Reaction to Ravitch’s M.T.A. Report

By SEWELL CHAN

December 4, 2008, 3:01 pm

Updated, 5:41 p.m. | Even before Richard Ravitch presented his rescue plan on Thursday for saving the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the responses — first, from environmental, transportation and labor advocates, and then from elected officials — began to pour in. Most expressed support for, or at least urged careful consideration of, the Ravitch plan, but some politicians raised concerns about the report’s call for tolls on the city-owned East River and Harlem River bridges. Selections from their statements in response follow.

Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters:

Mass transit is the No. 1 sustainability issue facing the New York metropolitan region, but there is a chasm between the needs of our mass transit system and its current funding. Our economy and environment will quickly deteriorate without a robust, properly funded transit system. The Ravitch Commission recognizes the gravity of this situation, and we hope our partners in government will as well.

Gene Russianoff, lawyer for the Straphangers Campaign of the New York Public Interest Research Group:

The Straphangers Campaign supports the basic recommendations of the Ravitch M.T.A. Financing Commission, appointed in June by Governor David Paterson.

We share the view of the governor and commission that the state must act very soon to ensure New York’s riders have safe, decent and affordable public transportation.

The State Legislature has an important role to play now, as has been the case with transit in the past. Without their input and approval, there is no deal. We urge thoughtful and timely action. A lengthy delay will hurt the downstate economy and millions of transit riders, who now face the possibility of whopping fare hike and horrendous service cuts in the next few months.

The report continues a 30-year tradition of asking those who benefit from metropolitan transit to contribute to its maintenance. This includes transit riders, drivers, and businesses. New York City is unthinkable without an unparalleled transit network that moves more than nine million workers, customers, tourists and students each workday.

The recommendations address all of the M.T.A.’s financial needs. This includes holding fares affordable, maintaining...
attractive service levels, and fully funding the M.T.A.’s vital rebuilding program. Since 1982, the M.T.A.’s five-year capital programs have vastly improved the quality of the ride, from buying thousands of new subway and rail cars and buses; rehabilitating hundreds of stations; and replacing scores of miles of track and signals.

Back in the 1970s, poorly maintained subways, buses and commuter lines were both a cause and a symbol of New York’s sluggish economy and tough conditions. In 2008, this network is an engine that can keep New York livable and help get us out of recession. That requires all those who gain from our transit system to help to keep it moving forward.

The campaign has concerns about some of the recommendations.

A proposed regional bus authority will need to come with safeguards to prevent harmful cuts made in the name of eliminating “duplicative” service. Previous proposals in Albany have contained moratoriums on cuts. Labor unions representing transit workers have understandable worries about how their members would fare under a regional bus authority.

We also question the proposal for regular biennial fare increases. The Straphangers Campaign is concerned that an automatic funding source will discourage efficiencies, promote waste and be unnecessary given future possible finances of the M.T.A.

William K. Guild, chairman of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the M.T.A.:

Riders already bear an exceptionally large proportion of the cost of operating the M.T.A. system through their fares, compared with riders of other large transit systems nationally, and they should not be forced to shoulder an ever larger share of this burden. As riders’ fares do not cover even the cost of operating the system, the cost of capital improvements must be shared among the other beneficiaries of the system. We urge our elected officials to promptly consider the Ravitch Commission recommendations and to enact adequate means of funding the M.T.A.’s operating and capital needs.

The M.T.A. itself:

The M.T.A. is pleased that the commission appointed by Governor Paterson and led by Richard Ravitch has identified a comprehensive plan for putting the M.T.A. back on sound financial footing. We thank Governor Paterson, Mayor Bloomberg and all of the commission members for their support of increased funding for the critical operating and capital needs of the transit system that powers the state’s economy.

Roger Toussaint, president of Local 100 of the Transport Workers Union, which represents employees at New York City Transit, the transportation authority’s largest division:

While we have not yet seen the Ravitch report, some of its reported elements are worthy of consideration.

