

# Faith in Action: Clean Transportation & Trucks



As people of faith, we care about God's creation and human health, which informs how we approach transportation issues. The trucking industry is the leading source of deadly air pollution and has an outsized climate impact. Medium and heavy-duty trucks are a major source of harmful pollution, which is more keenly felt in low-wealth communities and communities of color because they are often located near major transportation corridors.



## Clean Transportation Future

While trucks and buses only account for 4 percent of vehicles on the road, they are responsible for 25 percent of total transportation sector greenhouse gas emissions. Because diesel pollution is a disproportionate burden on communities of color, clean transportation, including zero emission trucks, isn't just a matter of caring for God's creation. It is a matter of justice.

As responsible stewards of God's creation we have an opportunity to put in place strong standards to accelerate the transportation industry's transition toward zero-emission vehicles and work towards justice and equity.

[45 million](#) people in the US live, work, or attend school within 300 feet of a major road, airport or railroad and [45% of US residents](#) live in counties with unhealthy levels of smog or soot.

## The Cost of Diesel Pollution

Trucks are a leading source of lung-damaging air pollutants—including smog-forming NO<sub>x</sub> pollution and particle pollution. The [EPA estimates that in 2020](#), the nationwide medium- and heavy-duty fleet consumed 55.3 billion gallons of fuel and emitted 561 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, 1.5 million metric tons of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and 38,000 metric tons of particulate matter (PM).

According to an [analysis of EPA data](#), by 2023, every year diesel emissions from vehicles are projected to cause up to:

- 8,822 premature deaths
- 3,728 heart attacks
- 173,067 cases of respiratory symptoms
- 2,063 asthma-induced visits to the ER
- \$98 billion public health costs to the economy
- 516,704 lost work days

Almost 60% of NO<sub>x</sub> and PM exhaust emissions from the trucks and buses were in urban areas. Scientists have linked exposure to diesel exhaust to [more than four dozen toxic air pollutants](#) that cause birth defects, lung damage, and cancer.



## Policies to Put Cleaner Trucks on the Road

Electrifying medium and heavy-duty trucks across the U.S. will be key to improving air quality and saving lives in communities with some of the dirtiest air in the nation. Accelerating the electrification of trucks and buses is also a crucial step forward in achieving the widespread pollution reductions needed to avoid the worst consequences of climate change and its impacts.

States and the federal government have the responsibility to clean the air of deadly diesel pollution and cut greenhouse gas emissions from the freight and shipping sectors. Currently, we need policy solutions that will deliver cleaner and zero-emission trucks. The Environmental Protection Agency is currently developing new

standards for heavy duty trucks for model year 2027. To help protect God’s creation, including communities of color, the EPA should set stringent standards that ramp up zero-emission truck technology for all classes of trucks and buses.

Discriminatory land use and transportation policies have resulted in the burden of diesel pollution falling significantly on Black and Brown communities, leading to long-term respiratory and cardiovascular health issues among children and elders.

## Bring Clean Air to Communities

For communities living near freeways, trucking corridors, and freight hubs, pollution from heavy-duty trucks and buses can be deadly. Discriminatory land use and transportation policies have resulted in the burden of exposure to diesel pollution to be borne by communities of color. Exposure to diesel pollution has led to long-term respiratory and cardiovascular health issues among children and elders.

Asian-American, Black, and Latinx communities are being disproportionately burdened with air pollution from vehicles. Respectively, they face [34%, 24% and 23% higher exposures](#) when compared with their white counterparts. In the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, [communities of color breathe 66% more air pollution](#) from vehicles than white residents. These numbers illustrate the tragedy that non-white communities are bearing an unequal burden of vehicle pollution.

A response grounded in justice and equity demands that we move towards clean transportation. Enacting strong medium- and heavy-duty truck standards that prioritize zero-emission vehicles will help ensure a more just future for communities of color and help protect all of God’s creation.



## Materials & Resources

- Faith [Talking Points](#) and Background Info

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