



**OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

**MARTY MARKOWITZ**  
President

November 30, 2007

Mr. Marc Shaw, Chairman  
New York City Congestion Mitigation Commission and  
Executive Vice President-Extell Development Corporation  
800 Third Avenue, Fourth Floor  
New York, New York 10022

Dear Mr. Shaw:

I want to thank you and all the members of the New York City Mitigation Commission for undertaking this critical assignment to review and study plans to reduce traffic congestion within the City of New York and issue recommendations to the governor, state legislature, the mayor and the city council. I also want to thank you for the open process, and the opportunity to comment.

I have expressed my conditional support for Mayor Bloomberg's bold Congestion Pricing Initiative on several occasions. I believe that some form of this proposal can reduce congestion, increase transit use, provide a funding source for transit capital improvements and enhance the environment of our city. To that end, I want to submit my comments for consideration by the Commission.

A number of commentators have stated that this proposal tries to address too many objectives simultaneously. As I have stated in the enclosed copy of my August 1, 2007, letter to Governor Spitzer, I believe the congestion pricing initiative, the related transit fare and level of service should be viewed primarily as behavior modification tools (i.e. carrot and stick), to get people out of their cars, rather than as a mechanism for maximizing transit income, and thereby avoid undue hardship. I agree that there is an urgent need to address transit funding, but any congestion charge would need to be carefully coordinated with transit fares to encourage, rather than discourage, transit use.

If the proposed \$8 congestion charge would indeed be in effect daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., consideration should be given to maintaining an attractive level of transit frequencies and services available throughout this period. To encourage transit use, the public must be assured that connections for return trips can be made after the evening rush hour. This may require

expanding the availability of service beyond that which is available today to serve a city that never sleeps.

In the short run, provisions must be made for the vulnerable segments of our society, including the elderly and those with disabilities; those populations residing in areas underserved by transit; and those businesses which, by economic necessity, must frequently drive vehicles into the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD). Further, a mechanism must be set up whereby a person, who is absolutely dependent on vehicle travel, can receive an exemption from the city. To that end, I have identified the following opportunities for enhancing the equity and effectiveness of the initiative.

- **Provide business necessity exemption:** Provide an exemption to those who have no recourse or alternative to entering the CBD by personal, commercial or livery vehicle.
- **Provide a senior citizen exemption:** Provide free transit use to senior citizens and the handicapped at all times, similar to that implemented in London.
- **Implement early transit improvements:** Implement transit service and capacity improvements before the congestion pricing plan goes into effect. This must include those areas which do not have subway service, such as southern Brooklyn, where express bus service must be enhanced; as an incentive to use transit in these neighborhoods, the base express bus fare should be the same as the base subway fare; and much needed waterborne/ferry service should be initiated.
- **Expand service on lines with capacity:** Expand service on those lines that have available capacity, as NYC Transit loading guidelines may not be sufficiently spacious to attract this new crowd of former auto commuters. Some options include extending the V train through the Rutgers tunnel and implementing an express on the Culver line, served by the F train; a super express from East New York to Marcy Avenue on the Brooklyn Broadway line served by the J, Z, M trains; and improved G train service on the Brooklyn Crosstown line, particularly restoration of the six car trains that were reduced to four car trains in conjunction with implementation of the 63rd Street Connector project in 2001. In light of the many overcrowded subway lines, implementation of Communications Based Train Control (CBTC) should be expanded and accelerated, particularly on the overcrowded Canarsie line, L train.
- **Do not exempt the suburban commuter:** Establish a mechanism to have commuters from suburbs such as Long Island, Westchester and Rockland Counties, as well as New Jersey and Connecticut contribute their fair share to the resolution of the CBD congestion problem. It would be unfair to credit suburban commuters for the payment of pre-existing tolls.
- **Expand ferry service to CBD:** Expand or support ferry service from outlying areas of the city to the CBD, and integrate ferry services with the transit system to enhance our mobility, provide new connections and avoid land based bottlenecks as our waterfront communities grow. Preliminary suggestions include the 69th Street Pier, Atlantic Avenue, Coney Island and the Rockaways as possible stops on a Lower Manhattan/Downtown Brooklyn to JFK service, and a Downtown Brooklyn stop on

the high speed Lower Manhattan to LaGuardia service. To be effective, all connections must work together seamlessly and be perceived to be working seamlessly because the public's perception of service will influence commuter choices.