On the other hand, we understand that it also contains recommendations regarding the establishment of a regional bus company. Several years ago, the M.T.A. attempted without success to gain regional bus legislation through the New York State Legislature and through labor negotiations.
Since then there have been no negotiations. Nor have we been consulted with or informed of this element of the report before today.

Such a major step cannot be taken without appropriate scrutiny and without negotiations with the unions concerned. T.W.U. will strongly and completely oppose any attempt to accomplish this through the back door.

City Councilman Bill de Blasio, a Brooklyn Democrat:

I commend the Ravitch Commission for preserving services and trying to minimize fare increases. The commission has clearly recognized that riders in this city already fund a disproportionate amount of the transit system, and that the M.T.A.’s proposed service cuts would prove dire for millions of working New Yorkers.

However, I am deeply concerned that East River tolls are still on the table. It is just bad public policy to ask people who live and work in the outer boroughs to fill our budget gaps, regardless of their financial ability to do so. I strongly urge the commission, Governor Paterson, and Mayor Bloomberg to consider other interesting proposals, such as a progressive commuter tax or Comptroller Thompson’s car registration proposal, which would raise adequate revenue without unduly burdening New York’s outer boroughs.

Councilman John C. Liu, a Queens Democrat and chairman of the City Council’s Transportation Committee:

The fiscal situation is no doubt dire at the M.T.A. and with city and state governments. The Ravitch Commission has succeeded in blunting the harm to our mass transit system and its riders. The proposed payroll tax is a bitter pill but among the lesser of necessary evils in that the burden is spread widely and as sparingly as possible.

In contrast, tolling the East River Bridges imposes too large a burden on a relatively small part of the populace who have fewer choices in the first place. These tolls are also highly inefficient as, according to published reports, $1 billion in tolls would need to be collected to achieve net revenue of $600 million. These tolls are also highly divisive and carry too much emotional baggage.

Rather than tolling, the proposed payroll tax should be set at 0.46 percent instead of 0.33 percent to achieve the same target revenue.

Councilman Simcha Felder, Democrat of Brooklyn:

Many low and middle income residents in the outer boroughs live in areas that are underserved by public transit. To have them disproportionately carry the burden of rescuing the M.T.A. is unfair. How can you tax people to enter Manhattan when you don’t provide them reasonable alternatives? We need to find a way to distribute the responsibility of bridging the M.T.A. budget gaps fairly and evenly.

City Comptroller William C. Thompson Jr.:

I first want to applaud the commission, and particularly Chairman Richard Ravitch, a man who has long served our city and state with courage and distinction. I support the commission’s efforts, especially with regards to staving off a large fare increase in the midst of a recession, and am eager to work to explore a number of options.

The proposals for major improvements in bus service and
reforms at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority are very welcome. However, I continue to have serious concerns about instituting tolls on the Harlem and East River bridges.

It is my hope that my recent proposal be considered as a substantive alternative to generate comparable revenue while meeting environmental concerns. Notably, my plan would not involve the major costs of administering tolls.

I believe the institution of an additional weight-based surcharge of $100 for vehicles weighing 2,300 pounds or less — plus 9 cents for every pound of curb weight over that amount — would be a fairer and more regionally equitable way to spread the fiscal burden.

My proposal would generate approximately $1 billion from the entire Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District, which includes the 12 New York counties covered by the M.T.A. As I have indicated, most urgently, this revenue would help close the current M.T.A. budget gap and help fund the agency’s 2010-2014 capital program.

State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli:

The Ravitch Commission report offers a number of important recommendations on financing the M.T.A.’s operating and capital budgets and improving management and transparency.

“These recommendations will also enable the M.T.A. to decrease the proposed fare increases and scrap planned service cuts. That’s good news for straphangers and for the region’s economy which is so dependent on mass transit.

The M.T.A. is our region’s lifeline and the governor, mayor, M.T.A. board and the Legislature need to give careful consideration to these thoughtful recommendations.

