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Political Page

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Weiner: Getting Trucks Off Streets Will Solve Congestion Woes

BY JOHN TOSCANO



"These reports confirm what any straphanger already knows, the mass transit system is simply not ready to absorb significant increased ridership."

Congressmember Anthony Weiner agrees with Mayor Michael Bloomberg that traffic congestion is a serious problem in the city, but Weiner contends that the mayor's congestion pricing plan is not the way to solve it. Instead, Weiner feels reducing truck traffic in the city is the answer.

Citing truck traffic as the biggest cause of congestion in the city, Weiner declared last week: "We must solve the challenge of congestion in the city, but the most effective way to do it is by focusing on the real problem- trucks. For every truck we get off the road during midday hours, it's the equivalent of removing over two cars, and we can do it now without building a huge new bureaucracy."

In issuing his truck reduction plan, Weiner (D- Queens/Brooklyn) reiterated his opposition to the mayor's congestion pricing proposal, which would charge fees for vehicles entering Manhattan below 86th Street.

The lawmaker noted that new reports had emerged which confirmed that New York City's mass transit system is not ready for the mayor's proposed congestion tax.

Weiner added, "These reports confirm what any straphanger already knows, the mass transit system is simply not ready to absorb significant increased ridership."

Weiner and others have often made this point in opposing the mayor's plan. In issuing his sixpoint truck reduction plan, Weiner stated: "The MTA system hasn't been expanded in 60 years, and usage of mass transit has gone up 36 percent in New York City over the last 10 years, exceeding population growth.

"New York City's overcrowded mass transportation system isn't sufficient in terms of capacity, quality or accessibility, to accommodate significant increased ridership."

Under the mayor's congestion pricing strategy, moneys raised from it, in part would go to increasing the mass transit system as an inducement for riders to leave their cars and take the subway.

In contrast, Weiner's plan to reduce congestion in New York City is based on six points:

- Increasing truck tolls on city river crossings during peak hours, when almost all Manhattan deliveries are made, to discourage truck traffic.
- Create incentives to encourage more truck delivery firms to make truck deliveries at night, thus reducing peak time truck activity. If night deliveries resulted in greater operating costs, the companies would receive a city tax credit to compensate them.
- Implement DOT proposals for the New York Police Department to train and educate to acquaint truck drivers with existing laws, which would alleviate the congestion problem.
- Build the Cross-Harbor rail freight tunnel, which would redirect the 99 percent of deliveries into the city made by trucks. The proposed tunnel from Sunset Park in Brooklyn to Jersey City would take one million trucks off New York City streets.
- Sharply increase ferry service and expand bus rapid transit.