



# Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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## NEWS RELEASE

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No. 1219  
January 10, 1974

FOR RELEASE: a.m.'s Monday  
January 14, 1974

### AIR POLLUTION NO BAR TO DOWNTOWN GROWTH IF U.S. AUTO STANDARDS ARE MET

Regional Plan Study Shows Poor More Subject to  
Bad Air, Benefit Most From Improvement

Further concentrations of economic, governmental and cultural activities in urban centers can be carried out for energy-saving and other social and economic advantages without slowing the decline of auto pollution in downtowns if federal auto emission standards are achieved, Regional Plan Association reported today in its latest study of environmental issues.

"Such centers throughout the tri-state Region are the antidote to spread city," Dr. John P. Keith, President of the Association explained. "With centers, we can conserve land from development, allow for greater use of public transportation, reduce highway needs and save energy. But, since there are only a few places in the Region that can be served by rail transportation, there would have to be a reliance on buses as well as autos--even though centers would reduce overall travel. Therefore, a concern of ours was that such necessary vehicular concentrations might have an adverse effect on health-related issues. This study shows that if enacted air quality standards are met there need not be a concern.

"Now with the energy crisis and the search for long range energy conservation solutions, compact urban centers which can be served by public transportation become a necessity," Dr. Keith concluded.

The primary objective of the study was to determine the exposure of different economic groups, particularly low-income, to varying air quality. Existing air quality data, although often limited, showed that low-income residents tended to be exposed to higher concentrations of sulfur dioxide and particulates. Moreover, areas with significantly lower readings had few low-income residents.

Conversion to low sulfur fuel in New York City resulted in a dramatic reduction of about 50 percent in sulfur dioxide concentrations between 1969 and 1971. While this benefitted all New York City residents, it particularly benefitted the low-income population because of their concentration in the City.

For this study, alternative land-use plans, highway patterns and income distributions were postulated for the future. Examination found that these would have only a minor effect on exposure to pollutants caused by the auto. Instead federal emission standards would be a much more important factor in improving air quality and reducing exposure. The study concluded that should these standards be met and maintained, the issue of vehicle air pollution would be removed as an argument against high-density.

Another major finding is that measurements of pollution are so scattered and incomplete that they provide inadequate basis for choosing policies for improving air quality.

The study, The Distribution of Air Quality in the New York Region, by Jeffrey M. Zupan, Chief Systems Analyst for Regional Plan, was financed by a grant from Resources for the Future, a Washington non-profit research organization, and published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

(A limited number of press copies are available upon request.)

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