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***Assemblyman David Weprin, Senator Tony Avella, Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman
Stand Together to Oppose Move NY's Proposed East River 'Toll-Tax Scheme'***

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

QUEENS, NEW YORK – Assemblyman David I. Weprin (D-Fresh Meadows) was joined by Senator Tony Avella, Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman, 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 proposed Toll-Tax on East River Bridges.

New Yorkers have grown accustomed to rising tolls on New York City bridges and tunnels in the past decade. With another toll hike going into effect today, December 6, on another set of bridges; the working class families, small businesses and commuters of New York are being stripped of their hard earned money. Outer-Borough residents cannot afford another toll increase on the roads that connect them with the remaining parts of the city. After all, the people of Queens and Brooklyn rely on these roads to visit their loved ones across town, access necessary medical services, and engage in business across the city.

In addition, 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. At best, MOVE NY's toll-tax, is misguided attempt to balance the MTA budget on the backs of the working middle class and small businesses.

Assemblyman David Weprin has introduced legislation in the Assembly (A6029) and is joined by Senator Tony Avella who has sponsored legislation in the Senate (S1100). The legislation will prohibit the city of New York from placing tolls on any of the East River bridges.

“Not all locations in New York City are easily accessible by public transportation,” said **Assemblyman David 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 the 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.”

State Senator Tony Avella, said, “Move NY’s proposal to toll the east river bridges is nothing more than a tax on those who can least afford it: working and middle class families. Queens commuters have two options: drive into Manhattan or spend hours transferring between buses and subways to get to work. Mass transit in boroughs outside of Manhattan is far too limited to serve as an alternative to driving, to say nothing of Long Islanders who rely on these bridges. In an economy where the middle class has been squeezed dry, real people will absolutely struggle to pay for this policy and we should not be putting them into that position where they have to. I will continue to push my legislation to kill this proposal once and for all.”

New York City Councilmember Barry Grodenchik said, "Move NY’s proposed tolling plan is unacceptable to the residents of Eastern Queens and amounts to a regressive tax on people who have limited public transportation options. This plan would impose an unjustifiable financial burden on residents, especially commuters, who are already struggling with rising costs of living.”

New York City Councilmember I. Daneek Miller said, “Residents of Queens are all too familiar with the historic lack of mass transit investment in our Borough. The Move NY plan seeks to generate \$1.5 billion annually on the backs of commuters through a toll scheme that offers no concrete promise of improved transportation. For a fraction of the congestion pricing cost we could equalize commuter rail fares with subways and buses, increasing access to countless communities throughout the City, New Yorkers average the longest commute of any large urban population in the nation and there is a historic correlation between long commutes and low incomes. We dismiss the notion that congestion pricing seeks to promote: that the only way to improve transportation is to toll commuters, placing a disproportion burden on low and middle income families.”

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz said, “The ideas in the proposal for mass transit improvements are great. But without any direct connection between the revenues generated from the proposed tolls to those very improvements, there is simply no guarantee that this proposal will actually yield anything tangible or amount to anything more than just that: an interesting idea. It is fundamentally unfair to charge residents a fee to travel within one city. It is certainly unfair to the families who live in the transit desert of Queens as it would landlock our Borough.”

Thomas Grech, Executive Director of the Queens Chamber of Commerce said, "Queens is proud to be home to two major airports as well as rail links that bring in products from across the country and the world for both residents and businesses alike. The proposed congestion pricing plan will have a number of consequences to the businesses that import these products and sell in all five boroughs. Move NY’s plan will make it harder for Queens businesses to grow, and I would like to thank all the elected officials and civic groups here today advocating for the borough."

Harbachan Singh, President of the Queens Civic Congress said, "Firstly, the imposition of tolls would inarguably create both a physical and a psychological barrier between the outer boroughs and Manhattan. This would further diminish the century old concept of a unified city composed of equal boroughs. New York City’s boroughs were intended to nourish each other and form a preeminent city, but the additional expense to residents and businesses and the psychological barrier of tolls will harm that objective” Singh continued, “Such tolls would undoubtedly create an undesirable restraint which would hamper inter-borough industry and commerce where outer-borough residents access Manhattan goods and services. There are numerous businesses that make daily or more frequent trips between the boroughs and tolls would place an unnecessary expense burden on them.”

Corey Bearak, senior policy advisor for Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free said, “The folks who support the MoveNY toll-tax scheme exhibit traits associated with Wonderland. You know where Up is Down and Down is Up. How else to explain folks who mostly self-identify at progressive supporting a tax infamously regressive by its nature? Keep NYC Free cautions against reliance on any toll-tax scheme, Move NY included, that fails to raise the revenues needed, offers no benefits and hurts the economy. Keep NYC Free emphasizes how alternative revenues could secure any necessary resources to support public transit in a truly progressive manner.”