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Study Gives Alternatives to City Plan for Traffic

By [WILLIAM NEUMAN](#)

Raising parking meter rates in Manhattan, creating more taxi stands and putting in place a series of other measures could achieve the same level of traffic reduction as Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s congestion pricing plan, according to a [report](#) by a group opposed to the mayor's proposal.

"We've said all the way through that there are better ways to deal with traffic congestion," said Walter McCaffrey, a former city councilman from Queens who is the spokesman for the group, [Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free](#).

Mr. McCaffrey said the [report](#) was sent this week to the 17 members of a commission created by the State Legislature to study the mayor's plan for an \$8 charge on cars entering or leaving the area of Manhattan below 86th Street.

The commission is also required to consider alternatives to the mayor's plan that could achieve similar results. The Bloomberg administration has estimated that its proposal would reduce the miles traveled by vehicles in the Manhattan charging zone by 6.3 percent.

The commission must make a recommendation to the Legislature by Jan. 31 on a plan to ease traffic congestion.

The [report](#) by [Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free](#) identifies 13 measures that, when taken together, it predicts would reduce traffic more than the mayor's plan.

Chief among the measures is a proposal to increase greatly the number of metered parking spaces in Manhattan by putting meters on many blocks where parking is now free. The study also proposes raising the rate for on-street parking, doubling it in many areas and increasing it even more in the busiest parts of Manhattan.

The goal would be to create a higher turnover in parking spaces, in order to lessen the time drivers spend circling the block looking for parking. The [report](#) says that is a major contributor to congestion in parts of Manhattan.

Mr. McCaffrey said his group included several companies that own parking garages in Manhattan, and he acknowledged that increased street parking costs could make the garages more attractive to motorists. But he pointed out that even many groups that support congestion pricing have proposed higher on-street parking rates as an additional curb on traffic.

John Gallagher, a spokesman for Mayor Bloomberg, would not comment on specific aspects of the report.

“We look forward to having the commission review various proposals before they issue their recommendations,” he said in an e-mail message.

Hugh O’Neill, the president of Appleseed, an economics consulting firm, which wrote the report, said that the goal of the [study](#) was to find measures that focused on specific causes of congestion. The report also includes proposals that the city could carry out on its own, without the Legislature’s approval, which is needed for congestion pricing.

The [report](#) calls for the city to eliminate many of the thousands of parking placards that city employees use to get free parking.

To discourage cabs from cruising the streets for fares, the [study](#) suggests creating 50 new taxi stands in Midtown and in Lower Manhattan. It also proposes a \$3 surcharge on taxi trips that begin or end in the central business district of Manhattan, in part as an incentive for people to use mass transit for shorter trips.

Other measures include increasing existing bridge and tunnel tolls and charging higher tolls during the morning and evening rush periods.

Altogether, the [study](#) says, such measures could reduce traffic volume by 7 to 11 percent. Mr. O’Neill said, however, that the estimate was very rough.

“I would fully acknowledge that those numbers are speculative and would need to be subject to further analysis,” he said. “I think what the numbers legitimately show is that there are real options, real world alternatives, many of which are much simpler to implement than what the city has proposed.”

The [report](#) does not include an overall estimate for the cost of putting its proposals in place, but it says it would cost far less than the mayor’s congestion pricing plan.

The mayor’s office has estimated it would cost \$223 million to put in place the system of E-ZPass readers and cameras and the data processing center that would be needed to enforce congestion pricing.