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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Congestion Pricing Task Force  
Monday, June 21, 2021 - 6:30 PM  
This meeting was conducted via Zoom**

**Minutes**

*Present:* Rohit Aggarwala, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Craig Lader, Sharon Pope-Marshall Rita Popper, Marco Tamayo, Elaine Walsh

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM.

**Item 1: Discussion with Sen. Liz Krueger regarding 2019 State Budget Bill that mandated Congestion Pricing**

Liz Krueger, New York State Senator for the 28<sup>th</sup> District which includes the majority of Community District 8, provided an update on the status of the implementation of Congestion Pricing and answered questions and comments from constituents and members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Following a brief synopsis by the co-chairs of the Task Force on its history and the work previously performed by CB8M regarding congestion pricing, Sen. Krueger provided an overview of the current situation now that federal approvals that had been delayed by the Trump Administration have been provided by the Biden Administration. She described the various components of the 2019 State Budget Bill that mandated congestion pricing, and emphasized how most critical details regarding congestion pricing have yet to be worked out.

Among the many details of the Congestion Pricing Law, Sen. Krueger emphasized the following key elements:

- The congestion zone begins specifically at 60<sup>th</sup> Street as per the enacted law, but that presents a question as to what happens for drivers coming from north of 60<sup>th</sup> Streets trying to access the 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, where the lower level access is between 59<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Streets, and the upper level access is via 57<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> Streets. Passenger vehicles are to be charged a maximum of once per day, regardless of how many times they enter/leave the zone. Emergency vehicles and those carrying persons with disabilities are exempt from fees.
- Persons living below 60<sup>th</sup> St. and making under \$60,000 will receive a tax credit equivalent to the amount of congestion fees they pay annually.

- Congestion fees, which are not yet set, are expected to be variable based on time of day and day of week, as the intent is to generate revenue and reduce congestion
- 80% of revenue will go towards improvements specifically for NYC Transit. An additional 10% will go be directed to each of the commuter railroads. The funding will go directly to the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA), reducing the concern that the funds could be redirected to needs unrelated to MTA railroads and buses.
- The plan is expected to generate \$15 billion over 4 years, thus the Traffic Review Mobility Board (TRMB) when evaluating fees, exemptions and discounts need to make sure that they meet the revenue targets.
- The TRMB will be making the key recommendations regarding the amount of the fees, along with any discounts and exemptions to be provided to specific groups; the TBTA will be the final arbiter of any recommendations made by the TRMB.

Much of the focus of Sen. Krueger's comments related to the composition and responsibilities of the TMRB. Sen. Krueger indicated that the TMRB doesn't actually exist today, as its members yet to be appointed. She described the composition of the TMRB as indicated in the law, which only requires one member to be appointed by New York City officials (other members will represent state interests or constituents in the catchment areas of the Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Railroad). Sen. Krueger, along with her elected colleagues, wrote a letter to the Governor and the MTA in May 2021 pointing out that congestion pricing could not move forward until the TMRB was formed, and that the expectation was for the TMRB to conform to all open meeting laws in effect in New York State and to follow through on prior commitments that public hearings would be held for people working and living in and near the congestion pricing zone.

In response to constituent and board member questions and comments, Sen. Krueger expressed her opinion that while congestion pricing may not be the ideal solution to addressing congestion and funding shortcomings for the MTA, it is almost certain to be implemented now that it is state law and federal approvals have been granted, and that we should be focusing on how to make it work as sensibly as possible. She agreed that the implementation should not be rushed just because federal approvals have now been provided. She expressed her view that additional congestion won't result in the low 60s by drivers trying to park just short of the zone, as they will quickly realize that there generally isn't parking available in that area. She noted that cargo bikes are now beginning to be deployed in parts of Manhattan and is both concerned yet optimistic that they could be part of the broader solution of addressing truck traffic along with congestion pricing; she was open to looking into whether cargo bikes can be charged fees to use the road network in the congestion zone since they would take space from individual cyclists, as was suggested by a CB8 member. She agreed that the issues regarding Queensboro Bridge access as it relates to congestion charges needs a great deal of attention from the TMRB.

Sen. Krueger noted that for-hire on-demand vehicles (i.e. Uber, Lyft, Via) will be treated similarly to personal vehicles and subject to one charge per day, but the manner in which passengers are charged fees beyond the existing surcharges is not yet known. There is no expectation that the surcharge on for hire vehicles south of 96<sup>th</sup> Street will change once congestion pricing south of 60<sup>th</sup> Street is in effect. Sen. Krueger also agreed with concerns that for-hire vehicles should not be waiting in front of fire hydrants just north of the congestion pricing zone.

In response to a question regarding a realistic expectation as to when tolling will actually begin, Sen. Krueger did not have any specific guidance, but indicated she would be surprised if it would occur before the end of 2022 based on the many milestones that have yet to be met, including the most critical matters such as the formation of the TRMB and the policies they are required to recommend.

## **Item 2: Other Congestion Pricing Implementation Updates**

There were no other updates provided.

## **Item 3: Next Steps**

Following the discussion with Sen. Krueger, the Task Force discussed potential topics for future meetings. There was interest expressed among multiple participants for further opportunities to discuss potential parking scenarios and impacts that may result from congestion pricing. The group talked about the challenge of trying to implement congestion pricing at a time when there is so much uncertainty about how New York City will recover from the pandemic and the relationship between recovery and the timeline in which congestion pricing will take effect. There was interest in hearing from parties involved in designing and implementing congestion pricing in other cities around the world, and learning more about the impacts (both positive and negative) that have been quantified through data collection. The Task Force also expressed interest in hearing directly from MTA or NYCDOT officials who may be able to provide updates on each of their agency's preparations for congestion pricing. Additionally, due to the uncertainty as to whether for-hire vehicle passengers will be subject to additional fees beyond the per-ride fees already in effect for any trips south of 96<sup>th</sup> Street, there is interest in revisiting this issue (CB8 is on record opposing these fees for current taxi passengers and has requested they be eliminated).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31PM.

*Alida Camp & Craig Lader, Co-Chairs*