

In Re CBDTP Congestion Pricing Program Environmental Assessment
Public Hearing
August 31, 2022

1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT CONGESTION PRICING PROGRAM

2 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PUBLIC HEARING

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4 VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

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6 DATE: AUGUST 31, 2022

7 TIME: 10:01 A.M.

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In Re CBDTP Congestion Pricing Program Environmental Assessment
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1 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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3 Lou Oliva, Hearing Officer

4 Allison C. de Cerreño, MTA Deputy Chief
5 Operating Officer

6 Nichola Angel, Vice President, Triborough Bridge
7 and Tunnel Authority

8 Richard Wilder, Deputy Chief Engineer of Design,
9 New York State Department of Transportation

10 William Ullom, Deputy Director of Traffic
11 Engineering and Planning

12 Rick Marquis, New York Division Administrator
13 for the Federal Highway Administration

14 Monica Pavlik, Project Manager

15 Leah Flax, Moderator

16 Michael Wojnar, Moderator

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1 MR. OLIVA: Good morning. We
2 will now begin the hearing. Today is
3 Wednesday, August 31, 2022. And the
4 time is 10:01 a.m. My name is Lou
5 Oliva, and I will be today's hearing
6 officer.

7 This hearing is being
8 live-streamed and recorded and will be
9 available publicly on the MTA YouTube
10 channel and the Central Business
11 District Tolling Program project
12 website at mta.info/CBDTP.

13 Stenographers are present and will be
14 creating a written record of today's
15 hearing. By attending this virtual
16 hearing, you consent to be recorded.

17 Today's hearing will begin with
18 opening remarks, followed by a
19 presentation on the Central Business
20 District Tolling Program Environmental
21 Assessment, and then public comments.
22 There are 314 speakers signed up.
23 Speakers will be called in the order
24 they signed up.

25 After we get underway, through

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1 the Q&A function, we will send each
2 speaker present today your place in the
3 speaker list. Please give us a little
4 time as it will take some time to get
5 this message to each speaker in
6 attendance.

7 Throughout the day, we will
8 regularly let everyone know where we
9 are in the list so you can gauge how
10 much longer you may need to wait to
11 speak.

12 If you've joined the Zoom under a
13 name that is different from the one you
14 used when you signed up to speak or if
15 you did not sign up to speak or would
16 like to speak, please identify yourself
17 in the Q&A function.

18 You may also request to speak
19 anonymously. If this is your
20 preference, please indicate this in the
21 Q&A function and we will give you
22 further instructions.

23 Please do not use the Q&A
24 function for comments you would like to
25 submit on Central Business District

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1 Tolling Program. Comments can be
2 submitted by visiting mta.info/CBDTP,
3 calling (646)252-7440, via mail to CBD
4 Tolling Program, 2 Broadway, 23rd
5 Floor, New York, New York 10004, or via
6 email at CBDTP@mtabt.org.

7 You may also submit comments
8 directly to the Federal Highway
9 Administration via email at
10 CBDTP@dot.gov or by mail at FHWA-New
11 York Division, Re: CBDTP, Leo W.
12 O'Brien Federal Building, 11A, Clinton
13 Avenue, Suite 719, Albany, New York
14 12207. Comments submitted by mail,
15 phone, e-mail, online forum or verbally
16 at a hearing will be considered equally
17 and carry the same weight.

18 In addition, and again in
19 recognition of the overwhelming
20 interest, we have added the ability to
21 submit personally-recorded video
22 comments. As with oral comments at the
23 hearing, video comments should be
24 limited to three minutes. Recorded
25 video comments may be submitted via

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1 e-mail to CBDTP@mtabt.org. Such
2 comments shall be considered equally
3 and carry the same weight as all other
4 methods for submitting comments.

5 CART Captioning and American Sign
6 Language interpreters are available at
7 today's hearing. To turn on CART
8 Captioning use the CC button on the
9 bottom of the screen. Sign Language
10 interpreters will appear on screen for
11 all attendees. To hear the translated
12 audio, use the interpretation button on
13 the bottom of the screen.

14 We will now start with opening
15 remarks from Dr. Allison C. de Cerreño,
16 MTA's Deputy Chief Operating Officer.

17 DR C. DE CERRENO: Thank you. And
18 thank you all for joining us today.

19 We are excited to be here as we
20 continue our public outreach on this
21 historic project. I'd like to thank
22 you for taking the time to learn more
23 and share with us your thoughts and
24 comments.

25 This morning, I am representing

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1 the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel
2 Authority and MTA more broadly, and am
3 joined by Nichola Angel, Vice President
4 of Triborough Bridge and Tunnel
5 Authority and other members of the
6 agency, as well as other colleagues
7 from the other project sponsors for
8 this effort. Richard Wilder, Deputy
9 Chief Engineer of Design for the New
10 York State Department of
11 Transportation, and William Ullom,
12 Deputy Director of Traffic Engineering
13 and Planning from New York City
14 Department of Transportation.

15 We also have with us today, Rick
16 Marquis, New York Division
17 Administrator for the Federal Highway
18 Administration, the lead Federal agency
19 for this project. He will be joined by
20 Monica Pavlik, Project Manager.

21 Key personnel from all four of
22 our agencies are also in attendance
23 today, listening to what you have to
24 say; your comments will be recorded,
25 indexed and responded to as part of the

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1 Environmental Assessment process.

2 Last year, we held ten
3 webinar-style public sessions, nine
4 similar sessions focused on
5 Environmental Justice communities, and
6 several meetings each of the
7 Environmental Justice Technical
8 Advisory Group and Environmental
9 Justice Stakeholder Working Group.

10 Since then, we have incorporated
11 comments heard during these sessions
12 into the technical analyses for the
13 Environmental Assessment, or EA.

14 I want to thank you all for your
15 earlier input; I believe you will see
16 firsthand how your comments affected
17 what we explored and how we addressed
18 concerns.

19 On August 10, 2022, we released
20 the Environmental Assessment for public
21 review. If you have not yet had an
22 opportunity to read the entire
23 Environmental Assessment, the Executive
24 Summary, which has been translated into
25 multiple languages, is available on our

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1 website.

2 The rest of the document is also
3 on the website, and you can find a hard
4 copy of the entire Environmental
5 Assessment at numerous locations
6 throughout 28 counties in New York, New
7 Jersey, and Connecticut. A complete
8 list of locations is also available on
9 the Project website.

10 In a few moments, we will begin
11 with a presentation that provides a
12 summary review of the Environmental
13 Assessment findings. It is a bit
14 longer than one might expect, but there
15 is a lot of important information here
16 and we want to ensure that everyone has
17 an opportunity to hear about the areas
18 in which they may be interested.

19 After the presentation, we will
20 listen to those of you who would like
21 to provide oral comments. The formal
22 comment period on the Environmental
23 Assessment continues through September
24 9th. For those who prefer not to speak
25 but still want to submit comments, we

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1 will provide information on other ways
2 to do that again later in the session.

3 Now let's begin our presentation.

4 [Taped presentation begins - Narrated by Dr. C.
5 De Cerreño]

6 PRESENTATION:

7 So what is the Central Business
8 District Tolling Program? In 2019, New
9 York State enacted the MTA Reform and
10 Traffic Mobility Act, which authorized
11 the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel
12 Authority or TBTA to design, develop
13 and implement a vehicular tolling
14 program to reduce traffic congestion in
15 the Manhattan Central Business
16 District.

17 As defined by the act, vehicles
18 entering or remaining in the Manhattan
19 Central Business District on or below
20 60th Street, which is shown in the map
21 in orange, would be tolled. The FDR
22 Drive, West Side Highway, Battery Park
23 Underpass and any surface roadway
24 portion of the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel
25 connecting to West Street. In essence,

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1 the dark red line along the edges of
2 the orange area on the map to the
3 right, would be excluded from the toll.

4 After covering the
5 project-related capital and operating
6 expenses, revenue collected would fund
7 MTA's 2020 to 2024 capital program and
8 successor capital programs.

9 By law, 80 percent of the net
10 revenues would be used for New York
11 City transit capital improvements, ten
12 percent would be used for Long Island
13 Rail Road and ten percent for
14 improvements for Metro-North Railroad.

15 With respect to how the Manhattan
16 CBD Tolling Program would work,
17 locations for infrastructure would
18 include detection points placed at
19 entrances and exits to the Manhattan
20 CBD. On the avenues, these detection
21 points would generally be between 60th
22 and 61st Streets and an algorithm would
23 be used so those who stay on excluded
24 roadways are not tolled.

25 In essence, as someone is coming

1 down the roadway, the detection points
2 would detect their vehicle and
3 determine how long it should be before
4 they are seen at the next location.
5 Assuming they continue to be seen at
6 each location within the allotted time,
7 no toll would be charged.

8 If, however, the vehicle is not
9 seen and then not seen again, at some
10 point the system will determine that
11 they must have entered the Central
12 Business District and a toll would be
13 charged.

14 On the right, you can see an
15 example of what the infrastructure and
16 the tolling system equipment would look
17 like. It's predominantly poles, as you
18 see on the right, and mast arms, as you
19 see on the left. Importantly, the
20 tolling system equipment will be
21 clustered and housed in a single-unit
22 enclosure as shown on the bottom.

23 The enclosures are purposely
24 designed to minimize the amount of
25 equipment on the poles and to reflect

1 light in a way that makes them less
2 visible to someone walking or driving.

3 With respect to how customers
4 would pay, it would be very similar to
5 what people experience today. They
6 would be able to pay with E-ZPass or
7 Tolls by Mail, or an image is taken of
8 the license plate and a bill is mailed
9 to the registered owner of the vehicle.
10 And we will also have the capability
11 for future third-party providers. In
12 essence, these are companies that may
13 use different types of technology that
14 can link into the technology that the
15 system would have.

16 The benefits of the program would
17 include reduced vehicular traffic in
18 and near the Manhattan Central Business
19 District, improved travel times within
20 the Manhattan Central Business
21 District, including for buses and
22 deliveries, and a new source of local
23 recurring capital funding for subways,
24 trains and buses as well as improved
25 regional air quality.

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1 So why is an Environmental
2 Assessment or EA needed for this
3 project? Well, some roadways in the
4 Manhattan Central Business District
5 have received federal funds, so
6 approval for tolling is needed from the
7 Federal Highway Administration.

8 Before a federal agency makes a
9 decision, the National Environmental
10 Policy Act, or NEPA, requires the
11 federal agency to understand and
12 disclose the environmental effects of
13 the action. In this case, the tolling.
14 An EA is performed to ensure federal
15 agencies consider the environmental
16 impacts of their actions in the
17 decision-making process.

18 For a proposed action that is not
19 likely to have significant effects or
20 when the significance of the effect is
21 unknown, the EA aids in determining the
22 significance of the adverse effects.
23 Since the project could have effects on
24 environment justice populations,
25 Federal Highway Administration and the

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1 project sponsors incorporate an
2 enhanced public outreach and
3 coordination with federal and state
4 resource agencies.

5 The project's purpose is to
6 reduce traffic congestion in the
7 Manhattan Central Business District in
8 a manner that would generate revenue
9 for future transportation improvements
10 pursuant to acceptance into Federal
11 Highway Administration's Value Pricing
12 Pilot Program, or VPPP.

13 The need is to reduce vehicle
14 congestion in the Manhattan Central
15 Business District and create a new
16 local recurring funding source for
17 MTA's capital projects. The purpose
18 and need are refined through four
19 objectives; to reduce daily vehicle
20 miles traveled, or VMT, within the
21 Manhattan Central Business District by
22 at least five percent, to reduce the
23 number of vehicles entering the
24 Manhattan Central Business District
25 daily by at least ten percent, to

1 create a funding source for capital
2 improvements and generate sufficient
3 annual net revenue to fund \$15 billion
4 for capital projects for the MTA
5 capital program, and to establish a
6 tolling program consistent with the
7 purposes underlying the New York State
8 legislation entitled the MTA Reform and
9 Traffic Mobility Act.

10 You may be asking why do we need
11 to toll the Manhattan Central Business
12 District. Well, traffic congestion has
13 been a problem in the Manhattan Central
14 Business District for many years and
15 one of the most challenging policy
16 problems for generations.

17 Many efforts have been made and
18 yet, congestion in New York City
19 consistently ranks among the worst in
20 the United States. Indeed, congestion
21 costs 102 hours of lost time, equating
22 to almost \$1,600 per year per driver in
23 delay.

24 Between 2010 and 2019, travel
25 speeds fell 22 percent in Manhattan

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1 Central Business District and local bus
2 speeds have declined 28 percent since
3 2010. The average speed of Select Bus
4 Service, New York City's bus rapid
5 transit service routes in the Manhattan
6 CBD is 19 percent slower than in the
7 outer boroughs.

8 With respect to MTA's subway,
9 rail and bus systems, they need to be
10 repaired and modernized. Funding from
11 the project would support the 2020 to
12 2024 capital program and the successor
13 programs that prioritize investing to
14 improve reliability, committing to
15 environmental sustainability, building
16 an accessible transit system for all
17 New Yorkers easing congestion and
18 creating growth, and improving safety
19 and customer service through
20 technology.

21 I'll now walk you through the
22 findings of the Environment Assessment.
23 There were two project alternatives
24 that are evaluated in the Environmental
25 Assessment. The no-action alternative

1 in which there is no program to toll
2 vehicles in the Manhattan Central
3 Business District, no comprehensive
4 plan to reduce congestion, and no new
5 annual recurring funding for MTA
6 capital programs.

7 And there is the central business
8 tolling or action alternative where we
9 implement a tolling program consistent
10 with the Mobility Act to toll the
11 vehicles entering or remaining in the
12 Manhattan Central Business District.
13 We install tolling infrastructure and
14 tolling system equipment and signage
15 within and near the Manhattan Central
16 Business District, and generate funds
17 for MTA's capital investments to
18 subways, buses and commuter railroads.

19 The Environmental Assessment
20 explores each of the topics in this
21 chart. The specific chapters that
22 address the analysis for each area are
23 identified here. As you can see, the
24 analysis shows that most of the areas
25 have beneficial effects or no adverse

1 effects, but there are few areas with
2 potential adverse effects. The slides
3 a bit later in the presentation will
4 address each of the areas and identify
5 any mitigation that is needed.

6 This slide has a lot of
7 information and it is in the executive
8 summary and in chapter two of the
9 Environmental Assessment for further
10 review. I am going to spend a few
11 moments reviewing and explaining it
12 here so everyone can understand its
13 importance.

14 As I said a moment ago, there are
15 two alternatives for this Environment
16 Assessment, the no-action and the
17 Central Business District Tolling
18 Alternative.

19 Within the Central Business
20 District Tolling Alternative, there are
21 a number of tolling scenarios that vary
22 in several ways. Modeling these
23 different scenarios helped us to
24 understand the full range of effects of
25 the Central Business District Tolling

1 Alternative since the decision on the
2 actual tolling scenario has not yet
3 been made.

4 For those of you who participated
5 in the early outreach, you may notice
6 that we now have seven tolling
7 scenarios when we originally discussed
8 six. That is because we added a
9 tolling scenario, which I will get to
10 shortly, as a result of concerns raised
11 during the early public outreach.

12 So let me walk you through.

13 Along the top, are the tolling
14 scenarios. Tolling Scenario A we
15 referred to as the base plan. This is
16 the plan that is characterized in the
17 legislation. Tolling Scenario B has
18 that same base plan but starts to add
19 caps in the form of how many times a
20 vehicle can be tolled and certain
21 exemptions.

22 Tolling Scenario C adds what we
23 call low-crossing credits for vehicles
24 using tunnels to access the Central
25 Business District with some caps and

1 exemptions. Those crossing credits,
2 when they are low are roughly \$6.50.
3 When they are high, as you see in
4 tolling scenarios D, E and F, the
5 credits are roughly \$13. And this was
6 used for modeling purposes.

7 In D, E and F, you see those
8 high-crossing credits. In D and E,
9 they are applied to the tunnels that
10 enter into the Central Business
11 District. And in F, vehicles using all
12 of the toll facilities that enter
13 Manhattan would be eligible for
14 crossing credits.

15 Moving down the left side, you
16 see the distinction on the items that
17 are varying. First, the potential
18 crossing credits. Again, these are
19 credits that would be applied toward
20 the Central Business District toll, for
21 tolls paid at facilities prior to
22 entering the Central Business District.

23 As you move to the right, you can
24 see the nos and yeses which determine
25 whether or not that potential crossing

1 credit applies to the facilities that
2 are identified.

3 Moving to the next group, are
4 potential exemptions and discounts in
5 the form of caps on the number of tolls
6 per day. Importantly, by legislation
7 and in the modeling, and in the
8 program, passenger vehicles would be
9 charged only once per day. But other
10 vehicles could be charged more than
11 that.

12 And as you read across to the
13 right, you will see under each of the
14 different tolling scenarios how these
15 different types of vehicles were
16 treated with respect to caps or
17 exemptions.

18 Finally, as you move to the
19 bottom, we have the approximate toll
20 rate for autos, small trucks and large
21 trucks that resulted from the modeling.

22 The one tolling scenario I'd like
23 to mention is tolling Scenario G, all
24 the way to the right. This tolling
25 scenario has a base plan with the same

1 tolls for all vehicle classes. We'll
2 talk about that a little bit later in
3 the presentation. But importantly, as
4 you see on the bottom, the toll rate is
5 set the same for every type of vehicle.

6 So that was a lot of information.
7 And so, I'd like to leave you with some
8 key takeaways.

9 First and foremost, tolling the
10 Manhattan Central Business District in
11 all scenarios, reduce traffic entering
12 the Manhattan Central Business District
13 and results in a net benefit in
14 congestion reduction for the region.

15 Discounts, crossing credits and
16 exemptions result in the need for
17 higher toll rates. Higher toll rates
18 lead to a greater degree of traffic
19 reduction in the Manhattan Central
20 Business District, but also lead to
21 increased traffic diversions, including
22 increases along the Cross Bronx
23 Expressway and the Staten Island
24 Expressway.

25 Crossing credits lead to more

1 parity in the total cost among
2 different routes that are taken by
3 vehicles entering the Manhattan Central
4 Business District, but those same
5 crossing credits change the balance of
6 effects on traffic.

7 It results in less effect
8 reducing traffic from Queens and much
9 less effect reducing traffic from New
10 Jersey. They result in greater effects
11 reducing traffic from north of 60th
12 Street in Brooklyn and they result in
13 more traffic at the Queens-Midtown
14 tunnel, the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel and
15 the Long Island Expressway.

16 Before we move on, I thought it
17 was helpful to give at least a sense of
18 where are the commuters actually coming
19 from into the Manhattan Central
20 Business District.

21 On the left, you can see the
22 28-county region. Again, this is all
23 in the Environmental Assessment for
24 further review. The colors on the map
25 denote the proportion of total

1 commuters to the Manhattan Central
2 Business District from each county in
3 the 28-county region.

4 The map also shows how many
5 commute by transit, car or some other
6 transportation mode to reach the
7 Manhattan Central Business District.
8 Not surprisingly, counties that are
9 further away tend to have fewer
10 commuters to the Manhattan Central
11 Business District.

12 For example, of all the commuters
13 to the Manhattan Central Business
14 District, fewer than one percent come
15 from counties like New Haven and
16 Dutchess. About one to three percent
17 come from counties like Rockland,
18 Morris and Richmond. And roughly four
19 to five percent come from Bergen,
20 Hudson and Westchester counties.

21 Closer in, about six to ten
22 percent come from Nassau County and the
23 Bronx. While the remainder of the New
24 York City boroughs contribute 11 to 22
25 percent of the commuters to the

1 Manhattan Central Business District.

2 On the right in the figure, you
3 can see that of all the people
4 commuting to work in the Manhattan
5 Central Business District, the vast
6 majority, 85 percent, commute by
7 transit. Of the 11 percent who commute
8 by car, approximately eight percent of
9 them are from counties in New York,
10 roughly three percent in New Jersey and
11 less than one percent from Connecticut.

12 Now we'll go through the effects
13 of each of the topic areas. On the top
14 right of each slide, you'll see that
15 we've identified whether effects are
16 beneficial, not adverse or adverse. In
17 this case, this is the regional effects
18 of transportation. Broadly speaking,
19 all tolling scenarios reduce the number
20 of vehicle entries into the Manhattan
21 Central Business District and reduce
22 vehicle miles traveled in the Manhattan
23 Central Business District.

24 The table on the bottom left
25 provides the degree to which the

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1 traffic is reduced. In this case,
2 there is a reduction of vehicles
3 entering the Manhattan CBD of nearly 20
4 percent to roughly 15 percent,
5 depending upon which tolling scenario
6 one is looking at.

7 On the right-hand side, you see
8 the increase or decrease in daily
9 vehicle miles traveled for each of the
10 areas throughout the 28 counties. And
11 as you can see, broadly speaking,
12 regionally again, there's largely a
13 benefit.

14 In the Manhattan Central Business
15 District, VMT decreases anywhere from a
16 little over nine percent to about seven
17 percent. Throughout New York City, the
18 reduction is roughly 1.5 percent to
19 about 0.7 percent and so on down the
20 group.

21 With respect to highways, we have
22 beneficial effects and we do have some
23 adverse effects in a few locations
24 where mitigation will be required.
25 Some locations experience a decrease in

1 congestion, which is a beneficial
2 effect. There were three highway
3 segments, though, that would experience
4 adverse effects in the form of
5 increased delays at certain times.

6 As you can see here, it's the
7 Westbound Long Island Expressway near
8 the Queens-Midtown tunnel in the
9 mid-day, approaches to the Westbound
10 George Washington Bridge on I-95 also
11 in the mid-day, and in the evening, the
12 Southbound and Northbound FDR Drive
13 between East 10th Street and Brooklyn
14 Bridge.

15 For mitigation, the project
16 sponsors implement a monitoring plan
17 prior to the project beginning that
18 identifies thresholds for adverse
19 effects. If the thresholds are
20 reached, as a result of the project,
21 the project sponsors will institute
22 Transportation Demand Management
23 measures such as ramp metering,
24 motorist information or signage, at
25 identified highway locations with

1 adverse effects.

2 In addition, post-implementation,
3 the project sponsors will monitor
4 effects. And if needed, Triborough
5 Bridge and Tunnel Authority, TBTA, will
6 modify the toll rates, crossing
7 credits, exemptions and/or discounts to
8 reduce those adverse effects.

9 Note the call-out in the upper
10 right and recall what I mentioned
11 regarding tolling scenario G earlier.
12 During our early outreach in
13 conversations with Environmental
14 Justice communities we shared
15 information regarding changes in
16 traffic patterns. Here on the left, you
17 can see one of the maps that was used
18 for analysis related to traffic and air
19 quality effects. These are areas with
20 Environmental Justice communities.
21 Under this tolling scenario, some of
22 these communities would experience
23 reduced vehicle miles traveled. Others
24 would see some increases as traffic
25 diverts to avoid the toll. As noted

1 earlier, as the toll goes up, these
2 diversions increase.

3 Participants raised concerns
4 about the increased traffic along the
5 Cross Bronx Expressway and asked what
6 that meant in terms of truck traffic,
7 as trucks are associated with
8 particulate matter and associated
9 health effects. The team reviewed the
10 initial six scenarios at a specific
11 location, Macombs Road and found the
12 daily increases in truck traffic in the
13 table to the right. During the same
14 outreach period, the trucking
15 associations also raised their concerns
16 that people can move to transit to
17 avoid the toll. But trucks cannot do
18 this.

19 Further, the tolled bridges
20 roadways and tunnels typically charge
21 higher tolls for trucks given the wear
22 and tear on the roadway. The purpose
23 of this project is to reduce
24 congestion.

25 The project team looked closer at

1 why trucks were diverting in the
2 modeling. We found that the extent of
3 the diversion was linked to the truck
4 toll and price differential in the
5 initial six tolling scenarios where
6 trucks are tolled at a higher price.
7 To test this, we created tolling
8 Scenario G, which prices all vehicle
9 types the same.

10 The results, as you can see,
11 reduced the diversions along with the
12 relative incremental number of trucks
13 on the Cross Bronx Expressway. Given
14 the concerns raised, the project team
15 decided to include this tolling
16 scenario formerly in the Environmental
17 Assessment.

18 With respect to local
19 intersections, again, there were
20 beneficial effects and adverse effects
21 where mitigation is required.
22 Specifically, most intersections would
23 experience decreases in delay. Tolling
24 scenarios D, E and F, the high-credit
25 scenarios, have four out of a 102

1 intersections that experienced adverse
2 effects in the modeling in the form of
3 increased delay at certain times. And
4 you can see them here on the right.

5 Project sponsors will monitor
6 those intersections where adverse
7 effects are identified and implement
8 appropriate signal timing adjustments
9 to mitigate the effect for New York
10 City Department of Transportation's
11 normal practice.

12 In terms of transit, we found
13 beneficial effects and some adverse
14 effects where mitigation is required.
15 With respect to beneficial effects,
16 reduced roadway congestion would result
17 in reliable faster bus trips. There is
18 an increase in transit ridership of one
19 to two percent system-wide for travel
20 to and from the Manhattan Central
21 Business District, but no adverse
22 effects from increased ridership on any
23 lines or transit stations.

24 We do see that in some scenarios
25 increased ridership could adversely

1 affect passenger flows at specific
2 stairs or escalators, what we refer to
3 as stationed elements.

4 With respect to mitigation, in
5 tolling scenarios E and F, TBTA will
6 coordinate with New Jersey Transit and
7 the Port Authority of New York and New
8 Jersey to implement a monitoring plan
9 with specific thresholds for pedestrian
10 volumes on a specific Station Stair in
11 Hoboken Terminal.

12 If the thresholds are reached,
13 TBTA will coordinate with these
14 agencies to implement signage and
15 wayfinding. In all the tolling
16 scenarios, TBTA will coordinate with
17 MTA's New York City Transit to
18 implement monitoring plans with
19 specific thresholds at the locations
20 bulleted here.

21 At 42nd Street and Times Square,
22 there's a specific stair affected. And
23 if the threshold is reached, the center
24 handrail will be removed and the riser
25 will be adjusted. At Union Square

1 Subway Station and Flushing and Main
2 Street Station, there are two
3 escalators, one in each, that could be
4 affected. If the thresholds are
5 reached, we would increase escalator
6 speeds. And at Court Square, there's a
7 stair affected. If the threshold is
8 reached, we would construct a new stair
9 to increase capacity.

10 With respect to pedestrians and
11 bicycles, the EA found that increases
12 in passengers at transit hubs would
13 have no adverse effects. There would
14 be some increases in bicycle trips
15 overall and near the transit hubs, but
16 again, no adverse effects.

17 Outside the Manhattan Central
18 Business District, increased transit
19 usage at individual stations would not
20 adversely affect pedestrian conditions
21 on nearby sidewalks, crosswalks or
22 corners. But within the Manhattan
23 Central Business District, there are
24 two crosswalks and one sidewalk that
25 would be adversely affected.

1 You can see here, on the right
2 with the red lines that they occur on
3 8th Avenue near West 32nd Street and
4 7th Avenue and on West 34th Street and
5 Avenue of the Americas. For
6 mitigation, the project sponsors will
7 implement a monitoring plan with
8 threshold for action. If the threshold
9 is reached, pedestrian space would be
10 increased and obstructions will be
11 removed or relocated.

12 With respect to parking and to
13 social conditions, specifically
14 population characteristics and
15 neighborhood character, we found either
16 beneficial effects or no adverse
17 effects.

18 With respect to social
19 conditions, improvement in travel time
20 and safety, reduced vehicle operating
21 costs, and reduced emissions would
22 occur from the project. There would be
23 no adverse effects on neighborhood
24 character or access, travel to
25 employment within the Manhattan Central

1 Business District or reverse commuting,
2 traffic patterns on local streets or
3 community facilities and services.

4 With respect to parking, the
5 study found a reduction in parking
6 demand within the Manhattan Central
7 Business District and increased parking
8 demand at subway and commuter rail
9 stations and park-and-ride facilities
10 outside of the Manhattan's Central
11 Business District. But the increase at
12 any individual location would not be
13 large enough to result in an adverse
14 effect from the project.

15 Economic conditions found
16 increased productivity as well as
17 safety improvements. There were no
18 adverse effects to any particular
19 industry or occupational category in
20 the Manhattan Central Business
21 District.

22 Depending on the tolling
23 scenario, the toll could reduce taxi
24 and for-hire vehicle revenues in the
25 Manhattan Central Business District.

1 While the industry would remain
2 economically viable overall, individual
3 drivers could be adversely affected,
4 and this is dealt with a little bit
5 later in the presentation.

6 In terms of energy and noise,
7 again, there are beneficial effects and
8 no adverse effects. With respect to
9 energy, the region would benefit from
10 reductions in regional energy
11 consumption as a result of reductions
12 in the vehicle miles traveled.

13 In terms of noise, 102
14 intersections were assessed and all the
15 crossings into the Manhattan Central
16 Business District. The study found
17 imperceptible increases or decreases in
18 noise levels resulting from changes in
19 traffic volumes.

