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KEEP NYC CONGESTION TAX FREE

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**Opponents to Congestion Pricing Urge NO Vote to City Council,
Assembly and State Senate Members**

NEW YORK, February 14, 2008 -- The Committee to Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free is urging City and State legislatures to *vote no* on pending legislation calling for an onerous and regressive “congestion pricing” driving tax on outer borough residents. The group pointed to five solid reasons for members of the city and state legislatures to reject the legislation, including:

- NO FAIRNESS
- NO GUARANTEES
- NO ROOM ON *RECORD CAPACITY* SUBWAYS, BUSES AND TRAINS
- NO PARKING IN PERIMETER NEIGHBORHOODS
- NO MONEY IN NEW YORKER’S WALLETS

By approving the Mayor’s ill-conceived congestion pricing plan last month, 13 members of the 17-member Traffic Congestion Mitigation commission succeeded in making an unfair proposal even more punitive and unjust. After weeks of public hearings that fell on deaf ears to an overly pro-congestion pricing group of Commissioners, the group voted to approve congestion pricing, which would charge cars \$8 and trucks \$21 to enter Manhattan south of 60th Street from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. during weekdays. Now, the City Council and state legislature must be approve the recommendation by March 31, 2008.

The plan blatantly exempts the wealthiest sections of Manhattan from paying anything while unfairly burdening the working families, to senior citizens and to union workers of Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, Staten Island and Manhattan. This does not take into account the high cost of fuel or the cost of parking. If implemented, it will be virtually impossible for a middle-class person to commute by car into Manhattan’s congestion zone, and especially if they have a larger family and need a larger vehicle.

Walter McCaffrey, former Queens City Council and lead spokesperson for Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free, said “The congestion pricing plan offers no guarantees or fairness, there is no room on the mass transit or available parking for commuters on our neighborhood streets, and no extra money in working people’s budgets for this big business boondoggle¹. Because the Commissioners failed to offer reasonable and

viable alternative, our elected officials must vote NO as the only fair alternative. Now the time for members of the legislature to speak has come. We urge them to stand-up for what is right --and, when the time comes, to vote—against a regressive tax on working people, outer borough residents, small businesses and the driving public. ”

The recommended plan eliminates the intra-zone fee and adds charges for motorists using the FDR Drive and Westside highways. The decision to permit toll offsets against the new fee further deducts the contributions people from New Jersey, Connecticut, and Long Island will contribute to mass transit - increasing the burden on Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island residents. In addition, the commission’s final plan does not guarantee that all necessary improvements to mass transit will be in place by implementation or that all funds raised from this scheme would go directly to mass transit.

The commission’s final report acknowledges that funding the MTA capital plan must be the primary goal of revenues from congestion pricing should be dedicated by the city, however, they have not made any lockbox guarantees, nor have the addressed the enormous cost of setting up the toll, camera and maintenance infrastructure.

McCaffrey heavily questions MTA’s ability to follow through. “Even when they talk about infrastructure and capacity improvements, the MTA and the City fail to guarantee what exactly will be put in place and when.”

McCaffrey added, “We implore all 41 Council Members who represent outer-borough districts - including many who are going to seek higher citywide offices next year - to realize that the plan recommended by the state’s commission still has too many unanswered questions and no guarantees, and if implemented, would have devastating economic and quality of life effects on outer borough commuters and small business owners.”

McCaffrey added one final message to City Council Members: “You are in the driver’s seat. Put the brakes on congestion pricing now before it goes to Albany. ”

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Reference

¹the term boondoggle has come to refer to a government or corporate project involving large numbers of people and usually, heavy expenditure, where at some point the key operators have realized that the project is never going to work, but are reluctant to bring this to the attention of their superiors.