Better M.T.A. Fixes

The subway's bad old days of frequent breakdowns, smelly air-conditioning, dirty cars and too much crime seem far removed from us and many of you. Albany is finally waking up to the fact that the '70s and '80s were in danger of returning underground.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is facing a $1.2 billion shortfall for next year and has no capital reserves. It plans a "downsizing" budget that would cut 25 percent of its data and extreme service cuts to Downtown and all over the city. Richard Fristch, the former M.T.A. chairman who helped launch the system in the '70s, proposes to close the operating and capital budget gap with East and Harlem River bridges tolls, a small payroll tax and an 8 percent sales tax. Joe Lhota, the current authority C.O.O., hopes Albany passes the plan to avoid the most painful cuts.

We have been long-time supporters of bridge tolls, and the Rentschler field is probably better than doing nothing, but Maybe Bloomberg's congestion 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 severe their sanctions would be if their commuting commuters. There is no reason that "downsizing" and a medicores plan should be the only two options.

State Senate-elect Daniel Squadron of Downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn has come up with good alternative ideas, while putting out the best of the Rentschler plan. In addition to congestion pricing, which would charge drivers on Manhattan's busiest streets during the day, Squadron wants market rate fees for co-op parking and higher registration fees for gas guzzlers.

We agree with him that Rentschler's proposal has a good idea. Since it is not a small, one-off of our opinion, we should not prompt job cuts. So, if it would be paid by employers in the city and the nearby suburban, and in some ways it is better than the current tax, which is a political nonsense anyway. The only danger of the new plan is of being voting for Albany to keep adding up whatever there's a budget unbalance — in other words, every year.

Another idea worth discussing comes from Ted Kider, the well-regarded retired labor lawyer who runs the high traffic pricing for the city's buses and the city buses and depending on the rate of day. Manhattan has an idea that it would be, but not a perfect one. The city's largest corporations, say it is easier to sell than the idea on the table.

Rentschler literally proposes a tolls tolls over the Harlem River bridges — the cost of our MetroCard usage — and that while, along with really good bus service, will be enough to prompt drivers to leave their cars at home. This sounds like fantasy.

Rentschler's premise is that more transit users, workers and drivers should share the burden equally, but under his plan, drivers are not paying for the pollution and congestion fees. An "equal" burden is something that is not, and the wealthiest suburban drivers would pay little.

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