20 With respect to air quality, the
21 Environmental Assessment found that
22 regionally, air pollutants would be
23 reduced including precursors to
24 greenhouse gases. There would be no
25 local exceedances of air quality

1 standards.

2 Recognizing that air quality is
3 of great concern to many constituents,
4 we have several enhancements though
5 there were no local exceedances of
6 those standards. New York City
7 Department of Transportation will
8 coordinate to expand the New York City
9 community air survey network of air
10 quality monitors. This will be
11 supplemented by a small number of
12 real-time monitors for particulate
13 matter.

14 Also, based on feedback during
15 outreach for the project, MTA will
16 prioritize Kingsbridge and Gun Hill Bus
17 Depots, both located in and serving
18 primarily Environmental Justice
19 communities in Upper Manhattan and the
20 Bronx, when electric buses are received
21 in MTA's next major procurement of
22 battery electric buses.

23 In terms of environmental
24 justice, the study did find adverse
25 effects where mitigation is required.

1 The map to the right shows the
2 communities that are Environmental
3 Justice communities throughout the
4 region. They are widespread and as
5 shown earlier in some cases, certain EJ
6 communities will benefit directly from
7 this project.

8 However, the project would have
9 the potential for disproportionately
10 high and adverse effects on low-income
11 drivers who do not have an alternative
12 transportation mode for reaching the
13 Manhattan Central Business District and
14 on taxi and for-hire vehicle drivers in
15 New York City, many of whom identify as
16 part of an environmental justice
17 population.

18 This adverse effect occurs
19 specifically in tolling scenarios that
20 toll their vehicles more than once per
21 day. We have a number of mitigation
22 for low-income drivers which you can
23 see here on the left.

24 There will be a tax credit for
25 Central Business District tolls paid by

1 residents of the Manhattan Central
2 Business District whose New York
3 adjusted gross income for the taxable
4 year is less than \$60,000. TBTA will
5 coordinate with New York State
6 Department of Taxation and Finance to
7 ensure availability of documentation
8 needed for drivers eligible for the
9 credit.

10 TBTA will also post information
11 related to the tax credit on the
12 project website with links to the New
13 York State Department of Taxation and
14 Finance website to guide eligible
15 drivers to information on claiming the
16 credit.

17 TBTA will also eliminate the \$10
18 refundable deposit required for E-ZPass
19 customers with no credit card linked to
20 their account. They will increase
21 promotion of existing E-ZPass payment
22 and plan options and will work with MTA
23 to increase outreach and education on
24 eligibility for existing discounted
25 transit fare products and programs.

1 The project sponsors will
2 establish an Environmental Justice
3 community group that will meet on a
4 biannual basis with the first meeting
5 six months after project implementation
6 to share updated data and analysis and
7 hear about potential concerns.

8 For effects on taxi and FHV
9 drivers, the project sponsors will work
10 with appropriate city and state
11 agencies so that when passengers are
12 present in the vehicles, the passengers
13 will pay the toll rather than the
14 driver.

15 Again, these mitigations would be
16 for New York City taxi and FHV drivers
17 if a tolling scenario is implemented
18 with tolls of more than once per day
19 for their vehicles.

20 TBTA will work with MTA New York
21 City Transit to institute an employment
22 resource coordination program to
23 connect drivers experiencing job
24 insecurity with a direct pathway to
25 licensing, training and job placement

1 with MTA or its affiliated vendors at
2 no cost to the drivers.

3 For those who may not want a
4 commercial driver's license, TBTA will
5 coordinate with MTA New York City
6 Transit to submit a request to the
7 Federal Transit Administration for a
8 pilot program that will help increase
9 eligibility of taxi and FHV drivers to
10 use their vehicles to provide
11 paratransit trips and MTA's New York
12 City Transit will implement this
13 program if approved.

14 With respect to construction
15 effects, no adverse effects were found.
16 Construction would consist of
17 replacement of existing poles or
18 installation of new poles and mast arms
19 excavation and construction of
20 foundations, placement of new support
21 poles or structures attachment of
22 tolling system equipment, and
23 restoration of the roadway, sidewalk or
24 ground surface.

25 The construction would occur on

1 streets and sidewalks and take
2 approximately one to two weeks per
3 location. During this time, there
4 would be temporary disruptions to
5 traffic and pedestrian patterns and
6 temporary noise disruptions at nearby
7 land uses such as residences and
8 businesses. The project sponsors would
9 require the contractor to develop and
10 comply with plans and procedures to
11 minimize construction effects.

12 With respect to visual resources,
13 there were also no adverse effects.
14 Infrastructure is similar in form to
15 street light poles, sign poles or
16 similar structures already in use
17 throughout New York City. Signage is
18 similar in size and character to signs
19 already present and the color would
20 match existing light pole colors.

21 On the bottom right, there's a
22 rendering of tolling system equipment
23 that would be placed on existing
24 infrastructure. Again, as noted
25 earlier, the tolling equipment is

1 clustered into those single enclosures
2 to reduce visual impact and cameras
3 would use infrared illumination at
4 night so there would be no visible
5 light needed. The project would have a
6 neutral effect on viewer groups and no
7 adverse effect on visual resources.

8 With respect to Section 4(f), a
9 de minimis impact is one that after
10 taking into account any measures to
11 minimize harm, results in either a
12 Section 106 finding of no adverse
13 effect or no historic properties
14 affected on a historic property, or a
15 determination that the project would
16 not adversely affect the activities,
17 features or attributes qualifying a
18 park, recreation area or refuge for
19 protection under Section 4(f).

20 Central Park and the High Line
21 have the potential for a de minimis
22 use. Federal Highway Administration is
23 soliciting input from the public on the
24 effects of installing equipment and
25 signs within and on these properties.

1 Signage and for replacement poles with
2 tolling technology would be installed
3 in Central Park.

4 Tolling technology equipment
5 would be added to the underneath of the
6 existing structure of the High Line.
7 You can see some of the renderings at
8 the bottom here.

9 With respect to the findings, the
10 Central Business District Tolling
11 Alternative does not result in adverse
12 effects pursuant to Section 106 of the
13 National Historic Preservation Act.
14 And it does not adversely affect the
15 activities, features or attributes that
16 qualify the resource for protection
17 under Section 4(f).

18 Federal Highway Administration
19 has concurrence on a proposed finding
20 from officials with jurisdiction over
21 Central Park and the High Line and will
22 consider public input on its proposed
23 finding received during this public
24 review of the Environmental
25 Assessments.

1 There were two final additional
2 enhancements I would like to mention,
3 and again, they were in response to
4 outreach during the early outreach
5 period.

6 First, the project sponsors are
7 committed to ongoing data collection
8 and reporting on the potential effects
9 of the project. Data will be collected
10 in advance and after implementation and
11 a formal report will be issued one year
12 after implementation and then every two
13 years thereafter.

14 The reporting website will make
15 data, analysis and visualizations
16 available in open data format to the
17 greatest extent possible with updates
18 provided on at least a biannual basis
19 as data becomes available and analysis
20 is completed.

21 Again, through our conversations
22 and public outreach and particularly
23 with Environmental Justice communities,
24 we are also committed to prioritizing
25 equity and bus service improvements.

1 New York City's buses serve a greater
2 share of low-income minority households
3 and other modes including subways.

4 MTA developed a new approach that
5 combines considerations of equity and
6 air quality to identify equity priority
7 areas, which are then used to target
8 improvements and investments to promote
9 equity and access to opportunities in
10 transit-dependent, historically
11 marginalized and underserved areas.

12 Information on our early public
13 outreach is here on the left. During
14 that period, we held ten virtual public
15 outreach meetings as well as nine
16 environmental justice outreach
17 meetings.

18 We had three meetings of the
19 Environmental Justice Technical
20 Advisory Group and two meetings of the
21 Environmental Justice Stakeholder
22 Working Group. During the 19 public
23 outreach and EJ outreach meetings, we
24 had over a thousand participants
25 registered and nearly 400 speakers.

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1 All of the sessions were left on
2 our project website and people could
3 access them through YouTube. To date,
4 we've had over 14,000 views and we
5 received over 7,300 comments. Our
6 current public outreach sessions will
7 include six public hearings starting on
8 Thursday, August 25th and running
9 through Wednesday, August 31st.

10 We will also have another meeting
11 of the Environmental Justice
12 Stakeholder Working Group and another
13 meeting of the Environmental Justice
14 Technical Advisory Group.

15 With respect to schedule, this
16 shows where we currently are. We did
17 our early public outreach in 2021. In
18 early 2022, we prepared the
19 Environmental Assessment, we've
20 notified agencies and organizations and
21 individuals of the Environmental
22 Assessment's availability and we're now
23 in the midst, in orange here, of public
24 review and comment on the Environmental
25 Assessment.

1 After the formal comment period
2 closes, there will be a determination
3 whether the action, in this case, the
4 tolling, will result in significant
5 effects.

6 Ultimately, we're expecting that
7 in early 2023, Federal Highway
8 Administration will issue a decision
9 document. If adverse effects are not
10 significant or can be mitigated below
11 significant levels, FHWA would issue a
12 FONSI, a Finding of No Significant
13 Impact. If there are significant
14 effects that cannot be mitigated, then
15 an Environmental Impact Statement or
16 EIS would be required.

17 As noted, our public comment
18 period is open until September 9, 2022.
19 If you would like to submit written
20 comments, you may do so in the
21 following ways: Through our project
22 website, by email, mail, phone or fax,
23 or to the Federal Highway
24 Administration by email or mail.

25 All of this information is also

1 available on our website and the
2 information on the project website
3 email, mail, phone and fax for MTA
4 bridges and tunnels is also in the
5 Environmental Assessment. In addition,
6 formal oral comments can be made at the
7 public hearings as many of you are
8 doing today. They will be recorded by
9 the stenographer.

10 Thank you again for attending
11 this public hearing to learn more about
12 the Environmental Assessment for the
13 Central Business District tolling
14 program. And now, we look forward to
15 hearing from you.

16 [Taped presentation ends.]

17 MR. OLIVA: We encourage anyone
18 joining via Zoom or livestream to take
19 a short survey using the QR code or
20 link currently being displayed. The
21 link can also be found in the chat
22 section of the Zoom.

23 We are gathering public comment
24 today on the Environmental Assessment
25 for the Central Business District

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1 Tolling Program. Comments will be
2 recorded, indexed and responded to as
3 part of the Environmental Assessment
4 process. Responses will not be
5 provided during today's hearing.

6 There are 314 speakers signed up
7 to speak today. Each speaker is
8 limited to three minutes. At the
9 two-and-a-half-minute mark, the clock
10 will turn red and you will hear it beep
11 notifying you that you have 30 seconds
12 remaining. We ask that speakers keep
13 their remarks to the three-minute time
14 frame out of respect for all other
15 speakers.

16 We will be calling speakers in
17 the order that they signed up, but
18 anyone who wishes to speak will have an
19 opportunity. Due to the volume of
20 speakers, there may be extended wait
21 times to speak. Comments submitted by
22 mail, phone, e-mail, online form, or
23 verbally at a hearing will be
24 considered equally and carry the same
25 weight.

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1 If you have joined the Zoom under
2 a name that is different from the one
3 you used when you signed up to speak or
4 if you did not sign up to speak but
5 would like to speak, please identify
6 yourself in the Q&A function. You may
7 also request to speak anonymously. If
8 this is your preference, please
9 indicate this in the Q&A function and
10 we will provide you with further
11 instructions.

12 Please note that comments on the
13 Central Business District Tolling
14 Program are not being received via the
15 Q&A function. And comments submitted
16 in that fashion will not be part of the
17 hearing record.

18 When you are called on to speak,
19 there will be a brief transition on
20 your screen before you will be able to
21 unmute and enable your camera. Please
22 make sure that once your screen
23 updates, your camera and your
24 microphone are enabled, before
25 beginning your remarks. If you do not

1 wish to use your camera, you do not
2 have to do so.

3 You will not be able to unmute or
4 enable your camera until it's your turn
5 to speak. Please remain patient until
6 then. In the event you miss your name
7 being called, we will call you again
8 after all other speakers in attendance
9 have been called a first time.

10 As a reminder, this hearing is
11 being livestreamed and recorded and
12 will be available publicly on our
13 YouTube channel and on our project
14 website at mta.info/CBDTP.

15 Stenographers are present and will
16 create a written record of this
17 hearing. By attending this virtual
18 hearing, you consent to be recorded.

19 MS. FLAX: We will now begin the
20 public comment portion of today's
21 hearing.

22 Our first speaker is Assembly
23 Member Deborah Glick, followed by
24 Assembly Member Kenneth Zebrowski.

25 ASSEMBLY MEMBER DEBORAH GLICK:

1 Thank you for the opportunity to
2 testify before you today regarding the
3 MTA's plan for the CBD Tolling Program.

4 The need to reduce gas emissions
5 and create a reliable revenue stream to
6 improve our transit system makes
7 congestion pricing a reasonable policy
8 choice. There is a need to improve
9 accessibility for people with
10 disabilities, upgrade critical
11 infrastructure, move buses towards zero
12 emissions and improve subway safety.

13 However, in regards to the
14 implementation of this project, there
15 are a few concerns I have about the
16 residents who live in the CBD and how
17 this will impact their lives.

18 My first concern is about how
19 this will impact the economy. It is
20 reasonable to assume that everyone in
21 the congestion zone will experience
22 passalong charges for services and
23 deliveries, unlike New Yorkers living
24 uptown or anywhere outside of the CBD.

25 The promised impact of the

1 program on the environment is still
2 hypothetical, but the impact it will
3 have on hundreds of thousands of
4 residents' pocketbooks, many of whom
5 are struggling economically as it is,
6 is certain. Whether they own a car or
7 not.

8 While it is viewed as harsh by
9 many people in the congestion zone to
10 be charged an extra fee simply to drive
11 home, it seems especially punitive to
12 charge them to leave home, which the
13 remaining in zone toll seems to do.
14 The ancillary impact of new tolls put a
15 severe burden on our residents, most of
16 whom do not contribute to the
17 congestion or pollution, considering
18 that the majority of them either do not
19 have cars or leave their cars parked in
20 already heavily taxed parking meter
21 zones or parking garage. However,
22 those who do use vehicles due to
23 medical treatments may be especially
24 disadvantaged.

25 Another concern is how the tolls

1 will impact God's Love We Deliver, a
2 not-for-profit based in the CBD, which
3 will experience an estimated cost of
4 half a million dollars a year to
5 continue to serve historically
6 marginalized communities, and where
7 90 percent of their clients are below
8 the poverty line. An exemption or a
9 discount for this critical service is a
10 top priority, as it will surely affect
11 the lives of New Yorkers who need these
12 services to survive and live in all
13 parts of the city.

14 In closing, I reiterate my
15 support for congestion pricing, and
16 understand that the committee has said
17 any consideration in one area increases
18 the need for higher tolls to cover that
19 consideration. But I suggest that
20 solely relying on congestion pricing to
21 cover the MTA needs may not be the most
22 equitable solution and an added
23 additional broad-based revenue stream
24 should be considered.

25 Thank you.

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1 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

2 The next speaker is Assembly
3 Member Kenneth Zebrowski, followed by
4 County Executive Ed Day.

5 ASSEMBLY MEMBER KENNETH ZEBROWSKI:

6 Hi. Good morning, and thank you
7 for this opportunity. I'm Assembly
8 Member ken Zebrowski. I represent
9 Rockland County. One of the west of
10 the Hudson counties in the MTA
11 district.

12 I've been an opponent of
13 congestion pricing for a long time.
14 I've testified previously. I don't
15 want to spend too much of my time here
16 today speaking about my broad base
17 opposition. I've voted against the
18 legislation that set up this entire
19 process.

20 But being where we are today, I
21 really want to talk about the west of
22 Hudson commuters, Rockland County in
23 particular, but up to Orange County.
24 The commuter tax, the portions of the
25 sales tax. Those of us in the MTA

1 district from west of Hudson, pay all
2 the same taxes, yet get a fraction of
3 the service.

4 So listening to the presentation
5 earlier, where it was talked about some
6 of the benefits, none of those benefits
7 will be received by west of Hudson
8 commuters. In fact, when you talk
9 about the 90, 10, 10 distribution of
10 the funds, you know, even the ten to
11 Metro-North won't go to west of Hudson
12 commuters unless they have to pay some
13 sort of a toll or pay a fare in order
14 to get over the river first before
15 getting on Metro-North.

16 I may oppose congestion pricing
17 completely, but at least it would be
18 something for my constituents if there
19 was something in this plan to suggest
20 that it will be used to improve the
21 historical, I think lack of investment
22 for west of Hudson commuters. But of
23 course, there's nothing there.

24 So I think we need to provide, if
25 this is going to go forward, credits to

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1 west of Hudson commuters, those in
2 Rockland that have to pay a toll to get
3 over that bridge. Now, I understand
4 that there's different authorities
5 involved in this process. A lot of
6 Rocklanders have to go down the
7 Palisades Parkway and head over the GW
8 Bridge. There has to be a recognition
9 of that, and there has to be some sort
10 of a credit given to those folks. They
11 don't have the options. Every train in
12 Rockland County is run by New Jersey
13 Transit. Which number one is
14 substandard service and number two
15 takes a long time to get down and then
16 over.

17 So if -- and also, a lot of
18 folks, whether they be nurses, police
19 officers, firefighters, have to commute
20 in off hours where there literally is
21 no mass transit opportunities.

22 So I know I don't have too much
23 time yet, but when we talk about
24 credits, you have to remember west of
25 Hudson commuters, and at the very

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60

1 least, there has to be some sort of a
2 credit as most as possible, I would
3 advocate for those commuters that are
4 paying a toll to get over the river.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

7 Our next speaker is County
8 Executive Ed Day, followed by Assembly
9 Member David Weprin.

10 COUNTY EXECUTIVE ED DAY: Hello?

11 MS. FLAX: You may begin your
12 remarks.

13 COUNTY EXECUTIVE ED DAY: Hey --
14 stop --

15 I'm sorry. I'm just trying to
16 set this up.

17 MS. FLAX: We can see you and
18 hear you. You may begin your remarks.

19 COUNTY EXECUTIVE ED DAY: Okay.
20 Thank you very much. And my name is
21 County Executive Ed Day. I want to
22 thank you for the opportunity.

23 Unlike almost all of the members
24 of the Metropolitan Community
25 Transportation District, Rockland

1 County has no one-seat rail ride to the
2 Central Business District and severely
3 limited mass transit alternatives.
4 This transit desert forces more than
5 60 percent of our residents to drive
6 into the city because they have no
7 other way to get there. And that
8 commute is not cheap.

9 Our residents pay heavy tolls on
10 the George Washington Bridge, Lincoln
11 Tunnel and Tappan Zee Bridge for
12 decades, while being subjected to a 400
13 million-dollar annual value gap between
14 what we pay to the MTA and what we get
15 in return. That equates to a
16 40 million-dollar gap in just the last
17 decade. And now you want these
18 commuters to give even more while all
19 the East River bridges remain toll free
20 despite the significant transit options
21 to get into the city from those
22 communities.

23 Among those commuters include
24 cops, firefighters and others whose
25 work schedules would leave them

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1 stranded if not using their own
2 vehicle. Have all of you forgotten
3 9/11? Is this your reward for their
4 sacrifice?

5 Connecticut commuters, yes, an
6 entirely different state, do not pay
7 one red cent and unbelievably receive
8 better service from the MTA than our
9 overpaying MTA member Rockland county.
10 One project that's proven this point is
11 the MTA's recent 1.3 billion dollar
12 Penn Station access project to provide
13 a second one-seat extension ride into
14 Penn Station for Metro-North, east of
15 the Hudson commuters. Yes, a premium
16 one-seat ride, while we in Rockland
17 still cannot get that basic one-seat
18 service.

19 In exchange for that \$40 million
20 extra collected by the MTA from
21 Rockland each year, our county has
22 received service reduction and
23 increased fares. No improvements to
24 the Pascack Valley rail line in
25 15 years. And no significant

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1 improvements to facilities, rolling
2 stock, yards or equipment.

3 Now, the MTA will say they
4 invested heavily into west of the
5 Hudson Port Jervis line, which is true.
6 But unfortunately, that line only
7 serves only one station in Rockland.
8 And our residents make up less than
9 two percent of that ridership.

10 I challenge and invited each and
11 every one of you to find any
12 significant MTA investment that has
13 been made in Rockland County in the
14 last 15 years. Rockland county
15 residents faced by far the highest
16 level of transit inequity in the MTA
17 region, and it would be an insult to
18 these families who are already
19 struggling to keep up with rising gas
20 prices and record-breaking inflation to
21 move this forward without an exemption
22 as part of the CBD Tolling Program if
23 it is implemented.

24 Thank you very much.

25 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

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1 Our next speaker is Assembly
2 Member David Weprin, followed by
3 Councilmember Selvina Brooks-Powers.

4 Assembly Member, you may unmute
5 yourself and begin your remarks.

6 ASSEMBLY MEMBER DAVID WEPRIN:

7 Good morning. I'm Assemblyman
8 David Weprin. I represent the 24th
9 Assembly District in Queens,
10 which will -- which will be one of the
11 most adversely impacted by the
12 imposition of congestion pricing.

13 Congestion pricing is not a fair
14 deal for New Yorkers. It is an out of
15 borough tax that will cripple families
16 and businesses in New York City at a
17 time of record inflation while we are
18 still recovering from the COVID-19
19 pandemic. The proposed day for
20 implementation of congestion pricing
21 could be as early as the end of next
22 year or the start of 2024.

23 I am calling for a moratorium on
24 the implementation of congestion
25 pricing through at least December 31,

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1 2028, and I will sponsor the
2 legislation to that effect.

3 My district, which extends along
4 the Grand Central Parkway, is a public
5 transit dessert. A trip into Manhattan
6 can take two hours and often requires
7 hopping two buses and two subway lines.
8 Whereas driving more than cuts that
9 time in half. Many of my constituents
10 have no viable transportation options
11 other than driving a car. Congestion
12 pricing is anti drivers, which includes
13 taxi drivers, truck drivers, app based
14 providers and millions of our neighbors
15 from across all five borough.

16 Inflation is skyrocketing, and
17 congestion pricing will raise costs for
18 every business in New York City. There
19 are no carve outs for small businesses
20 where the working drivers will be hit
21 twice by congestion pricing. First by
22 the fees and next by the increased
23 prices of goods and services.

24 There are no exemptions for the
25 disabled, the elderly or the infirmed.

1 To make matters worse, the MTA is
2 currently redesigning the bus network
3 and eliminating multiple stops that my
4 constituents have used for years, which
5 will result in further disruption to
6 ridership.

7 Our businesses haven't returned
8 to normal and their success requires
9 the patronage and financial support of
10 out of borough residents. But
11 congestion pricing will cut this much
12 needed revenue at the knee. The supply
13 chain disruptions that have impacted
14 all of our lives for the past few years
15 will only be exacerbated by congestion
16 pricing, which will impose yet another
17 fee on shipping companies and truck
18 drivers that transport our goods.

19 Any increases in shipping fees
20 will be borne by our businesses and
21 ultimately the customer.

22 Savvy shipping companies may cut
23 their losses and abandon us as the
24 market and the cost of doing business
25 becomes too high. The MTA is notorious

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1 for mismanaging funds. What happened
2 to the \$15 billion in federal funding?

3 In closing, the MTA is an
4 unacceptable, unaccountable and
5 untrustworthy steward on the public
6 funds. We must focus on fixing the MTA
7 and making it accountable. That's why
8 I'm calling for a moratorium on the
9 implementation --

10 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
11 remarks.

12 ASSEMBLY MEMBER DAVID WEPRIN:
13 -- of congestion pricing
14 through -- through 2028.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

17 Our next speaker is Councilmember
18 Selvina Brooks-Powers, followed by
19 Samir Lavingia.

20 Councilmember, you may unmute
21 yourself and begin your remarks.

22 COUNCILMEMBER SELVINA BROOKS-POWERS:
23 Hi, can you hear me?

24 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

25 COUNCILMEMBER SELVINA BROOKS-POWERS:

1 Perfect.

2 Good morning. I'm Councilwoman
3 Selvina Brooks-Powers, representing
4 Southeast Queens and Eastern Rockaway
5 in the New York City Council, and
6 serving as the chair of the Committee
7 on Transportation and Infrastructure.

8 I'd like to thank the agency for
9 hosting this forum for New Yorkers to
10 share their perspectives on how
11 congestion pricing will affect their
12 communities.

13 This proposal stands to
14 significantly impact the fabric of our
15 city by reducing traffic in Manhattan's
16 urban core, and by establishing a new
17 funding stream for our public
18 transportation network and the many
19 critical improvements necessary.

20 We have a real opportunity to
21 ensure that our subways, buses and
22 commuter rail systems continue to meet
23 the needs of everyone who lives, works
24 and plays in the New York region. But
25 this must be done right and done

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1 equitably. The MTA has released the
2 wide ranging set of proposals with toll
3 levels rising as high as \$23.

4 I have been stopped at events
5 across the city, e-mailed, called with
6 very valuable feedback on the
7 congestion pricing plan with concerns
8 of the impacts of communities like the
9 one I represent.

10 I believe it is critical that out
11 of borough communities like mine, as
12 well as Staten Island, South Bronx and
13 west Queens are not unjustly affected
14 by the financial and potentially the
15 environmental burden this toll may
16 impose.

17 As the chair of the Committee on
18 Transportation and Infrastructure and
19 as a Councilmember, whose constituents
20 have some of the longest commutes in
21 the city, I know first hand that many
22 residents in transportation deserts
23 rely on our cars as a key part of their
24 commute.

25 Our communities lack viable

1 public transportation services to
2 effectively, safely and reliably travel
3 into Manhattan. I have many
4 constituents who are seniors, as well
5 as people in need of medical care only
6 available in Manhattan. When, for
7 them, the only way to access vital
8 services is by car. An overly
9 expensive toll will present a real
10 financial burden to our seniors and
11 disabled communities that live on fixed
12 incomes.

13 Additionally, we need to be sure
14 that our existing infrastructure can
15 accommodate new commuting preference.
16 My addition has three Long Island
17 Railroad stations. The MTA should
18 consider expanding intracity LIRR fare
19 discounts to make the rail an
20 affordable option for more New Yorkers.

21 I also want to make sure that as
22 commuter demands shifts on car to
23 commuter rail, our stations do not
24 experience crowding, overwhelmed
25 parking lots, and less reliable

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1 service.

2 I have also heard serious
3 concerns from taxi drivers about this
4 proposal. Our network of taxi cab,
5 livery and ride share vehicles fill key
6 transportation gaps in many
7 communities, and these drivers have
8 already faced serious economic burdens
9 in recent years and already --

10 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
11 remarks.

12 COUNCILMEMBER SELVINA BROOKS-POWERS:
13 -- congestion surcharge.

14 If I can just ask for one more
15 moment, please.

16 I'm sorry, can I ask for one more
17 moment just to complete it?

18 MS. FLAX: In respect for all
19 speakers, we ask that you keep your
20 remarks to three minutes. You can
21 submit additional comments to us via
22 e-mail and we will follow up with you
23 on different ways to submit comments.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SELVINA BROOKS-POWERS:
25 Okay. Thank you.

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1 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
2 Samir Lavingia, followed by Glenn
3 Dewar.

4 SAMIR LAVINGIA: Hello.
5 Hopefully you can see and hear me. I
6 appreciate the opportunity to give
7 comment today. I'm a resident who
8 lives in the CBD area or what will be
9 the CBD area. I live adjacent to Union
10 Square Park. And I previously lived in
11 the West Village, which will also be
12 included in the area.

13 Previously, I have lived in two
14 different places with congestion
15 pricing, Singapore and London. And in
16 both places, it works amazingly to keep
17 congestion down, and improve quality of
18 life for residents, commuters and
19 others.

20 Right now, we are simply asking
21 people to pay for vehicle usage with
22 their time and their health via issues
23 with greenhouse gases and other stuff
24 like that.

25 So I think I read through the

1 Environmental Assessment and I
2 appreciate how thorough it is. In my
3 opinion, I think options D or E are the
4 right way to go. It's just a question
5 for me of what is going to raise the
6 most money for the MTA, what is the
7 simplest and what is going to reduce
8 the car usage as much as possible.

9 When I'm thinking about these
10 options, what I think is, if I was a
11 resident or I was about to take a car
12 into the cordoned zone, what will
13 prevent me from doing it. We want to
14 reduce these trips as much as possible
15 into the cordoned zone in order to
16 improve the lives of the people who
17 live in it as much as possible.

18 I think that means we should have
19 as few exemptions as possible and we
20 can always increase costs and tolls
21 later if the need for more money
22 arises.

23 There are so many benefits like
24 the environmental benefits, reductions
25 in noise, bus speeds safety and speeds

1 for emergency vehicles.

