



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

Comments on Central Business Tolling Program Environmental Assessment 8.25.22

Representatives from the FHWA, MTA, and State and City DOT,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of the Central Business District Tolling Program, also known as congestion pricing. This policy has been a long time coming – more than 15 years, in fact, and I’m very happy to see it finally moving forward.

Implementation of this program is even more dire now, with car ownership in NYC up over 200% due to the pandemic, and the MTA facing a fiscal cliff as soon as 2024 if we fail to act. In Brooklyn, we’ve seen the harmful impacts of growing traffic congestion on the economy, and especially on street safety and local air quality.

Brooklyn also understands the benefits of investing in transit for the working class – the vast majority of New Yorkers rely on mass transit to get to work, go to the doctor, and get to school. Only 2-5% of New York City residents drive a car into the Central Business District. And drivers are, on average, significantly wealthier than other non-car-owning New Yorkers.

For these reasons, it is crucial that the plan move ahead with a fee structure that provides no exemptions or as few exemptions as possible. The fairest approach for drivers is a very broad base and a comparatively low toll rate that does not disproportionately burden non-exempt drivers. If we are to seriously take on the responsibilities of improving public health and addressing the reality of climate change, we need to remove as many cars from our streets as possible, and this will only be achieved through applying the fewest exemptions. Additionally, the fee structure should be equalized across all crossings to eliminate “toll shopping.” This behavior would only exacerbate the issues we are trying to solve.

And while one of the most important outcomes of implementing congestion pricing is decreasing air pollution across our city, I recognize that the Environmental Assessment identifies potential additional increases in truck emissions for our South Bronx neighbors, with no mitigation required. We must ensure that the proposed enhancements are sufficient to improve air quality for these residents, as they have already battled poor air quality, high asthma rates, and other associated environmental justice issues for decades.



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In summary, for our city to continue to function, we must get people out of their cars and back onto reliable public transportation. Congestion pricing is set to be a win-win-win for the city and region's economy, transit system, traffic reduction efforts, and overall safety and quality of life – for Brooklynites and all New Yorkers.

Thank you again for your time, and I look forward to continuing this conversation. Given the quick turnaround and the late-Summer schedule of these hearings, I hope the Traffic Mobility Review Board will consider conducting more outreach and holding more hearings in the fall specifically on the proposed pricing structures, so that more New Yorkers will have a chance to have their voices heard in this process.