

WEST SIDE

neighborhood alliance

February 14, 2008

Speaker Sheldon Silver
New York State Assembly
250 Broadway, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Majority Leader Joseph Bruno
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building Room 909
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Speaker Silver and Majority Leader Bruno:

We write to express **our strong support for moving forward with the institution of a congestion pricing plan** for the lower half of Manhattan. We were pleased with the changes to the plan recommended by the Congestion Traffic Mitigation Commission, and **we believe that further changes would make the plan both more equitable and more effective.**

The West Side Neighborhood Alliance is a grass-roots community organization with more than 500 members that advocates for affordable housing, community-friendly development and responsible planning for a diverse West Side. Many of us suffer on a regular basis from the effects of the extreme traffic congestion we face in our neighborhoods, and we strongly support measures such a congestion pricing which will shift commuters from private cars to mass transit, and provide a revenue stream to increase mass transit options and efficiency.



We believe that the Congestion Pricing Plan as recommended by the Congestion Traffic Mitigation Commission will take important steps in that direction, and offers improvements over the original congestion pricing proposal. However, there are some important gaps in this plan as well, which we urge you to consider addressing.

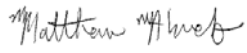
Most pressing is the credit afforded for tolls for Hudson River crossings towards the congestion pricing fee. In essence, this means that the currently proposed congestion pricing program will have little or no effect on traffic entering Manhattan from New Jersey, because they will pay no additional fee beyond the current bridge or tunnel toll. Aside from minimizing the impact of congestion pricing – both in terms of reducing traffic congestion and generating new income to go towards mass transit – such a system unfairly benefits commuters from New Jersey, Rockland County, and points west who use the trans-Hudson bridges and tunnels to enter Manhattan, while disproportionately burdening drivers from the five boroughs.

We are particularly conscious of the extreme congestion which forms around the Lincoln Tunnel on a regular basis, spilling back well into our neighborhoods and midtown Manhattan, and the harmful effect this has upon our health and safety, as well as the efficient movement of traffic. To essentially exempt this traffic from the congestion pricing plan would be a wasted opportunity and would fail to address the stated objectives of a congestion pricing plan. We thus strongly urge that you work to eliminate this exemption from the plan as it moves forward.

As residents of Manhattan near the Midtown business district, we have as much of a stake as anyone in seeing congestion pricing implemented as soon as possible. We applaud you for your efforts to move this plan forward, and pledge to continue to work toward its implementation. But we also believe that such a plan should be equitable and effective, and that changes to the current exemptions offered for Hudson River crossings must be eliminated in order to achieve this.

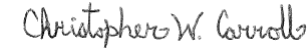
On behalf of our 500 members,

The West Side Neighborhood Alliance Steering Committee:


Mathew Abuelo


Andrew Berman


Anita Black

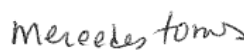

Christopher Carroll


Tom Cayler


Pete Diaz


Dahlia Duperroir


Elaine Marlovitch


Mercedes Torres


Vivian Riffelmacher

cc: Hon. Eliot Spitzer, Governor of New York State
Hon. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York City
Hon. Thomas K. Duane, New York State Senate
Hon. Richard N. Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Christine C. Quinn, Speaker, New York City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, New York City Council