



Flexible flight dates? Use our Low Fare Calendar. alaskaair.com Save Now

Our Lowest Fares. Guaranteed.	11	12	13
	\$82	\$89	\$119
	18	19	20
	\$82	\$89	\$129

Ads by Google

Google Custom Search Search

EDITORS ARCHIVES DISTRIBUTION STAFF

SHARE

SUPPORT THE ADVERTISERS THAT SUPPORT DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

Editorial

Better M.T.A. fixes

The subway's bad old days of frequent breakdowns, rare air-conditioning, dirty cars and too much crime remain vivid memories to us and many of you. Albany is finally waking up to the fact that the '70s and '80s are in danger of returning underground.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is facing a \$1.2 billion shortfall for next year and has no capital money. It passed a "doomsday" budget last week with a 23 percent fare hike and severe service cuts Downtown and all over the city. Richard Ravitch, the former M.T.A. chairperson who helped save the system in the '80s, proposes to close the operating and capital budget gaps with East and Harlem River bridge tolls, a small payroll tax and an 8 percent fare hike. He and Lee Sander, the current authority C.E.O., are hoping Albany passes the plan to avoid the most painful cuts.

We have been longtime supporters of bridge tolls, and the Ravitch plan is undoubtedly better than doing nothing, but Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan was significantly better because it spread the costs to more drivers and likely would have cut traffic more. It failed to pass Albany earlier this year for a variety of reasons, but one was that legislators did not have the specifics on how severely their inaction would be felt by their commuting constituents. There is no reason that "doomsday" and a mediocre plan should be the only two options.

State Senator-elect Daniel Squadron of Downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn has come up with good alternative ideas, while pointing out the best parts of the Ravitch plan. In addition to congestion pricing, which would charge drivers to enter Manhattan's busiest sections during the day, Squadron wants market rate fees for on-street parking and higher registration fees for gas guzzlers.

We agree with him that Ravitch's payroll tax is a good idea. Since it is so small, one third of one percent, it should not prompt job cuts. In effect, it would be paid by employees in the city and the nearby suburbs, and in some ways it is better than the commuter tax, which is a political nonstarter anyway. The only danger of the new tax is it'll be tempting for Albany to keep nudging it up whenever there's a budget impasse — in other words, every year.

Another idea worth discussing comes from Ted Kheel, the well-respected retired labor mediator who wants very high traffic pricing fees to pay for lower and free transit fares depending on the time of day. Many dismiss this as fantasy, but Kathryn Wylde, who represents the city's largest corporations, says it is easier to sell than the idea on the table.

Ravitch literally proposes a token toll over the Harlem River bridges — the cost of one MetroCard swipe — and claims this, along with really good bus service, will be enough to prompt drivers to leave their cars at home. That sounds like fantasy.

Ravitch's premise is that mass transit users, workers and drivers should share the burden equally, but under his plan, drivers are not paying for the pollution and congestion they cause. An "equal" burden is anything but equitable, and the wealthiest suburban drivers would pay little.

Albany tried to focus on cutting traffic earlier this year and is now looking for transit money. The only good way to solve both problems is looking at them together.

0 Comments

Your Comment

Join the conversation
* Required Fields

Your Email *

Your Name *

Password *

Confirm Password *

Your Birthday *

01 / 01 / 1981

I agree to the Pluck terms of use and privacy policy. *

By posting a comment, you are establishing an account with the Pluck on Demand network of websites. Your comment may appear across the network.

Post my comment

Done this before?

Email

Password

Post my comment

[forgot password?](#)

Powered by Pluck

Downtown Express is published by Community Media LLC. | 145 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10013 Phone: (212) 229-1890 | Fax: (212) 229-2790 | Advertising: 646-452-2465 © 2009 Community Media, LLC

Written permission of the publisher must be obtained before any of the contents of this newspaper, in whole or in part, can be reproduced.