Representative Anthony D. Weiner, Democrat of Brooklyn and Queens:

The city’s transit system faces a series of looming economic challenges. This report is the start of an important conversation about solutions to solve those challenges — a conversation I want to be a part of. But we need a new and different approach to solve the economic problems that plague city transit.

We should cut costs first, and raise taxes only as a last resort. Sadly, the report makes raising taxes the first option. The leaders at the M.T.A. need to demonstrate their willingness to cut the fat from their own salaries and benefit packages before forcing middle class New Yorkers to shoulder a greater burden.

Second, we need new and innovative ideas, not tired, old proposals. Like a ghost in a Shakespearean play, the idea of taxing commuters in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island for using the East River Bridges or raising fares appears again and again. The report fails to propose innovative ideas to reduce congestion in the city and raise new revenue.

Third, we need New York City — and not Albany and unelected boards and agencies — in control of our transportation system. The report misses a prime opportunity to implement widespread reform to our dysfunctional system. We should use this crisis as an opportunity to question why Albany and unelected boards and agencies continue to control the destiny of working...
New Yorkers.

Theodore W. Kheel, a longtime labor lawyer who has put forward an alternative plan for congestion pricing along with free mass transit:

I commend the governor and his appointed commission for their efforts to improve our transit system, but the proposed plan misses a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make meaningful, long-term change in our regional transportation system. Taxes and fare hikes, whether now or in the future, are 100% avoidable.

Implementing a geographically balanced and time-of-day-varied toll to drive into Manhattan and using those proceeds to fund free transit will bring far-reaching economic and social benefits to working New Yorkers while eliminating the specter of fare hikes once and for all.

My team and I have been working closely with leaders in government, business, labor and advocacy to devise a plan that brings balance to our regional transportation system by improving transit and reducing traffic congestion. We will be releasing the details of our plan in the days to come.

Corey B. Bearak, lawyer for Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free:

Let the conversation begin and clearly recommendations by the Commission on MTA Financing require much discussion. We find it extremely disappointing that the commission’s proposals essentially let Albany and City Hall off the hook. Our coalition plan [pdf] makes both the State and the City step up to the plate. Significantly, it identifies specific revenues that empowers the city and the state to devote funds to that core responsibility. In addition, we propose measures that raise significant funds to support mass transit, both operating and core capital program needs.

Today’s economic climate needs no initiatives that would choke our local economy. Imposing tolls where New Yorkers cross for free risks serious economic results. MTA, Port Authority and NYMTC data show the deleterious impact that higher tolls on tolled crossings imposes.

The fairness argument raised during the misguided attempts to impose the congestion tax still applies to any imposition of a toll tax. Bottom line, tolls choke the economy and the city and state must no longer avoid their duty to pay up for transit. These remain key weaknesses of the commission proposal.

Kathryn S. Wylde, president and chief executive of the Partnership for New York City:

No investment is more important than maintaining and upgrading our transit system. The partnership applauds Dick Ravitch and the Commission on M.T.A. Financing for coming up with a fair and balanced approach for putting transit funding on solid ground.

Richard T. Anderson, president of the New York Building Congress:

The Ravitch Commission deserves great praise for acknowledging the depth of the M.T.A.’s funding needs and recognizing the many beneficiaries of a fully functioning, interconnected transportation network. The commission has devised a thoughtful, inclusive approach that would ensure that businesses, residents and commuters, as well as subway riders and car drivers, pay their fair share for keeping our subways and roadways moving throughout the
region. The Building Congress urges elected officials in Albany and City Hall to do what’s best for the region’s future by considering these proposals on their merits and acting promptly.

Councilman Vincent J. Gentile, Democrat of Brooklyn:

Before they think about any tolls on those bridges, the M.T.A. needs to stop subsidizing the Metro-North and Long Island Railroads with New York City Transit and M.T.A. city bridges revenue. I want to know that money coming from local commuters is being used to improve local transportation, not to prop up railroads to the suburbs.

