

Beyond EVs

How Transit Policy Delivers Climate and Community Benefits

OCTOBER 8TH | 2:00PM ET

Introduction

Kristen Soares



State Climate Policy
Network Manager

CLIMATE **X** CHANGE
[SCP_N]

State Climate Policy Network



Network of **15,000+**

- State and local elected officials
- NGO advocates
- Researchers
- State agency staffers
- Organizers and activists
- Business leaders

... working on state climate policy

www.climate-xchange.org/network

Pro Bono Policy Assistance

We specialize in state climate policy design and analysis.
Reach out to kristen@climate-xchange.org requesting nonpartisan research and analysis related to:

- **Example states** and **model rules** for a given policy
- **Gap analysis** of your state's climate policy landscape
- **Connections** to other actors working on similar issues

Our Annual Fundraiser

We're back with our **11th Annual EV Raffle** and this year we're giving away three EVs.

Help fund our programs:

- SCPN National Calls and Webinars
- State Climate Policy Dashboard
- Pro Bono Policy Assistance

With two ways to participate, choose the raffle that's right for you!



carbonraffle.org

Beyond EVs: How Transit Policy Delivers Climate and Community Benefits



Steven Higashide

*Director,
Clean Transportation Program
Union of Concerned Scientists*



Peter Wagenius

*Legislative & Political Director
Sierra Club North Star Chapter*

Agenda

1. Why Transit? Climate, Health, and Community Inclusion
2. Transit Advocacy in Action: Minnesota
3. Q&A

Speaker

Steven Higashide



**Director of the Clean Transportation
Program**

Union of Concerned Scientists

More Transportation Choices Lead to Better Health, Better Communities, and a Healthier Planet

Steven Higashide }
Union of Concerned
Scientists

8704

Metro Transit

it's
ELECTRIC!



Powered by *science*
Inspired by *possibility*

science
has your back

[^{Union of}
Concerned Scientists]



The science is clear.

More transportation
options =

- better **public health**
- more **economic opportunity**
- a more feasible **clean energy transition.**

Some parts of the U.S. are making progress, but we have a long way to go.



“Transportation is a driver of community health” [because it] “affects our ability to access jobs, education, healthy food, social engagements, faith-based institutions, and health care.”

- American Public Health Association, *Transportation: a Community Driver of Health* (2020).



In 2017, 5.8 million U.S. residents delayed access to health care due to lack of transportation.

- Wolfe, MacDonald, Holmes,
"Transportation Barriers to Health Care
in the United States: Findings From the
National Health Interview Survey,
1997-2017." (2020)



Transit access is positively correlated with Toronto high school students participating in **after-school activities** and **expanding school choice**.

- Palm and Farber, "The role of public transit in school choice and after-school activity participation among Toronto high school students." (2020)

Transit as a climate solution

REPORT

Freedom to Move

Investing in Transportation Choices for a Clean, Prosperous, and Just Future

HIGHLIGHTS

More transportation options such as transit, walking, and biking, are good for the environment, the economy, and social equity. Yet the system we currently have revolves around car dependence bolstered by outdated policies and industry lobbying. New UCS analysis finds that

- *A system with improved transportation options and reduced driving could save up to \$201 billion in energy infrastructure, \$128 billion in public health costs, and \$5.9 trillion in vehicle ownership costs through 2050, presenting a more effective and affordable climate solution than the current car-dependent model.*
- *The auto and oil industries have a vested interest in car dependence, currently receiving more than 75 percent of public and private transportation spending, and have lobbied for decades to prioritize cars over a more complete and affordable set of transportation options.*
- *Science-based policies that prioritize more transportation choices align with community-based solutions where local advocates have long fought for a transportation system that prioritizes people over industry interests.*

Kevin X. Shen

Dave Cooke

Emmanuel De Barros

Mike Christensen

Kim Mitchell

Dorothy Wiley

October 2024

www.ucsusa.org/resources/freedom-move

<https://doi.org/10.47923/2024.15594>



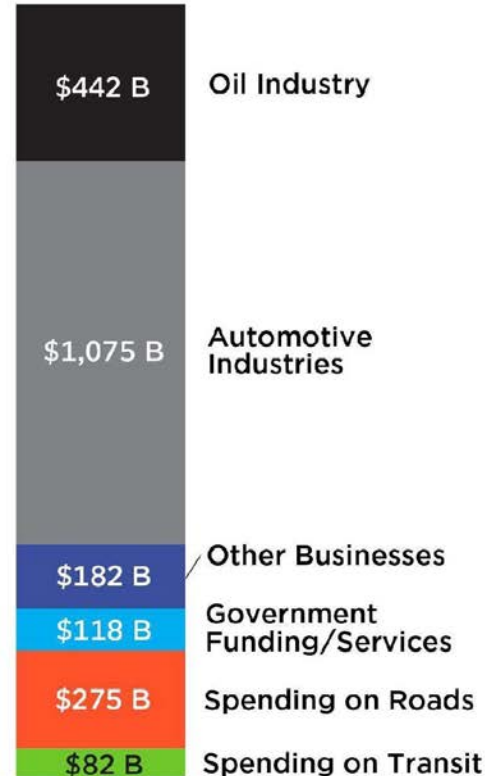
More transit options mean we can electrify transportation at less cost - saving up to **\$201 billion in energy infrastructure** and **\$128 billion in public health costs** through 2050.

Vehicles and Fossil Fuels are Larger Transportation Costs than Roads or Transit

Where's the Money Coming From?

Where's the Money Going?

**2021
Transportation
Sector
Spending:
\$2.2
TRILLION**



75% of transportation spending goes to fossil fuel and auto companies.

Seattle as Case Study



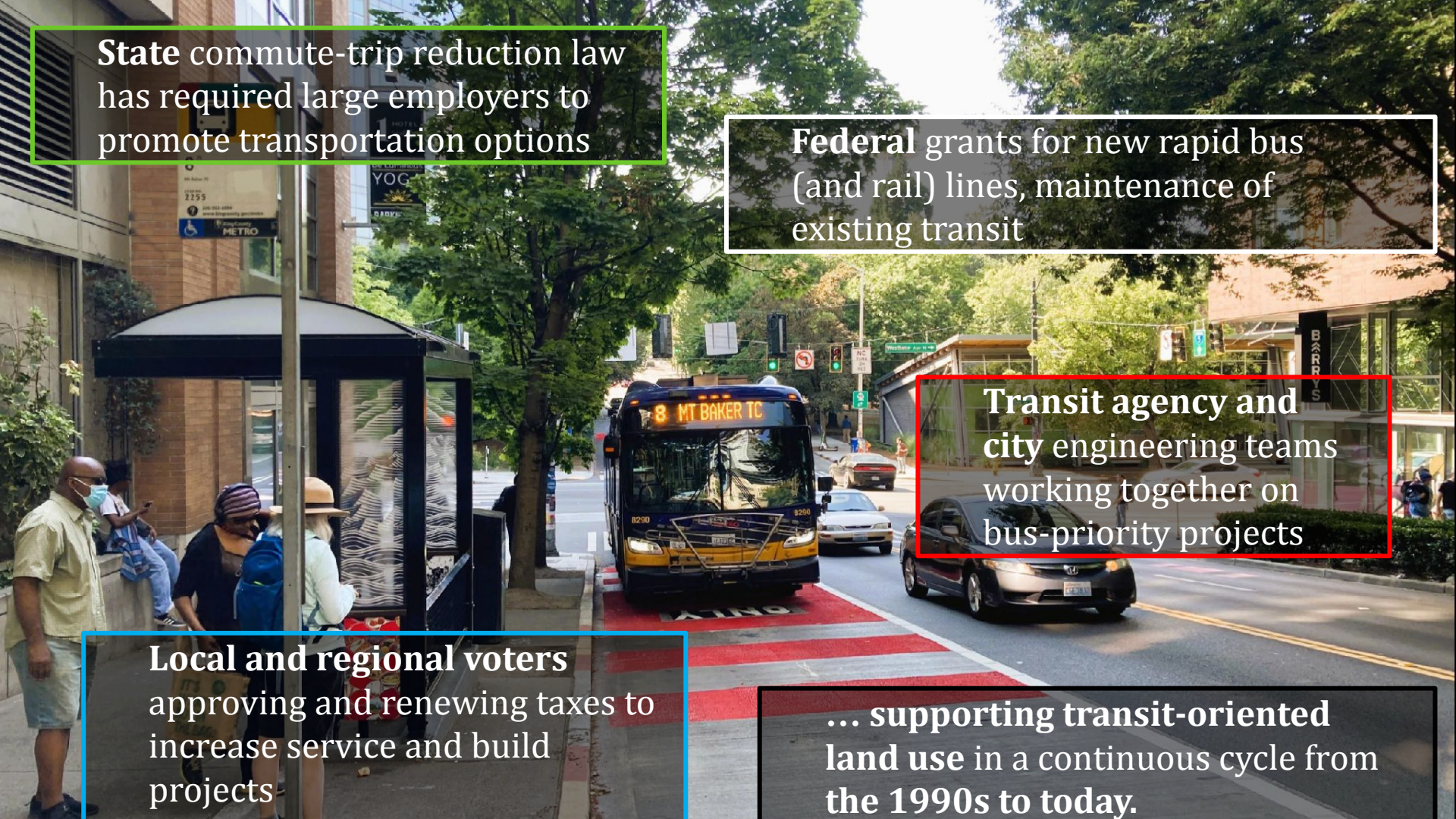


2017-2023: Seattle added 35,000 households; 3,300 cars.