- **Build a park-and-ride facility, including a municipal parking lot, at the expanded Gateway Mall in Spring Creek:** This facility would be served by borough-wide local and express bus services and by the Kings Highway/Flatlands Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) proposed by the New York City BRT Study. This facility should be modeled after the Kings Plaza Bus Terminal and Layover Area and should be included in the Gateway Plaza plan submitted for ULURP approval.
- **Provide capacity on the FDR Drive and West Street:** This would absorb the volume of vehicles to be diverted from traveling through the Manhattan CBD. The mobility of this route is necessary not only to decongest the Manhattan CBD, but to avoid backups on the Brooklyn Bridge as well.
- **Restore the two-way toll on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge:** The current one-way toll contributes to congestion in Manhattan and Brooklyn, and also results in lost revenues. In-bound vehicles are currently not required to pay, and returning/outbound vehicles travel on local streets in Brooklyn and Manhattan to avoid the toll. The creative application of EZ Pass or other technology would avoid these negative impacts and the excessive delays which prompted the implementation of the one-way toll.
- **Protect neighborhoods from becoming park-and-ride lots:** Protect those communities, such as Downtown Brooklyn and other areas near subway stops, which are expected to absorb displaced vehicles and a shift of travel from auto to transit by implementing a resident permit parking program so that residential areas do not become park-and-ride lots.
- **Implement a pilot program to test assumptions:** We should carefully assess assumptions around ideas such as variable time-of-day pricing and congestion mitigation measures. Several experts have recommended that the effectiveness of the implemented measures should be monitored; travel data should be measured; factors contributing to congestion identified and evaluated; and a final program designed for implementation at the end of the three year pilot.
- **Reduce and eliminate the availability of free parking:** Free parking creates an incentive for driving in Manhattan and contributes to congestion. The current proposal should reduce the availability of free on-street parking in Manhattan with metered parking during the 6 am to 6 pm period; charging rates approximating those charged at commercial lots should be considered; violations should be strictly enforced with penalties that are proportional to the duration of the violation.
- **Eliminate the city's tolerance for parking permit abuse.**

- **Establish a network of regularly spaced taxi stands throughout the CBD:** Passengers can be boarded at these stands to reduce the concentration and impact of taxis on CBD congestion. Further, multiple-passenger pickup at Penn Station, the Port Authority Bus Terminal and other high use Manhattan taxi stations, as well as targeted taxi stations throughout the city, should be considered to reduce the movement of vehicles required for CBD circulation and access. To preserve any achieved improvement in CBD congestion, the number of taxis, executive cars and other livery vehicles should be capped during the three year pilot.
- **Implement truck requirements:** Enforce a comprehensive policy concerning truck loading requirements, goods movement, night deliveries and oversized trucks.
- **Encourage travel by high occupancy vehicles.** Create incentives for travel by vehicles occupied by more than one person. To provide a further reduction in vehicles entering the CBD and encourage carpooling, an additional reduction in the congestion charge should be considered proportional to the number of persons occupying vehicles.
- **Review the recommended “SMART Financing Authority”:** This would issue debt secured by City, State, Federal and Congestion Pricing revenues to fund transit improvements. In light of its costs and the additional bureaucracy it would create, careful review is recommended before a decision is made on its implementation.

For the longer term, our future transportation needs should be planned and funded more comprehensively.

- **Change the current method of financing transportation in New York City:** Given the projected shortfall of transportation funds, all levels of government must assume their fair share. As I have stated in the enclosed copy of my August 1, 2007, letter to Governor Spitzer, the City and State of New York must assume a greater obligation in funding transportation to relieve the unfair burden on the traveling public. As I said at the recent MTA fare hearing in Brooklyn, I support the legislation recently introduced by Assembly Member James Brennan to provide additional funding to MTA and I welcome the governor’s recent public promise reported in the *New York Times* to substantially increase State subsidies to the authority’s operating budget. With regard to the congestion pricing initiative, I agree with Council Member Lewis Fidler that a regional payroll tax is warranted to shift the burden of transit investments on a more equitable basis to all those who benefit from them.
- **Complete the Cross Harbor Freight Tunnel Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS):** This city cannot be sustained by continuing its overdependence on trucks for the movement of goods. As trucks are the fastest growing component of the region’s traffic, it is important to consider this project in terms of its function in the overall multi-modal transportation system of the future. Studies have indicated that the project would remove hundreds of trucks from our highways and streets, stimulate Brooklyn's waterfront activities, and improve air quality. However, representatives of communities along the land route of the tunnel project have expressed concern regarding the local economic and social impacts. It is, therefore,

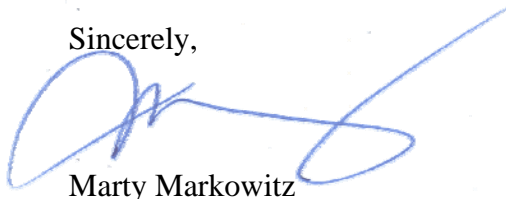
necessary to quantify all of the impacts and design a balanced project that does not solve one set of problems while creating another set of unacceptable impacts.

- **Extend the Second Avenue Subway into Brooklyn:** Extend the line as provided in the 1920's and 1970's versions of this project, to provide the needed mobility by the year 2030.
- **Complete and upgrade the connections between the former BMT, IRT and IND subway lines that have been missing since the subway system was unified by the city in 1940:** The connections I have identified in my proposal for Brooklyn Subway Connectivity Improvements would improve the system's redundancy and make travel on the subway more convenient.

Finally, I am hopeful that the process initiated by the Congestion Mitigation Commission and the legislature, including the need to identify and analyze environmental impacts, will remain transparent. This is especially important due to the broad impact the current initiative may have on the city's economy and its national competitiveness.

