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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Congestion Pricing Task Force
Thursday October 7, 2021 - 6:30 PM
This meeting was conducted via Zoom**

Minutes

Present: Rit Aggarwala, Gayle Baron, Michele Birnbaum, Alida Camp, Rebecca Dangoor, Craig Lader, Elizabeth Rose, Barry Schneider, Rami Siegel, Russell Squire, Elaine Walsh

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM. Prior to the formal start of the Agenda, New York State Assemblywoman Rebecca Seawright briefed Task Force meeting participants and provided highlights of the testimony she gave at the October 6th Central Business District Tolling Program public meeting. She reiterated the importance of the Traffic Review Mobility Board having two Manhattan representatives – one representing the toll zone and one representing the area north of the toll zone. She also noted her position in support of appropriate considerations for exemptions/credits/discounts for populations unduly impacted by the tolling programs, including seniors and persons with disabilities living in Manhattan.

Item 1: Updates on the implementation process for Congestion Pricing

Item 2: Review of MTA Central Business District Environmental Assessment October 6th public meeting

Representatives from the MTA held a series of 10 virtual public meetings between September 23rd and October 6th, marking the initial public outreach related to the environmental review of the proposed Central Business District Tolling plan. The meetings included a presentation providing an overview of the plan, including a significant amount of new information that had yet to be shared with the Task Force, and was followed by testimony by elected officials and members of the public. The October 6th evening meeting focused on Manhattan North of 60th Street.

The following is a synopsis of notable statements and information provided in the public meeting presentation:

Environmental Review Process

- The Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze a range of scenarios, which will be informed by the public outreach received, to allow for the full range of potential environmental effects to be considered;
- The study area for the EA includes the tolling district, which is “inclusive of 60th Street, and neighborhoods near the CBD boundary where the project could have social, economic or environmental effects;
- The EA will be studying the impact on areas near the toll zone boundary resulting from vehicles that travel through Manhattan but don't enter the local road network and therefore wouldn't be subject to the toll;
- The EA will not identify recommended toll rates; transportation modeling will be performed to assess impacts and help establish target levels of congestion reduction; the modeling is not yet

complete, and toll rates are to be determined by the TBTA board after the environmental review process is complete;

- Central business district toll rates will differ in each scenario, varying based on time of day, method of payment, and the types of discounts/credits/exemptions beyond those mandated by the State law.

Traffic Mobility Review Board & Determination of Discounts/Exemptions/Credits

- A Traffic Mobility Review Board (TMRB) is required to be formed to recommend the toll structure to the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA) board, "including but not limited to a plan for credits, discounts & exemptions";
- TMRB recommendations will be informed by a traffic study that "must take into account multiple criteria, including ability to generate revenue required, impacts on traffic patterns & volumes, public safety, air quality, among others";
- The State law requiring central business district specifically exempts "Qualifying vehicles transporting persons with disabilities" and "qualifying authorized emergency vehicles" from being tolled;
- Central Business District residents (living on or below 60th Street) with gross adjusted annual incomes below \$60,000 would be eligible for tolling tax credits.

Toll Rates

- It was explicitly stated that "all else being equal, the more credits/discounts/exemptions provided, the higher the toll must be to meet the project's purpose and objectives";
- Vehicles entering the toll zone will only be charged once per day;
- Subject to change, and based on the amount of credits/discounts/exemptions provided, the range of toll rates for automobiles is currently projected to be somewhere between \$9-23 for vehicles with EZ Pass, and \$14-\$35 for pay by plate vehicles;
- Off-Peak & overnight tolls may be lower than rates on weekdays and peak travel periods;
- Tolls for trucks and other vehicle types would have different ranges than those for automobiles.

Preliminary Findings

- Preliminary analysis indicates that any shifts of modal choice from driving to transit will not create overcrowding on the transit network; the shift to transit should not impact access to transit, transit services, or pedestrian circulation near transit stations and hubs;
- It is not expected that additional congestion will occur in areas bordering the tolling zone including areas north of 60th Street;
- Preliminary analysis indicates that less than 1% of commuters destined for the central business district are lower income individuals who drive;
- Models predict a 15%-20% reduction in traffic in the CBD, and improved travel times and air quality
- Some drivers may change their routes, and thus further analysis will be conducted to determine specific how areas in "Upper Manhattan" may be impacted by traffic, air quality and noise.

Environmental Justice

- There will be an Environmental Justice Technical Advisory Group, by invite only;
- There will also be an Environmental Justice stakeholder group, in which anyone interested in participating may submit their interest on the central business district tolling webpage on the MTA website;
- The impact on minority taxi drivers and taxi industry will be assessed.

