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[Congestion Pricing: Just Another Tax Increase - By George J. Marlin](#)

When I was Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a group of good-government (“goo-goos”) Manhattanites called on me at my World Trade Center office, expecting to receive my endorsement for “Peak Pricing” (a.k.a. Congestion Pricing) on the Hudson River bridge and tunnel crossings.

They couldn’t believe their ears when I dismissed their proposal and stated categorically that I would never increase taxes on commuters who must drive to work. (A toll or user-fee is just a clinical term for a tax.)

“No one drives to New York during rush hour for the hell of it,” I told them. “Working stiffs waste time in bumper to bumper traffic because they have no choice in the matter. They’re not people of privilege who can wait out rush hour madness and take cabs, chauffeured limousines or helicopters to their destinations.”

I took pride in the fact that these flabbergasted elitists dismissed me as a close-minded commoner from one of the outer boros (Queens County) and stormed out of my office.

The Manhattan goo-goos present champion, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is now promoting a similar “congestion relief program” that would tax automobile drivers \$8 and truckers \$21 between 6 AM and 6 PM who enter Manhattan below 86th Street. Bloomberg hopes his massive political campaign contributions, \$500 million in “free” federal money – much of which can be used to underwrite congestion pricing implementation costs – and the MTA’s need to fill a huge revenue shortfall in their Capital Projects plan, will induce Albany pols to approve the plan.

Bloomberg has made inroads in the state capital: Governor Spitzer discarded his campaign promise to oppose new taxes and signed on. Senate Republicans led by Majority Leader Bruno have also sided with Bloomberg.

How any New York City or suburban Republican-Conservative Senator could endorse this tax – which would cost many of their already over-taxed constituents an extra \$40 a week (\$2,080 a year!) is incomprehensible to me. In my judgment, any Conservative Party-endorsed Senator who casts a vote for this measure should be denied the party’s nomination in the 2008 election.

Fortunately the odds that the Mayor's tax bill will not be enacted are growing. Brooklyn, Queens and Bronx Assembly members, fearing primaries from scores of term-limited City Councilmen facing unemployment in two years, are paranoid that a pro-congestion vote could work against them.

To give these jittery legislators political cover, Westchester County Assemblyman Richard Brodsky released a study that recommends rejecting the Bloomberg tax plan. The New York Times reported, "The new report characterizes the plan as a regressive tax cut that puts most of the burden on the poor and middle-income drivers, and cautions that the charges would need to be raised substantially to have the desired effect of easing congestion."

In spite of these developments, Manhattan's glitterati still believe that victory over the outer boros is imminent. They shouldn't, however, start chilling the Dom Perignon. That's because I have faith that the common sense voices of the multitudes who hold that people should not be penalized for making a living, will prevail over the whine of a clique of Manhattan's goo-goos.