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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Congestion Pricing Task Force
Thursday, April 3, 2025, 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom**

Minutes

Present: Alida Camp, Craig Lader, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Todd Stein

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 20

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

Item 1: Status Update and Review of Congestion Pricing to Date since 1/5/25 Implementation

Task Force Co-Chair Craig Lader provided an update on the status of congestion pricing. Tolling began on January 5, 2025, and as of the meeting date, April 3rd, it continues to be in effect. There continues to be long-term uncertainty, as newly installed U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Sean Duffy sent a letter to New York Governor Kathy Hochul on 2/19/25 indicating that the program's approval under the Value Pricing Pilot Program (VPPP) was rescinded. On 2/20/25, Secretary Duffy sent another letter that the VPPP's rescission would take effect on 3/21/25 and called local officials to "cease collection of tolls" by that date. Governor Hochul and Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman Janno Lieber responded by asserting that tolls would remain in effect. On 3/20/25, Secretary Duffy posed on social media that a 30-day extension of the USDOT directive to cease tolling would be provided as discussions continue regarding the termination of congestion pricing.

Co-Chair Craig Lader then provided some of the early results of congestion pricing since tolling began. He emphasized that the data being presented is intended to give a snapshot of initial results, and that this isn't predictive or intended to suggest whether congestion pricing is meeting, exceeding, or falling short of expectations. He further stated that two to three months of data is not sufficient to confirm that any early results are sustainable or won't change positively or negatively over time.

The data points shared were as follows:

- As per the MTA, travel times into the congestion relief zone (CRZ) are down in the AM peak hours, including the Queensboro Bridge, which is down by 26%. The percentage of days with average crossing travel times more than 3 minutes over the amount it would take if traffic were free flowing is now significantly lower; in 2024, on the Queensboro Bridge, 54% of days had over 3 minutes of delays; in 2025 so far, that figure is now 10%.
- The MTA reports that there have been fewer vehicular trips in the congestion zone; between January 5th and February 26th, about 60,000 fewer vehicles per day are entering the congestion relief zone, equivalent to a 10% reduction. The MTA also reported that crosstown traffic has improved - Canal Street, 34th Street, and 57th Street are 30% faster.
- Data indicates that noise complaints have fallen significantly - between January 5th and March 6th, NYC's 311 system registered 67 complaints about honking inside the congestion relief zone (CRZ), which is down 69% from the same period in 2024. Also, the New York City Department of

Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) reported a 100% reduction in noise camera summonses - 27 last year, 0 as of this year.

- The MTA also provided data collected by various entities suggesting that congestion pricing has not adversely impacted the broader economy of the congestion zone, with positive results reported in terms of increased pedestrian traffic, Broadway attendance, restaurant reservations, retail sales, retail occupancy, and commercial leasing.
- The MTA has provided monthly updates on the proportion of vehicle types entering the CRZ – in January, the breakdown was 68% passenger vehicles, 22% taxis or for-hire vehicles, 9% trucks, and 1% buses and motorcycles. 95% of revenue during peak times. February was very similar - 66% passenger vehicles, 24% taxis or for-hire vehicles, 9% trucks, and 1% buses and motorcycles. 95% of revenue during peak times. The data reflects a 10% increase in Uber/Lyft entering the zone.
- MTA has also provided monthly revenue updates – In January, gross revenue was \$48.6 million, with \$9.1 million in operating costs and \$2 million in operating accruals, resulting in net revenue of \$37.5 million. In February, gross revenue was \$51.9 million, with \$9.5 million in operating costs and \$2 million in operating accruals, resulting in net revenue of \$40.4 million. Through February, on a net operating basis, over \$78 million in net revenue is to be transferred to the lockbox, and the MTA is “on track to generate and deliver \$500 million of net operating revenue” in 2025.
- MTA also reported improvements in bus operations in the early months of 2025. As per New York City Transit Authority (NYCT) President Demetrius Crichlow at the March MTA Board Meeting, there has been a 1.3-minute reduction in mean travel time, with 4% speed improvements, and reductions in bus bunching. Based on bus running time improvements that have occurred, there is a pilot program to remove timepoints on seven NYCT routes, which include the M31, M66, and M101 that operate within the Community Board 8 Manhattan District. By removing timepoints, bus schedules can be tightened to allow for shorter running times along the routes.
- In January, NYCT Bus Senior Vice President Frank Annicaro reported an increased customer satisfaction among bus riders systemwide, with the highest increases on routes operating within the CRZ and on express routes. There have been similar increases reported by bus passengers crossing over from New Jersey, especially among those operators that use the exclusive bus lane on the approach to the Lincoln Tunnel. It was also noted that Hampton Jitney’s President Geoffrey Lynch has made comments at recent MTA Board Meetings in which he described how their buses are operating more reliably with quicker travel times.
- Safety Improvements: Over the first few weeks of the program, data showed significant reductions in crashes and injuries (Source – NYPD Crash Data).

