

Worth Considering

Assembly Member David Weprin announced plans to introduce legislation to institute a commuter tax with 50-50 split of the revenue to support the MTA and the city of New York.

Keep NYC welcomes this initiative. Keep NYC Free gas [advocated](#) non-resident income tax at double pre-1998 rates that date back to 1971 (0.45% for wages and salaries, 0.65% for self-employed).

Our proposal uses all of the revenue reform – estimated at \$1.8 billion by the MTA in 2008 – for funding transit in the region; it was originally proposed by [Queens Civic Congress](#).

The Weprin proposal, a one percent rate, could raise \$2 billion.

Keep NYC recommends the funds Weprin would allocate to the City get applied to replenish the city's decade and a half cuts – pre-dating the current administration to its MTA contributions.

Whether or not that dough becomes available, Keep NYC Free supports the long overdue forensic accounting – approved by the legislature in 2009 – of the MTA's finances to make sure not even a penny gets wasted.

Read David Weprin's op-ed in the Daily News:

[Opinion: Congestion pricing taxes are taxing to the wrong people](#)
BY **David Weprin**

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As often happens in [New York](#) politics, we are faced again with the prospect of solving [New York City's](#) traffic congestion problem, or at least that is what the advocates of congestion pricing would want you to believe.

New York City does have serious transportation issues that need to be addressed, but another foray into congestion pricing would not only be bad policy but a waste of time politically.

It is true that there are severe transportation problems facing the city, but these problems have been years in the making, and instituting a tax on people attempting to drive to work isn't going to solve it.

The fact is that most of the transportation infrastructure in the metropolitan area was designed when cars still had tail fins and ribbons of highways were laid, encircling our cities and suburbs in an effort to turn New York into a commuter's utopia. The sprawl that followed, in addition to the neglect of the area's mass-transit infrastructure, has brought us to the problem we are facing today: too much traffic, too few alternatives.

Taxing commuters as much as \$2,000 a year, and taxing small businesses that use trucks to ship their goods to [Manhattan](#) a fee in excess of \$5,000 a year, might be a great way to raise money, but it doesn't solve the problem; it just covers it up at the expense of hardworking New Yorkers.

I believe that if New York really wants to become a 21st-century city, we need to forget these stopgap proposals and address how our city is going to function in the long term.

A useful exercise to understand the future transportation needs of New York is to imagine the multitude of negative effects a congestion-pricing scheme would have on the city of New York. The tax on commuters and businesses is the most obvious, but the stress that this plan would put on the already-troubled [Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) would result in giving those who can afford to drive into Manhattan an option while forcing working-class New Yorkers to cram onto already-crowded trains, subways and buses.

What I just described is the best-case scenario. I would hope that if people had to pay money to drive into Manhattan, they would see the error of their ways, buy a [MetroCard](#) or a bike, and be content with not having their car at work.

What is much more likely to happen is that the outer boroughs will become a park-and-ride lot for people commuting from [Long Island](#) and [Westchester](#).

This proposal also represents an embargo on Manhattan businesses, theaters and restaurants by taxing customers each time they choose to drive into Manhattan to frequent these establishments. Instead of ending congestion and mitigating pollution, a congestion pricing plan would simply move all of these congestion problems off Manhattan and stick the rest of the city with them. I believe this is unthinkable.

If we want to provide real transportation solutions - and aren't willing to wait for [Washington](#) or [Detroit](#) or the MTA to solve our problems - we need to think creatively about how we want transportation in New York City and New York State to function.

One commonsense solution to help the MTA raise the funds needed to actually begin to confront this congestion issue is by revving the nonresident income tax or commuter tax and ensure that part of that revenue be earmarked for the MTA. This is a much less-regressive tax than charging working-class New Yorkers to drive around their own city.

I will be introducing a bill that would implement a 1% nonresident commuter tax and would split the revenue equally between the city of New York and the MTA. A plan like this would allow us to raise revenue, not by regressively taxing our working-class residents but by collecting the money from those who already use our cities' services regularly but don't pay taxes for them because they live outside the city.

This bill would allow us to begin the hard work of creating the 21st-century transportation infrastructure that our city desperately needs. This is the time to figure out a long-term solution for meeting our future transportation needs, not just filling a funding gap in the MTA and turning Manhattan into the [Forbidden City](#).

David Weprin represents the 24th District in the Assembly.

Be Our Guest column is an occasional feature that will focus on important issues affecting our communities.

Read more: http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2011/03/09/2011-03-09_park_congestion_pricing_idea.html#ixzz1G8Pahm3J