

NYC's Congestion Tax Scheme: Too Many Questions; So Few Answers

Statement to NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission

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Presented by Walter McCaffrey

Whether the city congestion tax plan stays the same, changes or evolves into full-fledged tolls on the East and Harlem Rivers, it means most city residents pay \$8 while non-New Yorkers get a free ride. And nine months later, New Yorkers still look for answers when it comes to the city's congestion tax scheme:

- ? Where are the iron-clad legal guarantees of a net increase in mass transit funding? Why are there no “lockbox” assurances for funding dedicated to mass transit improvements? Will this tax be just like the Lottery – for every Lottery dollar in, government cuts out a dollar it used to allocate?
- ? Why does the City plan rely on privatization to construct and operate the congestion tax infrastructure, ignore prevailing wage and waive “Buy America” provisions for procurement.
(see: http://keepnycfree.com/media/files/2007-11-12_Series_02_PVT-Waiver.pdf)
- ? Will it generate any net revenues? (See: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/2007/10/22/2007-10-22_mayor_says_congestion_plan_will_raise_39-4.html)
- ? Will the plan receive the strict scrutiny of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review?
- ? Where is the federal money already due? (See Chapter 384, Laws of New York, 2007)
- ? Is the scheme a pilot plan that automatically sunsets (expires) or not?
- ? Will new transit capacity be in place first? (See: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/08/nyregion/08congest.html?_r=1&en=a66648c1192a127e&ei=5070&emc=eta1)
- ? Where is the money to pay for more transit first? (See: http://ny.metro.us/metro/local/article/Wheres_the_cash/10496.html. How does the MTA factor the Congestion Tax into its 2008 budget? (It does not) (See: http://keepnycfree.com/media/files/2007-11-18_MTA-FAQs.pdf)
- ? Where will Park and Ride facilities get built, if at all?
- ? What toll collection mechanism and technology will be used? At what cost?
- ? How will the public's privacy rights be protected when the tax plan involves the use of cameras and will there be restrictions on use of data that might be mined? (See: http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2007/12/12/2007-12-12_untitled_guest12op.html)
- ? Why apply London's foreign model that ill fits New York City?

Let's start with jettisoning congestion tax plans that raise so many red flags. Instead, look at the sensible traffic mitigation [measures*](#) – reducing taxi cruising by adding more taxi stands, better regulate our streets and others – proposed by Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free with its \$500 million or more in incidental revenues and the [revenue**](#) measures – making suburban and out of state commuter share the burden of supporting mass transit – proposed by its coalition partner, the Queens Civic Congress, which raises nearly 1.8 billion (\$1,774,000,000, based on the commission's analysis).

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*see: http://keepnycfree.com/media/files/2007-10-12_Alternative_Approaches_PR.pdf

**see: http://queensciviccongress.org/Media/files/2007/2007-10-30_transit_alternatives.pdf.