Zero-car households increased to 20% of city (up from 16% in 2017).

52% of Seattle residents within 10-min walk of frequent transit in 2022 (up from 25% in 2015)

The average Washington resident drove 1,100 fewer miles in 2024 than in 1994



State commute-trip reduction law has required large employers to promote transportation options

Federal grants for new rapid bus (and rail) lines, maintenance of existing transit

Transit agency and city engineering teams working together on bus-priority projects

Local and regional voters approving and renewing taxes to increase service and build projects

... supporting transit-oriented land use in a continuous cycle from the 1990s to today.



New Pinehurst Station opens in north Seattle 5 years ahead of schedule

Seattle Funding Measure Adding 100,000 Bus Trips Heads to Voters

Link Ridership Soars 46% After Crosslake Connection Opening

All-Star Game and Taylor Swift make transit history with record-setting month in July



UCS in Action



Defining the road lobby

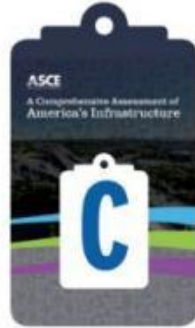
The 2025 Report Card for America's Infrastructure



Aviation
D+



Bridges
C



**OVERALL
GPA**



Broadband
C+



Dams
D+



Drinking
Water
C-



Energy
D+



Federal policy analysis

Union of
Concerned Scientists

The EQUATION

SIGN UP EN ESPAÑOL Q

Trucks Cause the Lion's Share of Road Damage—and Their Industry Wants You to Keep Paying for It

October 29, 2025 | 2:21 pm



C. WARD-DE LEON/UCS

About half of our goods (as measured in ton-miles of freight) travels by truck before reaching its destination, whether that's in last-mile shipping from a warehouse, offloading freight from a railyard, direct ground shipping, etc. This makes the trucking industry a critical piece of our freight infrastructure and, because of the role goods play in our daily lives, a vital piece of the economy.



Dave Cooke
Senior Vehicles
Analyst

Table: Cut USDOT Programs in H.R.6500 (highlights)

Agency	Program	Total FY26 (millions)	FY27 Annualized (millions)	Cut (millions)	% Change
FHWA	Bridge Formula + Investment Prog		\$700.0	-\$7,347.0	-9
FRA	Federal-State Partnership for Inter		\$65.0	-\$6,912.0	-9
FRA	Amtrak Northeast Corridor + Natio		\$2,427.0	-\$4,400.0	-6
FTA	Capital Investment Grants (CIG)		\$1,700.0	-\$1,600.0	-4
OST	Local and Regional Project Assista		\$145.0	-\$1,500.0	-9
FTA	Low-No Emissions Bus Competitiv		\$78.5	-\$1,050.0	-9
OST	Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS		\$0.0	-\$1,000.0	-10
FHWA	National Electric Vehicle Formula		\$0.0	-\$1,000.0	-10
FRA	Consolidated Rail Infrastructure a		\$137.4	-\$980.0	-8
FTA	State of Good Repair Grants		\$3,850.5	-\$950.0	-2
FRA	Railroad Crossing Elimination Gra		\$0.0	-\$600.0	-10
FTA	All Stations Accessibility Program		\$0.0	-\$350.0	-10
FHWA	Reconnecting Communities Progr		\$30.0	-\$100.0	-7
FHWA	Reduction of Truck Emissions at P		\$50.0	-\$30.0	-3
FTA	Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and		\$407.0	-\$50.0	-1



With all of these hearings, policy proposals, and negotiations between elected officials, where can I plug in? Where can I really make a difference?

The good news is that the possibilities are abundant! Reauthorization is an expansive process; therefore, there are plenty of opportunities to ensure that your voice is heard. What matters is creativity, consistency, and communication!

Connecting national expertise with state policy

[Union of
Concerned Scientists

The
EQUATION

SIGN UP EN ESPAÑOL Q DONATE MENU

Illinois Deserves Robust and Equitable Transit Funding

October 23, 2025 | 1:06 pm



Investing in public transit is crucial for our communities, public health, and addressing the climate crisis. But after decades of disinvestment, systems across the country are again feeling the squeeze, facing fiscal cliffs that jeopardize their futures. All the while, still over half of the country does not live near any transit whatsoever, and many less live near transit with high frequency and quality.



Kevin X. Shen
Northeast
Transportation Policy
Analyst/Advocate

Now, Illinois is in the headlines – not just for its battle with the Trump administration over National Guard deployment and inhumane immigration enforcement, but also for an impending funding cliff for public transit that would leave people stuck with service cuts and fare increases.

“I am working hard with House and Senate teams to address the transit fiscal cliff. Studies like these are very helpful in making the case to fully funding transit.”

- Illinois state legislator

Connecting national expertise with state policy



**New transit law
takes effect as CTA,
Metra, Pace enter
new era**

Northern Illinois Transit Act
(passed October 2025; took
effect June 2026):

\$1.5 billion annually to stabilize
and strengthen public transit
across Illinois (\$1.2 billion in
greater Chicago) + strengthened
governance

Thank You



Speaker

Peter Wagenius



Legislative & Political Director

Sierra Club North Star Chapter

The Case for Transit & Transit Oriented Development: Lessons from MN



Sierra Club North Star Chapter



\$470 million program of six arterial BRT lines in active development

- A Line (Snelling): Open 2016
- C Line (Penn): Open 2019
- **D Line (Chicago/Fremont)**
Opens December 3, 2022
- **B Line (Lake/Marshall/Selby)**
Opens 2024
- **E Line (Hennepin/France)**
Opens 2025
- **F Line (Central Avenue)**
Opens 2026, pending full funding
- **G Line (Rice/Robert – Routes 62/68)**
Opens 2027, pending full funding
- **H Line (Como/Maryland – Route 3)**
Opens 2028, pending full funding



Current METRO network



Planned METRO network





Our Historic 2023 Bill

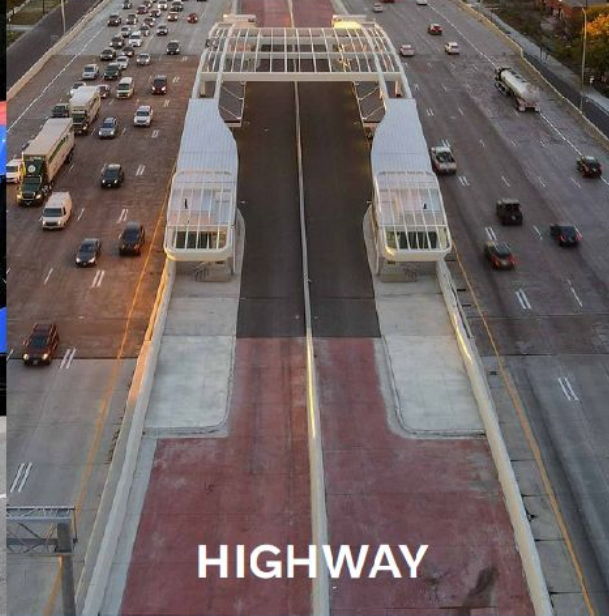
- Funding, including $\frac{3}{4}$ cent metro area sales tax for Transit, Walking and Biking
- Minnesota aims to be the “Capital of Bus Rapid Transit” BRT and it’s working!



