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CB 7 blasts congestion price plan

By Stephen Stirling

Members of Community Board 7 vented their long pent-up frustrations with Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan at their monthly meeting earlier this month.

City Councilman John Liu (D-Flushing) spoke briefly on the topic at the board's Sept. 10 meeting and encouraged the community to make their voices heard in the coming months as discourse on Bloomberg's plan heats up.

They certainly did.

Following a lengthy discussion, the board unanimously agreed to send a letter to Borough President Helen Marshall expressing its disapproval of the mayor's controversial plan, which would charge drivers \$8 to enter Manhattan below 86th Street.

Board members' main objections with the plan center around what its impact would be on Queens and many argued that implementing such a plan would exacerbate parking woes and increase pollution within the borough if commuters drive into communities which have mass transit to avoid higher tolls.

More than two dozen board members made alternative recommendations of their own, many of which mirrored the opinions of elected officials throughout the borough. Recommendations ranged from the conservative, such as increasing express bus service and altering the hours commercial deliveries can be made to Manhattan, to the more elaborate, such as expanding the No. 7 subway line eastbound as far as Little Neck. Others, meanwhile, were just skeptical all around.

"I'm against congestion pricing mainly because I don't think [the city will] use the money for what they say they will," said board member Donald Hinton.

The most fiery opposition however, came from CB 7 Chairman Eugene Kelty, who criticized the city and the Metropolitan Transit Authority for their handling of public transit in recent years.

"I'm tired of the MTA getting an absolute unlimited budget and then just p...ing it all away," Kelty said. "This is a green light for Bloomberg to make money, and that's all it is."

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