Report on the Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission Public Hearings

The New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission (the “Commission”) was established pursuant to Chapter 384 of the Laws of 2007 to undertake a review and study of plans to reduce traffic congestion and other related health and safety issues within the City of New York.

As part of its statutory mandate, and to provide the opportunity for the public to participate and comment, the Commission conducted a series of public hearings in each borough of the City of New York (Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island), on Long Island, and in Westchester County.

The Commission heard testimony from numerous witnesses, including State and local elected officials; various transportation, environmental, and community-based organizations; and private citizens. Other individuals who did not present oral testimony at the hearings submitted written testimony.

Written testimony received by the Commission will be available on the Commission website at:

https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/programs/congestion_mitigation_commission

The following pages provide a brief review of the seven hearings held between October 24th and November 5th, including the public’s suggestions for reducing congestion and pollution, and improving mass transit, health and safety.
Summary of Public Hearings

Long Island
Hofstra University
Wednesday, October 24, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 8 registered speakers.

Westchester
Westchester County Center
Thursday, October 24, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 6 registered speakers.

Manhattan
Hunter College, City University of New York
Thursday, October 25, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 82 registered speakers.

Queens
York College, City University of New York
October 30, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 31 registered speakers.

Bronx
Hostos Community College, City University of New York
October 31, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 26 registered speakers.

Brooklyn
New York City Tech, City University of New York
November 1, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 39 registered speakers.

Staten Island
College of Staten Island, City University of New York
November 5, 2007, 6:00 pm

There were 28 registered speakers.
There was a broad range of public comment provided at the Commission’s hearings on traffic congestion and mitigation in the City of New York. The seven hearings were well attended by the public, and the Commission heard approximately 25 hours of testimony. Witnesses provided their views on the current amount and type of congestion in the City and the region, and the impact of congestion and various mitigation options on the economy, the environment, quality of life, public health, and the transportation infrastructure. A number testified about a current lack of mass transit options, as well as concerns about the adequacy of existing mass transit systems and financing for addressing transit needs. Some raised equity, fairness, privacy, and/or feasibility issues with the concept of, and proposals for, charging for the use of public facilities, such as traffic, parking and health impacts on adjacent neighborhoods, burdens on those of lesser means, the disabled and the elderly, and the high cost of constructing and maintaining a pricing system. Others indicated their support of Mayor Bloomberg’s congestion pricing proposal for entering the Manhattan Central Business District, stating it would reduce congestion, finance public transportation improvements and improve public health and air quality in the region.

A variety of witnesses spoke of the regional nature of transportation and their concerns about the impact that congestion mitigation proposals could have on commuters, residents, and the transportation infrastructure regionally. Many witnesses provided specific options to address congestion including mass transit and highway/bridge improvements, freight movement, modifications to pricing for the use of roadways, the use of technology, alternative transportation modes, traffic and parking enforcement, telecommuting, and more. Appendix A provides a list of suggestions that the Commission received through the hearing process.
Appendix A: 
Suggestions Received through the Hearing Process

