

Only 2 commissioners took testimony in Staten Island

**Staten Island Advance**

**Islanders' message at hearing on congestion pricing: Fatigue**

**Residents feel decisions are made even before the public sessions are held**

Friday January 25, 2008,

**By MAURA YATES  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER**

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE -- The two dozen people who went to last night's congestion pricing hearing spoke passionately for or against the mayor's proposal to raise transit funds by charging drivers in Manhattan.

But the louder message was the fatigue Staten Islanders feel for public hearings about decisions that seem already to have been made.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed the plan last year, with the goal of charging cars \$8 and trucks \$21 to drive into and out of Manhattan below 86th Street on weekdays between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The fees would go toward funding mass transit enhancements and transportation infrastructure

But after similar hearings held here recently -- on toll hikes for all four borough bridges and fare hikes on local buses and subways, not to mention another congestion pricing hearing last November -- it's hard to blame commute-weary Islanders for not wanting to sit through another seeming exercise in futility after a long day.

Walter McCaffrey of Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free spoke against what he perceived as a lack of public interest in the hearing process, blaming the low turnout on the six simultaneous hearings held throughout the city last night.

"Once again, the Kangaroo court (aka Traffic Mitigation Commission) are holding public hearings today without the public, and in most cases without Commissioners," he said in a statement.

"The Fool's Gold masquerading as revenue has never been guaranteed or earmarked to improve mass transit," McCaffrey said. "And the Commissioners have already made up their minds, much to the public's dismay and disadvantage."

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Because of the simultaneous hearing schedule last night, only two members of the 17-member panel considering the proposal were in attendance at CSI.

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The commission will make its final recommendation Thursday, and the state Legislature and City Council will vote on the issue March 31.

Maura Yates covers transportation news for the Advance. She may be reached at [myates@siadvance.com](mailto:myates@siadvance.com).

See the entire article at:

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