



Infrastructure and Health Equity

Three questions you should be asking

Infrastructure is the physical foundation — the facilities and structures — of what our society needs to operate. This includes roads, highways, buildings, bridges, water, and energy. Cities around the United States are dealing with outdated and aging infrastructure. As a country, we must invest in infrastructure for a better future, and we must do so responsibly and equitably.

If you think infrastructure and public health are not related, think again. Poor infrastructure has been linked with [lead poisoning](#), [accidents and injuries](#), and [asthma](#).

As infrastructure proposals move forward, here are 3 questions you should ask to protect health and health equity. Read our full info brief on [Infrastructure and Health Equity](#) to learn more about this issue.

1. Who pays, and at what cost?

If the federal government is reluctant to use federal taxpayer dollars on infrastructure, it's important to ask: where is the public money coming from?

If states and local jurisdictions are asked to pay more without federal support, they may be forced to increase service prices for residents (such as [toll hikes](#)) and/or cut vital social services or programs such as public health or education.

2. Who will profit from financing incentives?

When private investment is involved in infrastructure projects, it's important to ask: who benefits and who is accountable?

Research has shown that when private companies are involved in leveraging public funds for infrastructure projects, they prioritize profit and minimize transparency. When this happens, communities suffer — for example, through surges in [utility rates and increased exposure to hazards, such as water-borne diseases](#).

3. How is health and the environment impacted?

When infrastructure projects are first proposed, it's important to ask: how will this impact the health and the environment of local communities?

Environmental review processes help identify important risks, including climate change consequences, exposure to dangerous environmental circumstances, and displacement from homes and jobs. When thorough and diligent environmental review processes — put in place to protect us and the environment — are [compromised](#), the local environment, as well as the global health of our planet are put at risk.