



## Staten Island Advance

# No Islanders on the city's traffic panel

## Borough officials irate over selection to study plan for Manhattan fee

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By SALLY GOLDENBERG and ROB HART

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Congestion pricing has been touted as a boon for the entire city, yet no one from Staten Island is included on a commission to study the controversial plan.

A search of official records indicates that the 17-member panel announced yesterday by city and state politicians has no one who either lives on the Island or represents it.

The revelation infuriated several of the borough's elected officials, who ultimately would vote on the plan in the City Council and state Legislature.

"What that has done is made a very difficult sell to the people of Staten Island nearly impossible," said City Councilman James Oddo (R-Mid-Island/Brooklyn).

Oddo contended the commission would lack a voice defending the needs of the Island, where commuters generally feel mass transportation alternatives are lacking and tolls are too expensive.

"Can you imagine Manhattan not being represented?" he asked. "Can you imagine the [former Mayor Rudolph] Giuliani administration creating a 17-member commission of whatever that didn't include a Staten Islander?"

The commission is charged with studying Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan to toll Manhattan drivers during weekday hours as an incentive to swap cars for public transportation, raise revenue to improve mass transit and reduce carbon emissions.

Bloomberg, who is politically unaffiliated, has argued that the plan would benefit the Island by improving mass transit options for Manhattan-bound drivers.

City Councilman Vincent Ignizio (R-South Shore) harrumphed, "If this was any other borough they would not be allowed to get away with this.

"If they don't respect my borough enough to allow at least one representative ... how could they expect its elected contingent to support it?"

State Sen. Andrew Lanza (R-South Shore), who has inched toward supporting the plan, was not as disturbed by the makeup of the group.

"That's disappointing, but nevertheless I think Staten Island will have a strong hand and a strong voice with respect to the study and how it progresses," he said. "Myself and the other representatives will speak loudly with respect to our needs for traffic and transportation."

The commission mixes politicians such as Assemblymen Herman (Denny) Farrell, Jr. and Richard Brodsky, critics of the plan who were appointed by Speaker Sheldon Silver, with private citizens and activists, such as Andy Darrell of the advocacy group Environmental Defense.

Aside from Silver's picks, most members were selected by politicians in favor of congestion pricing.

If approved by the state Legislature, the plan would be the first of its kind in the nation, and would charge cars \$8 and trucks \$21 to enter and leave Manhattan between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. Existing tolls would be credited toward the fee.

The Council gets a say, but the ultimate decision rests with the state Legislature, which must vote by March 31, 2008, after a recommendation from the commission.

Oddo was not alone in his outrage.

State Sen. Diane Savino and Councilman Michael McMahon, both North Shore Democrats, also slammed the composition of the group.

"We are the most under-served and most overlooked constituency by mass transit, and again we are getting short shrift here," Ms. Savino said.

McMahon said he has written letters to every official with a say in the appointments requesting that the borough have a representative.

"To me it's shockingly disturbing and disconcerting," he said. "Staten Island deserves a seat at that table. We've earned it the hard way by sitting in hours of traffic."

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