

Community Board 4Q joins Queens Community Boards 6, 7, 8, 11, 13 and Bronx Board 8 against Congestion Pricing

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Queens Board 4 Rejects Congestion Pricing Plan

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by Robert Pozarycki

'No' to congestion pricing

After hearing from both sides of the debate at recent board meetings on the proposed congestion pricing plan for managing Manhattan's traffic, only one Board 4 member voted in favor of a plan that would charge drivers a fee to travel to and from the borough.

With only one member dissenting, Board 4 rejected the plan which would charge any motorist traveling to points in Manhattan below 96th Street an \$8 toll during morning and evening rush hour periods on weekdays.

Prior to Tuesday's vote, members were urged by City Council members Sears and Melinda Katz to join them in opposing the proposal, arguing that if enacted, Queens residents would face additional congestion and fewer parking spaces on local streets in areas near major public transportation hubs.

Though the proposal is intended to reduce vehicular traffic in Manhattan, Katz charged that the plan would aggravate congestion problems in Queens and overwhelm a public transportation system that is currently brimming with riders.

Council Member Katz stated that studies of the impact of a congestion pricing plan on New York indicate that traffic would be reduced slightly. She also observed that the proposal could hurt Manhattan businesses, pointing to a recent report from London that over 700 businesses have closed in the English capital since its congestion pricing plan was enacted.

Rather than focus on Manhattan in reducing traffic, Katz said that the city should put together a five-borough plan to lower the number of vehicles traveling on city streets each day. Such a proposal, she stated, should include ideas to improve the city's subway and bus systems.

"We can't afford the influx of people projected by congestion pricing plan," she said.

As for Sears, the Council member stated that residents in her district—which includes Elmhurst and Jackson Heights—currently have difficulty finding parking spots or getting around local streets due to congestion. If the congestion pricing plan were put into place, she said, those problems would be exacerbated by drivers seeking to park in Queens to avoid paying a fee to get to Manhattan.