Charts were also displayed based on data from the website congestion-pricing-tracker.com, which was created by Brown University students and uses Google Maps data to measure the impacts of congestion pricing on travel time. While the pre-congestion pricing data depicted by the website includes information from May-August and December 2024, and thus isn’t a precise comparison, the charts do show impacts that correspond to other data presented by the MTA. Overall, the charts depicted improved travel times for trips that cross into the CRZ.

Queensboro Bridge data was mixed, with some indicating an increased crossing time in the AM peak hours but more significant savings in the midday and PM hours; a theoretical trip from 62nd/Madison Avenue to Battery Park via the Franklin D. Roosevelt East River Drive (FDR Drive) showed similar results. The website generally showed faster travel times within the CRZ, and marginally faster times for trips that didn’t include a crossing into the CRZ, such as trips starting in upper Manhattan and ending in the Lenox Hill neighborhood. It was noted that some of the data discrepancies between this website and the MTA’s data are likely based on the precise points used to measure delays; for example, the website looked at the East River Crossings, while MTA data looked at expanded areas that encompasses approaches to the crossings to get a broader sense of the impacts.

Item 2: Community Feedback, Perceptions and Identification of Local Impacts of Congestion Pricing Implementation in Community District 8

There was extensive participation among meeting participants, in which feedback was provided on the initial months of congestion pricing’s implementation, including reports of localized impacts within the Community Board 8 Manhattan District. There was a wide array of comments and questions, along with personal experiences that were described, which reflect the ongoing mixed perception of congestion pricing as a policy, with statements

both in support and in opposition to congestion pricing. It was noted that some polls taken after the implementation of congestion pricing are now showing more New York City residents supporting the policy, while those in the suburbs have continued to register a majority of respondents in opposition.

There were various anecdotal experiences described by speakers about potential impacts, including the following:

- There is a consensus that there is less honking and less traffic right around the 59th Street Bridge (Queensboro Bridge).
- Differing perceptions on traffic and bus times; some speakers described a decrease in traffic, including quicker bus times, in the 90s and 60s Street, while another speaker said they hadn't noticed that buses are moving more quickly.
- An increase in traffic near the FDR Drive entrance at East 96th Street, especially for vehicles turning from First Avenue.
- An increase in traffic on Third Avenue, which also could be due to the recently implemented New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) traffic signal timing changes that effectively reduced speeds to 15 MPH.
- One speaker noted increased congestion on 5th Avenue in the East 80s and 90s Streets leading down to Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET), while another suggested that the delays are more concentrated in the East 90s Streets near The Mount Sinai Hospital and that the issues near the MET are a result of blocked lanes in front of the Met from loading and unloading of cars, tour buses and taxis;
- Less chaos and less traffic on Canal Street, and it is now easier to cross the street without swerving around gridlocked intersections.
- Some comments concerned parking, with one East 65th Street resident suggesting that on-street parking has been lost over the years, and thus, congestion pricing didn't contribute to parking changes, and garages aren't necessarily fuller now. Another speaker of the public commented on the less frequent on-street parking spot turnover.
- One speaker described a personal experience in which he was unknowingly charged \$45 per day rather than the correct \$9 fee, which was also reported on the front page of the New York Post. The issue was rectified with assistance thanks to State Senator Liz Kruger. It was separately noted that E-ZPass must be used with the license plate registered to the corresponding tag to get charged the E-ZPass fee rather than the toll by mail fee. A member of the public suggested that the license plate information may be able to be changed online to allow it to be used with a rental car.
- There were multiple questions about data, including information that was not included in the presentation at the start of the meeting.