Traffic Mitigation

- License plate rationing
- Congestion rationing techniques
- Alternate day charging based on license plates or place of residence
- Implement variable tolls on select existing tolled facilities
- Impose tolls on select free crossings
- Additional taxi stands; reduction in cruising for fares
- $1 surcharge for all taxi trips within or crossing the zone
- Institute one side of avenue hailing for taxis
- $2 charge for all livery car trips into the zone
- Reduce congestion from black cars and other for hire vehicles
- Regulate the number of livery cars
- Two-way tolls on the Verrazano Bridge
- Real-time traffic information for drivers
- More allocated curb space for loading and unloading in busiest commercial areas
- Technological (e.g., electronic / camera) enforcement of violations contributing to congestion
- Enable Traffic Enforcement Agents (TEAs) to write “blocking the box” tickets
- Enforcement of parking and traffic laws and rules
- Regulation of the use of the streets for construction projects
- Modernizing traffic signals
- Expansion of Lower Manhattan traffic management program to Midtown
- Adequate space for off-street loading/unloading in new large commercial buildings in Manhattan Central Business District
- Relief of chokepoints in road system
- Extension of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge to Perth Amboy
- Open the Landfill Roads to two-way traffic
- Increase capacity of Staten Island and West Shore Expressways, build highways on Richmond and Willowbrook Parkway rights-of-way
- Implement 8 to 12 month pilot program consisting of gridlock cameras
- Integrate drive-thru loading docks in new building constructions
- Increase construction permit fee
- Surcharge for limousines
- Fund adequate training for Traffic Enforcement Agents (TEAs)
- Implement tolls at entry points of 59th Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queensboro, and 3rd Street Bridges
- Encourage small businesses to form a consortium to coordinate daily private garbage pickup
- Midtown access passes
• Implement a flex-car concept
• Increase tolls and parking meter rates during peak hours
• Extend goal of congestion reduction to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
• Simplify Manhattan road pricing cordon to apply to all vehicles entering the Manhattan Central Business District
• Uniform toll charges for entering Manhattan ($8) payable on entering Manhattan from 6AM-6PM Mon-Fri, no cost to exit during this time, and $4 to exit out of peak times
• Fewer street vendor vans that block roadways
• Replace toll plazas with High Speed E-ZPass

Vehicle Reduction

• Carpooling incentives
• Telecommuting and incentives therefore
• Strictly-enforced 3-person HOV Zone below 60th Street
• Upgrade and expansion of bike lanes, dedicated bike paths and greenways – implementation of 1997 NYC Master Bike Plan
• Protected bike lanes throughout Manhattan
• Encouraging use of bicycle transportation
• Bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure
• Institute self-organizing jitney system
• Move City agencies outside of the CBD
• Provide tax incentives for commuters who switch to mass transit, for employers who subsidize mass transit, and for companies that switch deliveries to off-peak times
• Investigate best practices in other countries to help make biking safer
• Implement pedestrian safety improvements (light signal timing changes and sidewalk repair)
• Pedestrian only cross-town streets every 20 or so blocks, perhaps also with trolleys or streetcars for faster cross-town transit
• Creation of HOT lanes

Public Transportation

• Defer the MTA fare hike
• Need for mass transit improvements
• Lower Manhattan bus depot
• Feasibility of double decker buses and trains
• MTA minivans for areas where full bus service is not viable
• Expand ferry service; fast ferry service
• Dedicate congestion pricing revenues to mass transportation improvements (“Lock Box”)
• Create dedicated fund to study mass transit problems and solutions for areas west of Hudson
- Light Rail
- Programs to encourage public employees to use mass transit
- Increase in monthly cap on transit subsidies that employers can provide as tax-free employee benefits
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Increase the number of buses, bus routes, and system capacity (bus depots)
- Bus/congestion pricing lanes on Staten Island highways
- Increase express bus lanes and service
- North Shore Passenger Rail
- West Shore Rail
- Staten Island monorail
- Free public transportation
- Improve LIRR access to Queens
- Operate non-polluting fuel buses
- Restore closed LIRR and MTA stations
- Complete Third Branch of LIRR and building of the East River Tunnel to complete JFK-Lower Manhattan Rail Link
- Regional Payroll Tax to finance tunnels and mass transit improvements
- Restore service at the 69th Street Pier in Bay Ridge
- Dedicate funds to the ‘G’ train subway line
- Accelerate planned bus, subway, and commuter rail service and capacity improvements
- Maintain current and future MTA 5-Year Capital Plan funding
- Increase MTA service to absorb potential ridership increases
- Bring Downtown Brooklyn subway stations to a state of good repair
- Reform the MTA
- Grant MTA authority to select and prioritize projects to be funded with revenue
- Replace the Gowanus Express Viaduct with a tunnel encompassing a dedicated BRT lane
- Integrated enhanced service on the ‘F’, ‘V’, and ‘G’ subway lines
- Remake commuter rail lines in NY/NJ/CT metropolitan area into a Regional Rail system
- City should have a larger role in the MTA budgeting process