2 I often walk around the area and
3 I'll see an emergency vehicle be stuck
4 in a ton of traffic. And I honestly
5 wonder what is happening to the person
6 inside when those sirens are going off.
7 I think we should additionally consider
8 charging different vehicles, not just
9 personal vehicles versus trucks. But
10 like SUVs or smart cars different
11 amounts of money. Because they simply
12 take up way less space, emit less and
13 do way less damage to residents who
14 live in the area.

15 I'd also like to see a ramp up in
16 bus service. When London launched
17 their congestion pricing program, they
18 ramped up bus service by 27 percent.
19 Ridership skyrocketed by 37 percent
20 virtually overnight. And it was half
21 of those people had been people who had
22 gotten out of their cars.

23 To summarize, I don't think we
24 can delay this project any longer.

25 It's been delayed again and again, and

1 in the meanwhile people who live in the
2 cordoned area are suffering. This
3 project will dramatically improve the
4 lives of everyone who lives in the
5 region be it by cutting travel times
6 for drivers, delivery times for
7 delivery companies, better air quality
8 for residents, better bus fees for bus
9 riders and capital improvements for
10 anyone who uses the MTA by this
11 dedicated funding stream.

12 The benefits of this program are
13 innumerable, and we should mitigate the
14 issues raised as much as possible. But
15 it is clear that congestion pricing is
16 something that must be done. And I
17 look forward to living in what will
18 soon be the cordoned zone. And I am
19 very happy to pay whenever I need to
20 take a car in or out of the area.

21 Thank you so much for hosting
22 these sessions and taking my comments.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Glenn Dewar,
25 followed by our 15th speaker on the

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1 list, Sarah Gribetz.

2 GLENN DEWAR: Can you hear me?

3 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

4 GLENN DEWAR: Okay.

5 Hi. My name is Glenn Dewar. I
6 live in Queens County. I'm a lifelong
7 resident of Queens County. There's my
8 video.

9 I'm a lifelong resident of Queens
10 County. I have been a caregiver for
11 most of my life. My mother was
12 mentally ill. I took care of her for
13 28 years. My partner sadly was
14 diagnosed with cancer in 2019. I took
15 care of him for the 17 months. I tried
16 to keep him alive. And now I've been
17 left to take care of his mother. She
18 is in a senior living facility. But
19 there is still quite a many things that
20 need to be taken care of that often
21 require transporting her.

22 For example, right now, I need to
23 find a neurologist for her because
24 she's beginning to forget things.
25 These plans for congestion pricing

1 don't consider caregivers. When I
2 looked at the presentation that you
3 presented, the disabled people didn't
4 exist, the elderly didn't exist. We
5 are not mentioned and caregivers most
6 of all don't exist in any of these
7 plans.

8 The idea that somebody would be
9 using a car to transport a disabled or
10 elderly person in need is not
11 discussed. This program takes a lot of
12 the best doctors and makes them
13 inaccessible to people in the outer
14 boroughs and any place else that need
15 to drive a person in. When I'm
16 considering a neurologist, I won't be
17 able to consider some of the best
18 neurologists in the city because they
19 will be inaccessible to me. I won't be
20 able to drive her. She uses a walker.

21 We were just in a pandemic.
22 Obviously, transit is not a great idea
23 when you are transporting a vulnerable
24 person. My partner, when he had
25 cancer, his immune system was

1 compromised in the middle of the
2 pandemic. Telling people they have to
3 take transit in that environment is
4 insane.

5 When we look at the people who
6 are behind this, it's transportation
7 alternatives. And they have been not
8 mentioned throughout this presentation,
9 but they are really the masterminds
10 behind this. And they hate drivers.
11 Their early mottos have been "one less
12 car" and currently, if you go to their
13 website and look at their branding,
14 their current thing is "streets are for
15 people".

16 So when I'm transporting someone
17 with cancer or when I was taking care
18 of my mother, I'm not even a human
19 being to transportation alternatives.
20 Only people on bikes apparently are
21 human beings. But not people who need
22 cars. Bicycles have room for one
23 person. The people behind this don't
24 understand that. They don't understand
25 caring for another person and the

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1 responsibilities of that. They live in
2 a fantasy world. And we need to
3 seriously consider the elderly, the
4 disabled and caregivers and stop
5 excluding them from this -- from --
6 from life in the city and our world.

7 Thank you very much. That's all
8 the time I have.

9 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

10 Our next speaker is Sarah
11 Gribetz, followed by Jonathan Miller.

12 Our next speaker is Jonathan
13 Miller, followed by Michael Murray.

14 JONATHAN MILLER: Hi. My name is
15 Elizabeth Miller. I'm here
16 representing me and my husband,
17 Jonathan today. We are residents of
18 the Central Business District. We live
19 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.
20 And unlike two speakers ago, I
21 completely disagree with him. We are
22 lifelong Lower East Siders. My husband
23 is a fifth generation down here, and we
24 completely oppose congestion pricing.
25 And particularly, that it doesn't

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1 exempt residents who live in the CBD.

2 This insane plan is going to cost
3 higher living for everyone. Not just
4 those who own cars. It's going to cost
5 more to get goods and services into
6 this part of the city.

7 My taxes, I live and work in New
8 York City. My taxes pay for these
9 roads, and we should be able to drive
10 on them without having to pay
11 additional money. And every time we
12 come home, we have to pay.

13 Now, we talk about exemptions for
14 low income New Yorkers, \$60,000 is just
15 a joke. But really, I have three
16 children in this city, public
17 transportation on the Lower East Side
18 is a mess. For all you MTA people on
19 here, you should know that the East
20 Broadway subway stop is the 12th most
21 dangerous stop in New York City. I'm
22 not going to take my kids there.

23 The M14 is among the worst bus
24 lines in Manhattan. It's really a
25 shame that this is such a money grab by

1 the MTA, they can't even see how they
2 don't exempt residents of the Central
3 Business District. And this is going
4 to be borne on our backs.

5 So maybe, in some kind of
6 alternative universe, the goals are
7 noble, the MTA has made it clear, it's
8 not really about reducing pollution or
9 air quality. It's really about raising
10 money for them, which frankly is not my
11 problem. And the residents need an
12 immediate exemption for all residents.
13 It should not be income-based.

14 And the last point I want to make
15 is that I use my car in Manhattan, as
16 many people have mentioned on here, to
17 see doctors. My son has hearing loss,
18 requires a lot of special services, and
19 the second we leave the CBD, we are
20 going to be charged. It's really
21 ridiculous and we are completely
22 opposed.

23 And I will cede my time for other
24 people.

25 Thank you.

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1 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

2 Our next speaker is Michael
3 Murray, followed by Daniel Eckman.

4 Michael, you may unmute yourself
5 and begin your remarks.

6 MICHAEL MURRAY: Thank you for
7 this opportunity to comment on the
8 proposed congestion pricing schemes.

9 Mark Twain said there are three
10 kinds of lies, white lies, damn lies
11 and statistics. And the EA's happy
12 findings of little to no adverse impact
13 defy logic. This will be an
14 unmitigated economic disaster for
15 everybody living in the Central
16 Business District and every business
17 located here.

18 Some have said this is an outer
19 borough tax. Well, it's also a huge
20 tax on the people living within the
21 Central Business District. If people
22 outside the district don't want this
23 and people inside the district don't
24 want this, it obviously needs to die.

25 In any case, my wife and I are

1 retired senior citizens living on a
2 fixed income in what would be the
3 Manhattan Central Business District.
4 Moreover, I suffer from severe CoPD and
5 emphysema. When air pollution
6 threatening my very existence, I should
7 be a fan of congestion pricing that
8 improves air quality. But the reality
9 is that congestion pricing, as
10 currently proposed, will be an absolute
11 disaster for my wife and I.

12 My health precludes me from using
13 mass transit. We need to drive to
14 essential medical care. And under the
15 current proposal, we face punishing
16 tolls every time I need to go to New
17 York-Presbyterian to see the lung
18 transplant team, or whenever I need to
19 go to the National Jewish Respiratory
20 Institute at Mount Sinai.

21 Moreover, we face onerous tolls
22 whenever driving to see relatives on
23 Long Island or simply doing something
24 like going to Stew-Leonards in Yonkers.

25 In short, the current proposal

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1 would largely limit our lives to the
2 CBD, virtually erasing our right to
3 travel. No other population would face
4 the hardships that will be imposed on
5 residents of the CBD. Moreover,
6 residents of the CBD are not the cause
7 of traffic congestion. Commuters,
8 trucks and for-hire vehicles cruising
9 our streets while waiting for fares are
10 clogging our streets. And those
11 claiming that residents of the CBD have
12 many options other than driving all
13 seem to assume that people are healthy
14 enough to walk, bike or use mass
15 transit. While the Uber, Lyft and taxi
16 lobbyists are demanding exemptions or
17 asking society to subsidize the very
18 activities that cause congestion.
19 Undermining congestion pricing ability
20 to get more people to use mass transit.

21 Clearly fairness requires
22 exemptions for residents of the CBD,
23 especially seniors and the handicap.
24 If politics precludes fair treatment of
25 residents of the CBD, then we should

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1 follow London's congestion pricing
2 program, where residents of the CBD get
3 a 90-percent discount.

4 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
5 remarks.

6 MICHAEL MURRAY: Additionally,
7 with congestion pricing increase and
8 the cost of --

9 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

10 Our next speaker is Daniel
11 Eckman, followed by Evan Ferrer.

12 DANIEL ECKMAN: Can you hear me?

13 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

14 DANIEL ECKMAN: Good morning. My
15 name is Dan Eckman. I live in
16 Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. I'm a native
17 New Yorker. I'm a small business
18 owner, I'm a middle class father of two
19 and I need my car to earn my living.
20 Not everyone in Manhattan is an
21 investment banker or a web developer,
22 my job involves the use of tools and a
23 ladder. I can't put it on a bicycle
24 and it's illegal to transport those
25 things on a subway.

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1 You want me to pay upwards of one
2 hundred dollars a week, that's five
3 thousand dollars a year, I don't to
4 feed my children. The MTA wants money,
5 the MTA always wants money. Maybe get
6 it from somewhere else this time. You
7 got my sales tax, you've got my state
8 income tax, you've got my city income
9 tax, you've got an MTA surcharge on my
10 vehicle registration and my cell phone
11 bill. I'm pretty sure you've got one
12 on my home phone and my internet
13 service. I haven't checked that
14 recently, but I'm assuming that it's
15 somewhere in the fine print.

16 The city wants to work on the
17 congesting. The congestion is a
18 created problem. You showed a graph at
19 the beginning of this that said that
20 since 2010, suddenly, congestion
21 spiked. Well, guess what? In 2011, we
22 went from having 13,000 medallion taxis
23 to having an extra 80,000 Uber drivers.
24 And Manhattan alone has 350 miles of
25 bike lanes. And you eliminated all the

1 available legal parking for private
2 vehicles pretty much in the Central
3 Business District, which means that
4 everybody on the road is driving around
5 looking for a parking space.

6 This is a created problem that
7 now we are being asked to pay for. And
8 it's fundamentally unfair. You know,
9 we are talking about people who need
10 money to feed their families.

11 Manhattan represents a massive portion
12 of everyone's income when you live in
13 the greater New York City area, and we
14 can't be held to account for poor
15 planning on the part of the city
16 government.

17 You know, we can't continue to
18 hold, basically, a war on the middle
19 class. You know, if you want to free
20 up parking, then fewer people would be
21 driving around looking for a parking
22 space. If you maybe audited the bike
23 lanes to see whether or not anyone is
24 using those 350 miles of road at a
25 volume that justifies the amount of

1 squeeze that's been created for all the
2 cars that you are now saying are
3 congested, maybe you'd discover that it
4 was actually not a good use of the
5 space.

6 I am not anti bike. I have a
7 bike. I love to ride my bike. But the
8 fact is, I know when I'm driving
9 through Manhattan all the time, that
10 those bike lanes are empty. And every
11 block is two fewer parking spaces and
12 two fewer parking spaces is two more
13 people circling the block all day
14 looking for a place to put their car.
15 And where they wind up settling into a
16 lot where I'm going to go ahead and
17 assume that part of that tax pays for
18 the MTA, too.

19 So ultimately, this is about
20 blaming the wrong people and holding
21 people to account who don't have the
22 money.

23 Thank you for your time.

24 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

25 Our next speaker is Evan Ferrer,

1 followed by our 20th speaker on the
2 list, Steven Salvesen.

3 EVAN FERRER: Hello. Thank you
4 for having me. My name is Evan. I am
5 a lifelong Manhattan resident. This is
6 my second time testifying on behalf of
7 the Central Business District tolling,
8 which Manhattan so desperately needs.

9 The fact is there are too many
10 cars on the city street. I live and
11 bike on Manhattan island and I can
12 testify that the bike lanes are full.
13 There are plenty of cyclists. Whatever
14 the previous guy just said is
15 absolutely untrue. In fact, sidewalks
16 are so congested that I regularly see
17 wheelchairs and elderly and disabled
18 people in the bike lanes. In fact, we
19 should be widening sidewalks.

20 We need to take space away from
21 the cars. We need to fundamentally
22 change how we think about
23 transportation. I'm sorry, not
24 everyone needs a car. There are good
25 doctors in Queens, there are good

1 doctors in Brooklyn and there are
2 plenty of business opportunities in
3 those boroughs and north of 60th Street
4 as well.

5 I -- I -- we need this congestion
6 pricing. Please don't give into these
7 people. Please. We need it. Okay.
8 And in fact, I'd -- I'd go as far as to
9 say the good people of the Bronx,
10 Fordham Road, they can use congestion
11 pricing. What about Atlantic Avenue in
12 Brooklyn by the Barclays Center, I
13 think people that live there could
14 probably use a road diet and congestion
15 pricing as well.

16 So please, we need this. We need
17 it badly. We needed it yesterday. We
18 needed it years ago. So I'm begging
19 you, don't listen to these people.
20 Please give the people of Manhattan
21 what they need.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Steven
25 Salvesen, followed by Ming-Yi Smith.

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1 Our next speaker is Ming-Yi
2 Smith, followed by Quentin Heilbroner.

3 You may begin your remarks.

4 MING-YI SMITH: Thank you. My
5 name is Ming-Yi Smith. I'm a resident
6 of the Lower East Side, Manhattan. I'm
7 also a mother of two children, and I am
8 part of a commit group that
9 unfortunately the Department of
10 Education has not been able to offer
11 our children a ride up to their school.

12 Our children were accepted, so I
13 represent three other families. Our
14 children were accepted into TAG Young
15 Scholars, which is on the upper
16 Manhattan. It's a public school and
17 because we live outside of the
18 transportation zone, we have to
19 actually take our children to school
20 every day by ourselves.

21 The DOE has failed us. I have
22 appealed many times. Even though we
23 live in the same district, we cannot
24 take the children on the school bus.
25 So my children have to rely on us to go

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1 up and down every day to go to school.
2 This is only just for going to school.

3 So by charging us this extra
4 congestion pricing, it's -- it's an
5 extra tax again. This is middle-income
6 families. Just because we live on
7 Lower East Side. I think you are
8 missing the part of where the wealthy
9 people are living. They're on the
10 Upper East Side and the Upper West
11 Side. They are the investment bankers.
12 We are just regular people.

13 Secondly, my husband is also --
14 he's an artist. So he relies on
15 driving with his equipment to film
16 sets -- again, he leaves -- he has to
17 leave the city, leave where we live in
18 order to commute to work. So all these
19 taxes is doing is just -- is -- is just
20 taxing us for no reason. We didn't
21 choose -- we didn't choose to move to
22 Lower East Side before this happened.
23 And now this is forcing everyone to pay
24 an extra fee.

25 Secondly, when I was looking

1 at -- there are two points I want to
2 make, one the speaker from Queens was
3 excellent, on point. Uber is the
4 reason for congestion pricing. Anyone
5 can become an Uber driver or a Lyft
6 driver. If you really want to restrict
7 traffic, that's where you need to
8 really focus on.

9 Secondly, when I was looking at
10 the presentation earlier, it had said
11 that, you know, maybe there's a
12 thousand people that has really chimed
13 in, we live in an eight-million-people
14 city. This is not some public
15 outreach. You are failing on public
16 outreach if you are really looking to
17 hear from -- hear back from everybody.
18 1,000 out of 8 million, that's less
19 than 0.01 percent. So this is not a
20 public hearing outreach attempt at all.
21 Not within New York City. Certainly
22 not to the people who live here.

23 I appreciate your time and thank
24 you so much for listening.

25 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

1 Our next speaker is Quentin
2 Heilbroner, followed by Leslie Stevens.

3 Our next speaker is Leslie
4 Stevens, followed by Sophia Kakarala.

5 Leslie, you may unmute and begin
6 your remarks.

7 LESLIE STEVENS: Thank you. I
8 don't know, I'm going to leave my
9 camera off just because it seems to be
10 glitching a bit.

11 Thank you for listening to my
12 input. I live in New Jersey, unlike
13 most people here, and I do volunteer
14 work specifically to combat climate
15 change in New York City.

16 Just this week, a British friend
17 who was visiting, visiting New York
18 told me she was shocked and appalled by
19 how many passenger cars, vans and
20 trucks are in the city. London's focus
21 is on clean air. In fact, they have
22 these clean air zones. They don't call
23 it congestion pricing anymore. So to
24 the points that some people are making
25 about the MTA, the MTA seems to be

1 focused on money as opposed to reducing
2 pollution and improving air quality.

3 So I encourage -- that seems to
4 be like an add-on, but I think that's
5 got to be a very important part of this
6 whole CBDTP. I am however, strongly
7 recommending that New York City adopts
8 the CBDTP as soon as possible. This
9 congestion pricing plan looks pretty
10 reasonable to me. And certainly as a
11 first pass. And I strongly
12 recommend -- I have several
13 recommendations.

14 The first is absolutely no
15 exemptions for perhaps two years so
16 that the overall impact on congestion
17 can be examined more across at least a
18 couple years.

19 Second of all, I do -- I am quite
20 empathetic for the families with school
21 children and for the elderly who need
22 medical visits or other people who need
23 medical visits. If there is a way to
24 make a daytime exemption for those
25 folks for the period of time they need

1 it, perhaps that would at least
2 alleviate some of the issues we've
3 already heard.

4 I'm also concerned, number three,
5 is about the emissions impact on the
6 Cross Bronx area and specifically the
7 E -- Environmental Justice
8 communities --

9 Number four is, I also think it's
10 crazy that we have so many Uber drivers
11 in SUVs. I think the SUVs and large
12 vehicles should be treated as a
13 separate category from passenger cars
14 and taxis. So I think that the SUVs
15 actually should get taxed until they
16 become electric.

17 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
18 remarks.

19 LESLIE STEVENS: I'd really like
20 to see more focus on --

21 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

22 LESLIE STEVENS: Thank you.

23 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
24 Sophia Kakarala, followed by Brian
25 Frisch.

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1 Our next speaker is Brian Frisch,
2 followed by Rocco Lacertosa.

3 BRIAN FRITSCH: Hi. My name is
4 Brian Fritsch. I'm a resident of
5 Brooklyn, and father of a
6 three-year-old and 11-month-old who
7 does not own a car.

8 As such, I'm extremely reliant on
9 our subway system for moving around the
10 city. Hauling two car seats and a
11 stroller in the cabs and taking other
12 modes of transportation simply not
13 possible for me when I'm parenting
14 alone, which has made me dependent on
15 subway stations with elevators, of
16 which we have far too few across the
17 city.

18 Clearly, these accessibility
19 issues are not new and one that
20 thousands of New York area residents
21 deal with on a daily basis. Mostly in
22 far more complicated situations in
23 mind.

24 That's why I was pleased to see
25 building new elevator service in a wide

1 range of stations is key part of the
2 current MTA capital plan that
3 congestion pricing will help fund, and
4 also that the MTA is committed to
5 making nearly all their stations ADA
6 accessible within the next few decades.

7 I'm also please to see signal
8 upgrades, electric buses and new trains
9 included alongside exciting projects
10 like Penn Station Access. Many of
11 these improvements could significantly
12 be delayed without congestion pricing,
13 and we must invest in public transit
14 now.

15 As we near the one-year
16 anniversary of Hurricane Ida tomorrow
17 and the ten-year anniversary of Super
18 storm Sandy in October, I'm also very
19 hopeful that congestion pricing will
20 help New York City be more
21 environmentally sound and a healthier
22 city that elevates mass transit over
23 polluting cars. This will help improve
24 our air quality and reduce asthma rates
25 for our children. Help us achieve with

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1 fewer traffic and pedestrian fatalities
2 and reduce emissions that will help us
3 reduce our carbon footprint overall.

4 We desperately need a city,
5 region and world that will ultimately
6 be a healthier place for my kids to
7 live. More resilient to the storms
8 that we are likely to come see more
9 frequently in the future, and one that
10 is more equitable for the millions of
11 New Yorkers that don't own a car and
12 rely on our subway and rail system.
13 That's why I strongly support
14 congestion pricing to help make that
15 vision a reality.

16 Thank you to the MTA and the
17 state for your work in moving this
18 project forward.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is Rocco
22 Lacertosa, followed by Edward Chiani.

23 Rocco, you may unmute yourself
24 and begin your remarks.

25 ROCCO LACERTOSA: Thank you. Can

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1 you hear me?

2 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

3 ROCCO LACERTOSA: Thank you.

4 Good morning. Members of the Traffic
5 Mobility Review Board. My name is
6 Rocco Lacertosa, I'm the chief
7 executive officer of the New York State
8 Energy Coalition. We serve as the
9 voice of the renewable bio diesel and
10 heating oil industry in the five
11 boroughs of New York City and Nassau
12 and Suffolk Counties.

13 I'm testifying today to express
14 the grave concerns among my membership,
15 regarding the Central Business District
16 Toll Program, the different tolling
17 structure scenarios to commercial
18 vehicles and trucks as outlined in the
19 Environmental Assessment and the impact
20 it would have on our industry and by
21 extension, our customers.

22 My members make multiple trips in
23 and out of Manhattan all day long,
24 every day of the year. And it goes up
25 exponentially in the wintertime during

1 the heating season. From October to
2 April.

3 We deliver with large trucks. We
4 send in service vans to repair and
5 replace heating equipment. And again,
6 these are multiple trips every day of
7 the year here. These multiple trips
8 through the Central Business District
9 will equate to increased cost to our
10 companies, which would thus have to be
11 passed onto consumers, which no one
12 really wants.

13 This, of course -- this outcome
14 benefits no one and certainly is not
15 one we wish to implement at a time when
16 the cost of living and the cost of
17 goods is certainly exorbitantly high.
18 We urge the Traffic Mobility Review
19 Board to consider alternative tolling
20 structures for commercial vehicles and
21 trucks who are passing through the CBD
22 for work-related purposes, including
23 but not limited to credits, reasonable
24 and fair discounts or exemptions.

25 As I mentioned, we represent

1 companies that engage in time sensitive
2 emergency work in a timely manner for
3 consumers who are experiencing issues
4 for both commercial and residential
5 locations. Similar to the way Con
6 Edison performs emergency work
7 throughout the city for electricity,
8 gas and steam work.

9 We have performed this work at a
10 number of city and state owned
11 locations, including nursing homes.
12 hospitals, schools, low income housing
13 complexes and many other facilities
14 that are heated during the cold New
15 York winters. It is our understanding
16 that under Section 1704-A, Subsection
17 3A of the MTA's Reform and Traffic
18 Mobility Act, the Triborough Bridge and
19 Tunnel Authority can implement the plan
20 for credits, discounts and exemptions
21 for tolls paid on bridges and crossings
22 informed by the Traffic Mobility Review
23 Board's recommendations.

24 We respectfully request that the
25 board consider our request and the

1 importance of our work, particularly
2 during emergencies as temperatures
3 become more extreme and deadly, and
4 consider exemptions for emergency
5 vehicles and for diesel oil, bio heat
6 and bio heating trucks be considered
7 emergency vehicles for the purposes of
8 the CBD Tolling Program.

9 I thank you for your time and
10 appreciate the opportunity to give my
11 testimony today.

12 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

13 Our next speaker is Edward
14 Chiani, followed by Arnold Hamilton.

15 EDWARD CHIANI: Hello. Good
16 evening -- good morning. Can you hear
17 me?

18 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

19 EDWARD CHIANI: Okay. I had a
20 whole bunch of stuff to talk about, and
21 I've been watching for the last couple
22 of days. And there's nothing I am
23 going to say that you haven't already
24 heard a million times over. So I just
25 got to bring up a few things to

1 reiterate.

2 There was a guy before that said
3 don't listen to us, the people who
4 don't -- who are against it. I'm here
5 to say, listen to the people who are
6 for it. Because nobody can give you a
7 better reason of why this is wrong than
8 those people right there. Those people
9 who are for it, that say go for it
10 either aren't impacted, are people who
11 hate cars, who walk around five feet
12 from them, they don't work or they do
13 work and they work down the block from
14 where they live in the city. I can't
15 afford that.

16 I had to leave the city and come
17 back into Queens for my office because
18 I couldn't afford -- well, during the
19 riots -- no, I'm sorry, peaceful
20 protests, most of the places I worked
21 had to close down. So now I'm home.
22 By going to the city to do work when I
23 need to drive. I work on computers and
24 network for small companies that can't
25 afford the big people. And now that I

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1 have to pay -- how much more to -- to
2 come into Queens, then I might have to
3 go to Brooklyn and come back into
4 Queens and then into Manhattan.

5 Every time I hear that, I got to
6 pay to do that on the bridge, and the
7 tolls on the tunnels. Are you taxing
8 me to use something that I already pay
9 for? Isn't that a double tax? A
10 triple tax? Isn't that taxation
11 without representation? Because the
12 money is not going to me who is a car
13 driver. It's going to the MTA. The
14 same people who are going to monitor
15 whether or not I'm driving around and
16 keep going. And -- and then turn
17 around, and I'm going to trust the same
18 people to monitor that? They can't
19 even monitor the subway right, the
20 switches and everything else.

21 New Yorkers want to help. We all
22 work together. You want to get more
23 money from us? No problem. When I go
24 register my car, put a surcharge on top
25 of it. But don't charge me every day,

1 every time I drive. And the other
2 thing really, you want a million
3 dollars? Go ask de Blasio where he put
4 that 1.9 million nobody can find, or
5 his wife who stole the \$850,000. Maybe
6 you should use that to build up
7 business.

8 Just think about what you are
9 doing. The MTA doesn't have the right
10 to tax. It says it right there. Let's
11 be reasonable about this. Find other
12 ways to --

13 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
14 remarks.

15 EDWARD CHIANI: Thank you.

16 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

17 Our next speaker is Arnold
18 Hamilton, followed by Peter Triestman.

19 Our next speaker is Peter
20 Triestman, followed by our 30th speaker
21 on the list, Gerald Adames.

22 Our next speaker is Gerald
23 Adames, followed by Michelle Petelicki.

24 Gerald, you may unmute yourself
25 and begin your remarks.

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1 GERALD ADAMES: I want to
2 thank --

3 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

4 GERALD ADAMES: Good morning. I
5 want to thank the panel for the work
6 that they put into the -- into the
7 assessment and its tenets and what it
8 would produce and the hypothesis behind
9 some of the positive things that could
10 come out of this.

11 However, as a Yonkers resident
12 commuting into Manhattan every day,
13 naturally, I'm going to be against
14 this. This is not cost or another
15 charge that I have to pay. So I'm just
16 trying to look at it from a positive
17 lens. In my last call, I asked that
18 you provide some sort of a discount for
19 electric vehicles, since they do honor
20 part of the initiatives or promote some
21 of the initiatives that you are putting
22 forth, which is noise -- noise
23 reduction and, you know, cleaner air.
24 Right. Less CO2 emissions right at a
25 rate of 50 percent for crossing those

1 tolls for electric vehicles.

2 By doing that, you will be
3 promoting electric vehicles. You will
4 also be broadening the Horizons of the
5 MTA to -- so they can say hey, look, we
6 are promoting greener skies, right.
7 But I challenge you to look at this
8 skeptically or critically, rather. So
9 one of the tenets of congestion pricing
10 is that it will reduce traffic. We do
11 not know that. We don't know that
12 definitively. Your hypothesis is that
13 traffic will be reduced. But you don't
14 know that. Simply because you are not
15 able to get into the minds of the
16 rider.

17 Many of the people will still
18 continue to come into New York. They
19 will. I will -- I'm figuring over
20 95 percent. So it's -- it's -- it's
21 not going to be a rate at which it's
22 going to actually be influential in a
23 way that you are hoping it will be.
24 Another tenet of congestion pricing is
25 that it will create cleaner air. We

1 also do not see the signs on how that
2 will come about simply because if the
3 toll is paid at the same amount or same
4 amount of vehicles are passing through
5 the cordoned zone or zone to be tolled,
6 that are already passing through today,
7 then there will not be cleaner air. It
8 will simply be the same amount of gas
9 vehicles going through there.

