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Weiner praises congestion alternatives

By Alex Christodoulides

U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Forest Hills) commended the congestion pricing commission's decision last week to expand options for New York City's commuters.

The state Department of Transportation's Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission released a report last week with alternatives to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan. The mayor's plan, which would charge cars \$8 and trucks \$21 to enter Manhattan south of 86th Street between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., has been criticized by many Queens politicians and community leaders as unfairly penalizing drivers from the outer boroughs.

The commission's report evaluated four possibilities: congestion pricing, tolls on the East River bridges, parking pricing and license plate rationing. The commission discussed the alternatives at a Jan. 10 meeting at MTA headquarters in Manhattan and released an interim report on the options.

Weiner praised the expansion of choices on the table. "Congestion pricing is simply a bad idea that will create a giant, expensive bureaucracy, hand too much authority to state agencies and give many suburbanites a free ride at the expense of New York City residents," he said.

Weiner testified before the Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission in October and outlined his own plan to reduce traffic in the city, which included increasing truck tolls on bridges during peak hours, encouraging businesses to use nighttime truck deliveries, building the Cross Harbor Freight Tunnel between Brooklyn and Jersey City, N.J. that would bring a controversial truck weigh station to Maspeth, and expanding public transportation options such as ferry service and bus rapid transit.

Bayside's Community Board 11, and borough politicians including state Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Fresh Meadows) and City Councilman David Weprin (D-Hollis) have opposed congestion pricing.

The commission's final plan is due Jan. 31.

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