**Freight and Commercial Vehicles**

- Incentives for nighttime or off-peak deliveries
- Increased water transport of freight
- Construct the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel, the Trans-Narrow Tunnel, and the Gowanus Expressway Tunnel
- Truck congestion charge based on vehicle weight and classification
- Facilitating rail freight movement, shift truck traffic to rail
- Reopen the Staten Island freight line
- Free truck zones
- Limit trucks to certain times of day
- Conduct a study of loading dock management
- Restricted delivery zone in Midtown during rush hour
- Incentives for deliveries during non-business hours
- Create more loading zones and off-street loading docks
- Eliminate tolls for commercial motor vehicles between 9 pm and 6 am
- Two-way tolls for trucks on all crossings out of New York City
- Organize and coordinate truck deliveries
- European-style Freight Villages
- Truck ferries – decongest bridges and tunnels
- Truck Only Lanes
- Rail Floats
- Utilize barges or small ships to transport freight between Florida and Maine
- Trucks charged on a sliding-scale tied to weight / no. of axles (like Port Authority & MTA tolls)
- Ticketing immunity for delivery vehicles between 10PM and 10AM every weekday

**Parking**

- Increase cost of parking in Central Business District
- Value pricing for curbside parking in the Central Business District
- Reform the issuance, use and enforcement of parking placards
- Additional parking at commuter rail stations
- Fee-based residential parking permits
- Develop additional, and maintain/replace existing, park and ride facilities outside the Manhattan Central Business District
- Additional Muni-Meters
- Use parking fines for transportation-related expenses
- Increase garage tax
- Create multi-level parking garages
- Reduce alternate side of the street parking regulations
- Consider using existing sites (such as, Belmont Park and Aqueduct Raceway) as commuter park and ride facilities
- Zoning restrictions to discourage new commuter parking garages
- Parking pricing scheme
- More off-street bus parking for tourist and charter buses in Lower Manhattan

**Exemptions / No Exemptions**

- Exempt hybrid, low-emission and clean-fueled vehicles
• Exemptions for medical hardship / hospital visits
• Exempt Senior Citizens
• Exempt commercial motor vehicles
• Exempt charter buses
• Exempt commuter buses
• Exemption for residents of the zone
• Exempt Manhattan residents
• Exempt disabled population
• Exempt emergency vehicles
• Subsidies and exemptions for low-income residents and non-profit agency vehicles
• No exemptions for taxis, surcharge on taxi fares

Other

• Regional approach to congestion, transportation, and projects
• Consider spending funds in places it could make a difference in getting commuters out of their cars
• Change northern boundary (e.g., 60th Street)
• Eliminate intra-zonal charge
• Variable pricing based on time of day
• Extend congestion zone to other neighborhoods
• Conduct an Environmental Impact Statement
• 50% year-end rebate of charges for families earning $46,000 or less
• An oversight board representing the Mayor, Governor, Assembly Speaker, Senate Majority Leader, City Council or Borough Presidents, to evaluate the pilot and decide on extension
• Create a multi-state planning agency
• $5 fee for City residents, $10 fee for non-residents, with credit for any tolls
• Address congestion and solutions on a city-wide basis
• Perform a comprehensive congestion study for all five boroughs
• Implement a pollution credit system
• Implement “Green Zones”
• Radio Frequency Transmitter technology to identify unlicensed drivers and uninsured / unregistered vehicles
• Midtown Development Plan
• Replace all City/State vehicles, buses, and taxis with hybrid or low-emission vehicles
• Reduce the number of cameras proposed
• Encourage use of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles
• Prepare an Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) in lieu of an EIS
• Examine benefits/costs of combining cordon road pricing with reduced/free transit fares
• Mandate cleaner trucks and institute tougher emission standards
• Guarantee that the congestion charge will not rise beyond $8/$21 in the near future
• Discount for smaller cars
• Increase number of pedi-cabs in Manhattan
• No free thruways
• Raise cab fares and fee charged to cabs
• Changes to the toll rebate policy
• Better air quality monitoring
• Monitoring and benchmarks