10 So another tenet is that
11 congestion pricing will raise money for
12 the MTA. And that is true. That's
13 exactly true. And you can expect that
14 there are going to be many lawsuits.
15 This congestion pricing will not go
16 into effect until two, three years
17 after you put it through because of the
18 disparate impact on people of color,
19 disabled people, and so many other
20 people, that unfortunately this will
21 not be able to move forward.

22 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
23 remarks.

24 GERALD ADAMES: So thank you so
25 much.

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1 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
2 Michelle Petelicki, followed by Andrew
3 Grossman.

4 Michelle Petelicki?

5 MICHELLE PETELICKI: Hi. Can you
6 hear me?

7 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

8 MICHELLE PETELICKI: Thank you.
9 My video for some reason is not
10 working, so I apologize. But good
11 morning. My is Michelle Petelicki.
12 And I own Panorama Tours, a small
13 woman-owned bus company in New Jersey.
14 We are located in Bergen County, which
15 is triangled exactly ten miles from the
16 George Washington Bridge and ten miles
17 from the Lincoln Tunnel.

18 I'm testifying today to ask that
19 while working on the parameters of this
20 program, that you recognize that all
21 buses, both private and public, are a
22 part of the solution to the goals you
23 wish to accomplish such as reducing
24 congestion and improving air quality.

25 Buses are not contributors to the

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1 problem. Therefore, I ask that an
2 exemption for all buses be built into
3 the final CBD Tolling Program.

4 Let's talk about congestion. I
5 took this opportunity to put together
6 for you real data from my small
7 company. Although we predominately
8 service in New Jersey market, in a
9 12-month time frame, Panorama took 533
10 unique trips, averaging 47 passengers
11 into the CBD. If each passenger
12 decided to drive themselves into the
13 CBD for their trip for that show or for
14 that restaurant, it would have been an
15 additional 25,051 vehicles in the
16 district.

17 The demographic of those 25,051
18 passengers stretched across all
19 socioeconomic classes, all races and
20 all religions. It included all ages
21 from babies to seniors, and because our
22 fleet consisted ADA accessible
23 vehicles, we were able to bring
24 disabled passengers into the district
25 that otherwise may not have been able

1 to get there.

2 We transported residents as well
3 as visitors both domestic and
4 international, without adding
5 additional cars or worse yet, drivers
6 that may be unfamiliar with driving New
7 York City streets. If an additional
8 expense such as a toll will be added to
9 private buses, the cost may not be
10 advantageous to the riding public,
11 ultimately deterring them from using
12 this service.

13 Now, let's move to air quality.
14 Buses today are very different from
15 what they were 20 years when I entered
16 this business. Buses have always been
17 recognized as being one of the most
18 fuel-efficient modes of transportation,
19 getting approximately 280 passenger
20 miles per gallon, versus a car that
21 gets approximately 30.

22 Today's buses, however, include
23 technology that does even more. Every
24 bus is manufactured with an engine that
25 requires diesel exhaust fluid to run.

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1 This fluid breaks down harmful
2 emissions into non-hazardous nitrogen
3 and water. Therefore reduces bus's
4 emissions by 90 percent.

5 In addition to the -- every bus
6 has diesel particulate filters designed
7 to capture and store exhaust soot,
8 keeping it from being expelled into the
9 air that we breath. These are not the
10 old smoky buses that one may remember
11 from years ago.

12 To wrap up, I hope I was able to
13 provide you with real examples of how
14 buses, both private and public, are
15 helpful to the success of the CBD
16 Tolling Program. To make sure that
17 private buses continue to be a viable
18 service for the public, an exemption
19 must be made for those vehicles as this
20 program is deployed.

21 Thank you for your time.

22 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Andrew
24 Grossman, followed by Darrin Gitlitz.

25 Our next speaker is Darrin

1 Gitlitz, followed by Dylan Yen.

2 Darrin, you may begin your
3 remarks.

4 Darrin, you are unmuted, but we
5 cannot hear you.

6 Darrin, because we cannot hear
7 you, we will move to our next speaker.

8 Our next speaker is Dylan Yen,
9 followed by Marietta Viera.

10 DYLAN YEN: Hi. Can you hear me?

11 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

12 DYLAN YEN: Great. Sorry I can't
13 join my video. It's technical
14 difficulties.

15 I am in favor of the congestion
16 pricing program. However, in
17 principle. Having lived in London and
18 Singapore. However, I don't believe
19 that the implementation of this
20 program, as prescribed by the MTA, is
21 quite frankly a great idea.

22 As a lot of the other speakers
23 have mentioned, a lot of these middle
24 class families, small businesses, what
25 have you, rely on their cars or their

1 commercial vehicles to come into
2 Manhattan to perform essential
3 services. Thus, and there is no other
4 alternative, I believe the gentlemen
5 who said it is illegal for him to bring
6 a ladder onto the subway and quite
7 frankly, it would be quite impractical
8 to bring such a thing onto the subway.

9 So in principle, I am in favor of
10 it. As I can see the results of it.
11 However, the implementation and
12 infrastructure that currently exist in
13 the city does not actually support this
14 kind of thing.

15 Furthermore, I don't --
16 furthermore, I think that this -- I am
17 worried that this will turn into
18 another billion-dollar slush fund used
19 to bailout Upstate ski resorts that has
20 historically happened before.

21 So in summary, I don't think that
22 supporting this will be a good idea, in
23 principle. However, I believe that in
24 the future, if -- if we go back to the
25 drawing board and establish the

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1 infrastructure needed to implement such
2 program, then I would support it.

3 Thank you for your time. I will
4 yield.

5 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Marietta
7 Viera, followed by Nicole Love.

8 Our next speaker is Nicole Love,
9 followed by David Geizhals.

10 Our next speaker is David
11 Geizhals, followed by Hassan Elhelwa.

12 Our next speaker is Hassan
13 Elhelwa, followed by Melodie Bryant.

14 Our next speaker is Melodie
15 Bryant, followed by our 40th speaker on
16 the list, Sam Pirozzolo.

17 Melodie, you may unmute and begin
18 your remarks.

19 MELODIE BRYANT: Thank you. And
20 thanks to the members of this panel for
21 holding these hearings and taking my
22 testimony today.

23 I am begging you to institute
24 congestion pricing as soon as possible.
25 It's done in other cities. New York

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1 can do it too, and we really need it.
2 The planet is telling us right now that
3 we need to do it. How many 90-degree
4 days in a row do we need to experience?

5 I live in Chelsea, to me is the
6 central living district. I'm a strong
7 supporter of congestion pricing and
8 will back the choice of column G in the
9 recap of tolling scenarios. Although
10 this would exempt taxis -- although
11 this would not exempt taxis, an
12 industry that has unconscionably
13 affected by the introduction of
14 for-hire vehicles, it's the most
15 responsible environmental alternative.

16 And it is only fair to the rest
17 of us considering who is driving. As
18 much as they complain, statistics have
19 shown that drivers earn twice the
20 amount of people riding transit. Since
21 the MTA's own studies show that
22 85 percent of people already commute by
23 transit, we are talking about a loud
24 minority who drive into the city or
25 within the city at will, or vested

1 interest like E-ZPass, which has been
2 trying to influence our elected, many
3 outside the city can park and ride, but
4 they choose not to. And it's ironic
5 that their elected whine about being in
6 transit deserts that they themselves
7 can vote to institute a transit for.

8 They care nothing for the
9 environment in Manhattan, which they
10 are just spoiling for the residents in
11 it. I doubt they will welcome a
12 million cars a day in their
13 neighborhoods as we have.

14 As it is, we now have a hundred
15 thousand additional cars in our streets
16 since before the pandemic. Ubers are a
17 big part of that. And drivers are
18 increasingly enraged and crazy. We
19 live with this. They jump the curve on
20 regular basis and murder us, they run
21 lights, they block crosswalks and drive
22 us into traffic. And traffic deaths
23 are higher now than they were before
24 Vision Zero was instituted.

25 Meanwhile, the world is going off

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1 a cliff because of carbon emissions and
2 the greatest single percentage of that
3 is coming from private cars. In a city
4 with the biggest transportation network
5 in the nation, it's absurd that we live
6 in this scenario. The opposition
7 objects to paying as much as \$23 to
8 enter the city at peak. We in turn are
9 asking if they'd pay that fee to
10 discourage their driving and mitigate a
11 fraction of the cost it incurs on the
12 rest of us. Asthma, lung cancer,
13 learning disability from lead, stink,
14 noise, aggression, and theft of our
15 public space and traffic deaths.

16 The answer is not to let these
17 drivers steamroll over the rest of us.
18 But to make transit so convenient and
19 attractive that even they will prefer
20 to use it to the hassle of driving into
21 the city.

22 For city drivers with kids or
23 elderly, we have taxis which even if
24 you took five a day, would cost less
25 than having a car and paying for

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1 parking and gas. Beyond carve outs
2 with people with disabilities, there
3 should be no carve outs in congestion
4 pricing. Column G comes as close to
5 that as possible. Congestion pricing
6 should happen as fast as possible.
7 Please. We need this.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

10 Our next speaker is Sam
11 Pirozzolo, followed by Louise Torres.

12 Sam, you may unmute yourself and
13 begin your remarks.

14 SAM PIROZZOLO: You hear me?

15 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

16 SAM PIROZZOLO: Okay. My name is
17 Sam Pirozzolo. I'm a lifelong Staten
18 Islander, and I kind of have to chuckle
19 a little bit when I was listening to
20 some of the legislators speaking
21 earlier today.

22 So first, I want to say thank you
23 for the opportunity to be here. I
24 really like the direct my comments to
25 my fellow New Yorkers. It was funny to

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1 hear the legislators all say that they
2 kind of want to get an exemption for
3 their people.

4 As a future and potential future
5 legislator, I kind of have to agree. I
6 would like to help you get that
7 exemption also. Except I think we need
8 to get an exemption for all New
9 Yorkers. Not just for your New
10 Yorkers. Just like red light cameras
11 and speed cameras had nothing to do
12 with safety, congestion pricing really
13 has nothing to do with congestion and
14 everything to do with pricing.

15 We are talking about this MTA
16 board, and I don't mean to insult
17 anyone, but this MTA board is appointed
18 by elected officials. New York City
19 voters have the opportunity to stop
20 this by the people that you elect.
21 Whether congestion pricing happens or
22 not, this is really just an opportunity
23 to warm you up. So instead of having a
24 23-dollar toll, maybe we'll have an
25 eight-dollar toll and everybody should

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1 be relieved because it's not the \$8,
2 you know, or the \$23 that it was
3 supposed to be.

4 The bottom line is, congestion
5 pricing was a bad idea ten years ago,
6 it's a bad idea today and it will be a
7 bad idea in the future. Even the MTA,
8 I don't know the studies you showed
9 earlier, but even the newspapers and
10 the media have been saying that it does
11 not show any effect that it's going to
12 reduce congestions, that it's going to
13 reduce greenhouse emissions. All it's
14 going to do is continue to pick the
15 pockets of every New Yorker now.

16 On Staten Island, we've lived
17 with this plight for a long time.
18 We've been paying the toll to go to
19 work and come back, you know, go to and
20 from work. This is really just another
21 tax just like the speed camera, just
22 like the red light camera.

23 So I want everybody to understand
24 that this board is appointed by your
25 local politicians, your local

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1 politicians have the ability to stop
2 this and you need to put the squeeze on
3 them.

4 Congestion pricing is a bad idea,
5 and I will fight against it every
6 single day I can. Thank you so much.
7 I'm going to yield the rest of my time.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Louise
10 Torres, followed by Bill Feinberg.

11 Our next speaker is Bill
12 Feinberg, followed by Miyer Florez.

13 Our next speaker is Miyer Florez,
14 followed by Thomas Miller.

15 Our next speaker is Thomas
16 Miller, followed by Cressida Connolly.

17 THOMAS MILLER: Hello. Can you
18 hear me?

19 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

20 THOMAS MILLER: Hi. I'm Thomas
21 Miller. I'm a resident of Hell's
22 Kitchen and the CBD. And I've raised
23 my family, four kids, two of whom are
24 still at home with us here for quite
25 some time.

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1 I do own a car, and I have
2 garaged that car ever since I moved to
3 Hell's Kitchen almost 40 years ago or
4 so.

5 I think we are very ambivalent
6 about the congestion pricing problem
7 because if you walk down the street
8 from our apartment at 49th and
9 9th Avenue any afternoon, you see the
10 problem in action. Thousands of cars
11 jammed, gridlocked streets across town,
12 you can't get there. It's awful and
13 it's gotten a lot worse.

14 However, the implementation of
15 the plan I think is quite unfair to us
16 residents of the CBD. So we use our
17 car not to run around Manhattan in the
18 CBD, but to get out of Manhattan, quite
19 frankly. But does that mean when we
20 come back to our home, I'm going to be
21 taxed or tolled for going the three
22 blocks from the West Side Highway to
23 our garage on west 50th Street? It
24 makes no sense at all. We're already
25 paying an enormous amount of money just

1 to garage the car and of course the
2 property -- the city parking tax kicks
3 in.

4 Now, there's a simple solution
5 for exempting CBD residents like myself
6 who garage their cars, keep them off
7 the streets. We are not even looking
8 for a parking space, and that is to
9 exempt everyone who has a New York City
10 parking tax exemption certificate
11 automatically. We are putting our cars
12 in the garage during the week. We are
13 not using them then. We are getting
14 out of town, frankly, on the weekend
15 and that's it.

16 So CBD residents, I think should
17 be fully exempted. And those who don't
18 park their cars in the garage should
19 still get an exemption. And you can
20 easily do that by syncing up with the
21 vehicle registration information that's
22 already on file with New York State.

23 Secondly, it's clear that the
24 real problem with congestion is caused
25 largely, not uniquely, by vehicles

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1 for-hire. You benchmarked 2010 as the
2 date when there was relatively little
3 congestion compared to today. Well,
4 guess what? In 2010, there was no
5 Uber. It was incorporated in San
6 Francisco in 2011. And since then the
7 vehicle for-hire number of rides per
8 day have gone from zero in 2010 to
9 600,000 per day according to the TLC's
10 own statistics this year.

11 So if you walk around during
12 congestion, you'll see the TC plates
13 everywhere. We see them all the time.
14 So unfortunately, while this is not a
15 job protection, it's a congestion
16 reduction hearing, Uber and all their
17 vehicle for-hire drivers or companies
18 need to be taxed more for their
19 licenses and Uber and those companies
20 should provide the city with
21 information about how much time each
22 and every one of their drivers spend
23 within the CBD during the workweek.
24 And they know that. Because that's how
25 their app works. They know where their

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1 drivers are at all times, for how much
2 time and the city should get that
3 information.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Cressida
7 Connolly, followed by Mohammed Islam.

8 Our next speaker is Mohammed
9 Islam, followed by Greywolf Richards.

10 Our next speaker is Greywolf
11 Richards, followed by Nomi Castillo.

12 Our next speaker is Nomi
13 Castillo, followed by Nevena Kocic.

14 Our next speaker is Nevena Kocic,
15 followed by Tony Melone.

16 Our next speaker and 50th on the
17 list is Tony Melone, followed by
18 Patricia O'Rourke.

19 TONY MELONE: Hi. Thanks so much
20 for having this hearing.

21 My name is Tony Melone. I've
22 lived in New York City for 22 years.
23 Currently reside in Brooklyn. I'm a
24 father of two kids in elementary
25 school.

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1 I'm very disappointed to hear
2 some elected officials speaking in
3 opposition of this program because it's
4 clear that our city is in a traffic
5 crisis with rising numbers of deaths
6 and injuries from crashes, and it's
7 clear that our world is in a climate
8 crisis as we see in the news every day.

9 Maintaining the status quo is not
10 an option. If your area does not have
11 good transit options, your
12 representatives should be pushing for
13 those, things like bus rapid transit,
14 rather than doubling down on car
15 commuting.

16 I want congesting pricing because
17 I want a city where my kids can safely
18 bike from my house two miles to their
19 schools, where our streets and even out
20 sidewalks aren't choked with cars every
21 day. I want us to meet our climate
22 goals and to cut air pollution that
23 causes asthma in so many kids. And I
24 want to reduce the thousands of
25 horrific injuries and deaths drivers

1 cause on our streets every year.

2 Congestion pricing is an
3 important step towards less driving and
4 a more livable city for everyone. I'm
5 still in physical therapy after a
6 raging driver assaulted me six months
7 ago. He ran me off the road and beat
8 me up. I was riding a Citi Bike, and I
9 confronted him about parking in the
10 bike lane. I don't recommend
11 confronting drivers. I should have
12 filed a 3-1-1 report from a safe
13 distance instead. The cops never
14 caught that driver because he had one
15 of those opaque license plate covers
16 the drivers use to beat speed cameras
17 and tolls. That's another problem we
18 need to solve.

19 But back to congestion pricing.
20 For the few people who actually need to
21 drive to Lower Manhattan, like a
22 plumber, a carpenter, a professional
23 harpist, they probably come out ahead
24 too under this program because they'll
25 be able to book more work and have more

1 free time when we reduce congestion and
2 travel times and get solo commuters to
3 use other options. And with the money
4 congestion pricing raises, we can
5 improve MTA service so the majority of
6 New Yorkers who don't own cars can get
7 around more easily.

8 I owned a car the first ten years
9 I lived in New York City. I thought I
10 needed it. As a freelance musician.
11 But my life improved so much when I got
12 rid of my car. I saved money and now I
13 never have to worry about where I'm
14 going to park and when I need to move
15 the car. My neighbors benefit too from
16 a little less pollution and a little
17 less congestion.

18 It's hard to give up your most
19 expensive, personal possession, which
20 is also a status symbol in our culture.
21 But if we want a safer, healthier city,
22 we need to use every tool to discourage
23 driving and car ownership, and we can't
24 give exemptions to city workers'
25 personal cars. Our city should set an

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1 example by starting with its own
2 workforce and discouraging drivers.

3 Congestion pricing is an
4 essential step to getting us to a
5 better future.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

8 Our next speaker is Patricia
9 O'Rourke, followed by Stephen Graham.

10 Our next speaker is Stephen
11 Graham, followed by Jonathan DeCamp.

12 Our next speaker is Jonathan
13 DeCamp, followed by Alberto Alamo.

14 Jonathan, you may begin your
15 remarks.

16 JONATHAN DECAMP: Good morning.
17 My name is Jonathan DeCamp, and I'm the
18 vice president of DeCamp Bus Lines in
19 Montclair, New Jersey.

20 DeCamp Bus Lines provides motor
21 coach commuter services to Northeast
22 New Jersey and New York City residents.
23 Prior to the pandemic, we carried over
24 6500 daily passengers between New
25 Jersey and the Port Authority bus

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1 terminal. In addition to motor coach
2 commuter services, we also provide
3 motor coach charter services, taking
4 groups to the many tourists attractions
5 in and around New York City.

6 First, I would like to say that I
7 support congestion pricing. I support
8 anything we can do to reduce the number
9 of individual cars on the roads and New
10 York City streets. However, I do not
11 support tolling buses. Buses should be
12 exempt. All buses at all times should
13 be exempt from the congestion pricing.

14 Buses do precisely what the law
15 intends to do. They take cars off city
16 streets, reduce the carbon footprint
17 all without comprising economic
18 benefits. Stockholm, London and
19 Singapore congestion pricing programs
20 recognize full size buses as part of
21 the solution and not a part of the
22 problem, and therefore exempted from
23 paying the congestion pricing fee.

24 I urge the panel to follow their
25 lead. We should do everything within

1 our power to incentivize the use of
2 buses and encourage commuters and
3 visitors to New York City to leave
4 their cars at home.

5 The last thing we should be doing
6 is discouraging use of mass transit by
7 adding burdensome new costs to bus
8 travel.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to
10 comment.

11 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Alberto
13 Alamo, followed by George Stonebely.

14 Our next speaker is George
15 Stonebely, followed by Elizabeth Adams.

16 GEORGE STONEBELY: My name is
17 George Stonebely. I've been involved
18 in the business, political, cultural
19 philanthropic and civic life of New
20 York City for more than 70 years. As
21 an automobile driver in our city for
22 more than 50 of those years, in spite
23 of that, I'm very much in favor -- I'm
24 very much in favor of congestion
25 pricing.

1 Before I present my comments
2 about congestion pricing, I'd like to
3 share a few observations with the
4 committee. One, since the early 2000s,
5 New York City has added almost 30,000
6 new black cars, yellow and green cabs
7 to our streets. Most of which wind up
8 in the CBD. At the same time, the
9 bottom has dropped out of any
10 enforcement of double-parking, no
11 standing in bus lane, the commercial
12 vehicle ban on certain avenues and
13 roadways, and the blocking of
14 intersections, blocking the box.

15 Why have these measures been
16 taken and they're certainly in conflict
17 with the efforts to reduce traffic
18 congestion in the CBD. So it would be
19 very important along with implementing
20 congestion pricing that we go back to
21 the basics of enforcement and looking
22 at reducing the number of black cars
23 that -- that -- that are clogging our
24 streets.

25 I'm strongly in favor of

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1 congestion pricing with some caveats.
2 I believe that the boundaries are going
3 to create significant problems of
4 pollution and congestion in the fringe
5 areas surrounding the 60th Streets zone
6 in the north. I believe that a more
7 equitable and realistic zone should be
8 the entire island of Manhattan, at
9 least a buffer zone starting with
10 96th Street in the north from east to
11 the west side.

12 All -- all bridges currently free
13 should be tolled and drivers from those
14 boroughs and the New York, New Jersey,
15 Connecticut suburb should receive a
16 credit on their congestion pricing
17 fees. Thank you very much.

18 By the way, I've been very
19 impressed with the quality of the --
20 the speakers that have -- that have
21 made their comments and the civility
22 and tone of them. I want to
23 congratulate all of them, as well as
24 the committee for paying attention and
25 listening to all their concerns in the

1 great New York tradition.

2 Thank you very much.

3 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

4 Our next speaker is Elizabeth
5 Adams, followed by Keala Montgomery.

6 ELIZABETH ADAMS: Good morning.

7 I'm Elizabeth Adams of Transportation
8 Alternative. For cleaner air, safer
9 streets and better transit, we need
10 congestion pricing to be implemented as
11 quickly and efficiently as possible
12 with minimum exemptions and factoring
13 in environmental justice needs.

14 I want to be clear about who is
15 currently bearing the brunt of our
16 city's transportation challenges. The
17 vast majority of New Yorkers, millions
18 offer people every day, from every
19 borough, trying to get to work or
20 school or the doctor, have to deal with
21 waiting for a bus that is stuck in
22 traffic congestion or a subway that has
23 lost service or has no elevator access.

24 This is about rebalancing the
25 scales for all of us. We are a city of

1 almost 9 million people. We simply
2 cannot base an entire transit system
3 around cars. It is unsustainable,
4 especially in the age of the climate
5 crisis. New Yorkers need service they
6 can count on, yet our policies have
7 prioritized cars over the basic needs
8 of transit riders. Putting us behind
9 in critical investments for better bus,
10 subway, pedestrian and biking
11 infrastructure.

12 We also cannot be short-sided
13 about the environmental consequences
14 here. Transportation is the number two
15 source of emissions across New York.
16 The only way we'll effectively meet our
17 mandated climate change goals is by
18 dramatically shifting off our current
19 reliance on vehicles, and making it
20 possible for all New Yorkers to access
21 affordable, reliable and sustainable
22 transportation.

23 Without congestion pricing, the
24 consequences to New Yorkers are severe.
25 We would see more subway fare increases

1 and transit delays, even greater
2 pollution and asthma rates, as extreme
3 weather and heat intensifies, and even
4 less repairs and upgrades that New
5 Yorkers need.

6 It is imperative that the state
7 implement the program quickly and with
8 minimal exemptions in order to maximize
9 effectiveness. Carving out city
10 employees for example would not even
11 make the program legally viable. It is
12 also critical that planned center
13 communities that have faced the brunt
14 of environmental injustice in its
15 solutions.

16 Congestion pricing could have a
17 significant impact on reducing
18 congestion and emissions in our city if
19 it's enacted effectively, and it must
20 be part of a larger plan to incentivize
21 more sustainable transit methods and
22 de-prioritize unnecessary car usage.

23 Congestion pricing is not a
24 be-all and end-all solution. Its
25 success will depend on our ability to

1 fast track infrastructure for
2 alternatives to driving. This must
3 include more bike share docks and
4 connections to transit, protected bike
5 lanes in freeways and dedicated
6 bus-only lanes to improve speed and
7 service.

8 With major reductions in
9 congestion, the possibilities for
10 public space are significant. Our city
11 can and must reimagine the 6300 miles
12 of streets and 3 million free parking
13 spaces for better public space,
14 transit, health and climate uses. And
15 that is how we support the needs of all
16 New Yorkers.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

19 Our next speaker is Keala
20 Montgomery, followed by William
21 Delaney.

22 Our next speaker is William
23 Delaney, followed by Rose Mary
24 Chatterton.

25 Our next speaker is Rose Mary

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1 Chatterton, followed by our 60th
2 speaker on the list, Cullen McGraw.

3 Our next speaker is Cullen
4 McGraw, followed by Adam Albarran.

5 Our next speaker is Adam
6 Albarran, followed by Dario Cremades.

7 Our next speaker is Dario
8 Cremades, followed by Darrell G Fulton.

9 Our next speaker is Darrell G
10 Fulton, followed by Donovan Hunt.

11 Our next speaker is Donovan Hunt,
12 followed by Craig Hudson.

13 Our next speaker is Craig Hudson,
14 followed by Haydar Akbar.

15 Our next speaker is Haydar Akbar,
16 followed by Jonathan Tineo.

17 Our next speaker is Jonathan
18 Tineo, followed by Warren Green.

19 Our next speaker is Warren Green,
20 followed by Jonathan Marcus.

21 Our next speaker is Jonathan
22 Marcus, followed by our 70th speaker on
23 the list, Kevin Ritter.

24 Jonathan, you are unmuted, but we
25 can't hear you. We cannot hear you.

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1 You may have something else connected
2 to your audio.

3 We cannot hear your remarks.
4 We'll have to come back to you because
5 we can't hear your remarks.

6 Our next speaker is Kevin Ritter,
7 followed by Rodney Hughes.

8 Our next speaker is Rodney
9 Hughes, followed by Deborah Baldwin.

10 Our next speaker is Deborah
11 Baldwin, followed by Eric Diaz.

12 DEBORAH BALDWIN: My name is
13 Deborah Baldwin. I live in Midtown
14 East, and entering my 20-plus years on
15 East 36th Street. I have watched a
16 once quiet, residential Murray Hill
17 turn into a noisy gridlock mass of hot
18 snarling bumper-to-bumper traffic. The
19 streets are meaner, less safe than they
20 used to be. Come by some morning and
21 I'll give you a tour of Midtown East's
22 new signature attraction, the blocked
23 box.

24 Pedestrians have learned to
25 thread their way between clashing

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1 bumpers and fuming tailpipes as
2 congestion builds along major quarters
3 like Third Avenue. You can feel the
4 tempers and temperatures rising.

5 New Yorkers need relief from the
6 crushing congestion we see not only in
7 Midtown, but throughout Manhattan.
8 From the narrow, congested streets of
9 Chinatown, to our formally splendid
10 avenues, which have now turned into
11 gridlocked highways. I'm here today to
12 urge Governor Hochul and our transit
13 leaders on behalf of citizens like me
14 and on behalf of the organizations I
15 support, Riders Alliance,
16 Transportation Alternatives and others,
17 who have worked so hard to help make
18 New York a smoother running city, to
19 help make the streets safer, greener,
20 and more fluid.

21 I'm here to urge everyone of us
22 to create a forward-looking city where
23 all New Yorkers, not just drivers, are
24 comfortable using the streets and where
25 buses and bikes, as well as pedestrians

1 can travel quickly and safely.

2 Congestion pricing has an
3 impressive track record and the concept
4 is simple. When it comes to taming
5 traffic, nothing else has been shown to
6 work as effectively as a no exemptions,
7 pay as you drive policy. Please make
8 it possible for New Yorkers to walk
9 along streets where the heat, honking
10 and air pollution thrown out by
11 vehicles are brought down to bearable
12 levels where traffic jams and crashes
13 are the exemption, not the rule.

14 Think of the heat and gridlock we
15 just saw this summer. Do we want our
16 city to be greener, healthier and
17 better functioning next year? Or
18 noisier, more congested and even harder
19 to navigate? With revenue from
20 congestion pricing, fewer vehicles to
21 block the way, buses can finally
22 fulfill their potential as one of the
23 nimblest and cost-effective forms of
24 mass transit we have. The subway
25 system can benefit from 21st Century

1 technology.

2 Is there a valid argument against
3 congestion pricing? I can't think of
4 one. Thank you for listening. And
5 thanks in advance for joining the fight
6 to make New York a cooler, greater,
7 more livable place for all.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Eric Diaz,
10 followed by Michael King.

