

Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free

August 16, 2007

"We are not the only ones raising questions and concerning about the USDOT funding issue"

From *The Daily News*:

Congest aid not quite a green light, pol sez

BY PETE DONOHUE

August, 16, 2007

It didn't take long for the road to congestion pricing to get bumpy again.

A day after the federal Department of Transportation pledged to support a congestion pricing plan in Manhattan with \$354 million, Assemblyman Richard Brodsky (D-Westchester) called the promise vague and weak.

"It's clearly not legally sufficient," Brodsky said of a written agreement between the feds and city. "It's not close."

Brodsky urged Transportation Secretary Mary Peters to clarify or restate the department's intentions.

From *The New York Times*:

Albany: Questions on Aid Package

By DANNY HAKIM

August 16, 2007

Assemblyman Richard L. Brodsky, left, a Westchester County Democrat, said yesterday that the terms of an aid package that federal officials offered this week for broad traffic reduction measures in New York City fall short of what is required under state law. Mr. Brodsky, who wrote an Assembly report critical of the plan, wrote a letter to Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters yesterday asking for a clarification of the terms of the \$354 million package. The aid is contingent on the state's approval of a pilot program to carry out Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's most controversial proposal, which would charge drivers for entering the most congested parts of Manhattan on weekdays. Mr. Brodsky said a new state law that sets up a commission to study the mayor's plan required a firm commitment of \$200 million from federal officials by

October. His comments and letter underscored continuing opposition in the Democrat-led Assembly. A spokesman for Speaker Sheldon Silver, who has expressed concerns about the plan, had no comment.

See Assembly Member Brodsky's letter to USDOT Sec. Peters

August 15, 2007

BY FAX, EMAIL AND HARD COPY

Mary E. Peters
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

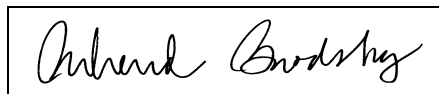
Dear Madam Secretary,

We are reviewing the MOU released yesterday by the Department, responding to the application submitted by the New York City Department of Transportation, New York State Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority seeking funding under the Urban Partnership Program. The MOU states, several times, that it is limited to an intention to negotiate further grant agreements, is not legally binding, and reserves to the Department the complete and unfettered discretion not to fund the entirety or any portion of the application.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we ask for your response to the following questions: Does the MOU "commit" the Department to any or all funding of the application? If not, are there continuing discussions with any or all of the Urban Partners to achieve such a decision to commit?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Best wishes,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Brodsky".

Richard L. Brodsky



August 16, 2007

Tolling East River Bridges

Behind the celebratory headlines announcing the federal award of \$354 million to New York City lies one little noticed fact: the bulk of the federal grant cannot be spent on implementation of congestion pricing. Most of the federal grant is funded with dedicated transit dollars which federal law requires to be spent for transit-related purposes. That is why all but a fraction of the grant will be devoted to bus-related improvements (\$213.6 million), an initial phase of a Bus Rapid Transit system (\$112.7 million) and regional ferry service (\$15.8 million). Only \$10.4 million is earmarked for equipment and installation necessary to make congestion pricing work. That equipment includes a computerized system and hundreds of cameras to monitor traffic, charge motorists using E-ZPass and pursue drivers without E-ZPass through a photographic license-identification-and-billing system. (It gets worse: only \$1.6 million of the grant is made immediately available; the remainder is to be released only upon legislative approval of a traffic reduction plan within 90 days of the opening of the next session of the New York State Legislature-- roughly the end of March 2008. But that's another story.)

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