- Primarily in mixed traffic, some bus-only lanes



- Primarily HOV/HOT lanes



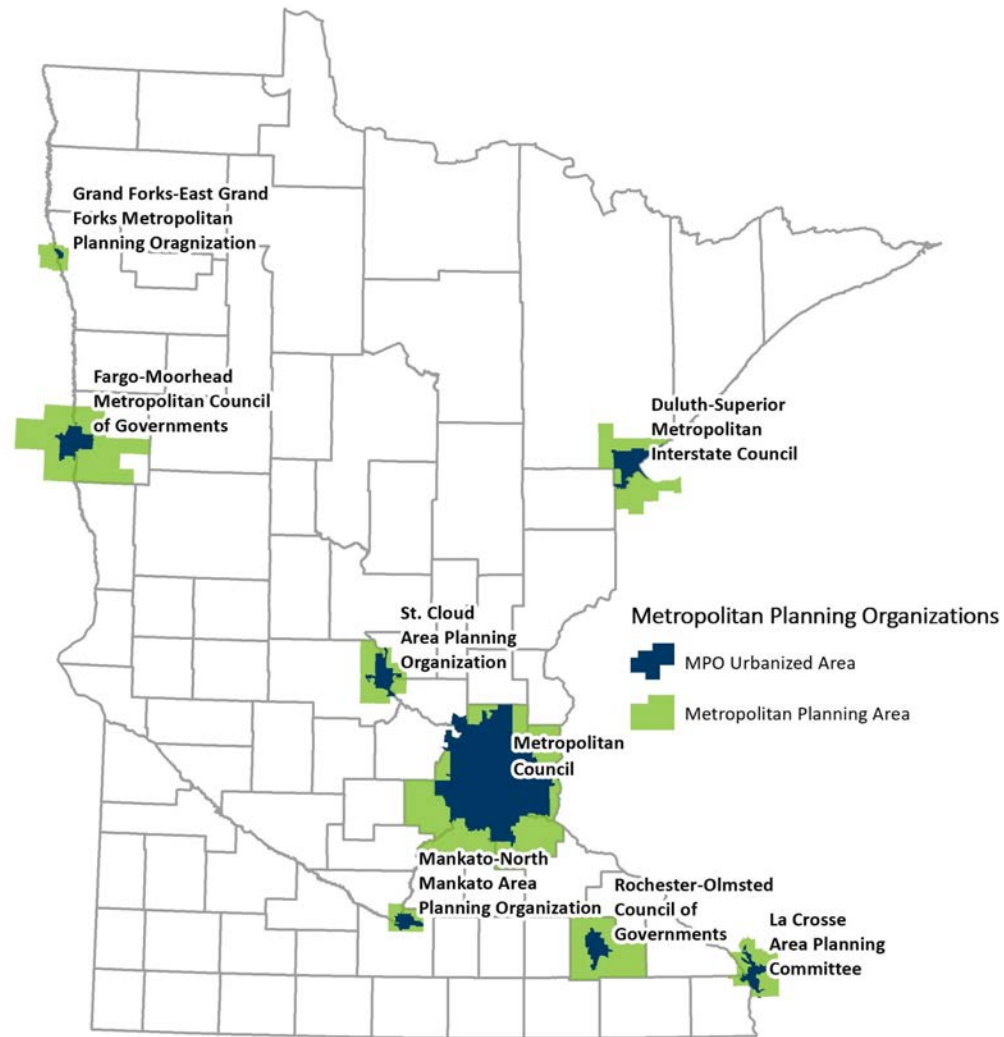
- Exclusive BRT guideway



Three varieties of BRT, one METRO system

Geography is... Everything

- For affordability
- For climate
- For getting votes to pass a bill
- and for the revenue to run a transit system that works!



Start on Offense

- Negative Story on “Roads Only” Approach
- Positive Story on transit and choices





“Do No Harm”



Status Quo is harming:

- Affordability
- Public Health
- Climate
- Economic Competitiveness
- Equity
- Political Polarization

Fix it First

- We Can't Afford This!



Our Historic 2023 Bill

- “Climate Impact of Highways Law”
- Requires the MN Department of Transportation to abide by reduction targets for both GHG and VMT.
- Colorado’s law only has reduction targets for GHG. We have both. MD, MA and others working to pass similar bills.

Three Choices

If a MNDOT Project would exceed those GHG or VMT targets, they have three choices:

1. Amend it with mitigations
2. Pair it with better projects, that include mitigations
3. Cancel the project

Mitigations include

- (1) transit expansion
- (2) transit service improvements
- (3) active transportation infrastructure (biking & walking)
- (4) Micromobility
- (5) TDM, including vanpool, shared vehicle programs, remote work, and broadband access expansion
- (6) parking reforms
- (7) land use reforms
- (8) roundabouts and reduced conflict intersections
- (9) natural systems, including prairie restoration, reforestation, and urban green space

A new system of transportation that provides choices for travellers...

...it is not just nice,
it is necessary.

Reality

- There is **no data** to support the idea we can address climate pollution from the transportation sector with electrification alone.
- We **must** also reduce Vehicles Miles Travelled (VMT).

EVs



...too
many
people
think
electric
cars will
solve all
problems.



Walking, cycling,
public transport,
rail, parking

Electric cars

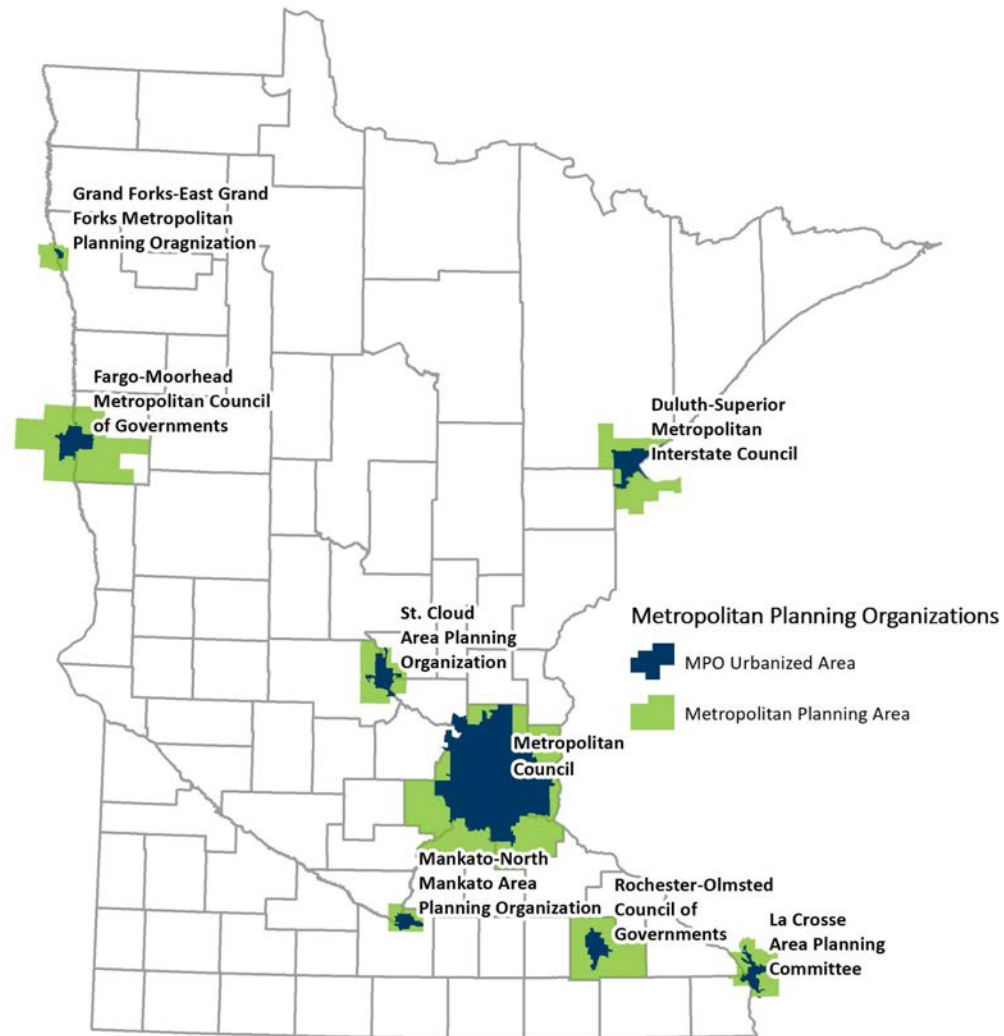
Solid Waste

Transportation

1. Reduce	1. Reduce
2. Reuse	2. Electrify
3. Recycle	3. De-Carbonize in other ways

Metro Areas

- When it comes to VMT, metro areas are the problem
- Fortunately, Metro Areas are also the solution.



