



LIAM QUIGLEY

NYC's kids will have cleaner air, better transportation options thanks to the Mayor's new sustainability plan. Page 15

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Transportation ALTERNATIVES

MISSION STATEMENT: Our mission is to reclaim New York City's streets from the automobile, and to advocate for bicycling, walking and public transit as the best transportation alternatives.

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The costs of congestion — to our health, to our environment, and to our economy — are only going to get worse. The question is not whether we want to pay but how do we want to pay. With an increased asthma rate? With more greenhouse gases? Wasted time? Lost business? And higher prices? Or, do we charge a modest fee to encourage more people to take mass transit?

-- Mayor Michael Bloomberg, April 22, 2007

More months ago it was nearly unimaginable. Then, on Earth Day, he did it. Mayor Bloomberg announced that London style congestion pricing would be a central tenet of his sustainability plan, *PlaNYC: A Greener, Greater New York*.

The proceeds of congestion pricing will fund a new generation of bus and subway improvements. The Mayor's plan, if successful, has the potential to dramatically improve mass transit, reduce pollution and help millions of New Yorkers breathe easier.

The American Automobile Association, the Parking Garage Owners and the other fossil fools who have historically opposed all manner of auto restriction measures did not waste any time. The very day after Mayor Bloomberg's historic speech they were attacking congestion pricing as "an unfair tax on working New Yorkers."

In fact, the Mayor's plan is the epitome of fairness. Congestion pricing will right a deep and long-standing injustice: New York City streets are toxic to the people who live on them and to the majority who take transit, walk and bike. Currently needless traffic unfairly impacts the lives of New Yorkers and the environment in many ways:

- One million New Yorkers have asthma, and asthma rates are higher on streets with more traffic.
- According to the City Department of Health, only one in four New Yorkers gets the daily activity they need to be healthy, in no small part due to traffic inundated streets hostile to biking and walking.
- According Transportation Alternatives' *Traffic's Human Toll* study New Yorkers who live on high traffic streets have a significantly lower quality of life than those who live on lower traffic streets.
- \$13 billion is lost every year due to traffic congestion, according to a study by the city's leading business group, the Partnership for New York City.

People who drive to work are in the clear minority. Only 5% (1) of outer borough work-

ers commuters drive to Manhattan and 80% (2) of those 5% have an existing time-competitive transit alternative that they are not taking. Congestion pricing and other green transportation improvements benefit the vast majority of New Yorkers and must be implemented immediately.

In the coming months, Transportation Alternatives will be working to make sure that the Mayor's plan is not killed by the fossil fooled opposition. We will be sending new organizers into Brooklyn and Queens and Albany to communicate to the grassroots and the grassstops the benefits of the charge, and to get feedback on what short term transit improvements are needed to make it work best. And we will continue to do what has gotten us to this historic juncture: effective coalition building, original research and effective communication with City Hall.

To be sure, there is still a lot that we are looking for from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Doctoroff. The plan does not, in its present form, call for car-free parks and it lacks specific language on parking reforms. And, as the (infamous architect Le Corbusier said, "God is in the details" as City figures out how to implement the 127 points contained in the plan.

Yet we are encouraged by the appointment of Janette Sadik-Khan as the new Commissioner of the Department of Transportation. Ms. Sadik-Khan has a proven track record on green transportation and is a newly minted bike commuter. Janette has her work cut out for her, for in addition to congestion pricing, she will be crucial to the effective implementation of many other of the Mayor's new initiatives that T.A. has long trumpeted: more car-free pedestrian space, more outdoor bike parking, secure indoor bike parking and more bike paths. T.A. looks forward to a forging a new spirit of cooperation with the newly greened DOT.

My T.A. colleague Dani Simons said recently, "I have never been prouder to work for Transportation Alternatives and to be a New Yorker!" I feel the same way, and as a member of Transportation Alternatives you should too.

Sincerely,

Paul Steely White
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives

(1) *Benefits of Congestion Pricing*, 2007
(2) *Necessity or Choice*, 2006

Both available at transalt.org