

“another viewpoint on congestion pricing”

# NEW YORK POST

[http://www.nypost.com/seven/11012007/postopinion/opedcolumnists/conquering\\_congestion\\_335337.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/11012007/postopinion/opedcolumnists/conquering_congestion_335337.htm)

## CONQUERING CONGESTION

By ANTHONY D. WEINER

*November 1, 2007* -- THE mayor's PlaNYC 2030 is chock-full of good ideas that get us thinking about how we ensure that New York is a great and livable place for the next generation. I support nearly all of the 127 proposals.

But the idea for dealing with the critical challenge of traffic mitigation is too expensive and places an unfair burden on New York City residents. Worst of all, it ultimately would fail to achieve our shared goals of improving the environment and fostering mobility.

I have a different plan:

**Get Ferries Floating and Busses Buzzing First:** The city is sitting on \$19.4 million in federal funds to purchase fast ferries. To date, the administration has done little to claim the money and get services started to places like western Queens, Sheepshead Bay or Rockaway. And it's only *starting* to plan to spend the funding for bus express lanes that we in Congress provided.

Before we start charging people to travel, let's do our best to offer them options first.

**Focus on Trucks:** There are more cars on the road these days - but a *lot* more trucks, a 30 percent rise since 1998. We should give truck drivers incentives to do deliveries during off-peak hours - and also give companies good reason (such as tax credits) to agree to only accept deliveries only at times of lighter traffic. I also support dramatic increases in bridge and tunnel tolls during for trucks during "prime time" - and reduced or free off-peak passage.

And if we are going to be prosperous and safe in the years ahead, we can't continue to rely on trucks for virtually nearly all goods coming into and through our city. Our failure to develop a plan to transport goods passing into and through New York City via train, rather than truck has stifled our roads and air. Building the 5.5 mile Cross Harbor Tunnel championed by Rep. Jerry Nadler would reduce the number of trucks that use our city streets by as much as 1 million per year.

**Choose Smart Programs Over Big Government Ones:** The PlaNYC congestion-pricing scheme requires installing and maintaining hundreds of cameras and license-plate scanners; that's an enormously expensive big-government solution to our Midtown traffic woes. Nearly 40 percent of the "car tax" receipts would go not to improving mass transit, but to upkeep of the machines and the giant bureaucracy behind them. And let's face it, we have plenty of better uses

of \$233 million than this.

Instead, we should re-emphasize an old idea - "Don't Block The Box" awareness and penalties. We have often seen the combination of education and enforcement really crack a tough New York problem. Much of Midtown mobility is tied up in the crosswalks. Let's renew our enforcement of this common-sense law.

**Think Outside the Box:** Why should parking meters charge just \$2 an hour when private lots get 10 times that? Metered parking should cost more during mid-day - a congestion-pricing plan we can all agree on.

And when the city considers more than 90 percent of our streets clean, the time has come to reduce the number of streets or times in which we require citizens to move their cars to the other side of the block. The joys of alternate-side parking are a tradition in New York, but doing it less would save gas, reduce congestion and eliminate a lot of aggravation.

**Don't Give the Suburbs a Free Ride:** Improving our environment will require us all to make sacrifices. But the PlaNYC proposal whacks residents of the five boroughs while letting many suburban commuters off scot-free. If you live in Manhattan or cross into Midtown over the East River bridges, PlaNYC would hit you with an \$8 car tax. But Long Island or Westchester residents who take the Midtown Tunnel or Triborough Bridge would pay nothing - because the plan gives these suburban drivers credit for their tolls.

If anyone should get a free pass, it should be residents of New York City, not our friends in the suburbs.

Mayor Bloomberg has started a very important conversation about traffic and the environment. Now let's make sure we seize the moment with solutions that reflect our values and creativity as New Yorkers.

*Rep. Anthony D. Weiner (D-Brooklyn & Queens) was a candidate for mayor in 2005.*