Transit & TOD

Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Land Use in America is a Disaster for

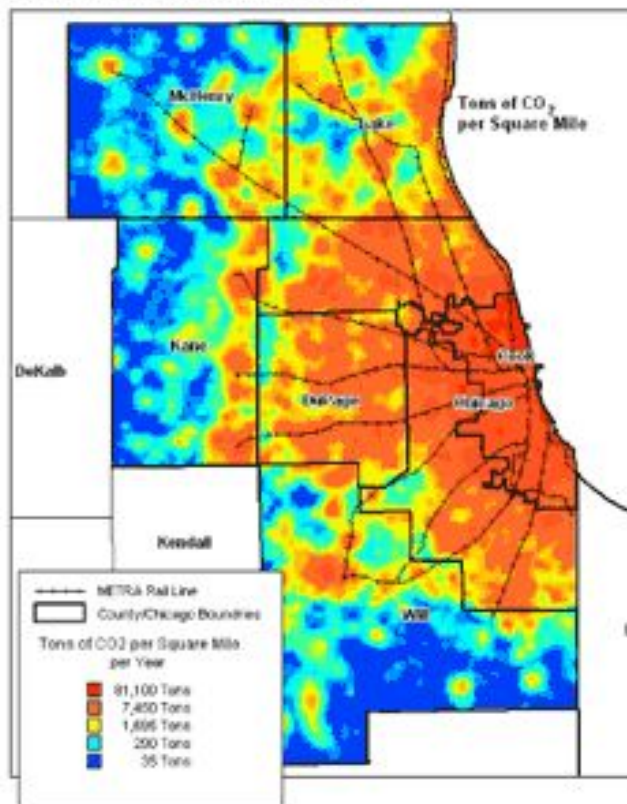
- Climate
- Housing Affordability
- Equity
- Electing Democrats

Two Views of Cities and CO₂

CO₂ Generated by Automobiles in the Chicago Region per Year

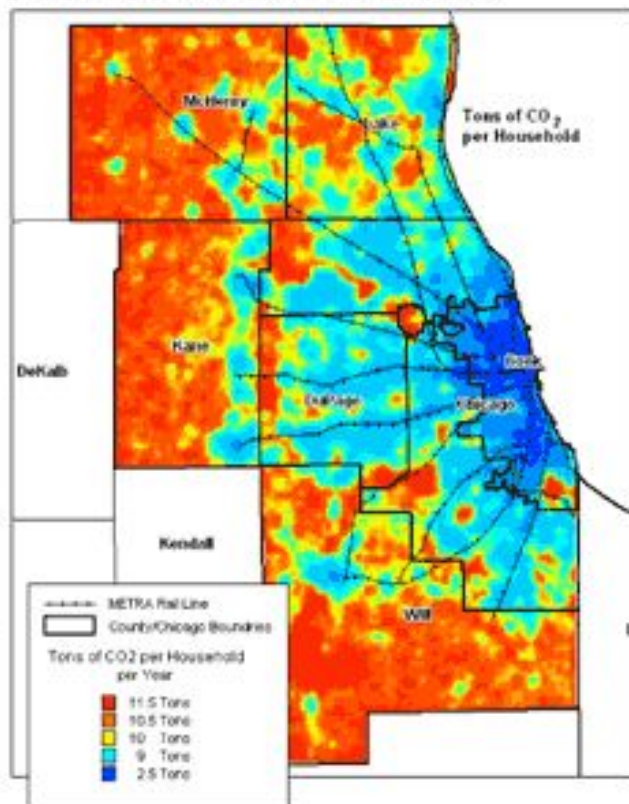
Traditional View:

Cities produce large amounts of GHGs.



Emerging View:

City dwellers produce relatively low amounts of GHGs.



Each color represents one fifth of the land area on each map.

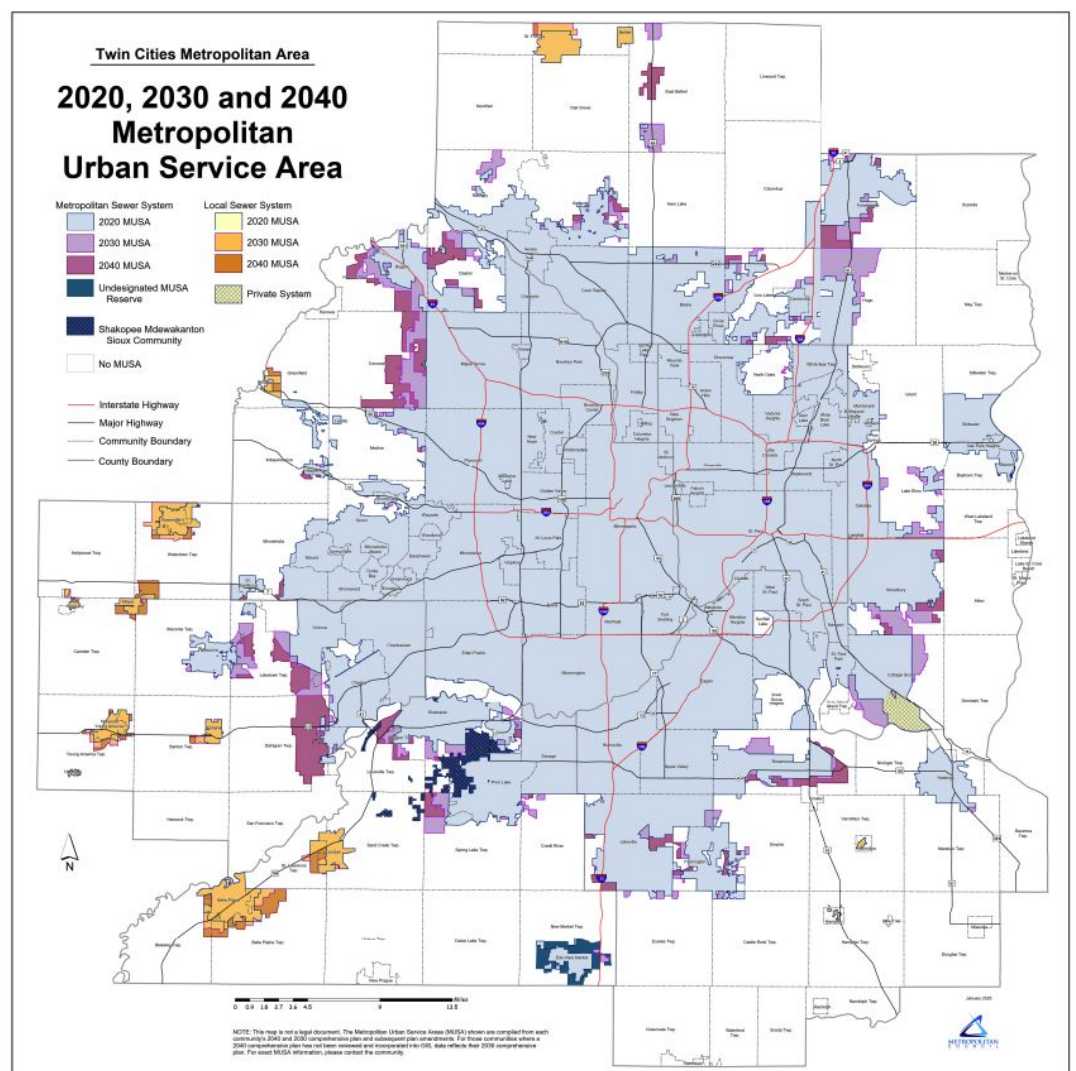
In their [Transportation Options and Vehicle Miles Traveled \(VMT\) Reduction Field Scan](#), MnDOT ranked land use patterns as the most impactful by far. Notably, MNDOT ranked land use #1 even while breaking out “parking policy” as a separate category.

Policy tiers	Strategy	Potential impact per household (● = 5%)	MnDOT role
1. More and better travel options 2. Transportation demand management 3. Coordinated transportation and land use 4. Commercial travel	Walking and biking	●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	Transit	●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	TDM and broadband	●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	Constrained highway capacity spending	●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	Road pricing	●●●●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	Parking policy	●●●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
	Land use patterns	●●●●●●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○○	
	Commercial VMT	?	

Figure 3. Various policy levers, potential impact on household VMT, and approximate MnDOT role.

Sprawl is Bad for the Climate

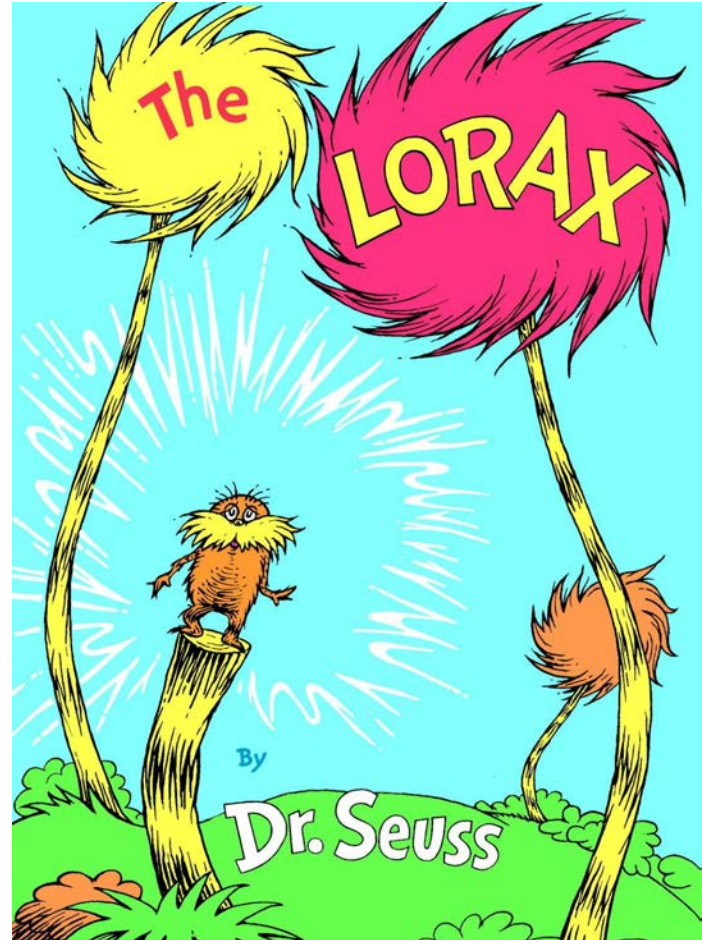
- It's even worse than we thought.



