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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Congestion Pricing Task Force  
Tuesday, November 14, 2023, 6:30 PM  
Conducted Remotely on Zoom**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Alida Camp, Edward Hartzog, Craig Lader, Valerie Mason, John McClement, Abraham Salcedo, Robin Seligson, Judith Schneider.

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

**Item 1: General Updates on the Central Business District Tolling Program since the September 12, 2023 Congestion Pricing Task Force meeting**

The following updates were provided on the Central Business District Tolling Program:

- Tolling Infrastructure has been installed at most of the locations where vehicles will enter and exit the Central Business District Toll Zone
- There was a group of officials featuring members of various government entities, elected officials and Community Board Representatives that participated in a walk-thru of the 60th Street congestion zone boundary. One outcome was the realization that the tolling infrastructure on Central Park West would need to be temporarily removed for the Thanksgiving Day Parade in a similar manner to what occurs with traffic lights along the parade route. It was further noted that the gantries tracking northbound cars would need to be removed if the tolls are for vehicles only entering the zone.
- A lawsuit was filed by officials representing Bergen County and the City of Fort Lee, who contest that the environmental review process didn't accurately determine the potential impacts of trucks diverting to the George Washington Bridge to avoid the congestion charge upon entering Manhattan via the Lincoln or Holland Tunnel. The Environmental Assessment (EA) indicated that diversions to George Washington Bridge will result in less than a 1% increase in traffic and pollutants.
- MTA Chair Janno Lieber participated in meetings in New Jersey on 11/13, with reports indicating that he was discussing a potential settlement to the previously filed lawsuit by New Jersey officials regarding environmental concerns regarding Congestion Pricing. It was reported that the MTA is willing to negotiate and work with New Jersey officials to determine mitigation approaches to deal with those concerns, similar to how they developed mitigation measures to address concerns in the Bronx.
- One of the members of the Task Force has spoken with MTA officials, and confirmed that the agency is aware of and monitoring Task Force activities and resolutions.

**Item 2: Summary of the October 2, 2023 meeting of the Traffic Mobility Review Board, and recommendations made regarding Tolls, discounts, offsets/credits, exemptions**

One of the co-chairs provided a brief overview of the October 2, 2023 meeting of the Traffic Mobility Review Board (TMRB). Although it was expected that the TMRB would announce their recommendations on toll rates, discounts, exemptions, and credits, they were still working through key policy issues and incorporating feedback received at prior meetings. As a result, the meeting focused on describing these issues and the more general direction that they were moving towards regarding recommendations. These included the following policies being considered:

- Rather than tolling vehicles when entering and exiting the Central Business District (CBD), the TMRB was looking to recommend tolls be charged only upon entering the CBD.
- A 50% nighttime discount for vehicles entering the toll zone was being discussed, along shoulder period in the evening from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. during which a 25% discount would be considered.
- For vehicles entering the CBD via the four tunnels in which tolls are assessed (Lincoln Tunnel, Holland Tunnel, Queens-Midtown Tunnel, Hugh L. Carey Brooklyn Battery Tunnel), the TMRB was looking at possible congestion pricing toll credits ranging from \$4 to \$7.
- A tiered approach was being considered for taxis and for-hire vehicles. The TMRB was considering a per-trip charge that would be paid by passengers in the range of \$1 to \$1.50 for yellow taxis, green taxis, and black cars, and between \$1.50 and \$2 for app-based vehicles.
- In response to comments regarding the burden of the toll on low-income drivers, an increase beyond the mandated 25% discount after the first 10 trips for low-income drivers to 50% was on the table.
- Exemptions for commuter buses and specialized government vehicles such as sanitation trucks, police cars and fire trucks were being discussed.
- Trucks were expected to be assessed higher rates, with double toll rates on box trucks and triple rates on larger trucks being contemplated.

There were no announcements of additional TMRB meetings, and it was expected that the TMRB would announce its recommendations prior to the next MTA board meeting at the end of November.

There was continued frustration expressed by meeting participants that there have been no public comments welcomed at TMRB meetings, and that the Task Force has yet to have an MTA representative attend a meeting, especially after it was reported that Community Board 3 Manhattan was going to be discussing Congestion Pricing with the MTA in attendance.

Much of the discussion centered on the concerns of the toll rate that most Community District 8 residents would be required to pay, and reading the TMRB tea leaves suggested that there would be few exemptions offered beyond those they were discussing at the October 2<sup>nd</sup> TMRB meeting. Speakers expressed fears that the toll would be up to \$23 during peak periods, which was the highest rate modeled in the EA; they also objected to the concept of congestion pricing being fundamentally unfair to those who rely on personal vehicles to visit family on a regular basis on the other side of the toll zone and continued to urge various discounts and exemptions for groups such as persons seeking medical attention and certain public sector workers such as teachers. Concerns about potential price increases for consumer goods to offset increased shipping costs related to trucks being tolled was also mentioned. As in past meetings, fears were raised that congestion pricing would result in increased traffic on local roadways in Community District 8 just north of the 60<sup>th</sup> Street toll zone boundary, and as a result of toll shopping that could send people to the inbound upper roadway of the Queensboro Bridge where no toll will be collected for vehicles that are destined for points north of 60<sup>th</sup> Street.

One of the co-chairs responded by explaining that congestion pricing is a policy that will affect different populations in different ways, and that it was clear that the exemptions being discussed are not geared towards those who live in Community District 8. He further explained that congestion pricing's significant effect will create proverbial winners and losers, and that those who own cars and live in Community District 8 and other neighborhoods with similar demographics and use them in a manner that they would be subjected to new tolls would be on the losing side, while those who rely on public transportation and may reap the longer-term benefits that congestion pricing is intended to generate would be the winners, as would those who live within the zone and do most of their driving within it and thus wouldn't be charged. The winners may also include those who live within the CBD.

Parking concerns also continued to be raised, especially in relation to fears of added demand for both on- and off-street parking in the lower 60s. It was indicated that CB8's Transportation Committee held a preliminary discussion on residential parking permit programs where its members expressed interest in further investigating the potential for it to be introduced in Manhattan. It is anticipated that another discussion will occur in the coming

months that will feature representatives from other major cities that can speak about similar programs that are in place in those locales.

One of the co-chairs suggested that it should be the for-hire vehicle companies that are assessed a fee since they will reap significant benefits stemming from reduced congestion and yet will continue to be the leading contributor of congestion in the CBD.

### **Item 3: Elected Official Comments/Reports Regarding Congestion Pricing**

A staff member from Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright's office noted that her team has been attending and monitoring Task Force meetings and welcomes feedback. He invited to call her office with concerns. He reiterated that AM Seawright is asking for exemptions for the disabled, seniors and others in need of such exemptions.

### **Item 4: Old and New Business**

There was no old or new business discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

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