

The bronx: why the government needs to take care of air pollution

[Environment](#), [Pollution](#)



When I got on the BX 12 Select Bus Service, I overheard the driver on Fordham Road state, “ I do not know what I am breathing, but I do know that it is toxic.” I agreed with the bus driver’s statement. The Fordham Road community is near the South Bronx, which has the highest rate of air pollution. Currently, the air pollution has only worsened due to the current roadwork. This is environmental injustice and action needs to occur because everyone has the fundamental right to clean air quality.

Children face the highest risk in developing asthma because of fine particle matter and ground level ozone. Fine particle matter is PM 2. 5 and ground level ozone is O3 . Both of these particles originate from industrial sites, truck routes, and other air pollution hotspots. Since Fordham Road is located near, the South Bronx, the community will face additional air pollution due to Fresh Direct’s warehouses in the South Bronx. Even though Mayor de Blasio adopted an environmental plan known as One NYC, which is to make New York City environmentally sustainable is a long-term rather than a short-term goal. The Fordham Road community needs short-term goals in order to protest the current location of Fresh Direct. The entire South Bronx needs to unite by taking action against this online grocery store.

Roadwork contribution to air pollution on Fordham

Fordham Road is a very dangerous intersection in the Bronx. In the past two years, I witnessed many accidents that prompted action in fixing the roadwork. Currently, I see plenty of “ Vision Zero” advertisements around Fordham Road as a caution for drivers to be more careful. These advertisements are a New York City initiative with a goal to end unnecessary

traffic accidents. This great initiative is causing unintended consequences such as air pollution can potentially kill more people than traffic accidents. When I went to Fordham Road to find out about the current air pollution, I decided to go in a nearby Footlocker store, because it was raining. That is where I met Mr. Persaud who had an interesting viewpoint about the current roadwork that contributed to the air pollution. He said, its “ horrible, getting very dusty and what is being done is limited. The pollution is horrible in this part of Fordham Road.” This definitely proves the point that roadwork contributed to the unnecessary air pollution. The City provides limited help through trying to control the dust by using city trucks to water the roads. The limited amount of water does not do anything to prevent further air pollution.

Viewpoints

I surveyed about 20 people on Fordham Road and Valentine Avenue about their viewpoints on air pollution. It was difficult to stop people because some did not want to stop at all. Some people that I stopped did not speak English. Most of the people that I asked said that they did not care about air pollution. This showed that people do not speak up about what they are breathing because some people are so used to their environment. In a bigger picture, this shows that if people do not give a voice, they will not make a decision about what happens in their neighborhoods. For example, when I went into the Footlocker store, I asked a clerk her thoughts on air pollution at Fordham Road. She waved me off and said that she does not care. I also asked her colleague Joe Maurice, who stated that “ no one is really saying anything about the pollution. I am already used to it.”

Since low-income communities of color live near industrial area, they tend to breathe 38% more nitrogen dioxides compared to their white counterparts, mainly due to exhaust from vehicles. A community that is not aware of the consequences in breathing this type of air is more likely to die from asthma or any lung-related diseases because too much nitrogen can cause a higher risk in asthma. Since demographically, the majority of the Fordham Road population is Hispanic and Black, this shows that communities of color do breathe different air than wealthier communities.

Asthma and Air Pollution

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently created a free online environmental mapping tool in being transparent between the government and community. According to EJSCREEN, Fordham Road has more ozone and PM 2. 5 particles, than the Upper East Side. PM 2. 5 particles are air pollution chemicals that contribute to asthma. Race divides neighborhoods such as Fordham Road is a low-income minority neighborhood, while the Upper East Side is a wealthy Caucasian neighborhood. This leads to zip codes playing a role on whether the individual would have asthma or not. Children from low-income neighborhoods are more vulnerable to asthma, as they face greater air pollution in their living environment. This NYU research study shows higher rates of asthma among children in the South Bronx. As a result of high asthma rates in the South Bronx, people are against Fresh Direct. Fresh Direct is an online grocery store with warehouses opening in the South Bronx. If there are more trucks in the neighborhood, then this will create an extremely toxic environment. Although Fresh Direct's decision to move into

the South Bronx can create more jobs for the community, people are against this plan because their children's health is at stake. Fresh Direct will move into the South Bronx as a way to create jobs in the low-income community; however, people are against this plan because the amount of trucks will only increase the asthma rate. This is environmental racism because Fresh Direct was picked to be in a minority community rather than in a wealthy community. This is an example of modern day environmental injustice that denies human rights of the people who live there and do not deserve to be further poisoned by more air pollution.

Solutions

PlaNYC became OneNYC under Mayor de Blasio with a plan to strengthen New York City, through addressing issues such as the environment. This plan includes reducing air pollution. The main goal of OneNYC is for New York City to have the best air quality by 2030. Even though this plan is ambitious, individuals need to step in and find ways to reduce air pollution. New York City should provide equal opportunities for everyone in terms of accessing bikes into all of the neighborhoods. A way to become sustainable is by following in the path of Denmark because they have a low-carbon footprint. New York City should increase the CitiBike program into every single neighborhood rather than being selective to the Upper West Side and Brooklyn Heights. The New York City government should also invest in more resources into creating a large outreach program that would actively collect individual's viewpoints on alternative forms of transportation. New York City nonprofits that focus on the environmental advocacy, such as We ACT for

Environmental Justice should use EJSCREEN to advocate for communities that have high pollution rates.

Conclusion

The air pollution on Fordham Road is an example of many communities of color that face environmental racism. Communities need to come together to have their voices heard. These communities are the driving forces in future decision making as the demographics of this country shift from majority to minority population. Communities of color can push this country into becoming environmentally friendly through using clean energy which would reduce air pollution significantly.