It's not just VMT

- destruction of natural spaces and their carbon sequestration
- less walkability
- less heating and cooling efficiencies from multi-family housing
- the greater carbon intensity of building new infrastructure to connect people who are farther apart from one another



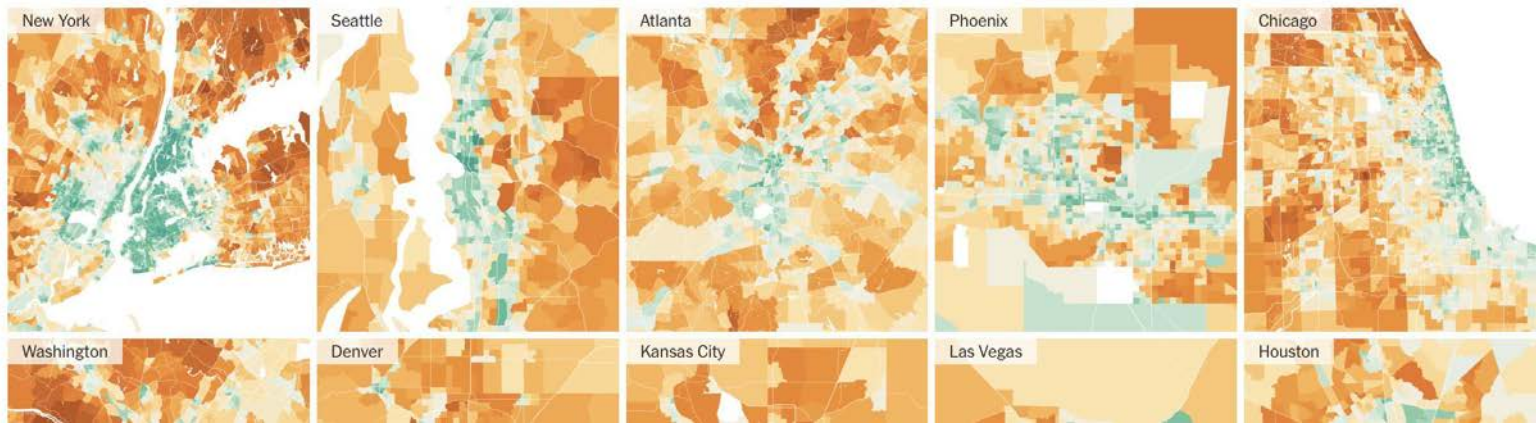
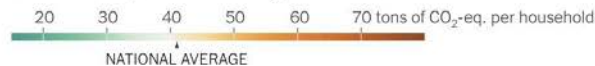


The Climate Impact of Your Neighborhood, Mapped

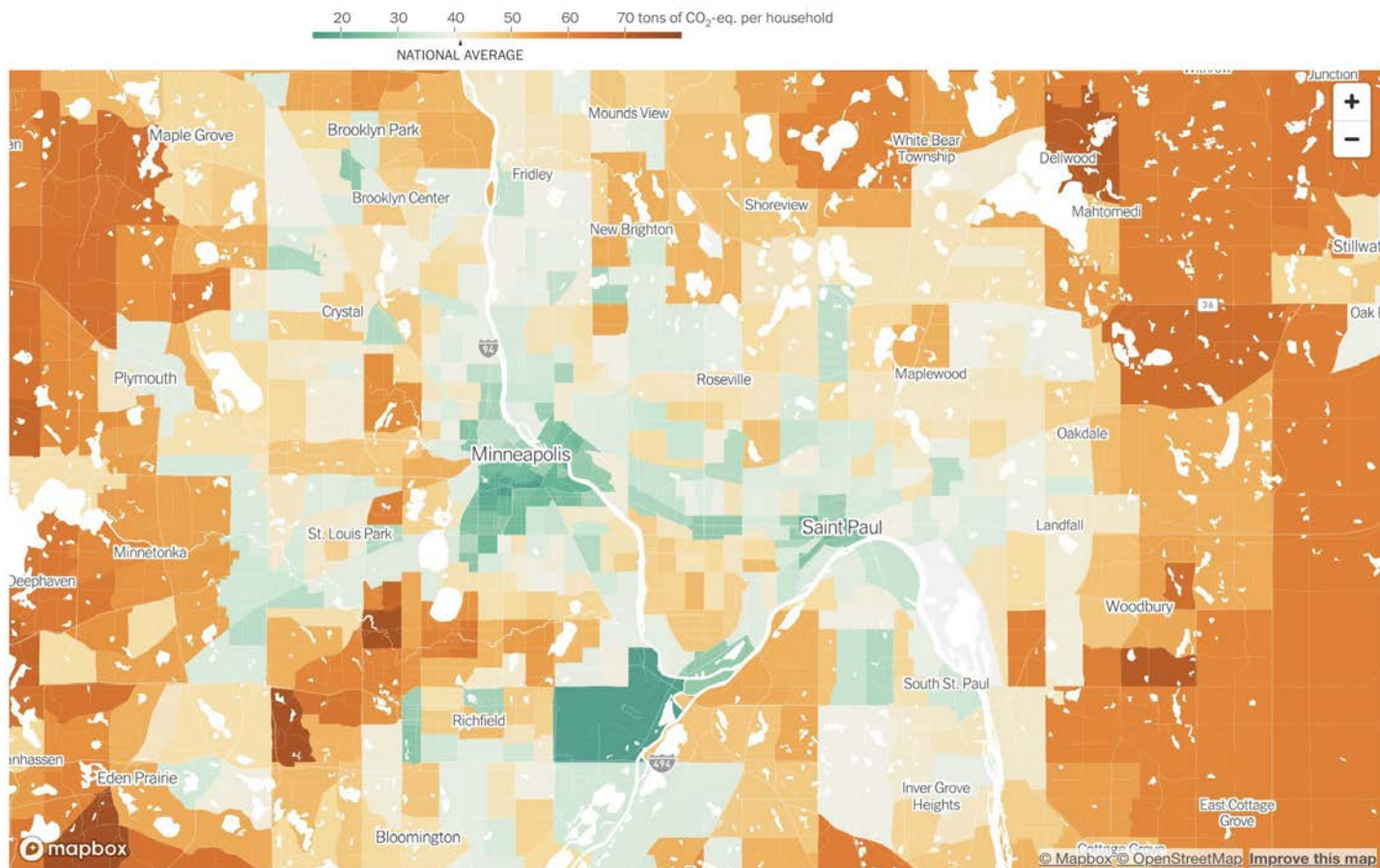
By [Nadja Popovich](#), [Mira Rojanasakul](#) and [Brad Plumer](#) Dec. 13, 2022

New data shared with The New York Times reveals stark disparities in how different U.S. households contribute to climate change. Looking at America's cities, a pattern emerges.