11 Our next speaker is Michael King,
12 followed by Rachel Minter.

13 Our next speaker is Rachel
14 Minter, followed by Jody Stewart.

15 RACHEL MINTER: Okay. I got
16 that. Can you hear me?

17 MS. FLAX: Yes, I can.

18 RACHEL MINTER: No camera. Okay.
19 My name is Rachel Minter. I grew up in
20 New York. I lived in four of the five
21 boroughs. I have no organizational
22 affiliation, except I guess I'm here as
23 a crip, which is less politically
24 correct than saying a person with a
25 disability. But it kind of cuts to the

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1 chase. There I am.

2 You might be surprised if I'm
3 going to say that I really support the
4 goals of the program to cut auto
5 emissions, to raise funds to work on
6 the infrastructure of public transit.
7 I grew up taking public transit, and
8 I'm a great believer in it. We also
9 need to replenish the fares that were
10 lost during COVID. And it is a great
11 goal of this program.

12 Having said that, however, when
13 you become disabled, you give up a lot
14 of things. You have no control over
15 your day-to-day life, and you don't
16 have the luxury of taking principle
17 decisions about things. If it's going
18 to really affect you personally,
19 physically, financially, and that's how
20 I find myself in this situation.

21 I have MS, multiple sclerosis,
22 which is a debilitating neurological
23 disease. I walk with a cane because my
24 left leg drags behind me. I lose my
25 balance. I have cognitive impairment.

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1 I haven't worked in five and a half
2 years because I can't really deal with
3 complex information. This is making me
4 very agitated. I used to do this for a
5 living, but I can't do it anymore.

6 Anyway, originally, I was going
7 to come in and what I wanted to talk
8 about was the enabling legislation.
9 The statutory language about qualifying
10 vehicles transporting people with
11 disabilities, because I didn't see
12 anything about that. Then last night,
13 I found the assessment, I found all
14 these interviews, and I realized that
15 there has been some stabs at trying to
16 define what that's going to mean.
17 Obviously, it's going to be an
18 Access-A-Ride. But there were also a
19 couple of footnotes in places where
20 they talked about state disability
21 license plates. I don't have one. I
22 better find out.

23 But I'm so alarmed where this is
24 going. Particularly people saying no
25 exemptions, no prisoners. I'm going to

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1 explain how transportation choices are
2 quite influenced by MS. It's an
3 unpredictable disease. You don't know
4 how you are going to feel until you get
5 up in the morning. Some days it is
6 such an effort to get out of bed and
7 take a shower or rub a washcloth all
8 over me that I don't even get to check
9 the mail -- oh, shit.

10 All right. You can't use
11 Access-A-Ride when you have MS. There
12 are too many rules, you have to wait 45
13 minutes. You can't just go to the
14 pharmacy and pick up a prescription
15 because you have to wait 45 minutes for
16 a return trip. If I go into Manhattan
17 to see a doctor, I combine it with
18 trips to the supermarket or to pick up
19 a special product that I need. If I
20 had to do that with Access-A-Ride, it's
21 three trips. There and back, there and
22 back. So I'm actually contributing to
23 emissions. Thus --

24 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
25 remarks.

1 RACHEL MINTER: Okay. Never
2 enough time. And you don't -- do you
3 get to put things in writing or am I
4 so -- by this -- too much to say, too
5 little time.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

8 Our next speaker is Assembly
9 Member Harvey Epstein.

10 ASSEMBLY MEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN:

11 Hi. Good afternoon, everyone.

12 You can hear me?

13 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

14 ASSEMBLY MEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN:

15 Okay. Well, thank you for taking
16 the time to do all these hearings. And
17 to -- to really focus on the needs of
18 New Yorkers.

19 As an Assembly Member, I
20 represent the 74th Assembly District,
21 which is the east side of Manhattan.
22 My district is entirely within the
23 congestion zone, and I voted for
24 congestion pricing and I support this
25 moving forward. I think it's critical

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1 now that we need to deal with the
2 traffic and the environmental crisis we
3 are living in right now. I really urge
4 you to consider a few things as you
5 move forward through this, and things
6 that we had understood when we voted on
7 this legislation.

8 One is around the time period and
9 really stagger out the cost related to
10 rush hour and non-rush hour traffic.
11 There's a lot -- I hear a lot of talk
12 from constituents who live in the
13 district. They're going away.
14 Potentially they may have a vehicle and
15 they're leaving on the weekend. And
16 the cost shouldn't be equal coming into
17 Manhattan during rush hour than trying
18 to come home at the end of the weekend.
19 We should -- whatever tolling you put
20 together for congestion pricing should
21 really reflect that reality.

22 In addition, we've heard a lot
23 about parking outside the congestion
24 zone and that people may end up parking
25 in Brooklyn or above 60th Street in

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1 Manhattan. And we really need to think
2 about ways to avoid people trying to
3 park, quote, for free on the street
4 with alternate side of the street
5 parking outside of the congestion zone
6 in an attempt to avoid it. I will work
7 on and encourage you to look at
8 residential parking as a tool to combat
9 that problem.

10 In addition, I know in the
11 legislation that we passed, we had a
12 residential exemption for people who
13 make less than \$60,000. It's really
14 critical for our low-income residents
15 to be able to -- if they need a
16 vehicle, to be able to pay. But I also
17 push for residential exemption that
18 wasn't a flat \$60,000 to be honest, I
19 think it's really regressive because
20 \$60,000 for a family of 4, very
21 different for \$60,000 for a single
22 adult.

23 I encourage this then, and I will
24 continue to fight for tying the
25 residential exemptions that the area

1 median income that reflects the
2 diversity and, you know, for different
3 family sizes. That's really critical.
4 And it's really overall the
5 responsibility of all of us to ensure
6 that we reduce traffic. And when we
7 come to terms with climate leadership
8 and community protection act. I really
9 believe that congestion pricing will
10 reduce the traffic flow into Manhattan
11 and hopefully reduce the traffic flow
12 around the city. And we need to do
13 more to reduce traffic flow outside of
14 the congestion zone.

15 Encourage and work for all of us
16 to do that together. I believe this is
17 a really important tool. We have a lot
18 more to do to deal with our climate
19 crisis.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Jody Stewart,
23 followed by Christine Berthet.

24 Our next speaker is Christine
25 Berthet, followed by Juton Horstman.

1 CHRISTINE BERTHET: Hello. I'm
2 Christine Berthet. Can you see me?

3 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

4 CHRISTINE BERTHET: Okay. I
5 represent CHEKPEDS, a 15-year-old
6 non-profit focused on pedestrian safety
7 on the west side of Manhattan. We
8 fully support congestion pricing.

9 Our neighborhood of Chelsea and
10 Hell's Kitchen experience this third
11 worst air quality in the city, right
12 behind the Bronx. And this is due to
13 the volume of Lincoln Tunnel traffic
14 that spills over daily in our area.

15 In 2021, and again in 2022, the
16 Manhattan Community Board 4 requested
17 that drastic measure be taken to
18 alleviate the extraordinary traffic
19 congestion and air quality due to the
20 considerable increase in Lincoln Tunnel
21 vehicular volumes since the beginning
22 of the COVID recovery.

23 Every day, seven days a week, for
24 a total of eight hours, morning and
25 evening, the community endures

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1 gridlock, honking and --

2 Businesses, instead of welcoming
3 traffic, are negatively affected, as no
4 one will sit outside in the open
5 restaurant along our main streets, the
6 Ninth Avenue corridor. And the bus
7 line that serves thousands of
8 low-income New Yorkers on Ninth Avenue
9 is extremely slow and unreliable
10 because of the Lincoln Tunnel traffic.
11 The M11 won the Pokey Award.

12 So it is critical that the
13 congestion pricing scheme include
14 sufficient fees to reduce the number of
15 New Jersey drivers. Clearly, this is
16 not double tolling, since the tolls
17 apply to different stretches or roads.
18 No credit or no crossing credits are
19 the best. And perhaps a compromise
20 will entail the Port Authority to raise
21 tolls and dedicate the funds to
22 improving mass transit in New Jersey
23 and Rockland County.

24 It would be deeply inequitable if
25 congestion pricing improved the east

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1 side, but not the west side. Our
2 population has increased by 50 percent
3 in 20 years. We beg you to give
4 serious consideration to these issues.
5 Our 130,000 tax paying and hard-working
6 residents must be able to use their
7 streets without being choked or run
8 over.

9 Thank you very much.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Juton
12 Horstman, followed by Jim Wright.

13 JUTON HORSTMAN: Good afternoon.
14 My name is Juton Horstman, director for
15 planning and development, and I'm
16 speaking on behalf of Bronx Borough
17 President, Vanessa Gibson. Which I'll
18 read a letter that will be entered as
19 testimony.

20 The CBDTP, better known as the
21 congestion pricing, will be a benefit
22 to the greater New York City
23 metropolitan area. The overall impact
24 of the CBDTP will be positive and will
25 ultimately cause for an overall

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1 reduction of mobile air toxins across
2 the greater New York City region.
3 However, the proposed program does
4 increase air pollution within an
5 environmental justice area of the
6 Bronx. As the Bronx has taken steps
7 forward with reducing carbon emissions,
8 this is a step back for the
9 neighborhood surrounding the Cross
10 Bronx Expressway through the increase
11 of air pollution from vehicles on the
12 highway.

13 The MTA's report notes an overall
14 decline in air pollution across the
15 city and region, but an increase for
16 the Bronx. This is primarily due to
17 increased vehicles miles traveled on
18 the Cross Bronx Expressway, and the
19 reality is there would be an additional
20 increase on other highways, including
21 the Bruckner Expressway and Major
22 Deegan through secondary transportation
23 pressure, even if the methodology
24 doesn't show an increase.

25 The CBDTP is therefore an issue

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1 affecting health, equity and
2 environmental justice issues for these
3 communities which have taken on more
4 than their fair share for decades.

5 In order to have my support for
6 the CBDTP, these Bronx neighborhoods
7 need to see direct benefits that will
8 result in a reduction of mobile air
9 toxins. The best solution would be
10 prioritizing the capital funding for
11 the cap at the Cross Bronx Expressway.
12 When it was allocated as part of the
13 bipartisan infrastructure bill, the
14 Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman
15 Ritchie Torres were both instrumental
16 in getting passed. But the project may
17 need additional resources, and it
18 should be prioritized by the city and
19 state.

20 It is also important that the
21 deck on top of the Cross Bronx provide
22 additional long-term benefits, such as
23 providing green space by creating a
24 public transportation light rail line.
25 The line could provide an east/west

1 railway link stretching from Washington
2 Heights to Parkchester, creating
3 connections across eight subway lines
4 and serving nearly 600,000 people that
5 live in adjacent neighborhoods.

6 In addition to fully funding the
7 Cross Bronx decking, the priority
8 should be given to projects that would
9 reduce green house gas emissions, such
10 as providing free buses across the
11 entire city or at a minimum within
12 Bronx environmental justice areas
13 harmed by the CBDTP, to further
14 incentivize public transportation
15 options for residents that need it the
16 most.

17 The city should also pass
18 electric vehicle support legislation,
19 that will remove hurdles for where
20 electric vehicle charging stations can
21 be located and provide opportunities
22 for electric vehicle investment across
23 the city. This will encourage the
24 transition to electric vehicles, which
25 will be key to reduce emissions within

1 the city. Other ways the city can
2 support these environmental justice
3 areas include prioritizing and further
4 incentivizing renewable energy bonuses
5 for building upgrades. The Bronx has
6 made building with low income residents
7 and the city needs to support
8 improvements to these buildings in
9 order for the building upgrades to
10 happen.

11 For NYCHA buildings, the city
12 needs to prioritize and fully fund the
13 convergence to -- in the programming
14 while also providing enough capital to
15 add renewable energy upgrades.

16 While I want to focus my
17 testimony on the Cross Bronx, I also
18 want to acknowledge the impact this
19 will have on many workers such as
20 livery taxi and cabdrivers entering
21 Manhattan and shouldn't be penalized
22 for it. I acknowledge the CBDTP will
23 be a benefit for much of the city, but
24 the Bronx has been burned by the Cross
25 Bronx since its construction under the

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1 notion that it's good for the region as
2 a whole with the CBDTP adding --

3 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
4 remarks.

5 JUTON HORSTMAN: -- to the
6 historical burden. It is time for the
7 Bronx to receive major capital
8 improvements that will provide real
9 health benefits in these environment
10 justice communities.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
13 Jim Wright, followed by Hindy
14 Schachter.

15 JIM WRIGHT: Good afternoon.
16 Thank you for holding this hearing. My
17 name is Jim Wright, a transportation
18 architect testifying on behalf of the
19 American Institute of Architects New
20 York, also known as AIA New York. A
21 professional organization that presents
22 New York's architects employed in
23 government agencies, private firms and
24 academia.

25 AIA New York has supported the

1 Central Business District Congestion
2 Relief Program since it was proposed in
3 2007, 2008, and advocated the passing
4 of the current program by the New York
5 State legislature in 2019.

6 Similar alternatives have been
7 evaluated in the current Environmental
8 Assessment including no action of
9 these, only the Manhattan CBD zones
10 based tolling program, option T4, meets
11 the objectives mandated by the
12 legislature. AIA New York supports
13 option T4. We further support
14 minimizing exemptions to the tolls as
15 was recommended by the legislature,
16 only for emergency and service
17 vehicles, public transit and licensed
18 ADA handicapped vehicles, which will
19 keep the daily toll cost lower by
20 generating the required minimum revenue
21 for the MTA.

22 We also support variable pricing
23 strategies to calibrate toll prices
24 according to travel demand. These
25 strategies have proven to be the most

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1 effective way to control congestion and
2 its associated negative impacts. We
3 recognize the Environmental Assessment
4 identifies several adverse impacts to
5 low income drivers, as well as
6 environmental justice neighborhoods
7 that need to be addressed for the CP
8 program to be fair and equitable. The
9 legislature provided that households
10 with an annual income less than 60,000
11 would be eligible for State tax credit
12 to offset the cost of tolls. We
13 support this approach to reduce adverse
14 impacts to vulnerable populations.

15 The EA also projects that the CP
16 program will result in additional
17 trucks traveling through the South
18 Bronx, especially on the Cross Bronx
19 Expressway. Inexplicably, the EA
20 concludes there will be no adverse
21 affects from truck diversions. So no
22 mitigation measures are needed. Merely
23 calling for an air quality monitoring
24 for two years to determine if the
25 projections are accurate.

1 We strongly disagree with this
2 passive approach. Given the long
3 history of polluting emissions caused
4 by non-destination traffic through the
5 South Bronx that negatively impact the
6 health of surrounding neighborhoods,
7 it's imperative that effective traffic
8 mitigation measures be implemented as
9 part of the program.

10 Finally, we want to highlight
11 several MTA capital programs that will
12 be funded by the one-billion per year
13 revenue generated by congestion
14 pricing, funding the MTA's system wide
15 ADA accessibility commitment to make
16 95 percent of noncompliant stations
17 accessible by 2055, accelerating the
18 signal replacement program, expanding
19 and improving bus service to
20 underserved neighborhoods, accelerating
21 the transition to zero carbon energy --

22 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
23 remarks.

24 JIM WRIGHT: We appreciate the
25 opportunity to express our members'

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1 support for the congestion pricing
2 program, and look forward to the many
3 benefits that will result from its
4 implementation.

5 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Hindi
7 Schachter, followed by our 80th speaker
8 on the list, Seva Giamaras.

9 Hindy, you may begin your
10 remarks.

11 HINDY SCHACHTER: Great. Can
12 everybody hear me?

13 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

14 HINDY SCHACHTER: Excellent. I'm
15 Hindy Schachter, I'm a Steering
16 Committee member of Families For Safe
17 Streets. I enthusiastically support a
18 congestion pricing program that will
19 work to have fewer tragedies on our
20 streets, along with a rejuvenated mass
21 transit system.

22 How do we get there? We don't
23 simply get there by having a lukewarm
24 diluted congestion pricing program.
25 And therefore, I will spend my brief

1 time debunking the need for certain
2 exemptions.

3 One, as a senior citizen, cyclist
4 and pedestrian, I shout out, stop
5 stereotyping old people. Stop talking
6 as if all old people will be moribund
7 if they cannot bring their cars
8 constantly into Manhattan. Think about
9 the plurality of the senior citizen
10 community.

11 Many senior citizens, senior
12 citizen cyclists, the vast number of
13 senior citizen pedestrians are actually
14 going to be the people who benefit most
15 from a saner traffic system.

16 Two, let's not give exemptions to
17 people who live in the congestion
18 pricing district. They too are going
19 to be among the most important
20 beneficiaries of this program. I live
21 on the edge of what will become a
22 congestion pricing district. And right
23 now, we are inundated with cars. As
24 Debby Baldwin pointed out, there are no
25 crossing spots. People cannot cross

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1 the street because the cars take up the
2 spot where a human being will be able
3 to walk.

4 So, I see that I have 27 seconds
5 left. I will leave it here and give
6 those seconds to other people. My
7 parting words are, a strong system will
8 get the results you want. A system
9 ladled with inconsistent, unnecessary
10 exemptions is simply counterproductive.

11 We need --

12 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
13 remarks.

14 HINDY SCHACHTER: Concluded.

15 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

16 Our next speaker is Seva
17 Giamaras, followed by Gordon Watt.

18 Our next speaker is Gordon Watt,
19 followed by our 82nd speaker on the
20 list, Polly Brewster.

21 Our next speaker is Polly
22 Brewster, followed by Donna Bartolini.

23 Our next speaker is Donna
24 Bartolini, followed by Michael Gotz.

25 Our next speaker is Michael Gotz,

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1 followed by Bhairavi Desai.

2 Our next speaker is Bhairavi
3 Desai, followed by Peter Dinolfo.

4 Our next speaker is Peter
5 Dinolfo, followed by Tayo
6 Adjapon-Yamoah.

7 Peter, you may begin your
8 remarks.

9 PETER DINOLFO: Thank you.

10 Hello. My name is Pete Dinolfo. I'm a
11 commuter and business owner. I oppose
12 this plan and urge decision makers to
13 conduct further review of the many
14 factors not fully considered in the
15 assessment.

16 To be clear, I support the
17 premise of upgrading our city's public
18 transit system. Where I draw the line,
19 however, is expecting individuals and
20 businesses to foot the bill on such an
21 arbitrary manner. Tax payers have
22 already been pushed over the brink over
23 the past few years. With many of us
24 leaving for good. This plan will only
25 serve to force out the most vulnerable

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1 of us remaining and severely disrupt
2 countless more.

3 As other speakers have noted, the
4 congestion problem is at least
5 partially self inflicted. Bike lanes
6 are underused and routinely abused by
7 cyclist with no regard for traffic
8 laws. Parking cutbacks and outdoor
9 dining spaces have only exacerbated the
10 problem. More money is not the answer.
11 Smarter policies are.

12 This plan will create many
13 losers, but none larger than the
14 residents and businesses located within
15 the zone. As long as the goods and
16 services we rely on for every day life
17 come into the zone on a vehicle, and
18 much of it does, all within it will be
19 paying more for them. Businesses will
20 simply pass on these increased costs to
21 their customers. This means pricing
22 for most necessities will rise, service
23 based companies will be forced to
24 increase prices when entering the zone.
25 And in response, demand will decline.

1 Economic activity within the zone will
2 decrease, while the cost of living will
3 simultaneously increase.

4 This relationship between prices
5 and supply and demand is covered in
6 most Economics 101 courses. The
7 assessment's conclusion that economic
8 activity will not be negatively
9 impacted, is simply not compatible with
10 this proven principle.

11 Many have spoken about exemptions
12 if living within the zone or if under a
13 certain income. These ultimately do
14 not address the inevitable cost of
15 living increases this plan will bring.
16 There are no free lunches and everyone
17 will bear the cost of this plan one way
18 or another.

19 Prior speakers have counted on
20 the plan's potential negative impacts
21 on the real estate market. This
22 warrants further review as New York's
23 crown jewel is its real estate sector,
24 and any shortsightedness here will
25 prove detrimental.

1 As for commuters, certain areas
2 of New Jersey, Connecticut and outer
3 boroughs lack sufficient modes of mass
4 transit. Why must commuters now have
5 to choose between paying a premium to
6 drive versus extending an already long
7 commute. Why are commuters being asked
8 to subsidize a service that will likely
9 never be a viable option for them?

10 The ripple effects for those who
11 wish to circumvent the toll also
12 require further study. The GW, BQE and
13 other major roadways will see a surge
14 in traffic that they have already
15 proven they're not equipped to handle.
16 This plan amounts to a shell game,
17 where the vehicles will simply be
18 concentrated elsewhere, with neither a
19 net reduction in total vehicles nor
20 carbon emissions, which are two stated
21 goals of this plan.

22 The sponsoring agencies have
23 simply not finished their homework. I
24 implore them, go back and consider
25 these and other factors more

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1 thoroughly. This plan does not operate
2 in a vacuum, actions have reactions,
3 some foreseeable but others less so.

4 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
5 remarks.

6 PETER DINOLFO: Please don't take
7 this responsibility lightly and listen
8 to all these objections raised by the
9 majority of the public.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Tayo
12 Adjapon-Yamoah, followed by Sophia
13 Feist.

14 Our next speaker is Sophia Feist,
15 followed by Gerson Fernandes.

16 Our next speaker is Gerson
17 Fernandes, followed by our 90th speaker
18 on the list, Adham Ahmed.

19 Gerson, you may begin your
20 remarks.

21 GERSON FERNANDES: Can you hear
22 me?

23 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

24 GERSON FERNANDES: Good day. My
25 name is Gerson Fernandes. I belong to

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1 New York City Taxi Worker's Alliance.
2 Our leader is Miss Bhairavi Desai.

3 I'm a New York City yellow taxi
4 driver, medallion owner. As a
5 medallion owner, I manage my own
6 business. Whether profit or loss. The
7 MTA should manage their own business or
8 agency. Please don't use us for your
9 bad management.

10 That's all I have to say. Thank
11 you for giving me a chance to speak out
12 my testimony.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 Our next speaker is Adham Ahmed,
16 followed by Mario Asaro.

17 Our next speaker is Mario Asaro,
18 followed by Anonymous Speaker 1.

19 Mario, you may unmute yourself
20 and begin your remarks.

21 MARIO ASARO: Good morning. I'm
22 a lifelong outer borough resident and a
23 30-year plus civil servant. I'm an
24 avid bicyclist, but as a resident of a
25 double fare zone in Queens County, I've

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1 been an active driver in this city my
2 whole life.

3 I'm keenly aware of the need to
4 better share our roadways and make them
5 safer for all, as well as the need to
6 improve public transportation. I would
7 like the city's ramping up of its
8 overzealous campaign of double taxation
9 of drivers through their aggressive
10 camera ticketing program, the threat of
11 further billing our city residents
12 through the broad implementation of
13 congestion pricing needs to take into
14 account that millions of lower and
15 working class families who rely on
16 their vehicles to go to work, shop,
17 visit New York City's cultural
18 institutions and parks, or otherwise
19 get from point A to point B.,
20 especially during off peak hours.

21 As the city considers congestion
22 pricing for Manhattan, I urge our
23 elected leaders and MTA to not make New
24 York City become a playground for the
25 rich. New York City tax payers should

1 not be double taxed traveling to their
2 own city. Whether to work, to frequent
3 shows, theaters, museums, parks,
4 restaurants, or any other economic and
5 cultural generator. If congestion
6 pricing is to be implemented and New
7 York City residents and taxpayers need
8 to be reduced during business hours and
9 most importantly deserve and need free
10 access to their city after hours and
11 weekends.

12 Congestion pricing should be
13 designed and focused on commercial
14 traffic during peak business congestion
15 hours. To charge residents an
16 additional hefty tax to travel to their
17 own city outside these hours is
18 disturbing and grossly unfair.

19 Businesses and cultural
20 institutions rely on clientele from
21 outside Manhattan to support their
22 establishments. People regardless of
23 where they live should be able to
24 access Manhattan, especially after peak
25 hours and weekends to frequent and

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1 support them. Consider a family of
2 four from Eastern Queens thinking of
3 going to Central Park for a Sunday
4 picnic followed by a trip to The Met.
5 First, they would need to pack their
6 strollers -- or car or bus and get to
7 the rail station, then unpack onto the
8 railroad, and finally unto the subway
9 when they reach Manhattan. The commute
10 will cost them \$50 or more, and the
11 extra time would be at least two hours
12 to a simply outing to our own city.
13 For most families, that would just
14 dissuade them from ever going into
15 Manhattan.

16 As a child, my dad put us to work
17 at a family restaurant in Upper East
18 Side. I grew up in Central Park and
19 all the museums and cultural
20 institutions surrounding it. Later I
21 would take those Sunday trips with my
22 own family. Families in the outer
23 boroughs deserve the right to enjoy and
24 share our city parks and cultural
25 institutions and the thousands of other

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1 benefits that we already subsidize with
2 our tax dollars.

3 Our taxes pay for the right to
4 use and travel within our city without
5 undue restrictions. The dollars we
6 spend on maintenance, insurance, tolls,
7 gas, and tax revenue that provides and
8 contributes greatly to the city's
9 economy and infrastructure.

10 I've said this in my previous
11 testimony and it bears repeating.
12 Restricting Manhattan from those of us
13 who live in the outer boroughs with
14 further taxation, specifically during
15 non-congestion hours and weekends is
16 elitist, immoral and just plain wrong.
17 We must not create further walling off
18 the island of Manhattan only for the
19 rich and those who can afford to live
20 or travel there.

21 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
22 remarks.

23 MARIO ASARO: I urge the MTA and
24 our elected officials to grant fair
25 consideration to outer borough tax

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1 payers.

2 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

3 MARIO ASARO: Thank you very
4 much.

5 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
6 Anonymous Speaker 1, followed by
7 Councilmember Gail Brewer.

8 ANONYMOUS SPEAKER 1: Hello, can
9 you hear me?

10 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

11 ANONYMOUS SPEAKER 1: Okay.
12 Thank you for giving me this
13 opportunity to speak. I wanted to take
14 the time today to explain why tolling
15 of the cars getting into the Manhattan
16 is a bad idea.

17 A little bit about myself. I'm a
18 first generation immigrant who came
19 here with my family with a hundred
20 dollar bill and a couple of suitcases
21 being all and only possessions we were
22 allowed to take with us. We came her
23 back in 1999 to avoid persecution in my
24 home country and to make a new life for
25 ourselves.

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1 I work currently in hospital
2 Manhattan and I live in Brooklyn in an
3 area that has no train next to it. My
4 commute to work is long as is, but
5 without the car, it will be even longer
6 requiring multiple transfers. I have
7 tried it and timed it. I need to work
8 to live, yet this unjust tolling will
9 put incredible hardship on my family.

10 Car ownership doesn't make one
11 rich or entitled. It simply excludes
12 people who are working and have to pay
13 for -- and are overly taxed to the
14 brink from working in the city or even
15 taking the family out to the city to
16 enjoy what it has to offer. It prices
17 out New Yorkers who live and work here
18 from New York. Subways right now are
19 extremely unsafe. I know a lot of
20 people, myself included, who are scared
21 of using the subways, especially those
22 who have been crime victims on the
23 service. As well as those who know
24 people who have been accosted on the
25 subways.

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1 Telling them you are priced out
2 of working or enjoying Manhattan is
3 discrimination. They are overly
4 traumatized and scared. How can you
5 look at them in the face and say we
6 don't care about your trauma? Don't
7 come into Manhattan, don't live in New
8 York City because you can't afford to
9 drive in anymore and you can't take the
10 subway either.

11 Or for the people with special
12 needs. I have a special needs child
13 whom I take to multiple doctor's
14 appointments during the day in
15 different parts of Manhattan, and for
16 various reasons, I cannot take him by
17 public transport. Again, now we will
18 be priced out of our health care if we
19 can't reach the doctors because we have
20 to pay through the roof to get there.

21 If you are someone who comes into
22 Manhattan once in a while and increase
23 of this type may slide. However, for
24 someone who lives in New York and is
25 commuting daily into Manhattan for work

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1 or health care, or even for family
2 outings and for various reasons can't
3 use public transportation, which is at
4 this point super unsafe, with crimes
5 happening daily to begin with, in
6 addition to paying for gas and parking,
7 which both have increased
8 substantially, paying for getting to
9 Manhattan makes it completely
10 unaffordable, and shut a huge amount of
11 population out and is discriminatory.

12 So I beg you to be fair to all
13 New Yorkers, to consider all of us who
14 have to live and work and use our
15 health care here. And don't force us
16 to run away from New York City. Don't
17 fail us, don't discriminate against us.
18 We are vital part of this community and
19 New York City needs us too.

20 Thank you very much. That is all
21 I have to say.

22 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Councilmember
24 Gail Brewer, followed by Constance
25 Stellas.

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1 COUNCILMEMBER GAIL BREWER: Thank
2 you very much. I am Gail Brewer. I
3 represent the Upper West Side in the
4 6th District, and I'm just going to
5 summarize some of the points.

