

This New York One news report demonstrates the city's congestion tax plan and its toll/tax variants continue to raise questions with no answers in sight anytime soon. No guarantees exist that the city tax scheme or any of its variants will raise new net funding as opposed to replacing funding already in place.

{Note you need audio to view the video of the story}

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Public Sounds Off On Congestion Pricing Plans



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The hot-button issue of congestion pricing continued to generate strong opinions during a public hearing before a state panel looking into traffic reduction measures.

"The fact of the matter people in Brooklyn and Queens and the Bronx will be shafted in this process and it's not right," said Walter McCaffrey, a former city councilman who opposes the plan.

Looking to gauge reaction to its preliminary report on ways to reduce traffic in Manhattan, the Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission held a public hearing at Wednesday afternoon at Hunter College on the Upper East Side.

"The mayor's congestion pricing plan is a \$2,000 a year tax on working people from the outer boroughs," said Assemblyman Rory Lancman.

Several proposals are on the table, including the mayor's initial plan to charge drivers \$8 for traveling below 86th Street. A modified version would charge for traveling below 60th Street. Also on the table is a proposal to add tolls on East River bridges.

The panel will recommend one or more plans to the state legislature by the end of the month. Supporters of congestion pricing say it's the best way to improve the city.

"The benefits for congestion pricing for the vast majority of New Yorkers in the form of less traffic, better air quality, and improved public transportation far out weigh the cost to drivers who chose to commute in the privacy of their cars," said Lauren George of the Citizens Committee for New York City.

However, opponents say they have no choice but to drive because of bad subway and bus service. Bob Friedrich represents 10,000 people who live in Queens.

"This is nothing more than a tax on people who live in communities like ours who cannot get to a subway," said Friedrich, president of Glen Oaks Village. "Our folks don't drive into Manhattan because they enjoy the experience. They drive because they have no alternative."

Transit advocates say money from congestion pricing should be used to improve mass transit. They want guarantees the MTA will get the funds, along with the subsidies the agency already gets.

"Mere vague assurances on this are not enough," said Transport Workers Union President Roger Toussaint. "We need solid assurances there will be no reductions in existing revenue streams."

For more information on the Commission's interim report, log on to www.nysdot.gov.