Emissions Footprint of the Average Household



Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area

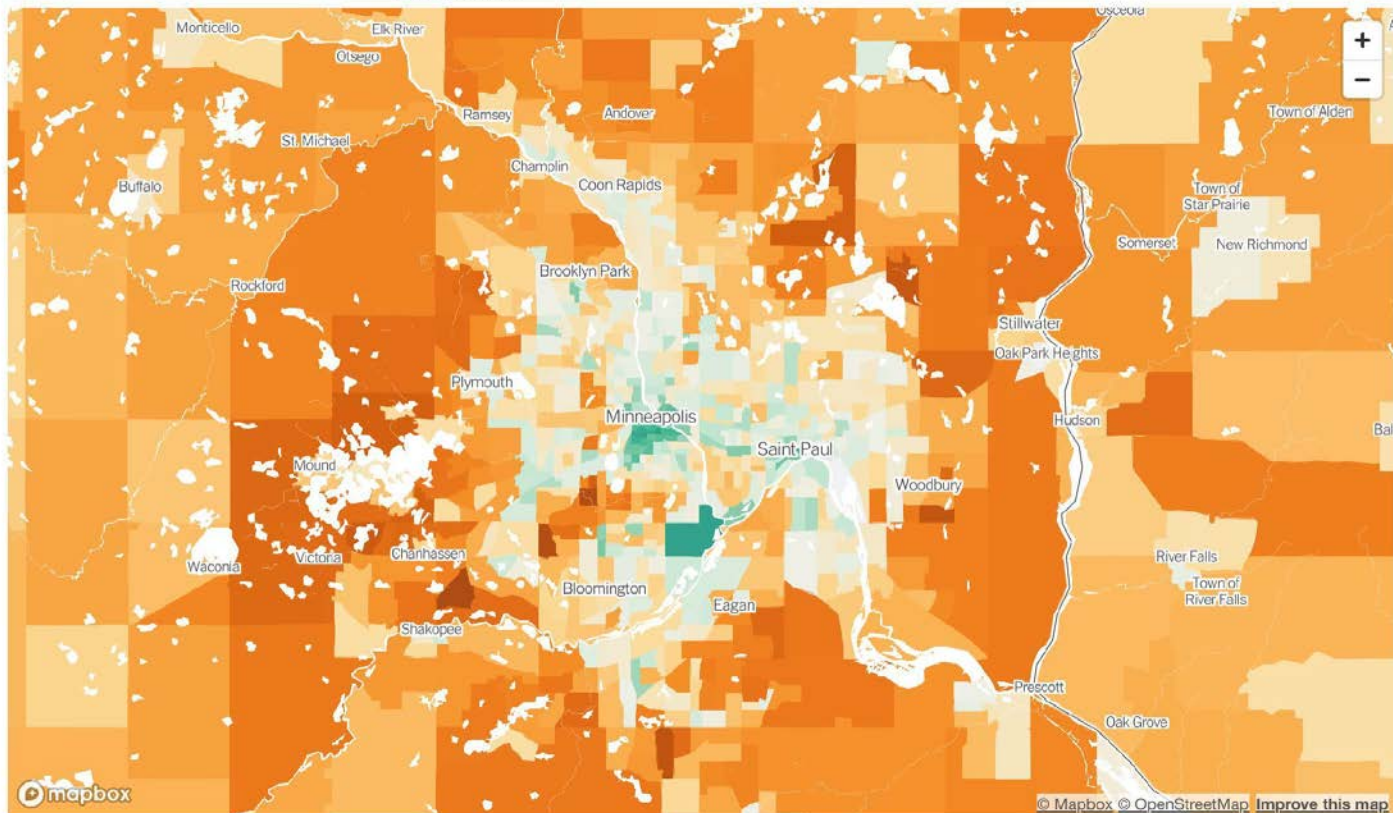


Note: Metro area names have been simplified.

Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area

20 30 40 50 60 70 tons of CO₂-eq. per household

NATIONAL AVERAGE



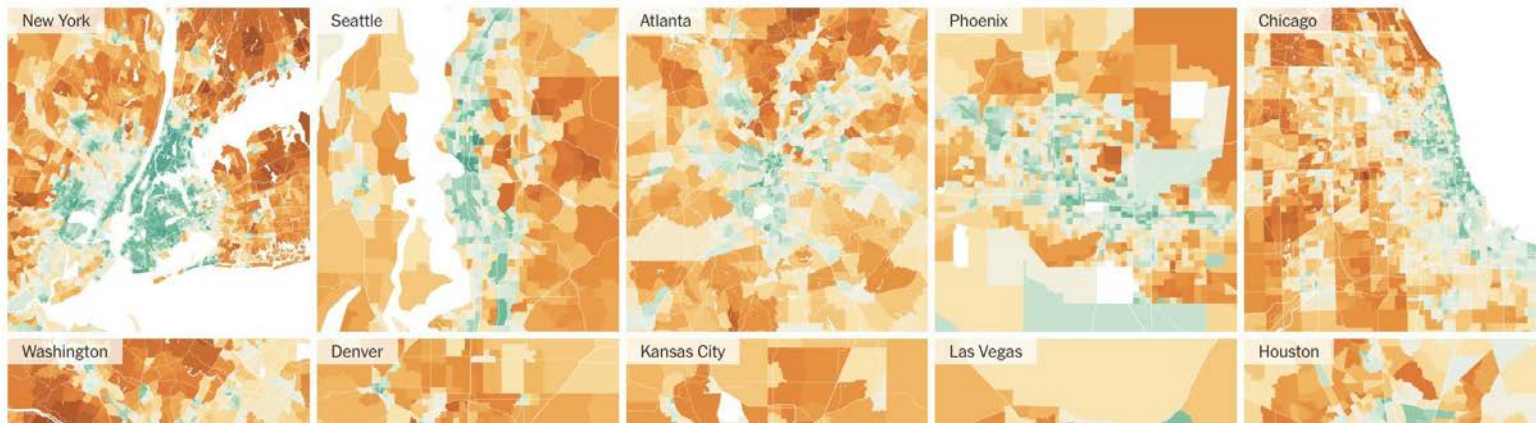
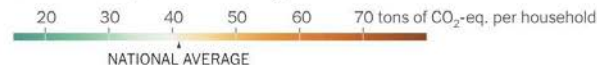
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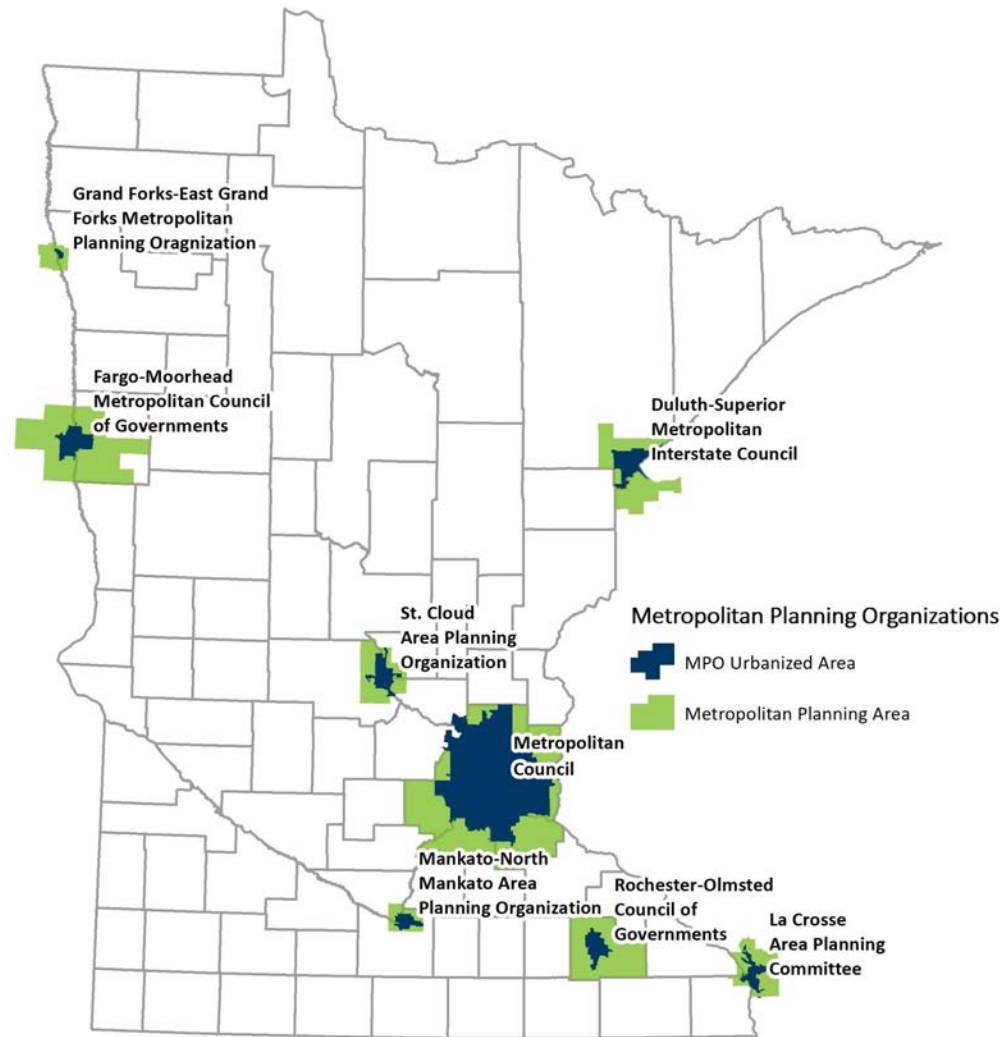
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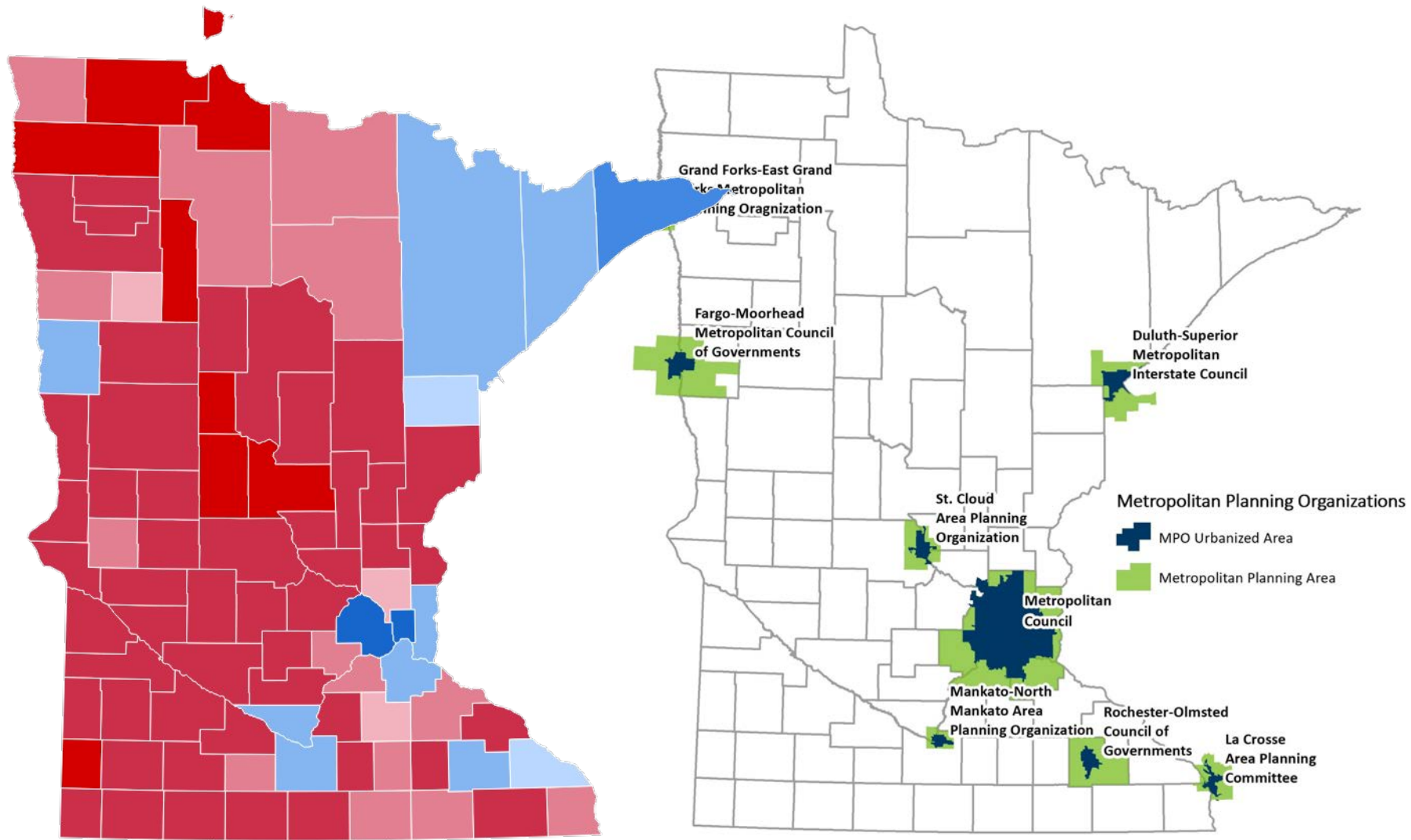
Emissions Footprint of the Average Household