“It makes no sense to use the revenue associated with one system to pay for another that services a completely different group of people, particularly when the M.T.A. is proposing serious fare increases and service cuts in local subway and bus services.

“Railroad subsidies generated by local fares and tolls are nothing more than an unofficial commuter tax, dead weight on the shoulders of New York City Transit riders.

Peter Steinberg
http://www.FlashlightWorthyBooks.com
Recommending books so good, they’ll keep you up past your bedtime. ;)

I applaud the commission for their hard work but have a few issues of basic fairness, but have a concern with the plan.

Why should I have to pay $5 or $8 in a toll to drive 3 miles from Downtown Tribeca to Tribeca when someone in Tribeca can drive 10 miles up to Inwood for free?

I understand the river is somewhat of a demarcation line but these tolls will split our city even further into a wealthy zone (Manhattan) and a struggling middle class zone (everywhere else).

Instead of adding these tolls, I encourage the commission to come up with a way to REMOVE the tolls on the other bridges and instead charge ALL new yorkers equally for the use of a car within a certain bands of congestion zone.

That would be the ultimate in fair.
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<td>Peter Steinberg</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>3:32 pm</td>
<td>So, we’re selling the Brooklyn Bridge after all…or just giving it away to the state? For what? A series of automatic fare hikes in two years without public hearings? As a New York City resident and taxpayer, that bridge (along with the others under DOT control) belongs to the people of this city – and I’m exquisitely angry that our leaders feel they’re doing a good job of serving us by giving away our property…just so that tolls can be slapped on them anyway! Powerbrokers? Or just pawnbrokers?</td>
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<td>David L. NYC</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>4:11 pm</td>
<td>How can anyone applaud this? I am a New Yorker and a tax payer and I can barely afford to feed myself and pay my rent in these troubled times. I don’t need the local government passing their shortcomings onto me. Maybe it’s time the government cuts spending like the rest of us have to do in these difficult times. I bet cutting out just one of the many extravagant yearly dinner parties up in Albany would pay for the MTA deficit three times over. These politicians should be ashamed of themselves for passing their bills onto the tax payers during a recession.</td>
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<td>MT Jones</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>4:22 pm</td>
<td>How about imposing a rich tax on the population of Manhattan’s wealthy neighborhoods, instead of making middle class and poor people from the four other boroughs pay extra? It’s the same old class war again that’s being proposed by the commission. I wanna see the wealthy come up with more! I’m so sick of the ongoing assault of the outer boroughs and its people.</td>
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<td>Darius</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>4:26 pm</td>
<td>MT Jones, You don’t need the government passing on their shortcomings to you? I don’t understand people like you who think that the government is some separate third party. The government is you and everyone else. Instead of complaining after the fact in blogs why didn’t you get yourself involved. If the government is falling short then it’s your responsibility to stand up and do something about it. The sooner people realize this the sooner government will work better. Stop passing the buck and maybe as a results you will save one.</td>
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<td>Barry</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>4:28 pm</td>
<td>I guess in the New York of the twenty-first century you can drive around Manhattan in your Jaguar as long as you live in the Upper East Side or so, if you’re from the Bronx or from Queens you have to pay a toll for doing the same. Sounds like two New Yorks.. One for the rich, and one for the riffraff…</td>
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<td>Simon</td>
<td>December 4, 2008</td>
<td>4:28 pm</td>
<td>If East River tolls are established, it is the perfect time to rationalize the MTA toll structure: Reduce tolls on the Throgs Neck and Whitestone</td>
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bridges to divert traffic between Long Island and New Jersey from using the Midtown/Lincoln tunnels.

Restructure the Verazano tolls for eastbound collection, conforming to the PANYNJ crossings. The original rationale, speedy east bound traffic, is now obsolete with EZ Pass. Trucks, with the highest potential toll, now travel through Manhattan to avoid the Verazano westbound toll. Perhaps include this crossing in the above reduced toll strategy.

— DRuby

8. December 4, 2008 4:40 pm
Another payroll tax? How much tax will they burden us with? How can a tax be an “economic stimulus”?

