissue, and can lead to and aggravate respiratory diseases, such as asthma.

• **FACT:** To truly address climate change, we need to understand how our past & current policies have reinforced climate change and inequity.
Structural Discrimination/Oppression

A system in which public policies (laws), institutional practices, cultural representations, and other (social) norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.

- Subtle racialized patterns in policies and practices permeate the political, economic, and sociocultural structures of America.
- Generate differences in well-being between people of color and whites.
- Maintain the existing racial hierarchy even as they adapt with the times or accommodate new racial/ethnic groups.
- This contemporary manifestation of racism in America can be called “structural racism.”

It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.

Credit: Aspen Institute 2004, Structural Racism and Community Building
Impacts of Structured Discrimination: Environmental Racism → EJ Communities

Refers to the:

- disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color or low socio-economic status.
- unequal lack of protection against toxic waste or chemical pollution exposure.
- exclusion of these communities from environmental decisions affecting their communities.

Recommendation- Level 1

1) Reduce passenger car transportation emissions through Interstate Highway policy and planning.

Example: Highways that facilitate and/or reward mass transit, multiple passenger vehicles and public transportation.

• Special/designated lanes
• Easy on and off ramping to highway
• Discounts on tolls and fees
Recommendation- Level 2

2) Acknowledge the duty for highway planning and construction to assist in climate-based disaster recovery or proactively combat climate change.

Example: Highway systems built to work in climate based disaster (easy to use counter-flow; heavy rain; wind).
Example: Highway systems built to reduce GHG emissions (Solar or wind only energy highway equipment, signage, rest stops, interstate solar farms owned by the public.)
Recommendation – Level 3

3) Actively challenge policies that produce/maintain economic and climate inequity.

Example: Highway contracting based in a federal public works program, not public/private bids for the lowest price.

Example: Highway construction using sustainable/non-extractive materials.

Example: Highway assessments and construction that does not burden overburdened communities or threaten natural resources.
If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

- Desmond Tutu
Thank You!

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