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Introducing... the Freeway Fighters Network

Nationwide, local campaigns fighting highway expansions and advocating for reconnecting communities divided by highways unite to spark a transportation revolution.

Washington, DC - From Houston to Minneapolis, Syracuse to Seattle, and in dozens of cities and towns in between, local advocacy groups have joined forces to form the Freeway Fighters Network, a nationwide coalition to center people before highways in infrastructure investments.

For too long, the United States has relied on highway systems that damage the environment and cause social, economic, and physical harm to the people who live in their path. Highways perpetuate inequalities along the lines of race and class, built for commuting culture at the expense of the most vulnerable communities. Now, with many of these highways reaching the end of their designed lifespan, it is time to repair the damage and advance a more sustainable paradigm for American transportation.

The Freeway Fighters Network, supported by the non-profit organization the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), tracks over 60 local freeway fighting efforts across the country and coordinates collective action at the national level. In addition to fighting freeways in their own communities, network members advocate for a larger shift in transportation public policy to support the following principles:

- a commitment to stop expanding highways and building new ones
- the transformation of existing highways that damage communities into assets like city streets, housing, and green space;
- renewed investments in multimodal transportation systems in place of highways;
- parallel investments in community development that builds wealth for current residents and allows them enjoy the benefits of a highway's transformation;
- a priority to make amends to the people displaced or negatively affected by highway building.

“The Freeway Fighters Network serves as a think tank for advocates who are working to transform communities that have been scarred by highways or protect neighborhoods that are threatened by harmful infrastructure projects,” said Amy Stelly, co-founder of the Claiborne Avenue Alliance, based in New Orleans, LA. “The network provides a comfortable space for all who are city-building and working to create great places where people are valued over cars.”

“Hinge Neighbors, Inc. is engaged in community building and educating our neighbors about the possibilities of transforming Rochester’s Inner Loop back into part of the city. This process requires patience, but lucky for us, we have found a national community of freeway fighters who are eager to share ideas and successful practices.” said Suzanne Mayer and Shawn Dunwoody, co-founder of Hinge Neighbors, Inc., based in Rochester, NY. “The collective power of the Freeway Fighters Network helps us press our leaders in proactive and positive ways and convince them to take on reparative projects that reconnect communities divided by highways.



“No More Freeways is thrilled to be part of the Freeway Fighters Network,” said Aaron Brown, an organizer with No More Freeways, based in Portland, OR. “Neighborhoods struggling with the consequences of a previous century’s terrible racist freeways in cities across the country have so much to learn from each other and collaborate to imagine alternative futures for our communities. We are eager to share our successes fighting the Oregon Department of Transportation with the rest of the country and learn from others working to tackle the freeway industrial complex.”

“Being part of the Freeway Fighters fulfills an Allendale Strong goal: that our learning and doing experiences accumulated since 2012 give us voice in a national conversation about new vision, new policies, and new practices to reform urban transportation planning with community values,” said Kim Mitchell, organizer with Allendale Strong, based in Shreveport, LA. “As part of the Freeway Fighters, we now feel part of a national community that is unleashing the power of caring together.”

“Perpetuating injustice or climate arson – the mindless expansion of urban freeways is not just destructive, it’s pointless,” CNU Executive Director Rick Cole noted. “The studies are conclusive: widening freeways doesn’t ease congestion. Instead induced demand quickly absorbs added capacity, generating more greenhouse gasses and wasting billions of dollars. If the engineers and politicians continue to ignore the climate emergency, racial equity, and common sense, the nationwide Freeway Fighters Network will stop them in their bulldozer tracks.”

The Freeway Fighters Network recognizes that the investments in highways made during the 20th century have created a system of car-dependency that is difficult to disentangle, but until this happens, it is impossible to meet the 21st century climate and environmental challenges that threaten public health, economic vitality, and community stability.

More information on the Freeway Fighters Network can be found at freeway-fighters.org.

Members of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) help create vibrant and walkable cities, towns, and neighborhoods where people have diverse choices for how they live, work, shop, and get around. People want to live in well-designed places that are unique and authentic. CNU's mission is to help people build those places. Visit www.cnu.org for more.

