

Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CIVIC, BUSINESS, AND LABOR LEADERS TO GOVERNOR HOCHUL: FULL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY WARRANTED FOR HEALTH, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL RISKS FROM CONGESTION PRICING

‘Plowing forward with a congestion pricing tax as New York City teeters on the economic brink would be highly irresponsible, particularly when federal infrastructure funds are about to come on line to help fund MTA.’

*New York-Aug. 24...*A broad and diverse coalition of civic, business, and labor organizations throughout New York City today called on incoming New York Governor Kathy Hochul to insist that a full State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) study be undertaken before any additional steps are taken to implement the highly controversial congestion pricing tax on anyone driving south of 60th Street in Manhattan. SEQR studies are routinely required for even the smallest projects in New York State, and they are meant to analyze the potential environmental, economic, and social downsides of proposed undertakings.

“If ever there were a project that demanded a SEQR study, it would be congestion pricing, and we are hopeful that Governor Hochul will immediately understand that,” said Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free spokesman Joshua Bienstock. “Plowing forward with a congestion pricing tax as New York City teeters on the economic brink would be highly irresponsible, particularly when federal infrastructure funds are about to come on line to help fund the MTA. A congestion pricing tax would be highly regressive — hurting New Yorkers who can least afford it most — and it could render struggling midtown, the Hudson Yards, and downtown Manhattan off limits to new business development. These and other factors need to be fully considered, and only a thorough SEQR can accomplish that.”

In a highly unusual and controversial announcement, the Biden and Cuomo administrations recently announced that only a simple, watered-down “environmental assessment” would be used to move congestion pricing forward — a serious breach of protocol, especially for a project of this magnitude.

“SEQR studies were rightly put in place in recognition of the law of unintended consequences,” Mr. Bienstock continued. “When has charging ahead without the full complement of facts ever made sense? It certainly wouldn’t here.”

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Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free represents a diverse coalition of civic, business, and labor organizations and businesses throughout New York City. We share a simple vision: to keep our city congestion tax free. Our coalition opposes the imposition of tolls to enter the City's (Manhattan) Central Business District ("CBD") via toll readers installed on City Streets or on the City's FREE East River and Harlem River Bridges. Our members previously opposed the \$8 fee (\$21 for trucks) that then Mayor Bloomberg proposed to impose on drivers entering Manhattan below 86th Street and all subsequent iterations of so-called congestion pricing, including the most current scheme that proponents advocate charging drivers as much as \$25 per day (\$125 per week; over \$500 monthly; more than \$6,000 annually) to enter the CBD! Our members urge New Yorkers to deliver a simple message to our legislators: "Say no to any toll-tax fee scheme that seeks to charge us to enter Manhattan's CBD." Many supporters and coalition members propose alternatives that better address traffic issues in our entire City and provide new and fair sources to support mass transit.

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