

# CAMPAIGN FOR NEW YORK'S FUTURE

## Congestion Pricing

**“How much is it worth  
to have our children  
breathe? Is it worth at  
least \$8 a day?”**

—Elizabeth Yeampeirre,  
United Puerto Rican  
Organization of Sunset Park

### **Change in traffic within London's charging zone after congestion pricing:**

Automobiles: -34%  
Heavy trucks: -7%  
Vans: -5%  
Buses: +22%  
Taxis: +22%  
Bicycles: +28%

(Source: Transport for London, 2006)

Mayor Bloomberg has proposed that New York City adopt a three-year pilot project for "congestion pricing." Drivers would pay a charge to come into Manhattan's Central Business District during weekday rush hours. The mayor says these charges will reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and public health and help pay for transit repairs. This fact sheet is prepared by the Campaign for New York's Future – a coalition of civic, business, environmental, labor, community and public health organizations – to answer some common questions about congestion pricing.

### **What is Congestion Pricing?**

Congestion Pricing is the practice of charging motorists more to use a roadway, bridge or tunnel during periods of the heaviest use, thereby easing air pollution and traffic and encouraging commuters to walk, bike or take mass transit as an alternative. The principle was developed by William Vickrey, a Nobel Prize winning economist and New Yorker. Congestion Pricing is the most powerful policy tool at the hands of City and State officials to reduce unnecessary driving, promote environmentally sound transportation and finance public transportation improvements while at the same time dramatically improving public health.

### **How would congestion pricing work?**

The system currently proposed by Mayor Bloomberg as part of his sustainability plan is similar to that of London. Cars driving to the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD) will be charged \$8 between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Travel along perimeter routes such as the FDR and West Side Highway would be exempt from the charge, as would taxis, buses and emergency and handicap-licensed vehicles. Trucks would be charged \$21. E-Z Pass technology will allow for barrier-free toll collection. Drivers paying bridge and tunnel tolls to enter the zone will be credited the amount of their round-trip tolls that day, up to \$8. Vehicles without E-Z Pass will be recorded by cameras and will be allowed to pay the fee through the phone, Internet or participating retailers within 48 hours.

### **Why do we need Congestion Pricing?**

New York City is booming. In the next 25 years, experts agree an additional one million new residents will walk our streets, ride our subways and buses and drive on our roads. Unfortunately, our road network is at capacity and funding for transit expansion is very limited. Congestion pricing will decrease commute times by reducing the number of vehicles on the road, improve public health by cutting harmful vehicle emissions and generate the revenue necessary to fund critical public transit improvements. Road pricing strategies work. Cities around the world from London to Singapore have reduced overall traffic volumes by as much as 26% while not reducing the number of people coming downtown and at the same time raising critical funds to bolster public transportation.

### **Childhood Asthma Hospitalizations per 1000**

National Average: 3.1  
Bronx: 10.5  
Brooklyn: 6.1  
Manhattan: 6.2  
Queens: 4.7  
Staten Island: 2.7

Source: Center for Disease Control; NYS Dept. of Health, 2004

**“Congestion pricing, aided by E-Zpass technology, is the wave of the future.”**

—Daily News Editorial,  
April 23, 2007

### **How is health affected by traffic?**

Compelling new science shows that living and working near heavy traffic can dramatically increase the health risk associated with air pollution. Risks of asthma attacks, cancer, heart disease and lung impairment all worsen with proximity to heavy traffic. Health studies show that living within 500 to 1500 feet of major roads can aggravate asthma, increase hospitalizations and affect lung development. Over two million people in New York City live within 500 feet of major roadways. These pollution "hot spots" are putting New Yorker's health at risk. Currently, vehicular emissions contribute to more than 86% of the total cancer risk from hazardous air pollutants in New York City.

### **What are the benefits of Congestion Pricing?**

The benefits of congestion pricing across all five boroughs are significant:

#### *Improved Air Quality and Reduced CO2 Emissions*

After Los Angeles, New York City has the worst air quality of any US city, and asthma hospitalizes thousands of children here every year. To compound matters, background pollutants are found in greater concentrations along heavily-trafficked corridors, particularly in Harlem and the South Bronx. Congestion Pricing will decrease carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds and overall emissions dramatically within the charge zone, and by a significant amount citywide.

#### *Funding Needed Transit Improvements in All Five Boroughs*

New York City has not expanded its transit system significantly for over 50 years. The fees generated from the congestion charge will enable a broad range of improvements in mass transit, such as subway expansion, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to East Queens and South Brooklyn, fast ferry service from the Rockaways and across the East River, as well as safer bicycling/walking infrastructure. Many of these improvements would be cost prohibitive without the revenue generated from a congestion charge. Current estimates, based on an \$8 charge for entering Manhattan south of 86th Street, place annual revenue from the charge at roughly \$400 million.

#### *Reduced Traffic and Congestion*

When a congestion charge is implemented, a small but significant number of motorists alter when they commute to avoid the charge, or adopt a more efficient means of transportation such as walking, bicycling or mass transit. This relatively small decrease in traffic leads to an enormous reduction in delays and congestion. Mayor Bloomberg's proposal anticipates a 6.5% reduction in the number of vehicles entering Manhattan south of 86th Street during peak hours, resulting in a

13% reduction in congestion. That's the difference between a busy autumn rush hour and mid-summer when commuters are on vacation.

