



Features

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Congestion Pricing Could Lead To 'Hunting Licenses'

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

A hunting license. That's how the Department of Transportation described residential parking permits in neighborhoods that may be impacted by congestion pricing.

Residential permit proposals were discussed, commented on, and rated by residents attending a parking workshop last week in Long Island City. The workshops are the DOT's answer to local concerns about "park and ride" activity near subway stations and transit hubs in neighborhoods outside the congestion pricing zone.

Under the plans, residents and local employees would be required to obtain residential parking permits (RPP) to park on designated streets for periods of 8 to 24 hours (Option A), or 1 to 2 hours (Option B). The 1- to 2-hour option would be per day, staggered, on each side of the street.

All-day parkers, long-term visitors and short-term visitors could not park on residential streets during RPP times. RPPs would not exempt residents from alternate street cleaning regulations.

Two other plans would charge an \$8 fee for local employees, all-day parkers, longterm visitors and short-term visitors to park when RPP permits are in effect. "What this option does is make people who try to avoid paying \$8 to go into Manhattan pay the same to park in Long Island City," said Arnold Bloch, a DOT team member conducting the survey.

The residential parking permits would be issued annually and fees could range between \$75 and \$125 per year, DOT said.

Three hundred and forty three residential parking spaces were surveyed out of a total of 2,361 available in Long Island City, specifically, 44th Drive to Newtown Creek, Jackson Avenue/21st/27th Streets to the East River. The residential spots were observed on a weekday at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. and at 5:30 a.m. the following day.

Among the findings: 97 percent of total available spots were occupied at 2 p.m., 90 percent were occupied at 6 p.m., and 91 percent were occupied at 5:30 a.m.

This news came as no surprise to one participating resident. "If we move our cars, we never get a spot back," she said. "Parking is very tight," conceded Bloch.

Among cars observed at 2 p.m., 30 percent were registered within the neighborhood and 47 percent of the vehicles parked overnight were registered in the neighborhood (zip codes 11101 and 11109).

Responding to a resident's concern about the need for more parking in the area, Bloch said, "The city of New York is not in the business of building more municipal parking lots. Not only that, they're getting out [of the municipal lots]."

"The audience [attending the workshop] is very small," said Gerry Walsh, president of the Dutch Kills Civic Association, a workshop participant. "There's not enough neighborhoods here." Walsh pointed to a lack of participants from Astoria, Sunnyside and Woodside.

Of the residential parking permit plan, Walsh said, "If they go ahead with congestion pricing, they're [DOT] going to have to give some sort of relief, but I don't think that [RPP] is the answer.

"They're taking down parking garages while they're building hotels as high as 25 stories with no parking," he said. He also pointed out a 16-story hotel with a banquet hall under development with no parking. In addition, Walsh said residential condos are also going up without parking. "You can't build residential without parking.

"[The DOT] should be looking at the "N" and "W" line," said Walsh. "Trains are congested, this is not going to help. MTA cannot handle the crowds now.

"All the outside boroughs are going to suffer," Walsh said. "I oppose congestion pricing."