6 As a Councilmember, in 2008, I
7 voted for congestion pricing and as
8 Manhattan borough president, when it
9 was going to be happening, we held a
10 hearing on residential parking. Very,
11 very controversial. I mentioned that
12 because I think we have to consider it.
13 I don't know what's right or wrong.

14 But during that discussion, what
15 we learned was something that I would
16 like to see in some places where
17 congestion pricing have gone into
18 effect. The subways and the buses are
19 already going -- I don't know if it's
20 six-minute intervals, which is what I
21 would suggest. I would love. But the
22 public can see before congestion
23 pricing goes into effect, what their
24 changes could mean positively for them.
25 I think that's really, really

1 important.

2 I want to say also in
3 anticipation, just the other day, we
4 had a meeting on the Upper West Side
5 that I convened. Community Board 7.,
6 the Business Improvement District, all
7 local hospitals staff and stakeholders
8 and all elected officials. And this is
9 what came out of that discussion.

10 Obviously, what we are concerned
11 about is the 60th Street cutoff.
12 Obviously Roosevelt/Mount Sinai West is
13 concerned, as all hospitals are, about
14 their night workers. They feel
15 strongly that they should not have to
16 pay a toll because it is so hard to get
17 night public health workers, period.

18 Secondly, on the disability
19 front, we know that if one has a
20 current license plate indicating
21 disability, you will be exempt. But
22 there are others, as you heard earlier,
23 going to the hospitals. We have to, I
24 think, make that discussion and
25 definition of disability larger than

1 just those who have the license plate.

2 I want to also talk about the
3 non-profits. I think you've heard all
4 of this for many, many times. But
5 recently, I went from 49th Street to
6 94th Street delivering food for the
7 homeless, Homebound in particular. And
8 all of those non-profits that do that
9 need to figure out how they can
10 continue to either have the money for
11 the toll in their contract with the
12 city, state or federal government or be
13 exempt because they're not going to be
14 able to do every single trip.

15 On 60th Street, one of the
16 problems I think is that the traffic
17 currently, where there are challenges
18 within that area is going to be a
19 problem for DOT to review and it has to
20 be looked at very, very carefully.

21 I also just want to say also
22 about that area, the panic with -- of
23 people who will be parking in that
24 area. I don't think they will, but I
25 know that the bids are looking at the

1 parking garages. I know that if you
2 are in the area, you are panicked that
3 somebody is going to be circling and
4 looking for parking. So we have to
5 look very, very carefully in that
6 situation.

7 I support congestion pricing, but
8 there are thousands of --

9 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
10 remarks.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GAIL BREWER: -- to
12 get it right.

13 Thank you very much.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 Our next speaker is Constance
16 Stellas, followed by Richard Khuzami.

17 Our next speaker is Richard
18 Khuzami, followed by Adalgisa Payero
19 Diarra.

20 Richard, you may begin your
21 remarks.

22 RICHARD KHUZAMI: Yes, I am
23 Richard Khuzami, of the Old Astoria
24 Neighborhood Association, I'm also on
25 CB1 in Queens. I'm speaking as

1 president of the Old Astoria
2 Neighborhood Association, not CB1.

3 I'm a disabled driver. I happen
4 to be driving right now, so that I hope
5 I can get through this.

6 And I greatly appreciate the
7 exemption proposed for those with
8 disabilities. However, I have one
9 observation regarding the
10 administration of the disability
11 exemptions.

12 Many years ago, exemptions were
13 given to the disabled to utilize
14 permits in state parks. However, the
15 system was abused by Long Island
16 Railroad workers who had doctors create
17 phony disability permits. Regretfully,
18 when this was discovered, the state
19 started restricting the exemptions for
20 all disabled people. We don't want a
21 similar situation to happen here.

22 We think that it's imperative
23 that it be avoided. To this end, we
24 ask that the New York City issue
25 disability placards be honored, as

1 they're confirmed by city doctors. The
2 state-issued hanging placards should
3 not be honored because they are so
4 easily falsified.

5 We would ask that some sort of
6 streamlined process be created to issue
7 exemptions to holders of state-issued
8 hanging placards, regardless of what
9 state issued them. This would involve
10 confirming the diagnosis and perhaps
11 use some sort of legal notarized
12 statement from the issuing doctor so
13 they are held responsible. Or through
14 confirmation by a city doctor. And
15 perhaps neighboring states such as New
16 Jersey and Connecticut can utilize
17 their health system to issue
18 confirmation of diagnosis.

19 I also -- we greatly support the
20 utilization of residential parking
21 permits. We are in the Astoria
22 neighborhood, and we are quite worried
23 that cars will drive in there, park
24 their car, take up our local spots and
25 try and take public transportation from

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1 there. To guard against this I think
2 that residential parking permits will
3 be essential.

4 We appreciate -- I appreciate the
5 time given, and I hope you consider my
6 remarks and good luck.

7 Thank you.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Adalgisa
10 Payero Diarra, followed by DG.

11 Adalgisa, you may begin your
12 remarks.

13 ADALGISA PAYERO DIARRA: Hello.
14 My name is Adalgisa Payero Diarra. I
15 represent ODANY (phonetic), an
16 organization based in the Bronx for
17 taxi drivers. Also I'm part of the
18 coalition of Justice For Apps.

19 We oppose this proposal of the
20 congestion fee because this is going to
21 kill our traffic industry. We have
22 been paying congestion fees since 2019
23 of 2.75. We have given the MTA about
24 one billion in earnings. We are on
25 board with helping the congestion and

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1 green environment, but we believe that
2 the proposal needs to be reevaluated
3 and the MTA needs to find a different
4 way to help the congestion.

5 If you want your clients to come
6 back, New Yorkers to come back to --
7 you should improve the system, the
8 subway, make it safe and more reliable
9 for the New Yorkers. That will also
10 improve the congestion. We believe
11 that you have to find a better way
12 because this is only going to create a
13 domino effect on the economy of New
14 York.

15 The taxi limousine service is
16 going to get affected in the way that
17 all drivers will start losing their
18 earnings. We need for you to
19 reconsider if the drivers are not
20 bringing the people as we have always
21 done.

22 We move a lot of citizens of New
23 York along with the MTA and the subway.
24 It's going to hurt the businesses in
25 the central area if you consider all

1 the people that come from different
2 areas of New York, Bronx, Brooklyn, and
3 Queens. They're going to get affected
4 if they have to pay the 23-dollar fee.
5 On top of the economic crisis that we
6 have right now with the pandemic, most
7 likely it's going to reduce the traffic
8 into the city. But it's going to hurt
9 all the businesses in this area. And
10 that's going to end up creating a more
11 critical economy in New York than it's
12 going to resolve.

13 We think that you should
14 reevaluate the proposal, and if it were
15 to pass, all taxis, from taxi limousine
16 service, should be exempt of paying the
17 toll.

18 Thank you.

19 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is DG, followed
21 by Thomas Grech.

22 DG: Hi.

23 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

24 DG: Okay. Hi. I live in
25 Downtown Manhattan in the congestion

1 tax zone. And I'm completely against
2 this new congestion tax. I say this
3 both as a driver and a pedestrian, that
4 it is arbitrary and unfair and places
5 an undue burden on people like me who
6 can least afford it and just happen to
7 live downtown while not solving the
8 real congestion issues.

9 Downtown is not just a business
10 district, it's a residential district
11 like any other around the city. We are
12 no less a residential district than the
13 outer boroughs or the Upper West Side,
14 but everything gets dumped on our
15 neighborhood, and it's not fair to
16 impose this congestion price on us
17 alone as well.

18 It is easy for MTA executives and
19 city council people, people getting
20 six-figure salaries, to make
21 pronouncements about how people with
22 cars can afford this new tax of yours.
23 But you are out of touch with working
24 people like me. And no one is voicing
25 what this congestion tax will do to

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1 people like me. Because make no
2 mistake, the cost of this arbitrary
3 congestion tax will push me out of my
4 home.

5 I have a car because I need a
6 car. It is a tool I need for my work
7 and life. I don't have it because it's
8 a status symbol. And my car is not
9 causing congestion. I do not drive
10 around the city. I drive out of the
11 city and back in. I drive from my
12 apartment to the tunnel, and coming
13 back from the tunnel to my apartment.
14 And I park in a garage that I sacrifice
15 to pay for. My car is not on the
16 street.

17 But according to your congestion
18 tax plan, I am not only going to have
19 to pay your tax when I am using my car,
20 but because I live in the tax zone, I'm
21 going to have to pay every single day
22 even when I'm not driving. Even though
23 I only use my car out of the city once
24 or twice a week, I'm going to have to
25 pay your congestion tax every single

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1 day I'm remaining in my apartment and
2 my car is sitting in the garage that I
3 already pay to keep off the street.
4 How is that fair?

5 If you are truly concerned about
6 congestion, stop creating more.
7 Overdevelopment and 90,000 Ubers,
8 restaurant sheds, out of control bikes
9 and e-bikes are four things that cause
10 ton of congestion and safety issues.
11 In fact, I'll say that's what causes
12 most of the congestion, along with the
13 tourists. But you are ignoring that
14 congestion and all those safety issues
15 and putting all the blame on cars,
16 especially in my downtown neighborhood.

17 Here at home in the city, I'm a
18 pedestrian. I walk everywhere. I
19 don't drive. I rarely take subways
20 anymore because due to poor management
21 by the MTA city council and mayor,
22 they're unsafe. But even if I did use
23 the subway, it would not alleviate my
24 need for a car because I'm only using
25 my car to go places with no public

1 transportation.

2 To alleviate congestion, get rid
3 of the restaurant sheds, would also cut
4 down the visibility when crossing the
5 street, cut the number of the 90,000
6 Ubers who are the worst drivers, who
7 drive everywhere while on their devices
8 double parking, causing congestion.
9 Crack down on the bikes that run red
10 lights and run up on the sidewalks.
11 Require license plates that can be read
12 on traffic cameras and send them
13 tickets.

14 Also the city is creating more
15 congestion trying to build a new
16 cluster of highrises near Madison
17 Square Garden, adding extra burden to
18 an already overdeveloped, overcrowded
19 neighborhood. The developers will no
20 doubt make billions of dollars on this.
21 Why not get the MTA the money it
22 supposedly needs from them?
23 Development creates congestion, and
24 development should pay for the
25 congestion. Or tax the tourists. Not

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1 the people who live here.

2 But we know it's not about
3 congestion. It's about you wanting a
4 bigger pot of money --

5 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
6 remarks. Thank you.

7 Our next speaker is Thomas Grech,
8 followed by Eric Dorfman.

9 Our next speaker is Eric Dorfman,
10 followed by Sarah Hughes.

11 Our next speaker is Sara Hughes,
12 followed by our 100th speaker on the
13 list, Maulin Mehta.

14 Our next speaker is Maulin Mehta,
15 followed by Ana Champeny.

16 MAULIN MEHTA: Can you hear me?

17 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

18 MAULIN MEHTA: Okay. Good
19 afternoon. My name is Maulin Mehta,
20 and I want to thank you for the
21 opportunity to provide comments today.

22 I'm a Queens resident, and I'm
23 here to show my support for congestion
24 pricing.

25 There are two reasons that I

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1 throw my support behind this program.
2 First is the need to fund public
3 transportation. As a resident of
4 Forest Hills, I'm fortunate to have
5 access to many modes of transportation.
6 We have four subway line and the Long
7 Island Railroads that helps us get into
8 Manhattan in twenty minutes. But not
9 everyone in Queens is so lucky. We
10 have a number of transit deserts, with
11 residents forced to take multiple
12 transfers and modes of transportation
13 to get around the city.

14 Moreover, how we travel has
15 changed. We all know that getting in
16 and out of Manhattan is just simply not
17 enough. The announcement of the
18 Interborough Express is exciting for
19 Brooklyn and Queens residents who will
20 be able to travel across the boroughs
21 quicker, saving time and opening up new
22 possibilities. We need more projects
23 like this that will expand our
24 transportation network and connect more
25 communities.

1 As a relatively new father, I
2 have a six-month old, I also look at
3 our transit system differently now.
4 I'm fortunate to have an elevator at my
5 nearest subway station. But not
6 everyone is as lucky around the city.

7 A few years ago, a young mother
8 tragically lost her life falling down
9 the subway stairs carrying her baby in
10 the stroller. We need the MTA to
11 complete capital projects that will
12 create a fully accessible system so
13 that tragedies like that don't ever
14 happen again.

15 These efforts only happen if we
16 fund our transit system. Congestion
17 pricing will provide billions of
18 dollars for projects that will expand
19 access and accessibility, things that
20 are especially needed outside of
21 Manhattan.

22 The second reason I support this,
23 is to actually fight congestion. I am
24 a car owner and travel frequently to
25 visit friends and family outside the

1 city. I know first hand how congestion
2 in the core can create massive
3 headaches for drivers when it seems
4 like pedestrians are able to move
5 faster.

6 But what about all the people who
7 live in communities that have to deal
8 with that congestion on a daily basis?
9 When the Forest Hills Stadium near
10 where I live has a show, we do get a
11 lot of congestion. But that isn't
12 every day. The idea of having that
13 type of congestion around my family day
14 in and day out is hard to imagine.

15 Our city also has one of the
16 highest rates in the country of
17 hospitalizations and deaths of children
18 and young adults due to asthma. What
19 we do to reduce emissions and get
20 people to ditch their cars in one part
21 of the city matters for the rest of us.

22 Around the world, we have seen
23 examples of how congestion pricing gets
24 cars off the road, and improves quality
25 of life and health. We have an

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1 opportunity before us to improve lives,
2 connect people and build a better
3 future for the next generation of New
4 Yorkers. Let's make sure we get
5 congestion pricing right, and deliver
6 all that it promises.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you. Our next
9 speaker is Ana Champeny, followed by
10 Susan Albrecht.

11 ANA CHAMPENY: Good afternoon.

12 MR. WOJNAR: We can hear you.
13 Please proceed.

14 ANA CHAMPENY: Good afternoon.
15 I'm Ana Champeny, the vice president
16 for research of the Citizen's Budget
17 Commission. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to comment.

19 CBC has long supported congestion
20 pricing to reduce traffic and emissions
21 while generating revenue critical to
22 supporting the MTA's capital plan. Our
23 recent report reinforced the importance
24 of CBD tolling revenue to ensure the
25 transit system is brought to a state of

1 repair.

2 CBC also articulated
3 recommendations for CBD tolls and
4 getting the pricing right.
5 Specifically, CBC recommends that the
6 MTA vary tolls based on the time of day
7 and day of week, prioritize both
8 raising revenue and reducing congestion
9 and emissions best achieved by higher
10 tolls at the most congested travel
11 periods.

12 But limiting exemptions to those
13 specified in the law and perhaps to
14 for-hire vehicles and taxis. Do not
15 provide credits for MTA or Port
16 Authority tolls. Proliferating
17 exemptions or far reaching credits
18 would increase the toll other drivers
19 would have to face in order to generate
20 one billion in annual revenue.

21 While toll shopping among bridges
22 and tunnels should be addressed doing
23 so through credits through the
24 congestion charge would increase the
25 program's complexity and may even

1 create new toll shopping incentives.

2 The environmental assessment's
3 model clearly demonstrates that CBD
4 tolling can achieve the program's goals
5 and the exemptions and credits for some
6 would increase the cost for others by
7 between \$5 and \$14 for a car. The
8 significantly higher toll can both
9 weaken support for the program and put
10 revenues at risk.

11 CBC also recommends that the MTA
12 clearly communicate tolls to enable
13 drivers to modify their trips
14 accordingly. Dynamic pricing -- change
15 spontaneously during the day based on
16 the level of congestion was not modeled
17 and is not recommended since it would
18 add significant complexity without
19 the -- without potentially the
20 necessary behavioral change.

21 Secondly -- sorry. Monitoring
22 report on congestion pricing
23 operational metrics to inform future
24 policy adjustment. While the EA models
25 are sophisticated, the program's actual

1 impact will be different. Adjustments
2 should be considered at regular
3 intervals to ensure the program is
4 meeting its revenue congestion and
5 emission goals.

6 Furthermore, public reporting of
7 the data will provide transparency,
8 accountability and facilitate by it.
9 Effective congestion pricing
10 implementation targets congestion
11 emissions and revenue together. Not
12 just revenue alone. In a fair and
13 sustainable manner that limits credits
14 and exemptions and maximizes social
15 benefits.

16 CBC supports speedy
17 implementation, paired with ongoing
18 monitoring and continual improvement to
19 reduce congestion and emissions and
20 improve transit for all future New
21 Yorkers.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Susan
25 Albrecht, followed by Talia Crawford.

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1 SUSAN ALBRECHT: Hello. Thank
2 you for the opportunity to speak. My
3 name is Susan Albrecht. I'm a 40-year
4 resident of New York City, and I live
5 in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. I acknowledge
6 the need for some sort of congestion
7 pricing to address climate change and
8 to help fund the MTA, but not one that
9 discriminates against a heavily taxes
10 to outer borough residents.

11 I have three things I wish to
12 say. The first has to do with the rich
13 and diverse culture of New York City.
14 The environmental impacts do not
15 measure the cultural impacts or the
16 impacts on cultural institutions. Many
17 outer borough residents like me
18 occasionally drive into the city to
19 participate in cultural events, doing
20 all those things that make our cities
21 so great. Taking the subway for those
22 occasions is not always practical.
23 Coming home late in the evening is
24 often a long, drawn out, exhausting and
25 risky prospect.

1 Without a doubt, congestion
2 pricing will impact the culture of New
3 York City, and the capacity of outer
4 borough residents to enjoy that
5 culture.

6 My second point is the lack of
7 transparency of the MTA's plans and
8 budgets. To the average New Yorker,
9 the MTA budget is a big black hole.
10 Sure, we need some changes and we need
11 some improvements. But where is that
12 money going and what are the plans and
13 timelines? From the past experience,
14 we know the mitigation plans to add
15 select stairs and escalators and other
16 improvements will take years to install
17 and renovate.

18 My third point is to respectfully
19 ask the commission to cut a break for
20 the millions of outer borough residents
21 who will bear the brunt of this new
22 tax. So many lower and middle-income
23 New Yorkers are being heavily hit by
24 exorbitant rent increases and by
25 inflation. Can you please consider

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1 some plan, like maybe some free
2 crossings into the city or a reduced
3 rate for outer borough residents?

4 In closing, I ask you to remember
5 that this will significantly change the
6 lives of so many of us in the city.

7 Thank you very much.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Talia
10 Crawford, followed by Rachel
11 Weinberger.

12 TALIA CRAWFORD: Can you guys
13 hear me?

14 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

15 TALIA CRAWFORD: Good afternoon.
16 My name is Talia Crawford. I'm the
17 campaign organizer for the Tristate
18 Transportation Campaign. Tristate is a
19 non-profit policy advocacy organization
20 dedicated to fighting for improved
21 mobility, accessibility and mobility in
22 New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

23 Today, I will join those in
24 support of congestion pricing and will
25 continue to support congestion pricing

1 as both a rider and proud New Yorker.
2 Congestion pricing is expected to
3 generate \$15 billion, allowing the MTA
4 to complete its essential capital
5 program to improve longstanding issues
6 that have plagued our public
7 transportation system.

8 As someone who grew up in New
9 York City, I've never had a driver's
10 license or even a permit. So I rely on
11 the vast amount of public
12 transportation options available to me.
13 And I know I'm not the only one out
14 there whose mobility is dependent on
15 mass transit. So a swift
16 implementation of congestion pricing is
17 key to ensuring safer, more reliable,
18 efficient and accessible public
19 transportation. And from an
20 environmental perspective, it is the
21 key to cleaner air and less traffic
22 congestion.

23 That said, after reviewing the
24 recent draft of the EA, we call on the
25 U.S. DOT, the state and the city to act

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1 swiftly to mitigate any potential
2 negative impacts that congestion
3 pricing may have on the Environmental
4 Justice communities, located in New
5 York City's outer boroughs.

6 We urge the MTA to be cautious
7 when considering any discounts for
8 exemptions. Each exemption would be
9 less effective to the reduction of
10 potential traffic and more exemptions
11 can lead to increase traffic, traffic
12 diversions in areas surrounding the
13 CBD, including increases along the
14 Cross Bronx and Staten Island
15 Expressway.

16 We urge the MTA to carefully
17 consider how to mitigate and monitor
18 any adverse effects from changes in
19 traffic patterns, as it creates and
20 implements the final program. This is
21 imminently possible and should not
22 become a reason to bring congestion
23 pricing to a halt.

24 I strongly support implementing
25 congestion pricing in combination with

1 swift prioritization of mitigation
2 measures in any areas identified to
3 have any potential negative impact.
4 This policy is a huge win, not just for
5 Manhattan, but our regional transit
6 system at large.

7 So thank you for your time.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Rachel
10 Weinberger, followed by Imani Mckinnon.

11 RACHEL WEINBERGER: Good
12 afternoon, everybody. Thank you for
13 allowing me to testify today. My name
14 is Rachel Weinberger. I'm a resident
15 of Brooklyn, the mother of a seven and
16 a 12-year-old and I own and drive a
17 car.

18 I have a PhD in urban planning,
19 and a Master's degree in transportation
20 engineering. I also teach
21 transportation planning at the
22 university level. In these capacities,
23 I've given a lot of thoughts to the
24 region's transportation system, and to
25 congestion pricing in particular.

1 Today, I want to praise the
2 legislature for having passed this
3 landmark bill and the MTA for their
4 efforts to implement it effectively. I
5 also want to talk about how to make the
6 CBD Tolling Program the best it can be
7 to meet the dual goals of reducing
8 traffic and raising money for public
9 transit. I want to talk specifically
10 about toll shopping. And I'll start
11 with a personal story.

12 Recently, I was driving my mother
13 from Long Island to her apartment in
14 Chelsea. We were on the LIE, and at
15 some point in Queens, my mother said we
16 usually take the Williamsburg Bridge
17 from here to save the toll. The detour
18 would have added ten minutes and
19 two miles. I checked this morning on
20 Google Maps. My mother would have
21 driven ten minutes to save \$6.55. That
22 is equivalent to paying herself \$39 an
23 hour. Not bad.

24 What my mother's calculation does
25 not take into account is the delay she

1 imposes on other drivers, the damage
2 she exacts on the environment, and the
3 inefficient use of the public right of
4 way. My mother, like most other
5 people, wouldn't think to consider
6 those costs because they're completely
7 invisible to her.

8 In my research for a report
9 called Reimagining the BQE, I learned
10 that 25 percent of a.m. peak vehicles
11 of the BQE west of the free East River
12 crossings are heading to Manhattan via
13 those two free crossings. 25 percent
14 of vehicles on that over burdened and
15 crumbling part of the BQE had bypassed
16 the Hugh Carey Tunnel, a potentially
17 shorter, more efficient route to their
18 destination, but saved themselves
19 \$6.55.

20 They, like my mother, have no way
21 to assess the full impact of their
22 decision. The time delay they impose
23 on themselves is also imposed on other
24 drivers. Because they take a longer
25 route to save money, they use more

1 street resources as well as. That is
2 the city builds and maintains more
3 roads than would be needed to serve the
4 trip if taken more directly.

5 Toll shopping adds traffic,
6 pollution and carbon emissions that we
7 have never thought to quantify. But
8 today, we know at least that 25 percent
9 of a.m. peak travelers on the BQE would
10 go out of their way to save a toll. We
11 can assume there are many more
12 travelers like them. We can assume
13 they will do the same to find a lower
14 price route compared to a higher priced
15 route with the CBD Tolling Program.

16 It is the government's sector
17 that set up the incentive for my mother
18 and thousands of people just like her
19 to toll shop. The same problem exists
20 on the way out of the CBD. If the cost
21 of crossings is not equal, many drivers
22 will look for a bargain, adding time
23 and distance to their trips,
24 multiplying the extra time across all
25 the drivers in the system and

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1 ultimately defeating the goal of
2 reducing congestion and it's collateral
3 benefits of reducing pollution --

4 MR. WOJNAR: Please conclude your
5 remarks.

6 RACHEL WEINBERGER: Thank you for
7 your time.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

9 The next speaker is Imani
10 Mckinnon, followed by Sandra Voss.

11 The next speaker is Sandra Voss,
12 followed by Daniel Love.

13 SANDRA VOSS: Hi. Can you hear
14 me?

15 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can. Please
16 proceed.

17 SANDRA VOSS: Great.

18 Thank you so much for the
19 opportunity to speak. My name is
20 Sandra Voss, and I'm a resident of
21 Harlem. I'm a strong supporter of
22 congestion pricing. The issue of
23 prioritizing people over cars is one
24 that is close to my heart because my
25 brother-in-law Charley was killed while

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1 riding his bike in 2020 when a driver
2 hit him when he had the right of way.
3 I miss Charley every day.

4 Almost every week, I hear of
5 another New Yorker who has been injured
6 or killed by a driver. In order to
7 reduce and eliminate the rising number
8 of traffic-related deaths in our city,
9 we need to begin prioritizing people
10 over driver's convenience.

11 But even if no one was being
12 killed by cars, there are so many
13 reasons why we need congestion pricing.
14 The majority of NYC residents do not
15 drive or own a car. The majority of us
16 take public transit to get places. It
17 is unfair that New Yorkers who don't
18 drive are forced to put up with the
19 pollution, noise and danger caused by
20 the small minority who do drive.

21 I've heard some people claim that
22 congestion pricing will hurt low-income
23 residents who live in the outer
24 boroughs. But the fact is that
25 low-income New Yorkers are even less

1 likely to own a car than the average
2 New Yorker. According to a 2017 report
3 based on U.S. Census data, an NYC
4 car-free households earn 52 percent
5 less than households with vehicles.
6 Medium incomes of zero car households
7 are lower than overall medium incomes.
8 While medium incomes of households with
9 vehicles are higher than overall medium
10 incomes in all five boroughs.

11 A recent study also found that
12 96 percent of outer borough New Yorkers
13 wouldn't regularly pay a congestion
14 charge. Let's stop catering a minority
15 of wealthy commuters and have our city
16 reflect the actual needs of the people
17 who live here.

18 Congestion pricing will provide
19 essential funding for our public
20 transit system, which is in need of a
21 lot of improvements. Looking at cities
22 in other countries that have trains
23 that run on time and buses that can
24 move quickly through express lanes,
25 it's an international embarrassment

1 that we don't prioritize our transit
2 system more. We need to join the 21st
3 century, and do our part to reduce
4 climate change by prioritizing transit,
5 walking, biking and people over
6 driving.

7 Every time I see an ambulance or
8 fire truck that can't get through
9 because of traffic, I think about how
10 much we need to reduce the number of
11 cars on our streets. I think about the
12 person inside the ambulance whose
13 likelihood of survival might be reduced
14 because of traffic. And I think on
15 their loved ones.

16 Even up here on 116th Street in
17 Harlem, gridlock can be extreme. It
18 seems almost laughable that it's
19 controversial to consider congestion
20 pricing that's only being proposed
21 below 60th Street. It's clear that we
22 need to do something to reduce the
23 number of cars throughout all of NYC
24 and the congestion pricing plan is the
25 start that we need.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

3 Our next speaker is Daniel Love,
4 followed by Jordan Force.

5 Daniel, you may begin your
6 remarks.

7 DANIEL LOVE: Hello. I'm sorry.
8 I can't get my video going.

9 But I want to thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify on this very
11 important issue. My name is Sproll
12 Love (phonetic). I also live in
13 Central Harlem on 124th Street. I'm a
14 father of two school-aged children, and
15 I do own a car. My family and I use
16 bikes extensively both for errands and
17 getting to work, as well as for
18 pleasure, getting down to Central Park.

19 We also rely on the subway
20 heavily. I drop my daughter off to
21 school every day on the subway, and we
22 use it for errands. I want to first
23 say I'm strongly in favor of
24 implementing congestion pricing as soon
25 as possible. I agree with all the

1 arguments made in favor, and I want to
2 thank the MTA for putting together an
3 excellent, well-researched, data-backed
4 presentation.

5 I want to distill this issue down
6 to two simple facts, which I don't
7 think anyone can argue with.

8 One is, we have too many cars and
9 traffic in New York City. The other
10 is, we have a subway that's the
11 lifeblood of New York City. It's one
12 of the top reasons I live here, and
13 it's in a financial crisis.

14 This program addresses those two
15 issues. And of course, a lot of
16 special interests, namely entitled
17 drivers, are arguing for exemptions and
18 special treatment. But they're the
19 minority. You know, when we say
20 streets are for people, we mean they're
21 for drivers, they're for cyclists,
22 they're for pedestrians. And I just
23 want to leave it at that.

