

Queens Community Boards 4, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 13 already oppose Congestion Pricing. Community Board 1Q Chair Vincent Donato states, "If you put pricing in or tolls on the bridges you're going to have a worse situation."

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Bd. 1 Challenges Congestion Pricing

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

A little over a year ago, Mayor Michael Bloomberg came to Queens to speak about the future of the city. The speech, given on Dec. 12, 2006 at the Queens Museum of Art in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, was "New York City 2030: Accepting the Challenge."

From that address, projecting a "greener, greater New York", came PlaNYC 2030, as it is called, with 10 goals related to land, water, transportation, energy, air and climate change. The mayor's proposed congestion pricing is part of the transportation plan.

"This area suffers a lot of the ill effects that the plan addresses," said Jennifer Manley, Queens director for the mayor's Community Affairs Unit. A presentation updating PlaNYC 2030 was made to Community Board 1 at its January meeting.

Told congestion pricing would result in cleaner air quality for the community, some board members questioned the premise. "Neighborhoods like Astoria and Woodside, they're going to get crushed with this [congestion pricing] plan," transportation committee Chairperson Robert Piazza said.

"If you're going to put congestion pricing in, I don't know where [commuters] are going to park. You're going to have to put them in people's backyards," said First Vice Chairperson Joseph Guarino.

"You have to understand, the most affected area in the city by the mayor's plan is this area," Chairperson Vinicio Donato said.

"We proposed putting a parking lot over the Grand Central Parkway for the last ten years," Donato said. "Let us do something about parking. If you put pricing in or tolls on the bridges you're going to have a worse situation."

The Department of Transportation is having a PlaNYC Workshop on neighborhood parking in Long Island City on Tuesday, January 29 at 6:30 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.) at the Citicorp Building, 1 Court Square, in Long Island City.

The workshop is a follow-up to the first series of workshops that was held in November, 2007. A summary and results of data collection of curbside parking rates and turnover will be presented. In addition, residents can participate in discussions on potential parking policies that can be applied in neighborhoods. RSVP is required by January 28; call 917-339-0488.

"Many people take their parents or take themselves into Manhattan for medical treatment," said Board Member and UCCA President Rose Marie Poveromo. "To pay \$8, the mayor, God bless him, can afford just about anything. People in Queens County can't."

The mayor's representative said cars with handicapped license plates would be exempt from congestion pricing.

"Is the city prepared to tell the state to issue handicapped plates to, I would guess, 50,000 people or more who have to go into Manhattan for treatment if this plan goes into effect?" Donato asked.

A public hearing to take testimony and consider public reaction to the interim report of the New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission will be held on January 24 at York College at 6 p.m. A final report is due by January 31.