Current timeline

- The EA will be prepared between now and January 2022; it will be available for comment between February and May 2022 and will concurrently be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- The EA public review period will take place between June and December 2022; during this time, outreach regarding toll rates will also be conducted;
- Upon a final determination by FHWA, if approved, there will be future hearings as part of the implementation and TMRB policymaking process;
- The toll system will be operated and maintained by a company called TransCore, which was awarded a \$507 million contract to design, build and operate the toll system equipment and infrastructure; TransCom has up to 310 days from the date that FHWA approval occurs to "go live", and then it has been reported that there may be a 60 day period in which no tolls are actually collected.

Synopsis of Testimony Submitted

Following the formal presentation at the October 6th public meetings, there were over two hours of testimony given by both elected officials and the general public. There were a wide range of opinions offered, both in support and in opposition to the plan, along with many specific suggestions regarding the policy decisions that are to be made by the TMRB and TBTA, and the type of information that should be addressed in the EA. Some of the most frequently discussed topics related to specific policy matters included:

- The location of the toll boundary at 60th Street. Some commenters suggested moving it further south to exclude the Queensboro Bridge; some wished to see it moved further north to 96th Street or to encompass the entire island of Manhattan;
- Exemptions/Credits/Discounts. There were many speakers who wished to see subsets of residents eligible for toll exemptions or discounts, including residents of Manhattan, residents living in the toll zone, residents with limited incomes but above the threshold included in the State law, seniors, persons with disabilities, people traveling to medical appointments, and medical workers. Some speakers requested that different classes of vehicles be exempted, including zero emission vehicles and motorcycles. There were many speakers who felt that there should be few or no discounts offered beyond those already mentioned in the State Law.
- Manhattan representation on the TMRB is needed;
- Concerns about potential impacts that may result in areas just north of the 60th Street toll boundary, including additional congestion, lack of on-street parking and overburdened garages that could engage in price gouging, air quality deterioration and increased cost of conducting business and related delivery costs;
- The concept of residential parking permits to ensure residents living near the boundary have access to on-street parking;
- Concerns about aesthetics and the appearance of tolling infrastructure, especially in historic districts;
- The process for the environmental review is too long, and should be expedited to allow congestion pricing to start before its currently projected late 2023 timeframe for going live;
- The unfair nature of the congestion surcharge assessed on yellow taxis below the northern boundary of that surcharge zone located at 96th Street

The comments provided by attendees of the Task Force emulated those made at the public hearing, and encompassed many of the same issues and viewpoints. The majority of speakers at the Task Force meeting expressed opposition to congestion pricing, but they were reminded that the purpose of the discussion was to discuss issues germane to implementation and policy making rather than debating the merits of the plan that is mandated by State law. There was a focus on issues pertinent to the area near the toll boundary and the broader issue of credits/exemptions/discounts. One member suggested parking lots be built on the Queens side of the 59th Street Bridge to allow outer-borough residents to park and transfer

to public transportation, and that audits of the MTA be conducted. Concerns were expressed that the MTA should not handle the funds generated by congestion pricing because it has done a bad job managing funds to date. Board members expressed concern for small businesses in the boundary area. Another member suggested that tolling all users of the Queensboro Bridge would benefit the community and help avoid some of the potential shifts in traffic that some fear could occur if some bridge entrances/exits do not trigger tolling. There were also some members who suggested that residential parking permits be considered.

There were also some questions brought up that have yet to be clearly addressed by officials and will require answers from TBTA:

- Will tolls be assessed to all vehicles using the Queensboro Bridge, or will inbound vehicles exiting from the upper level avoid the tolls due to their exit occurring north of 60th Street?
- Will persons who travel entirely within the zone be subject to a toll?
- Will vehicles starting their trip in the zone be assessed a toll upon exiting it, or are they only tolled upon entering the zone?
- What happens if there are not enough cars that enter the toll zone and revenue targets are not met?

Item 3: Determination of Next Steps

Based on the feedback of both members of the Task Force and speakers from the public, it was clear that there are two primary areas in which the Task Force should focus its efforts at upcoming meetings:

1. Developing a set of policy recommendations to be sent to the TMRB that specifically identifies any groups that should be recommended for credits/discounts/exemptions, including Community District 8 stakeholder groups that may be affected by a boundary that cuts through the district;
2. Address the plethora of issues that are of specific interest to residents and businesses located in the immediate vicinity of 60th Street, both north and south of the boundary, and developing a set policies to mitigate any adverse impacts that may directly impact those working or residing below 66th Streets, including whether there should be residential parking permits issued for residents of this area.

Item 4: Old & New Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48PM.

Respectfully submitted, Alida Camp & Craig Lader, Co-Chairs