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“This one’s electric!” says [Elastigirl in \*The Incredibles 2\*](#) as she hops onto her new elasticitycycle, zips around the elasti-garage with lightning speed, then whisks away for a joy ride that becomes the envy of every formerly badass mom everywhere (No? Just me?).

Companies are seeing a market from [snowmobiles](#) to [pickups](#) to [big rigs](#) to [airplanes](#) as consumer preferences for EVs and climate-friendly transportation policies accelerate across the U.S. and around the world.

Progress in policy and innovation is steamrolling ahead—not just in EV technologies, but also in the way we rethink urban design to support a healthier future with social justice underpinning every decision. As optimists, we know we can get there; as realists, we know there's work to do before we can ride off into the pollution-free sunset.

So buckle up as we zoom in on news that feels like a cozy hug *and* a slap-in-the-face call to action. Enjoy!

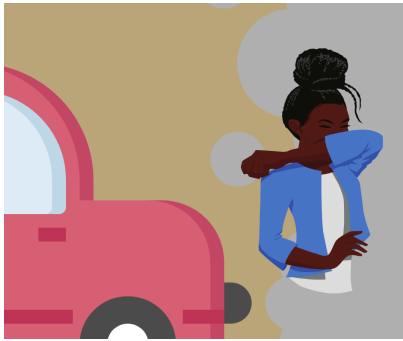
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**A ROAD AWAKENING**

*Transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions in the U.S., and traffic pollution contributes to asthma, heart disease, preterm births, and premature death.*



Racist policies have made it more likely that Black communities are located in places where pollution from major roadways contribute to getting asthma and making it worse once you have it.

Emerging research points to tailpipe pollution making the pandemic worse, as people who breathe more of it are also more likely to die from COVID-19.

## POLICY WHEELS ARE TURNING



*There is a lush, tree-lined path outta here—a green recovery presents opportunities to create more resilient and equitable transportation systems. Let's get rolling, Dear Optimists!*

**California will ban the sale of new gas-powered passenger cars and trucks in 15 years.**

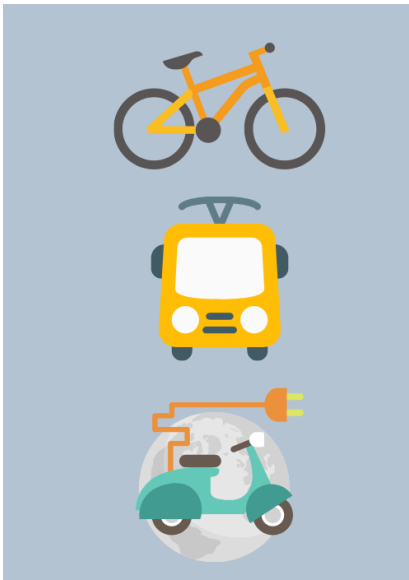


“You’re talking about the largest state in the U.S., the fifth largest economy in the world, reducing a third of its greenhouse gas emissions. That’s huge,” said Julie Cerqueira, Director of the US Climate Alliance to the *LA Times*. She says the plan will stimulate new jobs and investment, bring down the cost of EVs, and increase the variety of models we can buy.

### **But EVs alone are not a silver bullet transportation solution**

A paper in *Nature Climate Change* estimates that 90% of U.S. cars must be electric by 2050 to meet our climate goals, and keeping them juiced up would create challenges for the grid and require excessive amounts of raw materials needed for batteries. The researchers call for system-wide solutions that reduce dependence on personal cars for the transition away from gas powered cars to be successful.

**States in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic are drafting policies to cut CO2 emissions from the transportation sector through cap-and-invest programs.**



[Our researchers and colleagues](#) are exploring how these policies could improve equity and health through better air quality and increased physical activity. We looked at five policy scenarios that set different caps on emissions and different strategies for investing the proceeds.

Our researchers noted important challenges that should guide decision making:

- We urgently need enforceable commitments to improve public transit and air quality because lives are on the line.
- Serious inequalities in air pollution exposure would still exist, and more action is needed to drive down pollution in frontline communities.
- Health benefits are not a guaranteed outcome—actual health benefits would depend on state actions.

## WHAT DO FUTURE CITIES LOOK LIKE?

*For solutions that address how we get around, how cities are designed, and how we rebuild our economy after COVID-19, check out these [engine-ius ideas](#).*

### Life becomes more convenient



Meet the [15-minute city](#), where all your needs are within a short distance from your home. As governments look to invest in a green recovery, [visionaries](#) are re-imagining urban landscapes that include fewer cars, more public spaces, and climate resilience. Watch a [short intro](#) on the concept, or check out this [TED talk](#) from the guy who coined the idea. He's the wheel deal!

### Life becomes healthier

“One of the best prescriptions I could write for my patients is a clean, equitable, and sustainable transportation system,” said Boston physician Gaurab Basu in a [Boston Globe op-ed](#), noting that transportation harms his patients by polluting the air and destabilizing the climate.

The Rocky Mountain Institute suggests [six strategies for cities](#) to promote cleaner air:

**Improve transit service:** Seattle is a city committed to improving transit availability, coverage, and service with a focus on racial equity.

**End discriminatory land-use, zoning, and transportation planning practices:** California



measures transportation planning success by how much it reduces vehicle miles traveled and by requiring land use policies that reduce pollution.

**Reclaim street space for walking, biking, transit:** RMI pointed to the Dutch with their woonerf and the Spaniards with their superblocks and you'll be so glad they did.

**Implement Zero-Emissions Zones:** In 2019 London started charging personal cars \$15/day to drive in these zones and lowered nitrogen oxide pollution levels by 30%.

**Make it easier to deploy EV charging infrastructure:** Cities can streamline permitting, institute building codes to require chargers, and eliminate prohibitive demand charges.

## Life becomes more equitable

Urban planner [Alvaro S. Sanchez told Grist](#) that his vision for safe, equitable transit includes:

- No fares for students, seniors, and other marginalized populations.
- Scooter, bike, ride, and car shares address equity concerns, such as requiring credit cards and smartphones to use them.
- Accommodations for people with decreased mobility to use sidewalks safely.
- Ensuring Black communities feel safe from police violence or discrimination.

## WE THOUGHT YOU AUTO KNOW IT'S TIME TO VOTE



Over 80 million people have already voted in this year's election. If you're not one of them, this section is for you! Election and postal experts say it's too late to mail your ballot, but you can use this guide to make a plan to vote in your state.

In ignition to these pointers, [check last month's Optimist](#) for a deep drive into voting for climate and health!

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