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Montgomery Wants to Know: Will That Road Make You Sick?

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Montgomery County officials want to know if that new road might make you wheeze.

Officials on Tuesday will propose **requiring health studies before major roads are approved**. They want to gauge how vehicle exhaust will affect minors, seniors, women who might have children, heart patients and others.

"If one lives close to a major highway, it can have real impacts on respiratory function and lung capacity," said council member **Duchy Trachtenberg** (D-At Large), who is introducing the idea with four of her colleagues. "If a project is going have a negative impact on the population . . . we have an obligation as public servants to work with that information and **make sure we protect the public's health and well-being**."

How about fixing the broken land-use regulatory system to enable more people to function without getting into a car? {see section 28a on the Woodmont Triangle web page.}

Walking is the simplest way to improve public health. Obesity is the #1 problem {see section 29a on Woodmont Triangle page of website www.VirtualAdjacency.com }

The regulation would require predicting pollution levels near proposed roads and their effects decades into the future. Major state and county roads within 1,000 feet of parks, schools, day-care centers, retirement homes or hospitals would be affected. **Federal highways would get a pass**.

Pedestrian-focused land-use within walking distance of Metro-rail stations should be exempted from every bureaucratic delay to encourage these to move forward efficiently and economically.

The county's Department of Health and Human Services would need to "quantify the cumulative public impacts of exposure to air pollutants from motor vehicles" and "quantify the potential

risks to at-risk populations" in the sensitive areas, according to the draft regulations.

Officials at the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** have cited the benefits of such health impact assessments, saying they bring "public health issues to the attention of persons who make decisions about areas that fall outside of traditional public health arenas, **such as transportation or land use.**"

*These are NOT two separate things.
They are inter-dependent / two sides of same coin.*

Communities in California have studied the health impacts of development, and legislators in Washington state can request assessments in some cases, according to **Brian Cole**, a researcher at the **UCLA School of Public Health**.

Cole said a broad local effort such as the one envisioned in Montgomery "would be a big deal, because I think it will help more consistently get **asthma** considered, which has huge health disparities. It will get impacts on **heart disease** considered more consistently. Right now, for the elderly, that's the number one concern."

But just how Montgomery's proposal might fit into existing political struggles over growth remains to be seen. There already has been grumbling from some development advocates and others that Montgomery's traffic modeling rules are cumbersome and imprecise. A building industry group has pressed county officials to suspend those rules.

Trachtenberg said the proposal is not meant to block building.

"Of course not. This is a health board regulation that simply requires more information," she said, adding that mitigation is not required. "This is not about stopping projects."

She said that discussions have taken place about eventually taking health studies into consideration when making development decisions but that officials have decided to "start with roads."

Sitting in traffic does DOUBLE damage:

- 1) you are not getting exercise AND
- 2) you are stressed!

Don't forget ACCIDENTS! These injure and kill people and do an incredible amount of property damage! {see section 33 on the Woodmont Triangle web page}

Cars in stop and go traffic pollute 4 times as much and waste 4 times as much gas as those traveling at a constant 50 mph.

*An elevator is a vertical Metro-rail!
When has an additional 20 or 30 stories on a building done any damage like these?*