

Keep NYC Free

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For Immediate Release

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Statement to Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Presented by Walter McCaffrey

Thank you to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) for this hearing and the opportunity to make absolutely loud and clear what some folks making policy need better understand: NO NEED EXISTS TO RAISE ANY FARE ON OUR BUSES AND SUBWAYS.

And just as important, EXISTING SERVICE LEVELS MUST BE MAINTAINED AND IMPROVED.

Just over a month ago, on December 4, 2008 the Commission on MTA Financing chaired by former MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch released its proposals. It included an inefficient and inequitable toll tax that makes little sense and merits rejection. At a time when the MTA proposes its outrageous hikes, the public demands sound alternatives that offer long term financial stability, especially for the fare straphangers pay.

The MTA board can help make a difference in this effort by supporting alternative resources, including many advanced by our coalition, and rejecting the imposition of any toll-tax.

The imposition of tolls on the currently free East River and Harlem Rivers bridge crossings – including the Queensborough Bridge serving my home borough, the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges, and and Harlem Rivers bridge crossings – which serve as local streets between The Bronx and Upper Manhattan – essentially recycles the congestion tax.

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Both the congestion tax and this new re-packaged son of the congestion tax scheme would take \$2 for administration for every \$3 for transit. The Assembly correctly shunned the parent scheme last year.

Instead of the Ravitch plan that also disappointingly lets Albany and City Hall off the hook, we urge the MTA and our public officials to look at our coalition [plan](http://keepnycfree.com/media/files/2008-10-15_Recommendations_MTA_Financing.pdf) (http://keepnycfree.com/media/files/2008-10-15_Recommendations_MTA_Financing.pdf) that makes both the State and the City step up to the plate. As the MTA holds hearings on its plans to gouge us more, please use that opportunity to support this solid alternative plan to adequately resource our transit needs, and not in any one-shot fashion.

We identify specific revenues that empower the city and the state to fund this core responsibility. This includes a modest \$0.04 state gasoline levy (\$255 million), a vehicle registration fee increase (\$250 million), increased fines for illegal parking (\$75 million), higher parking meter rates (\$50 million) and more realistic (city) fees for the use of street space by construction contractors and utilities (\$500 million).

Other initiatives raise significant funds to support mass transit, including a non-resident income tax that apportions its proceeds between City and suburban transit projects (\$1.8 billion).

For more information, please visit our website, www.keepnycfree.com. We would welcome any opportunity to discuss our concerns and recommendations with the full board, a board committee, or individual board members. Thank you for your interest.