### ***Faster Bus Service***

The City's bus system is mired in traffic. Many buses, especially on clogged arteries like Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, travel at a snail's pace. Reduced congestion means more reliable, faster bus service across NYC. In addition, taking cars off the street creates room for innovative projects like Bus Rapid Transit. With physically-separated lanes, these buses will carry huge volumes of passengers without traffic delays. The current plan calls for dedicated bus lanes across all East River bridges, dramatically speeding up interborough bus service.

### ***Less Thru-Traffic on Neighborhood Streets***

Manhattan-bound traffic flows through the outer boroughs and Upper Manhattan, flooding them with oppressive commuter thru-traffic each and every day. That traffic pollutes neighborhood air and clogs neighborhood streets, eroding our quality of life. Neighborhoods just outside the CBD will see an enormous reduction in thru-traffic if a congestion charge is implemented. A 2006 Partnership for New York City study foreseeing traffic reduction similar to London estimated traffic reductions in Downtown Brooklyn (-29%), Williamsburg/Greenpoint (-24%), Long Island City (-27%), Harlem (-14%), the South Bronx (-5%) and Flushing (-3%).

### ***Faster Commutes for Those Who Must Drive***

Reduced congestion will benefit those who continue to drive, in the form of faster, more predictable commutes. Essential trips, particularly emergency vehicles, delivery vehicles and small business owners, will become less susceptible to traffic-related delays. A driver saving 12 minutes per day on their driving commute (six minutes each way) will save more than 48 hours per year (more than one week's work) in driving time.

### **Who supports congestion pricing?**

A growing chorus of newspaper editorial boards as well as a coalition of civic, business, environmental, labor, community and public health organizations support congestion pricing. Supporters included the New York City Central Labor Council, AARP, New York Immigration Coalition, SEIU 32BJ, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, and the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign. A full list of growing supporters can be found at [www.CampaignforNewYork.org](http://www.CampaignforNewYork.org).

**For more information, contact the Campaign for New York's Future at [www.CampaignforNewYork.org](http://www.CampaignforNewYork.org).**

**"...this is a bold and visionary plan that will benefit New York's working families for generations."**

—Ed Ott  
New York City  
Central Labor Council

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# Congestion Pricing

## MYTHS & FACTS

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*There is a lot of misinformation about the impact of Congestion Pricing on NYC. Here are some of the most common misconceptions, and the real facts.*

**Myth: People outer boroughs rely on the cars to commute to Manhattan.**

**Fact:** Only 5% of commuters in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx commute to the Manhattan CBD by private car. Of that number, 80% have time-competitive mass transit available. Only 51% of household in the outer boroughs even own cars.

**Myth: Congestion Pricing is a tax on the working class.**

**Fact:** Among commuters who live beyond walking distance to a subway station, workers earning less than \$25,000 are TWICE as likely to take the subway as drive, and THREE TIMES as likely to take bus, subway or commuter rail than drive. Among commuters who earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year, transit remains the preferred option to driving, by a 3-1 margin. Only among commuters earning more than \$50,000 a year is driving more popular than the subway, though subway, bus and commuter rail use is greater than automobile use.

**Myth: Congestion pricing will hurt small business owners who need their trucks.**

**Fact:** Businesses that need to drive in Manhattan regularly will have to pay the charge as a cost of doing business, but each vehicle will only be charged once a day. Moreover, reduced traffic congestion will significantly increase the amount of business they can do -- so the productivity will make up for the charge. A plumber might be able to schedule an additional job each day as a result; a florist might need fewer trucks to make the same number of deliveries.

**Myth: Congestion Pricing will result in traffic-clogged toll plazas.**

**Fact:** The technology currently used in cities like London relies on cameras that scan license plate numbers without the need for toll plazas, and without the need for cars to slow down. The charge will then be assessed from a driver's EZ Pass account, or can be paid electronically, by mail, or at designated retailers.

**Myth: Congestion Pricing will hurt the City's economy.**

**Fact:** London's economy has suffered no ill economic effects from its Congestion Charge. In total, only 2% of people who previously drove were deterred from entering the central London. Because New York's proposed congestion charge is lower than that of London (\$8 versus \$13), so the results will be even lower. Furthermore, despite increasing costs in hotel rooms and other expenses in recent years, the number of tourists visiting New York has continued to grow.



*The Campaign for New York's Future is a coalition of civic, business, environmental, labor, community and public health organizations that support the goals and strategic direction of PlaNYC. Our goal is to make every neighborhood in NYC a great place to live and work, as well as make a significant contribution to fighting climate change. The coalition aims to encourage public debate – as well as fair and effective action – now and in the years to come. We recognize the need to both seize the opportunity for immediate action and to insure that this long-term plan evolves with continued dialogue and changing conditions.*

For more information contact: [www.CampaignForNewYork.org](http://www.CampaignForNewYork.org).