

TBJ - Report shows health savings with walkable growth

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Fresno County could save \$83 million a year in health costs alone with proper planning to reduce air pollution, according to a new report by the American Lung Association in California.

The report, Public Health at the Crossroads, explains how more compact and walkable development would likely lead to 4,600 fewer asthma attacks and other respiratory health impacts by 2035, along with 789 fewer lost work days.

For Fresno County, that means \$83 million less tax payers have to spend each year to deliver health care services to low income residents. Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, the total saved rises as high as \$416 million annually by 2035.

The report comes as Valley counties adopt growth policies to align development with SB 375.

Also known as the Sustainable Communities Act, SB 375 requires California counties to come up with blueprints for transportation and development that will limit vehicle use and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.

Some of the recommendations listed in the report calls on elected leaders to prioritize growth and transportation investments to serve existing downtowns and community cores rather than fringe areas and support a local government grant program to help make existing neighborhoods more walkable, bikeable and transit friendly.

The [American Lung Association in California](#) also wants Fresno County to support more efficient zero- and near-zero emission freight strategies and promote infill, transit oriented development and better access to transit as well as Bus Rapid Transit as cleaner air transportation options.

"Given the results of this report, the American Lung Association in California is calling on local leaders to move away from business-as-usual planning and toward a healthier vision," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, senior director of Policy and Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California, in a release. "Air quality and health can improve greatly in communities that are more vibrant and active, with real walking, biking and transit opportunities."