No doubt the MTA is in trouble – let it reorganize itself like every other company is doing now. Consolidate back office operations, merge with the Port Authority, a union give-back of some very expensive benefits.

What Bloomberg and Paterson don’t seem to understand is that Wall Street will NEVER be back in its old form, we will NEVER be collecting the real estate taxes we used to collect. More taxes are unsustainable. The city and state need to rein in spending instead, lest they drive people and companies away.

— Steve

9. December 4, 2008 4:41 pm
A comprehensive, if perhaps flawed plan. I challenge the critics to come up with a better, workable plan. Cutting so-called bloated salaries (you salary is bloated, mine is reward for a tough job) is just as bogus in this instance as McCain’s earmarks nonsense was during the past election.

I go into Manhattan two or three times a month and I find using the LIRR or bus and subway almost as fast, a lot less stressful and a heck of a lot cheaper than parking in a garage.

— DonO

10. December 4, 2008 4:47 pm
I’m a resident of Staten Island who applauds the Ravitch recommendations. While I’m concerned about an automatic increase without any sort of public review process, that concern is outweighed by the disincentive to driving that East River bridge tolls represent. While diehard drivers would gripe, then pay; many others would choose alternatives, reducing one of the principal causes of our skyrocketing asthma rates, among other public health concerns.

— bencharif

11. December 4, 2008 4:53 pm
It’s about time that those of us who do not own cars and are dependent on public transportation got a break. Who can dispute the fact that New York would be better off without motor vehicles? Just take a walk down any block in central Manhattan and check the inordinate number of out of town cars, and then add those who have decided that a car is necessary to their comfort to see how much better off we would be without all those cars.

The answer is to improve public transportation, not to cater to car owners.

— Earl Jagust

12. December 4, 2008 5:04 pm
I agree with most of the comments — this is about levying yet another tax on the already battered, decimated middle class, and about making Manhattan
an island for the rich.

It's the kind of regressive tax that affects middle and working people most, and the wealthiest the least, and it should be fiercely opposed. Don't expect to get any real value from the tolls, either. The tolls will just increase the cost of living and doing business here that much more.

New York City has for so long suffered from net federal tax OUTFLOWS. This despite NY C's tremendous contribution to the economy and tax rolls. It is high time that the city and state mobilize to get some of this money back, instead of further bleeding its citizens.

— Gregory

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It's all about closing loopholes. First, all users of mass transit must pay full fare. This includes all city employees including transit workers, policemen and firemen going to and from work.

Eliminate the discount fares for students and senior citizens.

Close all subway token booths that house employees that do not actively contribute to revenue creation, i.e. the vested employees that “help”.

Eliminate underperforming bus and subway routes, thereby.

By starting the discussion with the elimination of the loopholes, one can fully vet the issues objectively.

— kmiller

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Wow I had no idea car-driving outer-borough residents had such an inferiority complex. I lived my whole life in New York City, in three different boroughs, and never owned a car. I always chose a home that was near transit for obvious reasons. I happily pay my fare to the MTA to use the service. And yet on top of that year after year I have to pay taxes to support a half a billion dollars of bridge and tunnel maintenance that I don’t use. Drivers get a free ride in this town and I’m sick of it.

Simon is right, there ARE two New Yorks. One for the drivers and one for the rest of us. It’s time drivers started paying for the infrastructure they use just like mass transit riders. Mass transit has always been the redhead stepchild of the regional transportation network and I’d be glad to see the responsibility of paying for it spread around, because everybody benefits from it. Even those who are not near a subway benefit from the fact that millions of people are taking the subway and not out there driving on the same roads.

— BK

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Without the taxes on the bridges the Ravitch plan falls apart. That is the entire plan, and neighborhood politicians like Mr Liu who seek to benefit their district at everyone else’s cost hurt the city.

Now is not the time to increase taxes on anyone. It is, however, exactly the time to move NYC forward into the 21st century, to embrace mass transit and end our misbegotten infatuation with the automobile.

