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## M.T.A. Plan Shows Less Help From Congestion Pricing

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Supporters of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's plan to charge people who drive into the busiest parts of Manhattan have promoted it as a way to provide a steady flow of money to pay for improvements to public transportation for decades to come.

Trains would be less crowded. Stations would be spruced up. A new subway line would be built.

But under a new spending plan released Wednesday by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, so-called congestion pricing would cover a relatively small portion — 15 percent — of money needed for transit improvements. That would leave the authority still scrambling for money.

The authority said that it would need \$29.5 billion from 2008 through 2013 for system improvements (like thousands of new buses and modernized subway signals) and expansion (like work on the Second Avenue subway).

It tentatively identified \$20 billion in potential sources of funds, including \$4.5 billion that could be raised by borrowing against congestion pricing revenue. But officials were unable to say where the remaining \$9.5 billion would come from at a time of city and state budget tightening. They planned to ask the governor's office and the State Legislature to come up with a financing formula to make up the shortfall.

Elliot G. Sander, the authority's chief executive, said that unless its plan is financed in full, the transit system risked sliding back into the disrepair of the 1970s and 1980s.

"I think if this plan is not passed, it compromises the future of the region as we know it," Mr. Sander said. "I think the stakes are about as high as they can be."

The spending plan, known as the authority's capital program, was produced in a rush as part of a state-imposed schedule for the Legislature to consider the congestion pricing proposal by the end of next month. Legislators in Albany asked for the spending plan so that they could see what congestion pricing revenue would pay for.

But the plan appeared to raise questions about the long-term financial muscle that congestion pricing can provide.

Under the plan, the \$4.5 billion in borrowing that would be made possible by congestion pricing accounts for just 15 percent of the authority's infrastructure needs through 2013.

"One can easily fall into the trap, because of the size of the overall number, to think \$4.5 billion seems small," Mr. Sander said. "Four-point-five billion dollars is a huge amount of money."

But Richard L. Brodsky, a Democratic assemblyman from Westchester County, who is a vocal opponent of congestion pricing, said that it had been "oversold" as a financing mechanism.

"Congestion pricing was sold as a panacea, and what this plan admits for the first time is that it's not," Mr. Brodsky said.

Mr. Bloomberg, who first proposed congestion pricing in April, said in a statement that it provided "one of the only reliable sources of funding" for the authority's capital program "and without it, the projects in this plan will not happen."

But the spending plan also exposed lines of tension between the authority and City Hall over how congestion revenues would be used.

Aides to Mr. Bloomberg said revenue from the system should allow for a total of \$6 billion in borrowing — \$1.5 billion more than the authority proposed.

The authority said it came up with a lower number because some congestion revenue should be set aside to cover operating costs, which would rise as it adds service to accommodate people who switch from cars to public transit once the system goes into effect.

The mayor has said that all congestion revenue should go to support capital spending.

The majority of money under the plan would go for the upkeep and modernization of the current system. It calls for the purchase of 590 subway cars, 2,976 buses and 440 commuter rail cars. It includes rehabilitation plans for 44 subway stations and the modernization of signals in parts of the subway system.

The plan also includes money for the authority's major expansion projects, the Second Avenue subway, a Long Island Rail Road link to Grand Central Terminal and the new Fulton Street Transit Center in Lower Manhattan, which it revealed are over budget by a total of \$1.5 billion. The schedules for those projects would also be extended, with the Second Avenue subway and the Long Island link now set for completion in 2015, a year later than previously planned.