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## **FUEL ON THE FIRE**

### **Four Reasons Why Councilmember Monserrate's Hybrid Handouts Will Worsen Traffic and Pollution**

Queens Councilmember Hiram Monserrate, through his City Council Introduction No. 716, wants to give New Yorkers who purchase hybrid cars free curbside parking. Additionally, Monserrate is asking the state legislature to give hybrid drivers tax breaks and discounted gasoline.

"This bill betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of how free parking exacerbates traffic and pollution from all types of vehicles," says Paul S. White, executive director of Transportation Alternatives. "The result of these handouts to hybrid drivers will be more traffic, more pollution and more carbon."

There are at least four reasons why giving hybrid drivers free parking is bad public policy:

- 1. Free parking for hybrid drivers will encourage more traffic on our already congested streets and highways.**

As Bruce Schaller, current NYC DOT Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Sustainability, said in his report last year, "Free Parking, Congested Streets":

"The cost and availability of parking is the biggest factor influencing potential motorists' choice between driving and taking public transportation...free or reimbursed parking is an inducement for the majority of motorists who choose to drive to the CBD rather than use public transportation or other means of travel."

Free parking will encourage more car ownership, more driving and longer parking stays. Yesterday's New York Times revealed that the #1 cause of parking gridlock is free-parking privileges for public employees. Monserrate's plan will create another category of privileged parkers, making on-street parking even more difficult to find and leading to yet more burning of gasoline and clogging of our streets as drivers search for a space.

## **2. The City will lose significant revenues.**

On-street parking typically costs \$1 or \$1.50 per hour, and the City has proposed raising these charges to as much as \$4 per hour in the Manhattan core. At \$1.50 an hour, each hybrid exemption will cost the City up to \$3,000 in lost revenues (based on eight hours a day, five days a week for fifty weeks). If rates go up to \$4 per hour, the City would lose \$8,000 per hybrid. If just 1,000 hybrids qualified for Monserrate's parking exemption, the City could lose \$8 million in revenue.

## **3. Hybrids are less than half green.**

Drivers, no matter how their cars are powered, take up more than 10 times the street space required by walkers, bicyclists and bus riders. While hybrids do emit as much as 60% less pollution than an average vehicle, they still pollute our scarce public street space, crowding streets and making it tougher for New Yorkers to use the greenest modes of transportation: walking, bicycling and taking the bus.

## **4. New Yorkers already have significant incentives to purchase a hybrid vehicle.**

The Federal government already subsidizes purchase of hybrid cars, to the tune of tax credits worth as much as \$3,000. And rising gas prices give car owners another incentive to switch to hybrids, since the savings from fuel efficiency can amount to thousands over the lifetime of the vehicle. Offering drivers money to buy a hybrid is like offering Warren Buffet money to buy an underpriced stock — it's an incentive they don't need.

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