MORE WORK THAN WE'RE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE

An occassional look into what's so inconvenient about the truth.

Today: The earth-unfriendly car vs. the slightly less earth-unfriendly car.

Car or Other Car?

ou think about it everyday. It's becoming a common refrain among your family. The question goes like this: Should I get a car? Or should I get, like, a hybrid car? Because of global warming, people are asking themselves all over the world, like never before, if they should get that one earth-unfriendly car, or perhaps that slightly less earth-unfriendly one.



Some, convinced they can make a difference in the effort to curb global warming, choose a car. Others, more concerned with spending less on fuel or standing in solidarity with those who can not afford an expensive car, choose a car. Still others are searching for a way to make a great statement to the people around them. One that says they're forward- thinking consumers who will stand up for something. Many of them choose to say that through a car. But who is right? Or is that even the point?

Lately you've been hearing that your petroleum dependent car is not so earth-friendly. Sucks, doesn't it?

CAR J

I mean, seriously, the U.S. burns 10,000 gallons of gasoline a second,² and even without as much lead as there used to be in fuel, the pollution is still substantial and dangerous. But, hey, at least you got some wheels, right?

DRIVE TO WORK SO YOU CAN BUY A CAR SO YOU CAN DRIVE TO WORK.

Percentage of people between the ages of 25 and 64 who get to work by way of:⁵

Private auto: 87% Carpool: .54% Public Bus: 2.87% Subway or commuter train: 1.57% Bicycle: 0.56% Walk/Nonmotorized wheelchair: 1.6%

Why don't our city council members and their peers push for a transportation plan that is people-centric, not industrycentric? Probably because we're not demanding it. Climate change, economic and environmental injustice has roots in many of our most common, most American, habits. Driving, in any car, is an environmental problem that we bring on ourselves.

PRODUCTION

Cradle to Grave

"In recent years...the automotive industry...was a major purchaser of iron and steel (30 percent), lead for batteries (46 percent), aluminum (23 percent), and platinum for exhaust fume control (41 percent). Approximately 75 percent of the cost of the industry's power comes from electricity, but the auto industry also consumes natural gas (15 percent of energy expenditures), and coal and coke (over 8 percent), as well as steam, oil, and propane."¹ So, yeah, it's a hybrid. But did you know that often the greenest cars come from the dirtiest facilities? And really, even if it were a 100% electric car, where does that electricity come from? More coal burning plants? More nuclear power? Unfortunately only 6.8 % of our nations energy is coming from renewable sources,³ so unfortunately the hybrid is still being fueled primarily by earth's dwindling resources.

CA



WHY DOES EXTRACTION MATTER?

It takes a tremendous amount of energy to extract the materials the earth spent billions of years creating. Every little bit of energy spent is that much more of the earth's resources we must extract just to have the energy to extract the materials that we need to make a car. And keep in mind all the petroleum used in the machinery that extracted and delivered those materials. Does Caterpiller make hybrids?



RUNOFF

What is runoff?: Drips of anti-freeze, engine oil, rubber and metal particles from tire wear, cigarette butts, plastic bags, paper trash, spent shells, pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste and more that is carried off the road by wind, rain and snow and into water and soil. Soil erosion around roads, bridges, etc is also considered runoff, as well as particles from roofs, off-road pathways, and elsewhere. RUNOFF CONTINUED

ON THE ROAD

There are 3,995,644 miles of roadways in the US (almost twice as many as India and approaching three times as many as the entire EU). That is nearly 4 million miles of land, approximately 12 to 72 feet wide that can not grow much more than potholes, originate runoff, facilitate pollution and kill lots and lots of wildlife. (And then there's the ills of parking lots.) Even hybrids need roads and parkinglots.

A 1953 Ford Motor Co. Press release, where this image was published, stated that in that year alone, 3.5 million cars would be scrapped.

What can be done? Here is a list of things we can do to begin decreasing our dependency on cars. 1) Group more errands into one trip. If any of those errands can be done closer to your house, consider walking, riding a bike or sharing your car with a friend who may also need to run some errands. 2) If you commute, or even if you don't, consider carpooling. 3) If you can, ride a bike as much and as far as your legs will carry you. If that's not possible, think about joining or supporting your local bicycle or greenways initiative. You don't have to ride a bike to believe in the beauty of better bike paths. 4) Write your city council members and "suggest" that their careers depend on them "cleaning up this town". Tell them you don't just want more bike lanes. You want them everywhere. And you just happen to be a citizen who doesn't want to have to drive to pick up a gallon of milk. Say all of this very respectfully, of course, or

Graphic and writing by Bryan Moats blockstreetandbuilding.com/blog

THE HUMAN COST

(The Forgotten Bottom Line)

Nature does not waste. People do. Pollution comes from people. Ironically, we spend a lot of time and money avoiding having to live near waste as if were not our fault it is there. But someone or something has to live near the waste of our dead cars and industrial by-product. Typically, all that trash ends up in landfills, very often located in or near low income communities or communities of color. This is refered to as environmental injustice and a form of racism.

In a 1992 EPA press release, it was stated that "racial minority and low-income populations experience higher than average exposures to selected air pollutants, hazardous waste facilities, contaminated fish and agricultural pesticides in the workplace..." The production, use and disposal of automobiles is one of the primary contributors to this inequality. One notable example is that "a significantly higher percentage of Black children compared to White children have unacceptably high blood lead levels." This from many years of ignorance and arrogance on the part of the consumer, the corporation and the federal government.

Where does it happen?: everyhwere you find cars, trucks, tractors, motorcycles, etc. Roads, driveways, ATV paths, parking lots, sidewalks, and more.

Why is it bad?: When particles and/or soil erosion runoff becomes sediment in waterways, it clogs fish gills, blocks sunlight from plants, and smothers fish spawning areas.





These EV1s met their untimely end via recall. They were around enough to have



driven a few relatively clean miles, but sadly never came close to undoing the environmental impact of having been manufactured in the first place.

Hey, at least someone was conscientious enough to have bought them in order to create a lighter footprint on the earth. But has it solved the problem of needing to drive



so much in order to get by? And what about not having the option or personal will to take or encourage the development of public transportation?

Two pollutants on the EPA's most-wanted list can be easily found in many low-income communities.

they won't take you seriously. 5) Lastly, lead by example. Pick up the "cause" in your own life and it will have a chain reaction. The human race has found out that cars and our environment just don't mix, no matter what kind of car. Now we just need to act on that knowledge. Ride a bike!



¹The Automobile and the Environment in American History by Martin V. Melosi, ²Oil on the Brain: Adventures from the Pump to the Pipeline by Lisa Margonelli, ³http://www.eia.doe.gov/, ⁴Federal Register: April 15, 1997 (Volume 62, Number 72), ⁵U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2002 National Transportation Availability and Use Survey. ⁶http://www.worldbank.org/transport/publicat/reh/toc.htm Extreme care to cite all sources has not been taken.