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Anatole Ashraf
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June 12, 2024

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York
The Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

RE: Congestion Pricing

Dear Governor Hochul:

The Transportation Committee and the Environment and Parks Committee of Queens Community Board 2 disagree with the decision to instruct the MTA to halt congestion pricing.

The CB 2 committees urge Governor Hochul to reverse this decision and instruct the MTA to resume implementing congestion pricing.

The Congestion Pricing Plan was passed by law after the 2017 summer in which transit riders experienced mass delays, overcrowding, and unsafe conditions across the entire system, largely due to a lack of funding for maintenance and revitalization of a century-old subway network. CB2 residents suffered equally on our over-burdened trains and buses.

In the wake of 2017, and with new funding promised by Congestion Pricing, the MTA committed to a number of capital improvement projects in our district:

- Modern Signaling upgrades (CBTC) on the 7 line, which now benefits from consistent four-minute headways.
- CBTC upgrades on the Queens Blvd line (E/F/M/R trains), which will be finished soon.
- CBTC and track upgrades on the G train, now underway.
- ADA upgrades, including elevators, and station revitalization on the 7 line, including Court Square-23rd St., Queensboro Plaza, 33rd St., and 46th St.
- Queens Bus Network redesign.

"Serving the Communities of Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside, and Maspeth"

While these projects have either been completed or are underway, we cannot tell what a delay in Congestion Pricing and the resultant MTA funding shortfall will do to postpone or change these projects. We can be sure that it will put a chill on any future projects, including much-needed ADA upgrades and elevators at all our subway stations, as well as a revitalization of stations that have been evaluated as the most decrepit in the entire system. We may not see upgrades for climate resiliency. We may see a return to a poorly-maintained, over-burdened transit system. Without a reduction in congestion, our buses will remain among the slowest in the country. And our CB2 neighbors who drive will continue to contend with the traffic moving through our district.

Congestion pricing was also set to bring numerous climate benefits to our city. Each year as we continue to burn fossil fuels and encourage car dependency, our summers get hotter and our storms intensify. Queens CB2 is particularly vulnerable to flooding inland and along its waterfront. The climate crisis has clearly arrived, and it is incumbent on our elected leaders to fight to protect New Yorkers from further harm.

Transportation is the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state, so encouraging shift to mass transit and other car alternatives is paramount. Congestion pricing will encourage fewer tri-state area residents from driving, overall reducing emissions from automobiles in the region. Furthermore, upgrades to mass transit will continue to inspire reliance on the MTA as a dependable form of travel and commuting. And reducing congestion will improve the operation of our buses and safety for cyclists, micromobility users, and pedestrians, further encouraging mode shift and emissions reductions.

Confronting climate change will take bold, visionary leadership. It requires a considerable culture shift that will not always be understood by all voters. However, inaction only furthers the crisis and puts our state—and New York City, the economic engine of the state—at risk. Despite the Governor's claims otherwise, there is no Plan B.

The country, and the rest of the world, is looking to us to set the tone on climate action. With this misguided congestion pricing delay, the Governor has chosen inaction. New York City must lead the way.

Governor Hochul, please reverse your decision and empower the MTA to resume the implementation of congestion relief pricing by June 30th, 2024.

Sincerely,


Anatole Ashraf

CB2 Chairperson, Community Board 2



Reilly Owens

Chair, Transportation Committee


Laura Shepard

Chair, Environment, Parks & Recreation Committee

Cc: Honorable Grace Meng, US Congress
Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez, US Congress
Honorable Michael Gianaris, NY State Senate
Honorable Kristen Gonzalez, NY State Senate
Honorable Jessica Ramos, NY State Senate
Honorable Juan Ardila, NYS Assembly
Honorable Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, NYS Assembly
Honorable Zohran Mamdani, NYS Assembly
Honorable Steven Raga, NYS Assembly
Honorable Robert Holden, NYC Council Member
Honorable Shekar Krishnan, NYC Council Member
Honorable Julie Won, NYC Council Member
Honorable Donovan Richards, Queens Borough President