There were multiple questions about data, including information that was not included in the presentation at the start of the meeting:

- In regards to a question seeking more available data on air quality and traffic in the environmental justice communities, it was indicated that data has yet to be made available, but traffic data reported out has shown the shifts in traffic patterns have not been as problematic as predicted by the communities.
- It was noted that data shows ridership increases on Metro North and the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) by 5% and 10%, respectively, but it is unclear whether the increase is a direct result of congestion pricing.
- Data also reflects an increase in For-Hire Vehicles (FHVs) such as Uber and Lyft of approximately 10%.
- It was emphasized that traffic volumes generally increase as the year progresses and are anticipated to increase in the upcoming months.

Among the comments provided by those skeptical towards or opposed to congestion pricing, which often reflected the contradiction between trying to accommodate fairness and trying to raise sufficient funds, were the following:

- The fee to use the outbound Queensboro Bridge is unfair for those who are barely traveling in the CRZ and forces those looking to avoid the toll to travel to the Brooklyn Bridge to go to Brooklyn/Queens/Long Island, and a suggestion that off-peak fees be reduced or eliminated, and that tolling of the outbound Queensboro Bridge be eliminated;

- Concerns for those having to go into the zone to do business with the government, such as jury duty;
- There has been limited consideration of the lower-income and middle-income New Yorkers bearing the brunt of congestion pricing;
- The history of the MTA's fiscal irresponsibility and that of elected officials who have not acted to address financial mismanagement;
- While there is a need for financing of MTA's projects, congestion pricing is a regressive tariff with a more significant impact on lower-income residents;
- Concerns that the CRZ zone will be expanded further north, and that dividing Manhattan doesn't make sense in the first place.

There were some questions about bus and subway operations as they relate to congestion pricing. It was clarified that bus and subway fleets have not increased in conjunction with congestion pricing. A member of the public asked if subway crime is related to congestion pricing; reported increases in ridership since the implementation of congestion pricing may be a crime deterrent, but there is, thus far, no statistical data confirmation or correlation. It was noted that while it has been a typical practice of locales introducing congestion pricing that transit service is increased, there have been minimal increases in service on MTA services, and no additional fleet has been added. Though the ongoing impacts of the pandemic have also resulted in available capacity among the existing fleet and services.

In response to a question about the low-income discounts for congestion pricing, it was clarified that there are two separate programs – one based on income that applies for trips exceeding 10 per month, which is available to anyone, and another program that only applies to residents of the CRZ that provides tax credits for any congestion tolls that are assessed. One speaker expressed frustration this wasn't fair to those who don't live in the zone and still have to pay the fee at least 10 times, which is a burden for those with lower levels of income; the same speaker also expressed frustration that the free exits from Manhattan traveling east are limited to the Brooklyn Bridge, while low-income residents in the zone can travel east at no cost using any bridge or tunnel.

A speaker asked about the potential expansion of the transit system and other upgrades. It was explained that capital projects included in the 2020-2024 MTA Capital Plan are being supported by congestion pricing funds. While the MTA's operating budget is funded separately, the MTA's 20-year Needs Assessment was recently published and describes the longer-term expansion and state of good repair plans for the MTA. It was noted that failure to properly maintain the system over many years has led to certain failures, including the 2017 "Summer of Hell", and that lack of investment has had significant consequences, including the need for the congestion funding to help support the many projects that are critical to system reliability and modernization. It was clarified that there is no specific information indicating precisely how much of the revenues received to date from congestion pricing are being allocated to specific capital projects that are to be the beneficiaries of the funds.

Several members of the public expressed concern over what many have perceived as wasteful spending by the MTA without sufficient oversight, questioning the fairness of providing a "tariff" to the MTA that directly affects low-income and middle-income drivers who may not have a choice about driving into the zone.

Items 3 & 4: Old and New Business

There was no old or new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

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