The Commission hearings have started a dialogue among organizations and individuals who care about this city and its future. It is my sincere hope that many new ideas will be presented to the Commission to address the CBD congestion problem and the financial requirements of a transit system that supports the economic engine of New York State. After many years during which the transit system has been under-funded by government, with the resulting burden borne increasingly by the fare and toll paying public, I hope that we can mitigate traffic congestion without the necessity of having to impose undue financial burden on the residents of the boroughs outside of Manhattan.

Sincerely,



Marty Markowitz

cc: Congestion Mitigation Commission

Enc.

MM/mjr



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

MARTY MARKOWITZ  
President

August 1, 2007

Honorable Eliot Spitzer  
Governor of the State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

I have been following the discussions concerning the need to raise the transit fare and the bridge/tunnel tolls in New York City to address MTA's projected deficits. This is taking place while MTA is enjoying another of its famous and "unexpected" budget surpluses. Of course, this recurring drama is business as usual in New York City.

Not a fan of business as usual, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced his PlaNYC in April. One of its most forward thinking aspects is the mayor's congestion pricing proposal, which I support contingent upon certain exemptions that I have recommended to protect seniors and other vulnerable populations. The proposal links auto and transit use by using revenues to improve transit, thus creating an incentive for drivers to use public transportation. This is a form of cross-subsidy, just like social security and subsidies to American farmers. **But if we ever hope to make congestion pricing work, we must guarantee the transit system is fast, safe, expanded, and affordable.**

I thought the mayor's bold initiative would forever change the dialogue about the transit fare from one focused on accounting to one that establishes the right mix of "carrots and sticks" to get drivers out of their cars and choosing public transportation. Therefore, I am surprised that the issue of the transit fare has been raised by the MTA at this time. **As the City of New York considers strategies to reduce congestion, this is no time for the MTA to be talking about raising transit fares.** Combining congestion pricing with MTA fare hikes is an unproductive "stick vs. stick" approach that cannot achieve our goal of making this city more livable and economically competitive, while taking care of the most vulnerable in our society. **This is why I strongly oppose any MTA fare hike at this time.**

I'm also concerned about long term transit funding. Good government groups always referenced insufficient State contributions to the MTA Capital Program and insufficient City contributions to the transit operating budget. If these funding sources continue to be left off the table, we run the real risk of

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over-relying on congestion pricing to fund transit. This runs directly counter to congestion pricing's principal aim, getting cars off roads. **If we rely on congestion pricing primarily as a source of transit income, its effectiveness as a tool for modifying commuter travel behavior may be squandered.**

Furthermore, the original proposal by the mayor called for congestion pricing to support capital improvements. The MTA seems to be suggesting that congestion pricing be used to level off fares. This public policy must be better coordinated. **The City and the State must go down the same road and track if we want to travel into a brighter, congestion-free future.**

Sadly that is not what's happening. And it's not only the fares that are unfair. Besides the State under-funding the MTA Capital Program and the City under-funding the Transit operating budget, other inequities include:

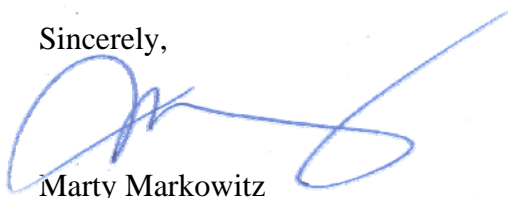
- **Revenue Distribution:** New York City still isn't getting its fair share of net revenues from MTA Bridges and Tunnels (B&T). MTA commuter railroads should not get half when all B&T facilities are in NYC.
- **Debt Servicing:** The burden of servicing MTA Capital Program debt has been unfairly shifted onto the transit fare.
- **Unified Fare Policy:** Each rider on MTA commuter railroads to or from the suburbs receives a subsidy rate greater than City transit riders, while the commuter tax designed to support City transit has not been restored; **it is time to establish a unified fare policy.**
- **Toll-Related Congestion:** The one-way toll on the Verrazano Bridge, MTA's largest transit cash cow, continues to distort traffic, increase congestion in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and reduce revenue.

**I must also assert, that as the highest-ranking local elected officials in the New York City counties, borough presidents should be represented on the commission being created to study congestion pricing alternatives—as well as on the MTA Board, which includes the county executives of the suburban counties.**

Please be informed that original versions of this correspondence have also been addressed to Majority Leader Bruno and Assembly Speaker Silver under separate cover.

In closing, our future as a model global city requires that we be **fair about the fare**—and revisit these other crucial transit issues as well.

Sincerely,



Marty Markowitz

cc: Honorable Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York  
Honorable Joseph Bruno, Majority Leader, New York State Senate  
Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker, New York State Assembly  
Honorable Richard Brodsky, Chairperson, Corporations, Authorities, Commissions Committee  
Honorable Christine Quinn, Speaker, New York City Council  
Honorable John Liu, Chairperson, Transportation Committee, New York City Council  
Elliot Sander, MTA Executive Director and CEO

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