Geography is... Everything

- For affordability
- For climate
- For getting votes to pass a bill
- and for the revenue to run a transit system that works!





Role of Cities

- Any answer to the climate crisis must include **welcoming more people** to live in equitable and sustainable cities.
- Minneapolis led the way by legalizing apartment buildings near transit. And it has worked to hold down rents.
- The City of Mpls was sued by anti-density folks by abusing our environmental laws.
- So in 2024, Sierra Club led the effort to amend Minnesota's environmental laws to end that lawsuit and protect other cities from similar litigation

100 Houses



100% of island used

100 Apartments



4% of island used



Historic Stillwater Downtown

- Stillwater's 2040 comprehensive plan calls for higher density near downtown
- A 61-unit apartment building in downtown Stillwater opened in 2023 (photo on bottom right)



Seventh Avenue (North St Paul)

- A 100-unit apartment building recently opened near North St Paul's historic downtown
- Mac's Diner on the ground floor (photo bottom right)
- Mayor cited housing as driver of downtown revitalization



Burnsville Heart of the City

- Urban, walkable, pedestrian-friendly area near rapid transit
- Hundreds of condos, apartments, and townhomes
- Host to Ames arts center and annual jazz festival
- Burnsville's 2040 Comprehensive Plan calls for more density and mixed-use neighborhoods that build upon the success of the Heart of the City



Burnsville Heart of the City



The West End (St. Louis Park)

- Walkable and vibrant commercial district with shopping, dining, and entertainment
- Hundreds of units across multiple apartment buildings as well as hotels



The West End (St. Louis Park)



Rice Creek Commons (Arden Hills)

- Former Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant
- Comprehensive Plan calls for mixed-use development with shopping, dining, employment, and for thousands of housing units



Highland Bridge (St Paul)

- Redeveloping 122 acres of former Ford site into mixed use commercial, residential, and greenspace
- Market rate and affordable homes

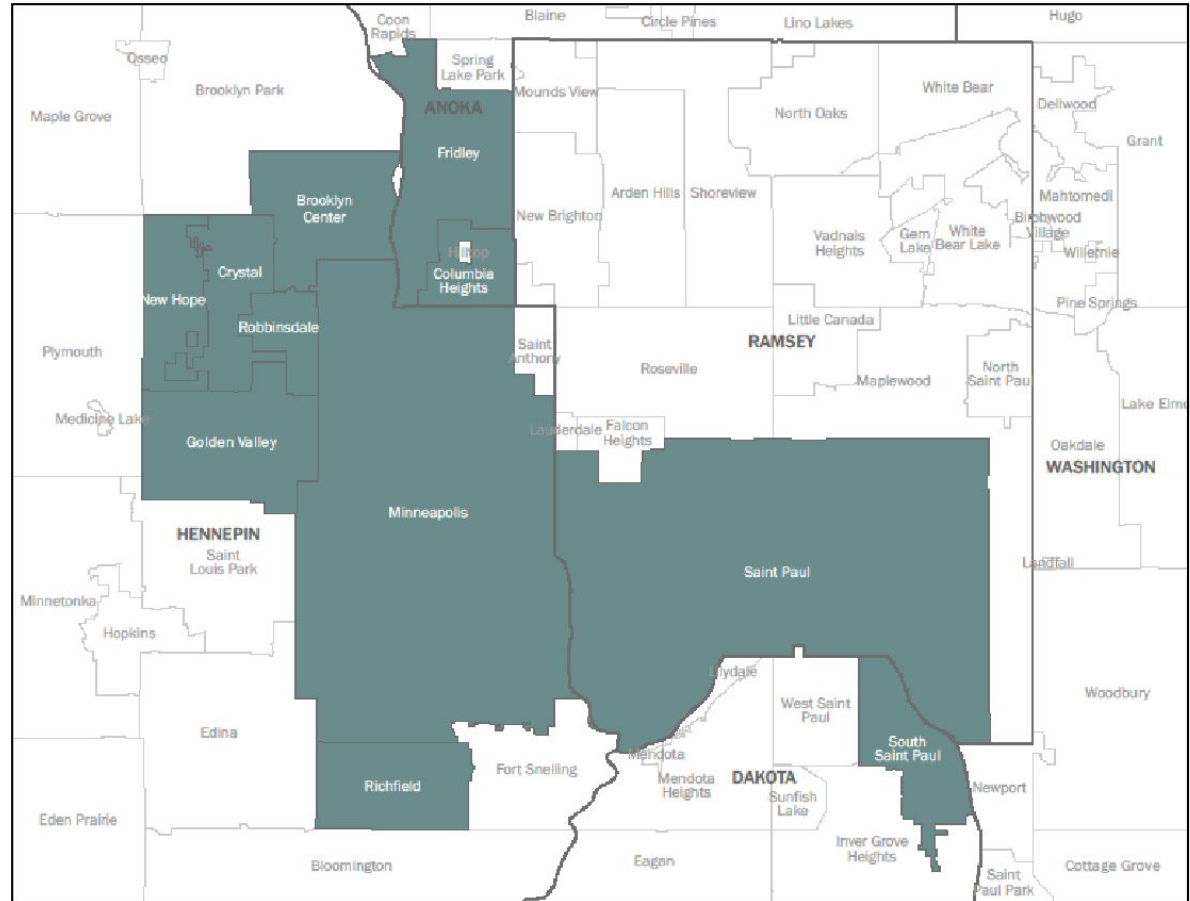


Highland Bridge (St. Paul)



Follow the infrastructure

- Core Cities are underpopulated compared to their infrastructure.
- These 11 cities in particular have collectively 126,000 fewer people than their previous peak populations.



