

Text of letter  
from  
Assembly Member Richard Brodsky  
to  
NYC Traffic Mitigation Commission Chairman Marc Shaw  
(with copies to all commission members)

Dear Marc:

I read the City IBO's Report on who commutes to the Midtown area with interest. It turns out there are other data sources that we were not told about, which bear on issues we must decide. But what really got to me were the Report's implications for the "data" and "research" that the Commission has been given by the City.

The distortions and misinformation took many forms, including the following.

First, the City did not use the same analytical tools for each analysis. I don't know why the computer model was tried on some issues, but "spreadsheets" were used on others. Nor were we told that different issues were analyzed differently. Neither is the intellectually honest thing to do.

Second, for ideas the City didn't like they made unfavorable assumptions that reduced the viability of those ideas. Why limit a taxi congestion fee to \$2, when other people pay \$8? On Congestion Rationing, why assume that multi-car families will cheat, or that DMV cannot easily fix the problem? Why did they refuse to calculate the reduction in revenue and VMT savings for the MTA and PA toll and fare hikes? Why won't they do the computer analyses of the data in time for next weeks meeting?

Third, we were not told that some data was for "commuters" and some was for all who entered the Zone.

Take a minute to figure out why this last one is so important. The IBO Report says that there are about 270,000 *commuter* trips a day into the Zone. The City says that there are about 2.2 million *total* trips into and within the Zone. That means that commuters make up about 12% of the congestion problem within the Zone. However interesting that data may be, it is certainly a tiny slice of the problem and we should not be asked to make judgments about an entire program with only that data. Much of the argument about the regressivity of the Mayor's Plan has focused on commuters, and their income levels relative to transit users. Fair enough. But commuters will pay a tiny fraction of the total fees generated, and they are not the congestion problem. There is no better illustration of why we need the O&D study that Denny, Vivian, and I had asked for almost three months ago.

I simply don't understand how we can function as a Commission when the basic descriptive, position-neutral data is being manipulated and distorted by the City. I came to the Commission with a position opposing congestion pricing that goes back over a decade. But I said then, and I say now, that we need the Commission to be fair and credible, and we need to deal with both congestion and mass transit funding. I don't mind losing an argument. I do mind a process that makes a fair debate impossible.

I know you care about both the result, and credible and honorable public processes. I'm glad to try to work things out. But we are getting close to deliberations, without the kind of information and facts that we ought to have, and the public has asked for. I hope we get fair and unbiased answers to our questions. If I can help get us there, let me know.

Best wishes,

/s/Richard

cc: Commission Members