What low- or middle-income Brooklynites drive cars into Manhattan to work? I live in Prospect Heights and work in Midtown. Although I have a good job at a financial services firm, I can’t even fathom driving in to work (I don’t have money to buy a car, I don’t have money for gas, I don’t have a place to park my car at
manhattan, and I CERTAINLY don’t have a place to park it in manhattan). but would i as an outer borough resident would like is decent, reliable subway service. every morning i wake unsure of whether i’ll get to work in time because of train delays. when i work late or if i’m in manhattan on weekend nights, coming home is a truly abysmal experience of 45-minute waits for the subway.

if councilmen blasio and liu really had their constituents in mind, they’d also try to improve service in the subways and discourage auto use. this falls in line with the larger point that in today’s world the last thing we need is to encourage more oil use or more car emissions. if we were serious about improving quality of life here, we’d have a first-rate transit system (comparing ours to any place in europe or much of asia is an exercise in depression). instead, we have weak-willed, corrupt pols who see any attempt to take away the ridiculous, outdated privileges given to auto owners at the expense of the rest of us as a political third rail.

stop it. implement tolls. implement congestion parking. give us clean, new, efficient trains and for the love of god, let me know how long it’ll be till the next train comes.

— john

5:53 pm
Link

Steve clearly must be under age 35 and has not lived long enough to understand the cycles that affect us. Wall street has died so many times yet it comes back. Hem lines go up and the go down. Long hair is out then in then out again.

— barry

17. December 4, 2008
6:33 pm
Link

I just moved from staten island to bay ridge, bklyn to avoid paying the $5 toll on the verrazano bridge when driving to work. now, before you demonize me for driving via roads and bridges that my payroll taxes already pay for, keep in mind many NYers like myself work evenings and weekends, when subway and bus service is less than timely. my car is not bothering anyone, nor backing up traffic, during my 20-minute drive home at midnight. one the other hand, if i keep my small, gas-sipping car at home, then my commute will be at least one hour inbound and well over an hour on the way home. if the MTA can assure me that trains will run as often at 12:05am as they do at 5:05pm, i’m all for this plan. otherwise, why should I pay $5 (each way?) to drive over a bridge that my tax money ALREADY pays for? do workers in chicago, l.a. or dallas pay to get from one part of their cities to another? no!

— edward

18. December 4, 2008
6:42 pm
Link

I apologize to city room and its readers for posting so frequently on the same subject, but we must make every effort to ensure that the brooklyn bridge remains the sole and exclusive property of the people of New York City.

the brooklyn bridge is one of New York’s true landmarks. please remember that we the people don’t own the empire state building, or rock center, or the statue of liberty – sure, they’re in New York City, and we use them as symbols, but they don’t belong to NYC. indeed, just what landmarks do we own? Central Park, yes. City Hall, yes. And i’m sure there are a few others that i can’t remember right now – but, like them all, the brooklyn bridge is special. since its construction, it
has been a symbol of unity, of strength, of everything that is soaringly good about New York City. The fact that the bridges of New York City belong to NYC is one of the things that’s been used to back NYC bonds – if we give it all away, we diminish the value of everything – including our heritage.

Moreover, the Brooklyn Bridge has received considerable funds from the federal government to ensure that it’s properly maintained – and under New York City ownership, it has been well-cared for. If ownership of the Brooklyn Bridge is transferred to New York State, will future funds go to Albany? And then what guarantee do we have that the bridge will be maintained?

I know that times are hard right now, and we’ve all got a lot on our minds. But the Brooklyn Bridge isn’t for sale and it isn’t for barter – it’s for the people of New York City and may it ever remain so.

— David L. NYC

I still don’t get how a train operator makes $60 K with full benefits, while an average college grad with loans up the wazoo makes way less. Where’s the meritocracy? Has anyone looked at the ridiculous compensation of every white and blue collar job in the MTA?

at #4

That’s called socialism. Redistributing the wealth of the rich among the poor. Basically it works like this: since the rich have to share their money, they’d rather get the hell out or become lazy since there’s no point to work hard anymore.