24 I'm going to cede the rest of my
25 time. I'm strongly in favor of this

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1 program, and I hope it gets implemented
2 as soon as possible, and it would be
3 great if we can raise the northern
4 cordoned barrier up into my
5 neighborhood.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

8 The next speaker is Jordan Force,
9 followed by Erica Schwartz.

10 The next speaker is the 110th
11 person to sign up, is Erica Schwarz,
12 followed by Wendy Brawer.

13 Our next speaker is Wendy Brawer,
14 followed by Ahmad Qayyum.

15 The next speaker is Ahmad Qayyum,
16 followed by Linda Baran.

17 The next speaker is Linda Baran,
18 followed by John Corlett.

19 LINDA BARAN: Can you hear me?

20 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

21 LINDA BARAN: Thank you.

22 My name is Linda Baran, I'm the
23 president of the Staten Island Chamber
24 of Commerce here on Staten Island.

25 First, I just want to comment

1 that entitled drivers, I take offense
2 to that. On Staten Island here, we
3 have very, very limited transit
4 options. So people don't drive as a
5 luxury. They drive because they don't
6 have other choices. So I just wanted
7 to kind of just reiterate that because
8 it isn't the case for everyone.

9 We are uniquely positioned here
10 on Staten Island. Between the
11 cash-strapped MTA and cash-strapped
12 Port Authority, we have four bridges
13 and we pay some of the highest tolls in
14 the nation already. In the seven CBD
15 tolling scenarios, I noticed that
16 there's a possible credit to include
17 drivers coming over area bridges, but
18 it does not include the Verazano
19 Narrows Bridge. So that's something
20 that I picked up.

21 For businesses here, the cost of
22 doing business is extremely high.
23 Especially post COVID or as you say, in
24 the recovery process. It puts our
25 businesses at a competitive

1 disadvantage with the other four
2 boroughs, with thin profit margins and
3 the cost of goods. The added cost to
4 get into the CBD district is only going
5 to multiply and it's going to be passed
6 along to the consumer, as everyone else
7 is saying here.

8 I heard Jessica Walker from the
9 Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. I do
10 suggest that there -- an economic
11 impact study be done to see what the
12 actual economic impact is going to be.
13 Especially as we are trying to get out
14 of COVID and we see what impact it's
15 having, not only on our businesses, but
16 on our residents, as far as inflation
17 and everything else.

18 There are a couple of things in
19 the actual assessment that I wanted to
20 bring up. While I do believe that
21 congestion pricing is an admirable
22 proposal to reduce traffic, reduce
23 pollution and offer reliable mass
24 transit, some of the things that I
25 would like to just comment on is

1 regarding reducing traffic. The
2 environmental impact statements shows
3 tolling scenarios that have truck
4 traffic being diverted to the Staten
5 Island Expressway.

6 The Staten Island Expressway
7 already experiences major traffic
8 snarls and delays daily, spilling over
9 onto our local streets, the westbound
10 HOV lane on the Staten Island
11 Expressway ends at Victory Boulevard,
12 and does not continue through the
13 Goethals Bridge. While we have
14 requested state DOT extend lanes, it
15 has no concrete plans to do so. And
16 congestion on the Staten Island
17 Expressway remains a chronic problem.

18 Reducing -- regarding reducing
19 pollution, increase truck traffic will
20 intensify emission and affect our air
21 quality as the car dependent borough
22 with limited -- people will continue to
23 drive here. Just regarding mass
24 transit options, there's been very
25 little investment in Staten Island, and

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1 in order to get people into mass
2 transit, we don't have a direct
3 connection to Manhattan. We have
4 problems and delays with our ferry
5 system. We -- the express bus is the
6 only option that people take, and it's
7 \$13 plus a day.

8 So we'd like to see some plan
9 for, you know, while -- while
10 investment -- while congestion pricing
11 is a laudable goal, we'd like to see a
12 plan to ramp things up before anything
13 like this is even --

14 MR. WOJNAR: Please conclude your
15 remarks.

16 LINDA BARAN: Thank you.

17 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

18 Our next speaker is John Corlett,
19 followed by Faraz Qureshi.

20 JOHN CORLETT: Good afternoon.
21 Can you hear me?

22 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

23 JOHN CORLETT: Thank you. My
24 name is John Corlett. I'm the director
25 of Government Affairs and Traffic

1 Safety Services for Triple A Northeast.
2 I'm speaking on behalf of Triple A
3 Northeast, which serves more than six
4 million members in New York, New
5 Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts,
6 Rhode Island and New Hampshire.

7 Nearly two million drivers in New
8 York City and the surrounding
9 metropolitan area are Triple A members.
10 As a significant stakeholder in the
11 implementation of a workable Central
12 Business District Tolling Plan, Triple
13 A Northeast has identified several key
14 issues for consideration.

15 Firstly, we are grateful to
16 federal, state and local officials for
17 the opportunity to comment on the
18 Environmental Assessment. This is
19 certainly in the step in the right
20 direction to ensure that the public has
21 had an opportunity to be heard.

22 Nonetheless, we respectfully
23 request that the MTA and other
24 government officials continue to hold
25 public forums, community meetings, to

1 provide updates regarding the progress
2 of the program in the year ahead.
3 Social media posts, press releases, and
4 public notices should be frequent and
5 provide clear communication to ensure
6 the public understand what exactly is
7 being implemented and when.

8 In addition, continuing to engage
9 stakeholder groups like Triple A, local
10 business improvement districts and the
11 trucking industry will go a long way
12 towards successful implementation.

13 Secondly, because the Central
14 Business Tolling Program aims to
15 relieve congestion in the zone, drivers
16 should be provided the cost savings
17 incentives to drive at the least
18 congested times of day. A toll
19 structure that imposes a reduced cost
20 at the least congested times a day will
21 enhance fairness to drivers by giving
22 them an opportunity to shift their
23 schedule to lessen the impact of the
24 charges.

25 We also strongly discourage the

1 use of realtime variable toll
2 structures, such as those used down in
3 I-66 Virginia. A driver should be able
4 to plan and weigh the cost benefit of
5 driving into the CBD before they leave
6 home, and should be provided advanced
7 notice well in advance of any price
8 difference to the extent practicable.

9 Indeed, if the MTA chooses to
10 impose higher tolls in specific days
11 when congestion is expected to be
12 worse, such as gridlock alert days or
13 air quality alert days, such changes
14 should be clearly communicated to the
15 public well in advance.

16 I'm just going to skip ahead. I
17 did submit this to the Federal Highway
18 Administration this morning. I will
19 just like to skip ahead here a little
20 bit. I only have 30 seconds.

21 Finally, we respectfully request
22 an exemption for emergency roadside
23 service vehicles. The CB District
24 Tolling legislation exempted all
25 vehicles defined as emergency vehicles,

1 but did not include all vehicles
2 defined under the state's Move Over
3 Law. Emergency vehicles, tow trucks
4 and light duty service vehicle all
5 provide essential safety functions in
6 New York City, and in fact in London,
7 all vehicles classified as recovery
8 vehicles are eligible for a 100 percent
9 discount. Because they -- those
10 vehicles can facilitate flow of traffic
11 by aiding or removing disabled
12 vehicles.

13 So thank you for the opportunity
14 to comment.

15 MR. WOJNAR: Our next speaker is
16 Faraz Qureshi, followed by Chelsea
17 Dowell.

18 The next speaker is Chelsea
19 Dowell, followed by Denis de Verteuil.

20 CHELSEA DOWELL: Good afternoon.
21 My name is Chelsea Dowell. I'm a staff
22 member at Open Plans, a non-profit
23 dedicated to building a more livable
24 city for all New Yorkers.

25 I'm also a resident of Brooklyn

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1 17th Street, and I live directly across
2 from an on-ramp to the Prospect
3 Expressway. Every day I see and hear
4 firsthand just how damaging car culture
5 is to our city's livability, safety and
6 health. My neighbors and I need noise
7 machines to fight the engine sounds at
8 night. We witness gridlock and road
9 rage. We keep our windows closed no
10 matter the temperatures outside and
11 even so, we often smell exhaust inside
12 our homes.

13 I often think of how lovely, how
14 quiet and peaceful our block would be
15 if the city hadn't carved a highway
16 through the neighborhood in deference
17 to car culture. But this isn't about
18 me or my block. This is about how
19 increased congestion has created these
20 conditions and much worse in
21 neighborhoods across the city. And
22 it's impacting a vast majority of New
23 Yorkers who do not own cars.

24 People whose streets and
25 sidewalks are clogged, polluted and

1 deadly because of the small minority
2 creating a very large problem. Lives
3 have been lost, lives are being lost.
4 Health outcomes have been diminished.
5 These compromises, these sacrifices to
6 car culture are not acceptable.
7 Congestion pricing is our chance to
8 prioritize people over cars, to
9 prioritize public transit over private
10 vehicles.

11 Congestion pricing is proven to
12 reduce driving. And having less cars
13 on the road means less crashes. It
14 means improved health and well-being
15 for the vast majority of New Yorkers
16 who again do not own cars.

17 New York City is a public transit
18 city. It's part of what makes New York
19 the greatest city in the world. And
20 now we need to invest in that system
21 that again most New Yorkers are using
22 to enter and travel within the
23 Manhattan core, as well as across the
24 entire city.

25 There are issues with our transit

1 system, as some speakers have
2 mentioned. Especially in areas farther
3 from the district in question. But the
4 future of our city is not a car. We
5 can't fix the issues by doubling down
6 on a problematic situation.

7 I urge that we implement
8 congestion pricing quickly with limited
9 exemptions and consideration of
10 mitigation in impacted areas. Let's
11 put a stake in the ground for the
12 future and begin to imagine a more
13 livable, safer and more accessible city
14 now.

15 Thank you for your time.

16 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

17 Our next speaker is Denis de
18 Verteuil, followed by Andrew
19 Greenblatt.

20 DENIS DE VERTEUIL: Hi, everyone.
21 My name is Denis de Verteuil. I'm a
22 resident of South Slope, Brooklyn, and
23 I work in Lower Manhattan.

24 Honestly, Chelsea gave a really
25 good support to all this, so I just

1 would like to say I would like to
2 support whatever -- everything that she
3 said.

4 And because -- like, I am a
5 father of two, and I rely heavily on
6 the transportation system, I am a
7 cyclist and I use it every day. My
8 family uses it every day. It is the
9 lifeblood of the city. And I fully
10 support the congestion pricing program.

11 I concede the rest of my time.
12 Thank you.

13 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

14 Our next speaker is Andrew
15 Greenblatt, followed by Carol Parker.

16 ANDREW GREENBLATT: Hi. Name is
17 Andrew Greenblatt, and I'm the national
18 policy director of the Independent
19 Drivers Guild. Thank you for this
20 opportunity to testify before you
21 today.

22 The IDG is a non-profit affiliate
23 of the International Association of
24 Machinists, and our organization
25 represents over 140,000 drivers

1 throughout New York State. I'm here
2 today on behalf of New York's for-hire
3 vehicle ride share drivers, to implore
4 you not to add a second congestion tax
5 on these drivers. Black and yellow
6 cars in New York City have been
7 generating a third of a billion dollars
8 per year since the congestion pricing
9 surcharge was first levied in 2019.

10 Today, none of the other classes
11 of drivers in Manhattan, that's private
12 cars, buses, commercial delivery, et
13 cetera, have paid a penny into this
14 program. Why drivers who are
15 overwhelmingly low-income and
16 91 percent of whom are immigrants, were
17 the only ones whose labor was taxed for
18 the last three years is a conversation
19 for another day.

20 Today, we ask why in a process
21 that for the first time is meant to
22 have other drivers start carrying their
23 share of the billion-dollar burden,
24 with this panel increase the burden on
25 those who are least able to pay, those

1 who have already paid the most, and
2 those who would otherwise continue to
3 pay a third of the billion dollars you
4 are trying to raise here today.

5 The original congestion pricing
6 fee of \$2.75 per trip, was at least
7 designed in a way that could be passed
8 onto passengers. Though any tax
9 ultimately does hurt drivers through
10 fewer rides.

11 The newly proposed fees, however,
12 would fall squarely on the shoulders of
13 the drivers. So let's take for example
14 the idea that if you impose the
15 23-dollar once a day fee onto drivers
16 entering the zone, which passenger
17 would pay that? The first passenger of
18 the day? The last passenger of the
19 day? The middle passenger of the day?
20 Obviously, only the driver would be in
21 a position to pay that one-time fee.

22 And \$23 a day is a devastating
23 amount for this population. Working
24 just five days a week, 50 weeks a year,
25 a driver would have to pay \$5,750 a

1 year just to work. For a typical
2 driver making \$40,000 a year, that
3 would lower their income by 14 percent.
4 That's right, this board is considering
5 imposing the equivalent of a 14 percent
6 income tax increase on some of the most
7 vulnerable workers in the city.

8 Let's not impose one of the most
9 regressive taxes in history on the only
10 group already paying more than their
11 fair share. Let's let everyone else
12 start to chip in first.

13 The Environmental Assessment
14 points out on page 4A, page 46, that
15 scenario D can be designed in a way to
16 achieve the one-billion-dollar goal
17 without imposing a second tax on FHV
18 drivers. To do anything else would be
19 nothing short of immoral.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Carol Parker,
23 followed by Christopher Sanders.

24 Our next speaker is the 120th
25 person to sign up, Christopher Sanders,

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1 followed by Isabelle Verdery.

2 Our next speaker is Isabelle
3 Verdery, followed by Lena Melendez.

4 ISABELLE VERDERY: Hi. Did that
5 work?

6 MR. WOJNAR: Yes. You may
7 proceed.

8 ISABELLE VERDERY: Cool.

9 My name is Izzy. I've lived in
10 New York the past four years, and in
11 the proposed congestion pricing zone
12 for all of those four years.

13 In my opinion, New York really
14 urgently needs congestion pricing, both
15 to combat climate change and improve
16 quality of life for all New Yorkers.
17 Without making driving more difficult,
18 to put it simply, people will continue
19 to do it. And restricting vehicle
20 traffic into the center of the city
21 will contribute to better public
22 transit and vibrant streets for all New
23 Yorkers.

24 I encourage the MTA and all
25 policy makers to make a wholesale shift

1 in prioritizing public transit users
2 and cyclists and pedestrians and make
3 large scale changes to accommodate this
4 move instead of incremental changes
5 designed to placate all stakeholders to
6 streets.

7 When London implemented
8 congestion pricing, the city saw
9 20 percent reduction in traffic and an
10 83 percent jump in cycling. And the
11 people who would pay more to drive into
12 the congested parts of Manhattan are
13 disproportionately wealthier. Just
14 four percent of all New York City
15 workers who live in the other boroughs
16 commute into Manhattan by car.

17 I would also like to address
18 those who said they should not be
19 charged for driving out of town into
20 Yonkers, to Westchester, into Long
21 Island, I have to pay the fare every
22 time I would like to go to those places
23 if I take the Metro-North or if I take
24 the Long Island Railroad.

25 I would also like to join with

1 the other testifiers, Sandra Voss, in
2 calling for reduced traffic deaths by
3 cars and improving safety on our
4 streets. The last few years,
5 especially since COVID, have been
6 extremely deadly for pedestrians and
7 cyclists. And I believe that
8 congestion pricing, by taking cars off
9 the road, will contribute to the city's
10 Vision Zero initiative, which it has
11 currently not been doing so well at.

12 Congestion pricing should be
13 implemented as soon as possible, after
14 years and years of delay. And I
15 believe that after we do this, we will
16 wonder why we did not do it sooner
17 after seeing the incredible benefits
18 that will bring to our subways, our
19 buses and our quality of life.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Lena
23 Melendez, followed by Christian Arrue.

24 Our next speaker is Christian
25 Arrue, followed by Danny Sena.

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1 The next speaker is Danny Sena,
2 followed by Douglas Desir.

3 DANNY SENA: Good afternoon. So
4 as stated, my name is Danny Sena. I'm
5 the director at Agape Transportation.
6 We are a non-emergency medical
7 transportation company serving the New
8 York City Metro area.

9 We've been in business for
10 ten years. Our founder was once an FHV
11 driver. He's my father, who moved here
12 as an immigrant. He is the epitome of
13 what it is to move to New York City
14 without a degree and get working and
15 get to where you need to get to.

16 So I'd like to first bring up the
17 need for some kind of concession or a
18 complete exemption for FHV drivers
19 across the board, as most are
20 minorities. Most have either lower
21 incomes or are immigrants or come from
22 places where maybe they didn't have the
23 opportunity that others did. So an
24 additional toll for this population
25 would be just devastating.

1 But beyond that, the population
2 that our company serves are primarily
3 Medicaid and Medicare recipients, as
4 well as generally elderly people or
5 sickly people who live within the new
6 congestion zone.

7 This toll would create just chaos
8 for many of them, as this cost would
9 either need to be absorbed by
10 themselves, as older New Yorkers, or by
11 Medicaid and Medicare. Therefore
12 exasperating the budget even more than
13 it already is.

14 So I request that it be highly
15 considered that for medicaid medical
16 transportation, non-emergency medical
17 transportation, just like
18 Access-A-Ride, it's the same service as
19 Access-A-Ride, a blanket exemption is
20 made as this is the service that needs
21 to be provided to those New Yorkers.

22 Throughout the pandemic, we were
23 considered -- it's exempt -- an exempt
24 service. And I think that should
25 continue. Because again, without our

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1 service or services like -- not even
2 just our company, but this service is
3 necessary for many New Yorkers living
4 within the congestion zone. So
5 non-emergency medical transportation
6 should be added in as an additional
7 exemption.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

10 The next speaker is Douglas
11 Desir, followed by Michael Huarachi.

12 Our next speaker is Michael
13 Huarachi, followed by Vishaan
14 Chakrabarti.

15 Michael Huarachi.

16 Michael, please unmute and begin
17 your remarks.

18 MICHAEL HUARACHI: Hello, can you
19 hear me?

20 MR. WOJNAR: Yes. Please begin.

21 MICHAEL HUARACHI: Hi, yes.

22 I would like to suggest that we
23 move away from criminalizing poverty in
24 our transportation system. I would
25 rather have two --

1 (Technical interruption.)

2 -- the core of the -- cannot
3 afford to pay. I think that 100 -- is
4 a -- it is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

5 (Technical interruption.)

6 Public transportation, housing,
7 health care -- is beyond the scope of
8 what the MTA can do, but what the MTA
9 can also do is stop catering to the
10 white rage that is -- unsafe --
11 probably the best public transportation
12 systems in regards to safety that
13 has -- in the western worlds. Never --
14 this -- our public -- New York City --
15 I cannot say the same -- England --

16 (Technical interruption.)

17 INTERPRETER: I'm sorry, the
18 interpreter cannot hear. I'm assuming
19 that the stenographer cannot hear
20 clearly as well.

21 CAPTIONER: I cannot hear.

22 MR. WOJNAR: We'll come back to
23 Michael, if you can get to a better
24 spot and give you your remaining time.

25 The next speaker is Vishaan

1 Chakrabarti, followed by Jon Jadrosich.

2 The next speaker is Jon
3 Jadrosich, followed by Alice Mok.

4 The next speaker is Alice Mok,
5 followed by Patricia Cowley.

6 ALICE MOK: Hello, everyone. My
7 name is Alice Mok. I represent my
8 company, Wonton Food Inc. We have been
9 an Asian food manufacturer in New York
10 for nearly 50 years, serving
11 restaurants, food service organizations
12 in the city and more.

13 We have plants in Williamsburg,
14 Brooklyn, Long Island City and
15 Plainview, Long Island, as well as a
16 wholesale division in Chinatown.

17 Implementing the congestion
18 pricing would affect our business or
19 similar businesses in the following
20 ways: Number one, due to high rent in
21 Manhattan, many businesses in Chinatown
22 have a small footprint. They require
23 multiple deliveries from their vendors
24 to support their business for the
25 community. It would add cost to our

1 business, and many food and small
2 companies that make daily deliveries to
3 Chinatown.

4 Needless to say, we are already
5 suffering from the increasing cost of
6 labor, transportation and raw materials
7 of running a small business in New York
8 City. Besides, it would add cost to
9 our vendors who make deliveries to our
10 wholesale division. And in the end,
11 add more cost on our shoulders.

12 Furthermore, it would affect our
13 business because customers may
14 discontinue using our products due to
15 the expense of picking up in Chinatown.

16 Lastly, it would heavily impact
17 the restaurant business in the CBD,
18 which are already struggling due to the
19 pandemic. That's all I want to share.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

22 The next speaker, the 130th
23 person to sign up, is Patricia Cowley,
24 followed by Michelle Grossman.

25 PATRICIA COWLEY: Good afternoon.

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1 My name is Patricia Cowley. I'm the
2 executive director for the Greater New
3 Jersey Motor Coach Association, as well
4 as the Pennsylvania Bus Association. I
5 am speaking here today to request the
6 full exemption to bus and motor coach
7 private companies in regards to the
8 congestion pricing tolling.

9 Our members represent over 100
10 motor coach operators who bring
11 commuters and tourists to New York
12 City. Although we support efforts to
13 address congestion in the city, we are
14 extremely concerned by the options
15 proposed in the Environmental
16 Assessment and the limited time
17 available to review the documents and
18 participate in this process.

19 Because New York City is a
20 national tourism and commuter
21 destination, any suggestion -- any
22 congestion relief or pricing models
23 need to take into consideration the
24 concerns of all stakeholders involved.
25 We understand several options proposed

1 in the New York Central Business
2 District Tolling Program include
3 tolling of buses and motor coaches that
4 serve the city.

5 This is counterintuitive to
6 providing congestion relief. Motor
7 coach travel is one of the most green,
8 fuel efficient modes of transportation
9 by getting approximately 280 miles per
10 gallon. Not only do our members reduce
11 traffic congestion on our roads and
12 highways, but just one coach has a
13 potential to replace up to 50 cars. So
14 we are taking cars off the streets,
15 lessening the carbon footprint and our
16 members do this all while providing
17 significant economic benefits to the
18 city.

19 Further, motor coaches are often
20 the only form of transportation
21 available to low-income and
22 under-served communities. By assessing
23 fees of the buses on the buses, there
24 will be no other choice but to raise
25 fares to cover the extra expense. I

1 think this will impact commuters and of
2 course will impact the significant
3 revenue we bring to the New York City
4 landscape.

5 Simply put, motor coaches are the
6 solution to your problem and need to be
7 treated as such. Therefore, we
8 respectfully request you to take these
9 points into your consideration, and
10 offer private motor coach companies
11 full exemption from the congestion
12 pricing plans being developed.

13 Thank you for your time.

14 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

15 The next speaker is Michelle
16 Grossman, followed by Caspar Lant.

17 The next speaker is Caspar Lant,
18 followed by Kate Brockwehl.

19 The next speaker is Kate
20 Brockwehl, followed by Jane Selden.

21 KATE BROCKWEHL: My name is Kate
22 Brockwehl, and I'm a member of Families
23 For Safe Streets, a group of people who
24 have been seriously injured or lost
25 loved ones to traffic violence.

1 Congestion pricing has made
2 streets safer where it's been
3 implemented. In London, crashes fell
4 nearly 50 percent in the congestion
5 pricing zone, with the 15 percent --
6 sorry.

7 Congestion pricing will make
8 streets safer for all road users.
9 Implicit in the testimony of virtually
10 every opponent is the assumption that
11 when someone gets in their car, they
12 will be able to get home in one piece.
13 I want that to be true, but for far too
14 many drivers, it is not.

15 Before I was hit by a car more
16 than four years ago, I understood that
17 I could be. Three of my
18 great-grandmothers were killed by
19 vehicles. When I was hit, I was
20 walking in the crosswalk and had the
21 light. The driver failed to yield,
22 causing serious knee, leg and wrist
23 injuries and PTSD. While I couldn't
24 have done anything differently to
25 prevent I being hit, congestion pricing

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1 will encourage drivers to reconsider
2 non-essential trips to Manhattan.

3 We have to design transit with
4 the expectation that humans will make
5 mistakes. We know how to and we must
6 design roads so that those inevitable
7 mistakes are not deadly. Congestion
8 pricing will deter some drivers from
9 getting in their car when they can make
10 the trip by subway, bus or train.

11 We need to reduce the number of
12 car trips to reduce the number of
13 crashes that are killing our neighbors.
14 There are important considerations in
15 how to implement congestion pricing,
16 but it is the only reasonable first
17 step to take in addressing a planet in
18 obvious crisis, and streets so
19 dangerous that drivers are killing and
20 severely injuring people who are
21 standing on sidewalks, babies in
22 strollers and 99-year-olds.

23 It is our most vulnerable who are
24 most likely to be injured and killed by
25 traffic violence. The youngest,

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1 oldest, people who cannot work from
2 home, commuters who travel at night,
3 people with disabilities and people who
4 drive for their jobs. That change is
5 uncomfortable. Makes it no less
6 essential.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

9 The next speaker is Jane Selden,
10 followed by Muneeb Rehman.

11 JANE SELDEN: Thank you for
12 giving me the opportunity to speak
13 today. My name is Jane Selden. I'm a
14 retired educator, a long time resident
15 of the Central Business District, a bus
16 rider, a subway rider and a climate
17 activist.

18 I fully support the CBD Tolling
19 Plan because it is an important step
20 towards reducing the city's greenhouse
21 gas emissions and improving the health
22 of our local communities. With
23 record-breaking heat waves, severe
24 droughts, unprecedented flooding and
25 uncontrollable wild fires both here and

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1 abroad, we are already witnessing the
2 deadly affects of the climate crisis.

3 According to the UNIPC's latest
4 report, we are rapidly running out of
5 time to take the steps necessary to
6 avert climate catastrophe. In New York
7 City the transportation sector
8 contributes 30 percent of greenhouse
9 gas emissions, with emissions from cars
10 and trucks being the largest
11 contributors. The path to reducing
12 these emissions is clear. We need to
13 reduce the number of vehicles entering
14 the city and provide the much needed
15 funding to modernize, expand and speed
16 up public transportation. Thereby
17 incentivizing more sustainable
18 alternatives to car travel.

19 Reducing these dangerous
20 emissions will also improve the health
21 of our local communities. Our city now
22 experiences the worst traffic
23 congestion in the nation. This
24 congestion results in more vehicles
25 idling and more stop and go driving,

1 which increases tail pipe pollution.
2 In fact, idling engines emit twice the
3 amount of toxic pollutants as a car in
4 motion. These pollutants include
5 carbon monoxide, nitrogen-oxide and
6 small particulate matter that have been
7 linked to higher rates of heart and
8 lung disease and cancer, as well as
9 higher rates of hospitalization and
10 death from COVID-19.

11 These adverse health effects
12 disproportionately impact low-income
13 communities and communities of color.
14 We know that implementing congestion
15 pricing has direct health benefits
16 because we've seen this happen in other
17 cities. For example, according to a
18 John Hopkins study, in Stockholm, there
19 was a fifteen percent drop in
20 particulate matter, and the number of
21 hospital visits by children with severe
22 asthma went down by nearly 50 percent.

23 Regarding exemptions, I support
24 exempting vehicles that transport
25 disabled people. This is fair. But

1 adding more exemptions will
2 significantly increase the toll,
3 resulting in more people seeking
4 alternative, toll-free routes,
5 including the Cross Bronx Expressway,
6 increasing the pollution for Bronx
7 residents who already suffer from some
8 of the worst air quality in the city.

9 The congestion pricing tolling
10 program is a crucial first step in
11 addressing multiple urgent issues in
12 our city. The climate crisis, the
13 public health crisis and the traffic
14 congestion. It's working in London,
15 it's working in Stockholm and in
16 Singapore and other cities around the
17 world. There's no reason it can't work
18 here.

19 Thank you very much.

20 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

21 The next speaker is Muneeb
22 Rehman, followed by Michael Prisco.

23 The next speaker is Michael
24 Prisco, followed by Mitch Watson.

25 The next speaker is Mitch Watson,

1 followed by Tracey Annunziato.

2 The next speaker is Tracey
3 Annunziato, to be followed by JoAnne
4 Simon.

5 TRACY ANNUNZIATO: Hello. Can
6 you see me?

7 MR. WOJNAR: Yes. We can see and
8 hear you.

9 TRACY ANNUNZIATO: Perfect. Good
10 afternoon. Thank you for allowing me
11 to speak. I spoke last night, but I
12 also wanted to speak again. My name is
13 Tracey Annunziato. I live in Brooklyn,
14 New York. I was just recently approved
15 for permanent disability a year ago, as
16 I have a very chronic, painful chronic
17 pain condition that affects my legs,
18 back, neck, shoulder, my entire body.

19 I also possess this New York City
20 handicap parking permit, which is very
21 hard to get, and I just had to renew
22 it. And went through a tedious process
23 of having to send so many doctor's
24 reports just to renew this handicap
25 parking permit that I've had for years.

1 I feel like this congestion
2 pricing is really a hardship for people
3 with disabilities and people like me
4 and the elderly, that have and rely on
5 their car. The handicap parking permit
6 is given to us because we have these
7 severe disabilities and we require the
8 use of our personal cars.

9 This handicap parking permit is a
10 hardship because I cannot ambulate the
11 subway systems at all. Number one, not
12 everybody gives you seats on the train.
13 Number two, the steps are impossible.
14 I cannot walk up steps alone, nevermind
15 carrying the walker that I ambulate
16 with up the steps with me.

