

For Immediate Release

Committee to Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free

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For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, June 27, 2007

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“THE SUBWAYS ARE OVERTAXED AND SO ARE NEW YORKERS. DON'T STAND FOR IT!” "ANTI-CONGESTION PRICING PRESS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS SCHEME FLAWS"

The Brooklyn Bridge is not for sale. There is no alligator in the sewer system. Ray's is not the original New York pizza. And the incredibly shrinking \$500 million of federal money may not even exist!

- ▶ To date no supporter of the Congestion Tax disputes Congressman Peter DeFazio, Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, who advised no Congressionally authorized program exists to provide federal funds. The money at best remains a request from USDOT to Congress. [see <http://www.dot.gov/bib2008/pdf/bib2008.pdf> (page 16). And the Federal budget fiscal year does not begin until October 1, 2007.
- ▶ No real deadline exists to qualify for the funding that apparently does not yet exist. The USDOT's online Federal Register notice makes clear its deadline to qualify for funding is anything but firm and clearly malleable.
- ▶ The Congestion Tax Scheme offers no tradeoff in immediate or near-term mass transit improvements for city commuters. The MTA admits its system lacks capacity to handle the projected 90,000 riders the congestion tax scheme envisions diverting to rail, subways and buses. New York City Transit's analysis indicates many subway lines simply maxed out and lacking capacity; straphangers will face jamming together like a can of sardines. NYCT president Howard H. Roberts Jr. said, “This is scary in the sense that right now, on a lot of these lines, we’re several years and a big capital construction project away from being able to provide what I consider adequate service. We’re constrained....There’s no room at the inn.” (New York Time, June 26, 2006)
- ▶ The morning rush overcrowding on the 4, 5, 6 and L lines exceeds NYCT’s loading guidelines. The 4 and 5 Lexington express trains run at full capacity - 27 trains an hour - during morning peak. Only 83.2% of 4 and 87.2% of 5 trains run on time.
- ▶ Solutions, such as increasing capacity 20% by running 12-car trains instead of 10-car trains, the Second Avenue subway and expansion of a computerized signal system to allow more trains running closer together on the same tracks, remain several years away.

- ▶ If congestion pricing becomes a reality, planners also cannot rely any time soon on additional buses to meet any increased capacity.
- ▶ The City's Congestion Tax relies on one of the most extraordinarily inefficient revenue streams ever devised to generate new revenues for mass transit: \$2 of every \$5 collected would support the program, not to improve transit and clean our air. The NYC Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability estimates that the proposed system's annual operating costs would total \$240 million annually – 39 percent of estimated gross revenues. People who live, work, do business in and visit New York would be paying \$620 million each year to generate only \$380 million for regional transit improvements.
- ▶ By incessantly and misleadingly linking their proposal to the projected \$31 billion shortfall in capital funding through 2030, and the prospect of a 20% fare hike, congestion tax supporters have sought to create the impression that it is the key to solving the region's transportation capital financing problems. If charges are set at the proposed levels, revenues from this congestion tax on businesses and people driving into or within Midtown and Lower Manhattan would finance only a fraction of the projected shortfall. The Independent Budget Office projects a \$799 million MTA fiscal year 2008 operating deficit, exceeding \$1.45 billion in FY2009. If the Legislature were to approve the congestion tax tomorrow, it would produce nothing in FY2008, perhaps \$200 million in FY2009, and net but \$380 million in FY2010 – when the congestion tax would be fully operational – but the MTA's deficit will reach \$1.78 billion. Congestion tax revenues simply aren't enough – and would arrive too late – to avert significant fare increases during the next two years. And this tax scheme got linked to the fare in an effort to diffuse opposition to the tax.
- ▶ According to data published by the City, the total volume of greenhouse gases generated in New York City by on-road vehicles declined by 5.6% between 1995 and 2005, while those generated by all other sources rose by 12.8%. The city scheme proposes no measures that address asthma where it impacts mosts: air pollution hot spots including The South Bronx, East Harlem, South Jamaica, and Bed-Stuy.
- ▶ The City's own figures suggest its congestion tax scheme will produce only a modest reduction in traffic congestion – the benefits of which have been wildly oversold.
- ▶ Better measures exist to relieve congestion and traffic. These include inducements to use mass transit – lower fares, lower express bus fares, reduced intra-city commuter railroad fares, and better bus connections to commuter rails. Traffic abatement measures include the posting of more traffic enforcement agents to avoid “box-blocking” to ensure traffic flow, and changing “blocking the box” from a moving to a parking violation which allows the use of cameras and fines to discourage that traffic-congesting activity.
- ▶ No other applicant proposed a congestion pricing to USDOT; the others involve drivers paying additional tolls to drive roads ("hot lanes") with less traffic.

The public ought to question the claims of deadlines and available funding that proponents of the Congestion Tax assert in their haste to pressure the State Legislature to adopt this inefficient and unfair scheme by July 16.