— UnfairLife

Here’s another idea: Set up a "congestion pricing zone", with the barriers set on 79th and 5th, and 79th and Madison, effectively closing off the one block that Mayor Mike lives on. Every time he departs via SUV driven by NYPD gold shields, $8 will come straight from Bloomy’s pocket.

— C

#19 unfair life, what should T/Os make? You have no idea what the job entails. You would be mistaken if you think there are no college educated T/Os. They give tests every couple of years. You just have to be willing to put up with the conditions to get the benefits, which are often misstated.

— nycpat

I am against imposing tolls and transportation taxes on the East River crossings. We’re expected to pay more than we already do for the same level of congestion, traffic, headaches and difficulties? What about every time you are out late and have to take a taxi back because the subway runs so infrequently? Now, you have to add on another $5 just so you can get home safe? Or you could take the subway and have a 15 minute ride be an hour and a half wait/ride.

And what about traffic? Isn’t it difficult enough to cross the bridges or navigate the BQE without the congestion that will result from toll booths? It’s inconvenient, so may be I’ll take the subway. But then the subways will be more crowded. And what is the MTA doing to improve the subway structures? The 2nd Ave subway won’t help commuters getting from the outer boroughs.
to Manhattan. The subway platforms can’t be extended, so the trains can’t add on more cars. We are stuck at an impasse where ridership will potentially increase while customer service will decline, and frustration on all means of transportation in and out of Manhattan will be frustrating and increasingly difficult and expensive.

Perhaps one of the unintended results of this plan will be the widening of the Manhattan/Outer Boroughs divide that others have mentioned. And there can be no benefit from that. We should be looking for ways to come together to improve the entire system for everyone. I don’t see that with this plan. It’s divisive, expensive, and lacking creativity. Where are the bright minds of the 21st century? Where are the creative solutions? There has to be a better way.

— Anthony

A 14 year old girl died today on a congested streetcorner in Queens. We never deal with the congestion. We act like it is okay that cars roam free over the city. Meanwhile we voted for change on Nov 4th. Where is it? Obama says we are going to reduce our dependence on Oil. How does a free ride over our bridges support that? Obama says we need to take climate change seriously and reduce O2e emissions. How does a free ride over our bridges support that? New York has a responsibility to the nation as the leader of life without a car. Show us how it should be done. Supporting congested streets as they are and not supporting growth in the mass transit system is counter to what NYC is all about. Drivers don’t live in a bubble, the issue has to looked at as a whole, but drivers want to be treated special. No can do.

— bob previdi

I hardly look at the plan as being a rescue, though it probably means the elite from the populists. We drivers are already giving money for transportation through our taxes and tolls that keep on increasing so constantly, so enough giving those such as myself the royal screw job. Honestly, I am against all forms of road pricing, because I find as just being a double charge on paying for bridge, tunnels, and roads that our taxes are already going to right now. Why should I pay more for it when the tolls are already that high? Just to help with transit in which those in charge are hardly giving anything back? For some reason this doesn’t sound like something new. I heard that there were numerous a proposals like the one above was given and failed all of those times. It’s like trying to win by continuing to throw the same things. There are ways to do this without giving anyone the royal screw job, but that doesn’t seem to cut it for the MTA executives, because they are just looking for more ways to rip us off. Maybe I will reconsider if the money collected from the fares will go to repairing roads that are long overdue if they want the money from the tolls to go to transit.

— Tal Barzilai

The MTA, like all government agencies, is willing to try anything except what the rest of us — individuals and businesses — have to do to make ends meet: Spend less money.

You want a real, lasting solution to the perpetual MTA funding crises? Abolish the MTA and sell the system to
private companies. That's how the system was built, and that's how it ran for decades until the city forced the private operators into bankruptcy.

LI.

— Liberty Lover

Comments are no longer being accepted.