How Idle Minds and Idling Cars Impact the Air

(Dave Wilms, Sustain Libertyville Commission member)

We often drive to pick someone up and keep the car running while we wait. While we're all aware that a car contributes carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, we don't typically think about the impact our own idling can have. According to energy.gov, one idling car can use up to half a gallon of gas in an hour. This may not seem like much until we factor in that every gallon of gas burned creates 20 pounds of CO2. When we put 15 gallons of gas in a car, SUV, or truck, that gas becomes 300 pounds of CO2 in a single tank.

The Libertyville Sustainability Commission is working with Libertyville school districts to reduce their carbon footprints, especially concerning idling at pick-up areas. If a car idles for 15 minutes, it uses about a pint of gas and creates 2.5 pounds of CO2. Again, this may not seem like much for one car, but what's the impact of all cars picking up students?

When I worked at Stevenson High School, as the Sustainability Coordinator, we monitored the traffic coming on campus every day. For the 4000 students we had during the study, about 5,000 cars entered the campus each day. Let's guess that half of those cars – 2,500 - were picking up a student. If we assume the average wait time is 10 minutes, that equals 25,000 minutes or 416 hours of idling time, consuming 208 gallons of gas and creating about 4,160 pounds of CO2. If we consider that there are 180 school days a year, by waiting in idling cars alone, parents will create 748,800 pounds of CO2 per year. This is enough to power the electricity of 66 homes for an entire year!

There are over 2,000,000 school students in over 4,000 schools in Illinois. If all school parents turned off their cars, it would reduce carbon emissions at the same rate as 2.3 million tree seedlings over the course of 10 years (and save millions of dollars per year in fuel costs)! While the numbers in this example are far from exact, the point is that sitting in an idling car has real consequences for the future of the planet. So, let's engage our idle minds, forgo our idling cars, and think about how we can create the best future climate for our kids.

Highlands Subdivision

Phase I Flood Reduction Project

The Highlands Subdivision Project which began in August, includes rebuilding the southern portion of Nicholas-Dowden Park. The project will address historical flooding in the area south of Route 176 between Butterfield Road and Garfield Avenue. The first phase of the project includes constructing a 38.5 acre-ft "dry-bottom" detention basin on the southern portion of Nicholas-Dowden Park. The softball fields, batting cages, storage building and off-street parking along Dymond Avenue will be improved. The project is estimated to be substantially completed in November 2022 with final park amenities and grass seeding by April 30, 2023. The existing storm sewer system has insufficient capacity. The Village was awarded $2,750,000 in grant funding from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity–Stormwater Capital Improvement Program for this project. The contractor for this project is Campanella & Sons, Inc. To learn more visit www.libertyville.com/highlands.

Road Resurfacing Program

For the third year in a row, the Village participated in a Joint Road Rehabilitation Program with Mundelein and Vernon Hills.

The program allows the Village to receive advantageous prices due to larger contract quantities. This year's program included Victory Drive, Crane Blvd., Stevenson Drive, Pine Tree Lane, Nordic Court, Carter Street, N. Stewart Avenue, Wedgemere Place, Fairlawn Avenue and Crestfield Avenue. A total of 2.07 miles of roadway were rehabilitated.