



Kill Congestion Pricing

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We warned early and often that Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan was an enigma wrapped in a puzzle - creating more questions than it answered.

Watching Mayor Mike try his best to push this controversial plan past the City Council, the citizens, and even the legislature in Albany, was like watching a wily veteran football coach trying to win the big game by using every trick in his playbook.

Bloomberg rallied his forces under the guise of making the city greener by 2030 by cutting pollution in Manhattan - midtown Manhattan only. His vision was to allow traffic in midtown to speed up to 5.36 miles per hour, from the current 5 miles per hour.

He called for the plan to be in place during rush hours, which he then re-defined as 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Many questions - no answers.

Then the whole question-riddled plan broke down into a race for the money - a gold rush. The federal Department of Transportation earmarked grant money - \$354.5 million for New York - if the city can approve a plan to reduce traffic congestion and ease air pollution by March 31.

Fool's gold we say ... only \$10.4 million of the federal funds would cover startup costs for Bloomberg's original plan. The lion's share would be used for bus depots, park and rides and pedestrian improvements - \$213.6 million. The feds would add another \$112.7 million for rapid-transit buses and \$15.8 million for ferry improvements.

Many more questions - fewer answers. Where are the hundreds of millions going to come from to set up the system and maintain it year after year? No answers.

There are currently five plans rattling around in the federal gold grab. Each plan raises questions of its own and each plan provides insufficient answers.

When something is this flawed from the beginning and gets to the point where the final public hearings will take place all on one night, tonight, January 24, at seven locations - it is time to stop the process.

We have always maintained that the goals of less pollution and faster traffic flow in midtown Manhattan could be achieved by enforcing the existing traffic laws and investing in more tow trucks, especially vehicles that can tow away double-parked trucks.

Enforce the integrity of the intersection boxes and ticket and tow like crazy. Ticket all cars and trucks from everywhere fairly - if they break the law the driver pays. Put more police and traffic enforcement agents on the street corners during the real rush hours and have them write tickets. Earmark the proceeds of all the tickets written in midtown Manhattan to go into a special fund to aid mass transit in the boroughs.

Do not allow us to become stuck in a quagmire of bureaucracy that is ill conceived and poorly planned. Many more questions must be answered before any plan goes into effect. Focus on fixing the mass transit system first, then look to limit cars into Manhattan.