Minneapolis Population

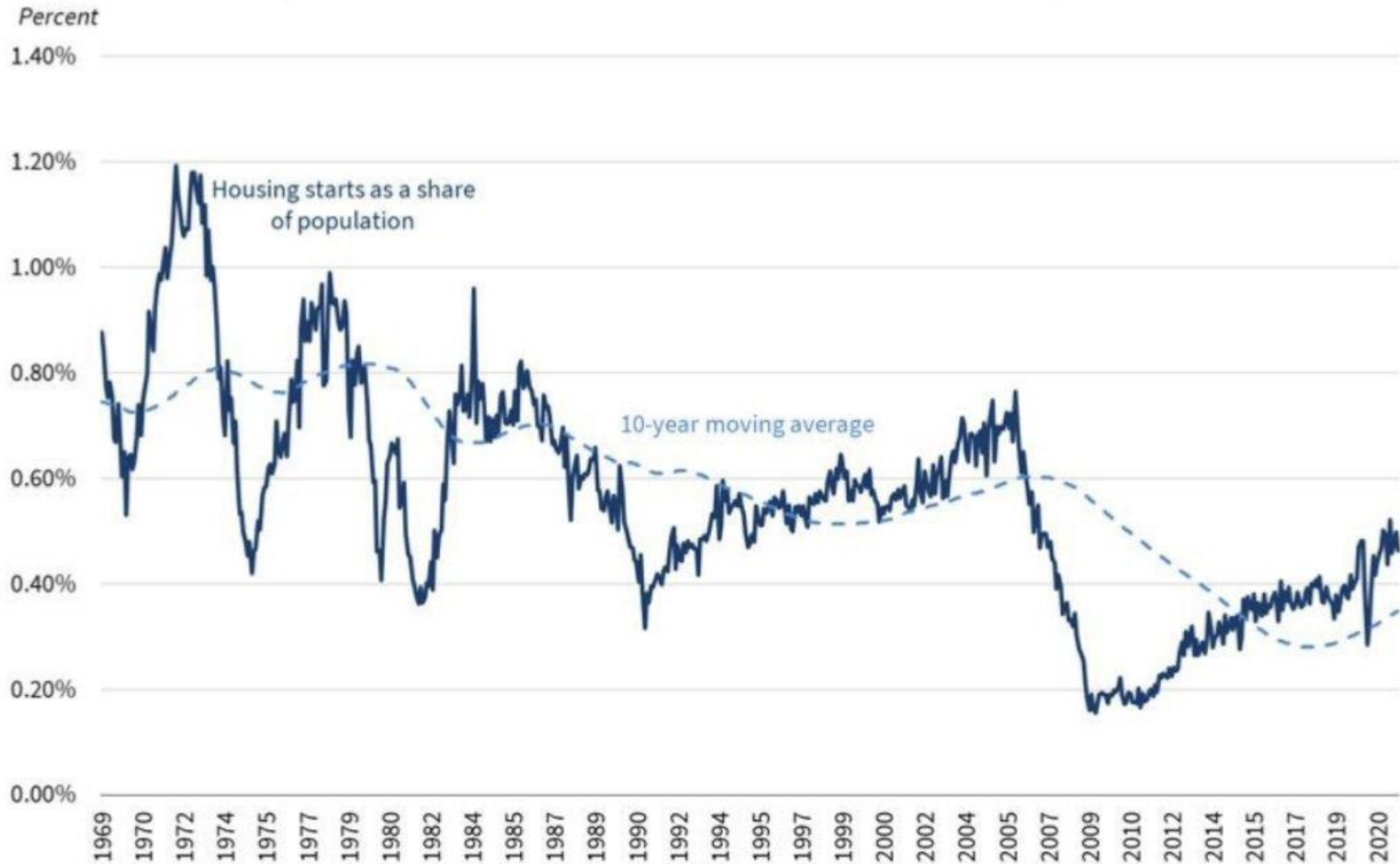
1950		521,718
1990	↓	368,234
2020	↑	429,954

- Still 18.5% less than peak
- Why?
 - Household size

All across the nation, cities lost population

- Average Household size in 1950 was 3.5
- Average Household size in 2020 was 2.6

Figure 2: Housing production has not kept pace with population growth



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED); CEA calculations.

Where Did This Come From?

- Is it primarily because Democrats developed a fetish for proceduralism? Maybe...
- But it's not an accident that cities across America accelerated downzoning in the 70s and 80s. Cities did that because outright racial discrimination was prohibited by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Abundance

#1
New York
Times
Bestseller



Ezra Klein
Derek Thompson

Coming in January:

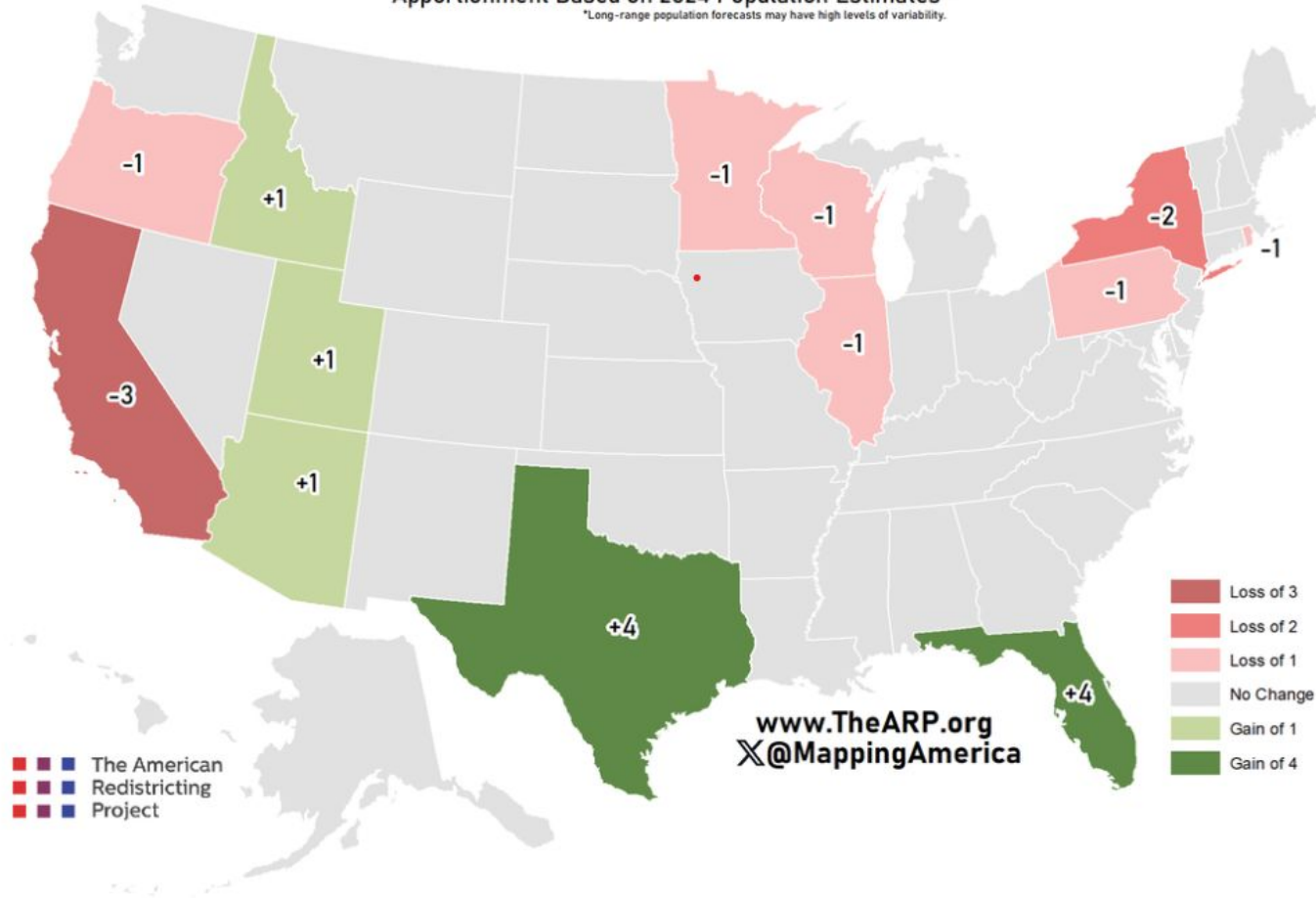
“An Environmentalist’s guide to Abundance, Housing and Transportation”

peter.wagenius@sierraclub.org

2030 Apportionment Forecast

Apportionment Based on 2024 Population Estimates*

*Long-range population forecasts may have high levels of variability.



Q&A

Thank you for joining!

**Reach out to
kristen@climate-xchange.org with any
additional questions!**

