

CHAIR
Task Force on
People with Disabilities

COMMITTEES
Banks
Cities
Codes
Election Law
Judiciary
Ways & Means

TASK FORCE
Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force



OFFICE OF
**NEW YORK STATE
ASSEMBLYMAN
DAVID I. WEPRIN**
24TH DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE
185-06 Union Turnpike
Fresh Meadows, New York 11366
718-454-3027
FAX: 718-454-3178

ALBANY OFFICE
Room 602
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248
518-455-5806
FAX: 518-455-5977

EMAIL
weprind@assembly.state.ny.us

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

March 1, 2015

CONTACT: Dan Cho (chon@assembly.state.ny.us | 516-313-4989)

***Assemblyman Weprin & Major Queens Civic-Community Coalition
Stand Together To Oppose Move NY's Proposed 'Toll-Tax Scheme'***

Queens Chamber of Commerce, Queens Civic Congress & Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free Join Assemblyman Weprin

QUEENS, NEW YORK – At a press conference today, Assemblyman David I. Weprin (D-Fresh Meadows) was joined by the Queens Chamber of Commerce, Queens Civic Congress, Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free, and other community-small business advocates to strongly oppose Move NY's recently introduced 'Congestion Pricing Initiative.'

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is a quasi-government agency, which means they are immune from strict local and state governmental mandates unlike many other mayoral or governor agencies are in New York State. In total, the MTA currently controls seven vehicular bridges and two tunnels, while the four East River bridges are still under the jurisdiction of the City of New York. Unless those outlying bridges' controls and authority are somehow surrendered to the City or the State of New York, the MTA can still legally raise those initially lowered tolls back up to the normal rates, or even higher at their pleasure. And, given the tolls and transit fares have continued to climb uncontrollably for the past couple of years, despite protests from elected officials and community members, it would be naïve to consider that the MOVE NY's utopian vision will actually come to fruition.

"Not all locations in New York City are easily accessible by public transportation," said **Assemblyman Weprin**. "The many disenfranchised populations in the northern, southern, and eastern Queens neighborhoods, as well as many parts in Brooklyn do not have the same luxuries as those in Manhattan with readily accessible subway systems nearby their homes and businesses. It is a wrong plan, and it will impose an undue financial burden on our working- and middle-class commuters who must rely on those roadways; whether to make a living, to visit their loved ones across town, or to travel to Manhattan to receive lifesaving medical care not often accessible in outer-borough hospitals. It will also be a major financial burden on small businesses that rely on the free bridges for multiple trips daily and may result in additional charges to consumers."

This year, Assemblyman Weprin sponsored a bill in the Assembly that will better assist NYC in solving its traffic congestion problems and upgrade its transportation infrastructure by raising badly needed revenue for both the city and the MTA. Weprin's Assembly bill, A2873, will establish a 1% non-residential commuter tax on all non-city residents that will be divided evenly between the City of New York and the MTA. The revenues from its implementations could range in the billions of dollars. This 1% non-residential commuter tax only represents a quarter of what those who reside in NYC pay in NYC income taxes. Furthermore, in the next few days, Weprin will be

sponsoring Senator Tony Avella's (S 1100-2015) accompanying Assembly bill that will prohibit the City of New York from placing tolls on any of the 4 East River bridges, which will surely end this discussion once and for all.

Jack Friedman, Executive Director of the Queens Chamber of Commerce said, "Despite claims this plan poses as something different, it would impose the same results as prior toll-tax schemes. It forces businesses that reside outside Manhattan to pay a fine for merely operating. There are many other and better ways to secure revenues, address congestion, and ensure our air is clean, without hurting entrepreneurs who need to travel into Manhattan to meet clients, deliver services, or products. I would like to thank Assemblyman David Weprin for organizing this news conference and look forward to working with him and the rest of the coalition to protect small businesses in Queens."

Harbachan Singh, President of the Queens Civic Congress said, "We are disappointed to note that some official was quoted as being 'receptive to this re-imagined version (of congestion pricing). Incidentally, we are also concerned that the additional work of tracking license plates and manual billing for non-EZ-Pass customers, especially for multiple trips in a day, will impose expenses not accounted for. While the possibility of reduced fees on the other bridges and tunnels might seem attractive, however, we see any support for this, or other such proposals by our legislators as fundamentally contrary to the interests of our constituents. On behalf of the civic and community organizations of Queens, we strongly oppose and speak out against this proposal."

Corey Bearak, senior policy advisor for Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free said, "While we agree that our elected officials must treat support for transit seriously, toll-tax schemes represent nothing serious when we must focus on revenue. Those who claim to be about 'fair tolling and transportation reinvestment' ignore the record about the City residents who use the free roads that connect Manhattan to Brooklyn, Queens and The Bronx. This toll-tax scheme asks these city residents to bear a cost nearly \$11 (\$15 cash) per day. Keep NYC Free documented that any toll-tax scheme fails to raise the revenues needed, offers no benefits and hurts the economy. It ought to be about what makes sense, and it certainly will not move New York."

-30-

<<Photo attached: DWEPRIN 03012015 MOVENY Opposition Presser.jpg >>

<<Caption: Assemblyman David Weprin (center) with (left to right) Richard C.Hellenbrecht, Queens Civic Congress; Corey Bearak, Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free; Harbachan Singh, Queens Civic Congress; Vincent Petraro, Queens Chamber of Commerce; Bob Friedrich, Glen Oaks Village Co-op>>

About Assemblyman Weprin:

Assembly Member David Weprin was elected to the Assembly in a Special Election on Tuesday, February 9, 2010. Weprin represents the same district represented by his father, the late Assembly Speaker Saul Weprin, for 23 years and his brother Mark Weprin, for over 15 years. His district includes Briarwood, Bellerose, Bellerose Manor, Fresh Meadows, Glen Oaks, Hillcrest, Holliswood, Jamaica Estates, Jamaica Hills, Oakland Gardens, Queens Village, Richmond Hill, South Richmond Hill, and Utopia.

About the Queens Chamber of Commerce:

The Queens Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit business assistance membership organization. It offers networking events, forums with government officials, educational workshops and services, and a health insurance plan for small businesses. Visit the Chamber's website for more detailed information about their resources and services at www.queenschamber.org

About the Queens Civic Congress:

The Queens Civic Congress (QCC) is a nonpartisan, not for profit umbrella group of eighty-five civic associations throughout Queens with the primary purpose to bring together the various communities of Queens through their civic and community associations through exchanges of ideas to meet their common concerns. The Congress was an outgrowth of the Federation of Queens Civic Councils, founded in 1962, and its two remaining regional civic councils, the Eastern Queens Civic Council and the United Civic Council. Visit the QCC's website for more detailed information about their resources and services at www.queensciviccongress.org

About Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free:

Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free represents a diverse coalition of civic, business and labor organizations and businesses throughout New York City. In the efforts to keep our city congestion tax free, the coalition opposes the imposition of tolls on the City's FREE East River and Harlem River Bridges. Visit their website for more detailed information at www.keepnycfree.com