

Congestion pricing faces an uphill battle in the Assembly, too

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It would be no small feat to get the Assembly on board, even if there is more support for the idea than there was 10 years ago, as some proponents argue. | Getty

A decade ago, then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan fell victim to outer-borough resistance, leading to an untimely death on the floor of the state Assembly.

Much has changed in the last 10 years, but while advocates are focusing their attentions on the Republican-controlled state Senate, **congestion pricing still faces a deeply divided Democratic-controlled Assembly rife with members loath to anger outer-borough constituents who already feel short-changed by the region's transportation system.**

There's a "good chance" it dies again in the Assembly, said longtime Democratic consultant George Arzt.

"I don't think it stands a chance" this year, said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis (R-Staten Island), who is open to some form of congestion pricing.

In recent days, POLITICO reached out to all 62 New York City-based members of the 150-member Assembly and interviewed 25. **Only four were unalloyed champions of what is commonly understood as "congestion pricing" — tolling the East River bridges** and sending the revenue to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs the city's faltering subway and bus system. The other members were either tentatively open to the prospect, on the fence or **opposed.**

Among the latter was William Colton (D-Brooklyn), who opposed the Bloomberg plan in 2008.

Colton said he has "always been very reluctant to consider" new bridge tolls. Why?

"I'm very concerned with the effect it would have on the outer boroughs particularly," he said.

Colton cautioned that Gov. Andrew Cuomo has yet to detail his proposal. And **it's possible Cuomo's notion of "congestion pricing" will differ substantially from how it is commonly understood.**

Deborah Glick (D-Manhattan) said she's "not unalterably opposed to doing something about East River crossings," provided there's a cap on cars affiliated with companies like Uber and Lyft.

Her Manhattan colleague Daniel O'Donnell, also a Democrat, is open-minded, but wary of "imposing on less affluent communities the burdens of this, while taking the more affluent communities and improving their air quality."

Joe Lentol and Catherine Nolan, Democrats who represent swaths of the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront where East River bridges spill cars onto neighborhood streets, said they are concerned that their districts would become parking lots.

“I have mixed emotions,” said Inez Dickens, a Manhattan Democrat. “I know we need to raise money to make repairs. ... However, my concern is really about the small businesses in Brooklyn and Queens that traverse the bridges and would now have to pay.”

Then there are those like Mayor Bill de Blasio, Assemblyman David Weprin (D-Queens) and Assemblywoman Latrice Walker (D-Brooklyn) who think congestion pricing is regressive.

“I represent a community that is plagued by extreme poverty and charging a fee on roadways may be a burden and overly cumbersome upon poor communities,” said Walker, who represents Brownsville, in a statement.

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