17 Number two, I see various doctors
18 in Manhattan. And I also -- I travel
19 through the Hugh Carey Tunnel when I go
20 to see these doctors. And now having
21 to pay an additional money just to use
22 my car, because I'm using my handicap
23 parking permit in order to go see these
24 doctors. I just think that if you have
25 this New York City handicap parking

1 permit, we should be exempt from paying
2 this ridiculous extra toll. It's just
3 tedious.

4 Please just consider exempting
5 the New York City handicap parking
6 permit holders.

7 Thank you for allowing me to
8 speak. Have a good afternoon,
9 everyone. Bye.

10 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Assembly
12 Member JoAnne Simon, she'll be followed
13 by Christine O'Brien.

14 ASSEMBLY MEMBER JOANNE SIMON:

15 Hi. Thank you. Thank you. I am
16 Assembly Member JoAnne Simon, and I
17 represent Downtown Brooklyn and most of
18 the neighborhoods surrounding the
19 commercial core.

20 I want to thank you for the
21 opportunity to testify in support of
22 congestion pricing today. I was a
23 co-sponsor of the congestion pricing
24 bill. And done right, congestion
25 pricing will increase the use of mass

1 transit and fund keeping it in a state
2 of good repair.

3 And two, it will reduce the
4 gratuitous traffic over the free
5 bridges. After engaging with
6 communities throughout the Gowanus
7 corridor in the 1990s, we learned that
8 much of the traffic in the corridor was
9 induced by two things. One, the free
10 Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, and two
11 the now eliminated one way Verazano
12 toll. And we fought for and got a
13 Downtown Brooklyn transportation
14 blueprint study, where we learned two
15 things.

16 And here's the blueprint study
17 right here. 50 percent of the traffic
18 in Downtown Brooklyn was through
19 traffic over the free bridges. That
20 congestion pricing was the only way to
21 disrupt the unequal tolling policies
22 that it created that polluted
23 pathfinding through the area. And that
24 residential permit parking was needed
25 to eliminate the major parking right

1 problem that existed.

2 That study was finalized in 2006
3 and demonstrated unequivocally that RPP
4 was justified in the area. And the
5 main point I want to make is that this
6 is about reducing congestion. Not just
7 because it's costly. But because
8 traffic congestion significantly
9 contributes to climate change.

10 Reducing congestion protects the health
11 and safety of all of us, even if you
12 disagree.

13 And yes, it will be a pain in the
14 tuchus for a number of people. New
15 Yorkers want to be able to go where
16 they want to go, when they want to go.
17 They want to see the USA in a Chevrolet
18 as it were. But not being able to
19 breathe and increase flooding is so much
20 more of a pain for so many.

21 Studies have shown that we have
22 to reduce vehicle miles traveled by
23 20 percent before 2030. So we just
24 have to reduce VMT. And that is
25 without regard to the electrification.

1 Now, a word about exemptions. I
2 agree with the previous speaker, that
3 people with disabilities must have an
4 exemption. Because the transit system
5 is not accessible. Moreover, they're
6 overwhelming underemployed or living on
7 a fixed income. Not allowing
8 exemptions for people who need to get
9 in and out of Manhattan or below 60th
10 Street and who cannot reliably take
11 public transportation deserve our
12 consideration.

13 The subways are marginally
14 accessible, the buses don't go over the
15 bridges except for a few. And
16 Access-A-Ride is an unmitigated
17 disaster. I've received many calls
18 from people who have conditions who
19 need medical treatment and just can't
20 sustain doing this either physically or
21 financially.

22 Yesterday, there was an Op-Ed in
23 The Daily News. I agree that we need
24 to mitigate those impacts to
25 Environmental Justice communities, such

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1 as those along the Cross Bronx. And in
2 some, I think the balance to be struck
3 is a delicate one. We all have a
4 responsibility to be part of the
5 solution. And I thank the panelists
6 for taking on this very difficult task
7 in the public's interest.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. WOJNAR: The next speaker is
10 Christine O'Brien, followed by Walter
11 Iwachiw.

12 The next speaker is Walter
13 Iwachiw, followed by Sheila Pierre.

14 WALTER IWACHIW: Good afternoon.

15 MR. WOJNAR: Please proceed.

16 WALTER IWACHIW: Yes. I'm here
17 representing the 8 million-dollar --
18 8 million citizens who ride the
19 subways. We had a contract that was
20 stolen by MTA staff. They reworked it
21 to appear to come from Transit
22 Wireless. Part of that contract was
23 basically to provide nearly free subway
24 service to all the residents of New
25 York City.

1 Now, that would have encouraged
2 people to ride the subways and would
3 have alleviated the problem.
4 Additionally, the MTA did a bus crash
5 on me, and I was injured in the bus
6 crash and they submitted a false
7 accident investigation done 30 minutes
8 after.

9 Now, as far as the Environmental
10 Review Board survey here, it looks like
11 the new IRA bill has not been discussed
12 in the proposal environmental impact
13 statement. I submit that this should
14 alleviate the congestion, the issues
15 with the environment and the MTA should
16 not be grasping for some additional
17 funding. It's already been
18 investigated and found that there is
19 infiltration of the MTA by organized
20 crime.

21 Jay knows about it, Governor
22 Hochul knows about it. I've asked
23 President Biden to make an
24 investigation. I'm asking the U.S.
25 Department of Transportation to also

1 carry on an investigation.

2 I would recommend that the board
3 members also look into it. Because if
4 this is a money grab, it shouldn't
5 happen.

6 Thank you very much.

7 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

8 The next speaker is Sheila
9 Pierre, followed by Donald Ranshte.

10 The next speaker is Donald
11 Ranshte, followed by Chris Castillo.

12 DONALD RANSHTE: Hello?

13 MR. WOJNAR: We can hear you.

14 DONALD RANSHTE: Great. Thank
15 you.

16 Good afternoon, everyone. My
17 name is Donald Ranshte. I'm executive
18 vice president of the Building Trades
19 Employers' Association. The BTA
20 represents 100 -- I'm sorry, 1100
21 construction managers, general
22 contractors and specialty trades
23 contractors operating in New York City,
24 who put in place over 65 billion
25 dollars worth of public and private

1 construction work in New York City.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to
3 testify on behalf of the plan, which
4 unfortunately we have to oppose. And
5 in the alternative, we request an
6 exemption from.

7 Our research shows that in
8 London, Milan, Stockholm, all the plans
9 have existed -- existing listed
10 exemptions based on the needs of that
11 city. And also, London, Milan,
12 Stockholm, Singapore have attributed a
13 higher cost of living as opposed to --
14 as opposed to New York, based partly on
15 congestion pricing.

16 The object of the plan is to
17 raise over a billion dollars for public
18 transportation, and to alleviate
19 traffic in the Central Business
20 District. Unfortunately, caught up in
21 this plan is a myriad of small
22 businesses that use commercial vehicles
23 to move necessary supplies, tools and
24 materials to the hundreds of public and
25 private work sites in Manhattan.

1 Like many other small businesses
2 that have already testified, the cost
3 of this tax on contractors will be such
4 a burden and so cost-prohibitive for
5 their clients that many contractors
6 will simply discontinue working in
7 Manhattan.

8 This would negatively impact not
9 only those tall glorious projects that
10 we see coming up out of the ground in
11 Manhattan, but school construction,
12 roadwork, pipe and electric gas work,
13 needed infrastructure, renovations for
14 homeowners, repairs, remodeling for
15 home owners. Adding exorbitant costs
16 to each of these projects.

17 In fact, on public projects, the
18 cost of congestion pricing on
19 construction contractors would simply
20 be passed along to the public owner.
21 And for the MTA as a client, higher
22 construction costs on the very projects
23 that the MTA is looking to raise money
24 for by implementing the plan.

25 All construction vehicles should

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1 be exempted. Without this exemption,
2 the MTA would net \$0 or more likely
3 lose money on each toll charged to a
4 construction vehicle entering the zone.

5 We would be happy to engage you
6 further on this. In -- quickly, the
7 BTA recently undertook an economic
8 impact study that showed that for each
9 billion dollars in construction
10 spending more than 1 dollar was
11 returned to the city in terms of taxes,
12 payroll and localized spending. So
13 this could potentially raise a billion
14 dollars for the MTA, but tangentially
15 cost and/or even show loss of
16 implementing the plan overall in New
17 York City.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. WOJNAR: Next speaker is
20 Chris Castillo, followed by Caswell
21 McLean.

22 The next speaker is Caswell
23 McLean, followed by Alfred Lynch.

24 The next speaker is Alfred Lynch,
25 followed by Connie Zambianchi.

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1 The next speaker is Connie
2 Zambianchi, followed by Cecilia Guerra.

3 The next speaker is Cecilia
4 Guerra, followed by Brett Burke.

5 The next speaker is Brett Burke,
6 followed by Filipp Shineleve.

7 BRETT BURKE: Good afternoon. My
8 name is Brett Burke, and I'm the vice
9 president and general manager for the
10 Coach USA Suburban facility located in
11 New Brunswick, New Jersey.

12 We have been a staple in
13 transporting passengers to New York
14 City for more than 80 years. Our New
15 Brunswick facility alone operates over
16 350 daily trips between points in
17 central New Jersey, to and from New
18 York City and more than 8,000
19 passengers per day rely on our service
20 as it is a reliable and low cost form
21 of transportation for them.

22 The pandemic was an extremely
23 difficult time for everyone, and while
24 many business were able to keep
25 operating by having their employees

1 work from home, Coach USA was out there
2 providing transportation to those who
3 needed to get to and from New York City
4 day in and day out.

5 We received hundreds of
6 phonecalls and e-mails from our
7 passengers thanking us for providing
8 services they would not know how to get
9 to work otherwise. We continue to be a
10 very good and reliable partner with New
11 Jersey Transit since the agency's
12 inception in 1977. In my 13-year
13 career at Coach USA, New Jersey Transit
14 has relied on us to provide emergency
15 service to public transportation riders
16 during national disasters, such as
17 Super Storm Sandy in 2012, as well as
18 other unexpected weather events.

19 We've also assisted in large
20 planned events, such as the Super Bowl
21 in 2014 and the Pope visit in 2015.
22 Additionally we operate local contracts
23 for New Jersey Transit throughout the
24 state. From an operational vantage
25 point, any additional charges to our

1 company will place extreme pressure on
2 us to increase our fares, which we do
3 not wish to do. The traveling public
4 has endured much stress over the last
5 couple of years and utilizes our
6 service because it is an affordable
7 alternative to driving their own
8 vehicle or using other transportation
9 options.

10 Our service has been part of the
11 solution as to why this tax is being
12 proposed in the first place.

13 Minimizing the amount of vehicles on
14 the road and lessening carbon emission.
15 As mentioned by my colleagues
16 previously, by the tens of millions
17 each year.

18 As a result of the program, Coach
19 USA believes that ridership of buses
20 will increase, therefore further
21 decreasing the number of passenger cars
22 on the road. But to make the program
23 successful and to anticipate this
24 increase in ridership, more suburban
25 park and ride facilities are needed

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1 outside of New York and in New Jersey.
2 Existing park and ride facilities
3 including those in Rockland and Orange
4 Counties, as well as those along the
5 New York Thru-Way and New Jersey
6 corridors, commuter park are not
7 adequate to receive increased transit
8 activity and need expansion.

9 Coach USA also believes that
10 rapid bus lanes into New York City
11 should be created that will allow for
12 more efficient transportation to and
13 through the congestion district.

14 We also support -- to monitor use
15 of current bus lanes and support
16 enforcement against individuals and
17 businesses that impede use of the bus
18 lanes. We are seeking to have what has
19 already been well established in
20 London, Singapore and Stockholm. These
21 cities embrace bus services as a major
22 way to address their congestion issue,
23 as well as a way to lowering carbon
24 emissions.

25 I respectfully request that this

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1 board's recommendation be of providing
2 an exemption to all bus operators at
3 all times.

4 Thank you for your time and
5 consideration.

6 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

7 The next speaker is Filipp
8 Shinelev, followed by Jorge Urena.

9 The next speaker, the 150th on
10 our list, is Jorge Urena, followed by
11 Andrew Stern.

12 The next speaker is Andrew Stern,
13 followed by Olivia Lai.

14 ANDREW STERN: Hi. As a resident
15 of Lower Manhattan, I would like to
16 urge the MTA and the state to deliver
17 congestion pricing soon and without
18 exemptions.

19 This would allow the MTA to fully
20 fund its capital program, which
21 millions rely on. The -- benefits that
22 will be enabled by a fully re-signaled
23 subway system, the Interborough
24 Express, the completed Second Avenue
25 Subway, Penn Station Access and

1 accessibility upgrades.

2 This is not a regressive program.

3 Only two percent of outer borough New

4 Yorkers in poverty drive to Manhattan

5 for work, and drivers to New Yorkers

6 are disproportionately upper class.

7 With congestion pricing, our bus

8 system, which middle and lower class

9 New Yorkers ride most, will be able to

10 run faster on less congested streets,

11 and I urge the MTA to invest further in

12 more frequent bus service, particularly

13 for outer borough transit deserts.

14 I live and work in Lower

15 Manhattan, and I deal with the impacts

16 of congestion every day. My risk for

17 asthma is elevated, and if I had

18 children, there's will be as well. I

19 am more likely to be hit by a speeding

20 car, and the car congestion makes our

21 streets difficult to walk, bike and

22 live on.

23 For those requesting exemptions,

24 I would point out that the exemption to

25 congestion pricing is simply taking the

1 train or the bus. For those requesting
2 exemptions for medical appointments, I
3 would point out that currently, the MTA
4 provides no fare exemptions for those
5 taking the train, which is often
6 upwards of \$20. So it's not clear to
7 me why these exemptions would be
8 granted for those taking cars.

9 Many hospitals in Manhattan,
10 including the VA, already provide
11 compensation for travel expenses, and I
12 assume this would be extended to
13 congestion pricing. Congestion pricing
14 is a way to formally price the negative
15 externalities of driving. It is
16 crucial that we limit any exemptions.
17 Regardless of why someone is driving
18 into the CBD, they're still imposing
19 those negative impacts on the people of
20 Lower Manhattan, not to mention
21 everyone else driving.

22 Congestion pricing has been
23 proven as effective in cities around
24 the world, but in the U.S., New York's
25 program is the first. It's crucial

1 that we do this right, do this soon and
2 with as few exemptions as possible to
3 show Americans in cities around the
4 U.S. that congestion pricing works and
5 it can be done here.

6 Thank you and I yield the rest of
7 my time.

8 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

9 The next speaker is Olivia Lai,
10 followed by Krishaveni Drummond.

11 OLIVIA LAI: Hi. Thank you for
12 the opportunity to testify. Hi, can
13 you see me?

14 MR. WOJNAR: Yes. Please
15 proceed.

16 OLIVIA LAI: I live in Lower
17 Manhattan. And I walk and take the
18 subway every day. I'm also a driver,
19 and not only would I be happy to pay
20 the congestion pricing toll, but I also
21 ask that there be no exemptions for
22 drivers who live in Lower Manhattan,
23 because the sheer number of cars makes
24 it impossible to safely walk and bike
25 around my neighborhood.

1 Right now, just outside my
2 apartment, the congestion created by
3 cars is making my street dangerous and
4 inhospitable to me and my neighbors,
5 and generating intense smog and noise
6 that are detrimental to our
7 livelihoods.

8 Congestion pricing would mean
9 fewer cars on our streets, safer air
10 and less noise pollution. I would like
11 to ask the MTA to limit any exemptions
12 as these would weaken congestion
13 pricing's ability to keep our streets
14 livable.

15 It is also important that we
16 implement congestion pricing as soon as
17 possible so the MTA has the funds to
18 improve their bus and train network,
19 which I and millions of other New
20 Yorkers rely on every day.

21 Thank you and I yield the rest of
22 my time.

23 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

24 The next speaker is Krishaveni
25 Drummond, followed by Raul Rivera.

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1 The next speaker is Raul Rivera,
2 followed by Peter Costello.

3 The next speaker is Peter
4 Costello, to be followed by Elizabeth
5 Larkin.

6 The next speaker is Elizabeth
7 Larkin, to be followed by Patricia
8 Keenan.

9 The next speaker is Patricia
10 Keenan, to be followed by Irving Lee.

11 The next speaker is Irving Lee,
12 followed by Beatrice Chisholm.

13 IRVING LEE: Hi. This is Irving
14 Lee. Can you hear me?

15 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

16 IRVING LEE: I just want to say
17 that -- let me get my act together
18 because you caught me -- I've been
19 waiting for a long time. You kind of
20 caught me.

21 All right. Okay. I'll start my
22 video. All right.

23 So I just want to say, I'm a
24 congestion -- I just want to say that
25 congestion pricing is a very bad idea.

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1 It's highway robbery. The MTA
2 presentation is a now and biased
3 analysis and not speaking with the
4 communities affected including
5 Chinatown. Except their so-called
6 environmental justice groups.

7 As a lifelong residents into
8 Chinatown and two bridges community,
9 the proposed congested pricing will
10 have devastating economic consequences
11 for my community.

12 The toll will deter many who
13 normally shop and eat in Chinatown to
14 go elsewhere, and will drive Chinese
15 mom and pop business operations out of
16 business. Trucks coming into supply
17 food will be taxed and the cost will be
18 passed onto the consumer.

19 The targeting of CBD for
20 congestion pricing is fundamentally
21 racist. Chinatown is an important food
22 resource for working families. We are
23 the economic engine that provides an
24 important tax base for the community.
25 Congestion pricing is an existential

1 threat to Chinatown. Congestion
2 pricing will accelerate gentrification
3 of New York City and will undermine the
4 diversity the city has long been known
5 for.

6 The 60,000-dollar cap is a joke.
7 No serious exemptions for those who
8 live in the zone, unlike the London
9 Central Business District that's being
10 proposed right now.

11 There's been flawed studies
12 surrounding congestion pricing. The
13 fundamental flaw in the studies of
14 congestion pricing is it's failure to
15 examine or even mention the primary
16 factors leading to heavy congestion in
17 Lower Manhattan, especially on Canal
18 Street. The tolls at the Verazano
19 Narrows Bridge force many vehicles
20 including trucks to avoid going through
21 Staten Island into New Jersey and pay a
22 toll instead of going to Manhattan to
23 New Jersey by utilizing the free
24 Holland Tunnel instead. Congestion in
25 lower Manhattan as a result of these

1 policies, the city has enacted.

2 Lyft and Uber and other car
3 services has been given the green
4 light, creating much of the congestion.
5 And of course, they face blowbacks as
6 New Yorkers. Other issues including
7 traffic and parking issues outside the
8 zone and potential retaliation from
9 other jurisdictions are responding to
10 our tolls with their own tolls to New
11 Yorkers.

12 Congestion pricing to finance MTA
13 appears to be a worthy goal, providing
14 for mass transportation is
15 environmentally important, and the most
16 efficient way in transporting to New
17 York City. The problem stems in a lack
18 of accountability on how the MTA spends
19 its money, especially on capital
20 projects. This includes the 4.3
21 billion on just three stations for the
22 Second Avenue subway line.
23 Accountability first before any
24 consideration --

25 MR. WOJNAR: Please conclude your

1 remarks.

2 IRVING LEE: I'd just say that
3 congestion pricing has nothing to do
4 with reducing congestion and more
5 determining factor for transforming and
6 gentrifying lower Manhattan.

7 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

8 Our next speaker is Beatrice
9 Chisholm, followed by our 160th person
10 on our list, Dana Matarazzo.

11 The next speaker is Dana
12 Matarazzo, followed by Leo Straus.

13 DANA MATARAZZO: Hi.
14 Non-entitled driver here. My name is
15 Dana Matarazzo, and I'd like to tell
16 you a little bit about myself and why I
17 vehemently oppose this most egregious
18 insult to the hard working citizens of
19 this city and our suburban neighbors.

20 The absolutely preposterous term
21 car culture makes me cringe and roll my
22 eyes like any real New Yorker would.
23 I'm a lifelong New Yorker. I grew up
24 in Parks Slope in a house that was in
25 my family for almost one hundred years.

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1 I now live in Dongan Hill, Staten
2 Island with my husband and three
3 children in a home that has been in his
4 family since it was built 68 years ago.

5 My heart bleeds for the city.

6 I'm actually on the West Coast right
7 now. I've been up since 6:47 a.m.

8 Pacific to talk to you people. I joke

9 with my children that I grew up on the

10 F train, which is true since I didn't

11 get my driver's license til I was

12 25 years old. I walked everywhere,

13 took the train or bus, and if that

14 wasn't an option, called a car service.

15 Before Uber.

16 It is sort of ironic considering

17 where I'm speaking now. I battled the

18 stairs daily at the R train when I was

19 in high school, and still have family

20 members who call the trains by their

21 proper names, the C Beach, IND or the

22 BNT.

23 I'm a pediatric hematology

24 oncology nurse and work on an inpatient

25 unit in Manhattan where we take care of

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1 babies, children and young adults
2 undergoing cancer treatments, receiving
3 bone marrow transplants. I have been a
4 nurse there for the last 12 years.
5 I've taken care of patients from as far
6 away as South Africa and some as close
7 as my own neighborhood.

8 Patients and their families come
9 to us to receive world class medical
10 care. Coming from the outer boroughs
11 and commuting to the Upper East Side,
12 my transportation options are limited.
13 Like most health care workers, I do not
14 work a conventional schedule, and I
15 also work weekends. I work 12 and a
16 half hour days. Using public
17 transportation would triple my
18 commuting time. There is only one bus
19 line I can take on the weekends.

20 During the workweek, there are
21 two buses I can take. One of which
22 stops running at 7:00 p.m. My shift
23 ends at 7:30. On a good day, I am out
24 of work by 7:45, 8 o'clock. Most days
25 I often work late due to our patients

1 acuity and our staffing needs.

2 Those with opposing thoughts will
3 say nurses can work anywhere. You can
4 work close to home if you don't like
5 the commute. My rebuttal will remain
6 that this is not my job, but my
7 calling. I love what I do, I'm good at
8 what I do, and I can do what I do. If
9 you've ever given chemotherapy to a
10 baby, you know what I'm talking about.

11 Some years back, I did actually
12 try commuting in. The price of the
13 parking garage had gone up, so I gave
14 it a go for a few weeks. Obviously, i
15 stopped because it took exponentially
16 longer than driving to get home and it
17 was not feasible on the weekends.

18 I noticed that when I rode M15
19 select, not one MTA employee collected
20 a fare. Perhaps actually collecting
21 fares on select buses would create
22 revenue that the MTA so desperately
23 needs. They might also consider
24 prosecuting criminals who beat fares or
25 look elsewhere such as overt, abuse and

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1 overtime pay and other sources of
2 wasteful spending instead of hitting
3 hard-working employees -- instead of
4 hitting hard-working people where it
5 hurts the most.

6 As one who sits in Gowanus
7 traffic at 5:50 a.m., I am not driving
8 for pleasure. It's out of a necessity.
9 If congestion pricing passes, I can
10 guarantee this would be the final nail
11 in the coffin for our formerly great
12 city. The increase in cost alone would
13 cripple my family personally and many,
14 many others. Nightmares traffic to
15 surrounding neighborhoods would be the
16 understatement of the millennia. All
17 the money in the world will not improve
18 or update the subways until Albany gets
19 realistic about the ramp in crime in
20 the city. The repercussions will be
21 felt for years to come.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

24 The next speaker is Leo Straus,
25 followed by David Schroeder.

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1 The next speaker is David
2 Schroeder, followed by Cathryn Myers.

3 The next speaker is Cathryn
4 Myers, followed by Amanda Friedman.

5 The next speaker is Amanda
6 Freidman, followed by Charlene Burke.

7 AMANDA FRIEDMAN: Hello. Can you
8 hear me?

9 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

10 AMANDA FRIEDMAN: Thank you.
11 Thank you, everyone, for providing me
12 the opportunity to speak in favor of
13 congestion pricing.

14 Driving a personal vehicle into a
15 dense urban area is not a right, but a
16 luxury and it should be priced
17 accordingly. In our city, traffic
18 violence is at an all-time high, and
19 I'm in favor of any measures necessary
20 to get cars off of our streets. As a
21 cyclist, I look forward to experiencing
22 a city with safer streets for cyclists
23 and pedestrians and fewer traffic
24 deaths.

25 I implore you to implement

1 congestion pricing with as few
2 exemptions as possible. And especially
3 not for groups as police officers who
4 have made a habit of illegally parking
5 all over our city sidewalks and bike
6 lanes.

7 I believe that this program will
8 give New Yorkers the push they need to
9 reorient their lives around transit
10 rather than car dependency. And I look
11 forward to living in the world that
12 this program will create.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

15 The next speaker is Charlene
16 Burke, followed by Charles Yu.

17 The next speaker is Charles Yu,
18 followed by Eric Schaal.

19 Our next speaker is Eric Schaal,
20 followed by Scott Henry.

21 ERIC SCHAAL: All right. My name
22 is Eric Schaal. I'm unaffiliated with
23 any organization. I've seen the
24 congestion pricing issue from a few
25 sides, and I wanted to comment.

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1 First of all, I lived in Downtown
2 Manhattan for over 20 years. I would
3 never dream of owning a car there.
4 That's the first thing. Now I live in
5 Rockaway Beach in Queens and I own a
6 car. I highly support congestion
7 pricing. And there are a lot of us who
8 are willing to make small sacrifices
9 for the good of the city, and for some
10 semblance of a climate policy.

11 And we've heard from someone
12 today, when I add my name to the list,
13 we rarely drive to Manhattan, my wife
14 and I, we work from home. We may be
15 going to the city four or five times a
16 year. This won't have a big impact for
17 us, as far as the tolls go. However, I
18 do worry about the public transit
19 options for people who commute from
20 Brooklyn and Queens.

21 As it stands, subway and buses
22 services is bad and on the weekends is
23 absolutely unacceptable. So normally I
24 work from home, but when I do commute
25 to work on projects, I can spend up to

1 two hours going to Downtown Brooklyn or
2 Manhattan via subway and bus. That's
3 about 15 miles. And many of my
4 neighbors who work and commute have to
5 do that, especially on the weekends,
6 when I guess we pretend like people
7 don't work. And the transit system
8 goes local.

9 So if you are worried about the
10 impact on businesses, and I think you
11 should, you absolutely need to improve
12 public transit options for people in
13 Brooklyn and Queens. As for
14 exemptions, I've listened to many
15 people's testimony, and some of it is
16 convincing with people with
17 disabilities, I believe yellow taxis
18 should be the only exemption.

19 Over the city, I've watched --
20 I'm sorry, over the past decade, I've
21 watched the city allow Uber and Lyft
22 completely clog the streets and pump
23 untold amounts of carbon pollution into
24 city air, unchecked. Right. 80,000,
25 something like that, vehicles.

1 I mean, Uber claims to be
2 essential to riders and transit deserts
3 in the outer boroughs. So in that
4 sense, they agree, they're essential in
5 those boroughs and have little to no
6 place in Manhattan. If someone wants
7 to take a Cadillac Escalade or a
8 Lincoln Navigator, basically a private
9 limousine, they want to take that
10 across town to go to brunch or
11 something else, then they should have
12 to pay an appropriate toll. I think
13 that's only fair.

14 And finally, I just want to
15 mention coordination. As you know,
16 there's so many agencies I've seen
17 before me, I dealt with various city
18 agencies on similar problems in the
19 past, and if you are not coordinated,
20 this is absolutely not going to work.
21 If you are not demanding that the NYPD
22 write tickets for people blocking bus
23 lanes and other traffic violations,
24 this will not work. I'm surprised
25 there's no one from that agency here

1 today.

2 Anyway, I wish you the best, and
3 I hope it does work. Thank you very
4 much.

5 MR. WOJNAR: The next speaker is
6 Scott Henry, followed by Michelle
7 Winfield.

8 The next speaker, the 170th on
9 our list, is Michelle Winfield,
10 followed by John Rumely.

11 The next speaker is John Rumely,
12 followed by Carl Wojciechowski.

13 JOHN RUMELY: Good afternoon.
14 I'm John Rumely, and I am a resident of
15 Washington Heights where I have lived
16 with my family since the 1980s.

17 We frequently -- we are car
18 owners. We also are frequent users of
19 mass transit. And after thinking about
20 it at a great length, we are in
21 complete support of congestion pricing.
22 Even though -- and in fact, we are
23 fully aware that we will end up paying
24 for it because we end up driving
25 periodically down to Lower Manhattan.

1 The example that I give in terms
2 of -- of changing my habits and people
3 that need to change their driving
4 habits, if we are going to un-congest
5 Lower Manhattan, is the -- the cameras
6 that they put around schools. When
7 those were put in place, I -- I got
8 caught speeding around schools, not
9 excessively, but enough that it was
10 dangerous and I paid a toll. I stopped
11 speeding. I was very aware of -- of
12 what I was doing then. And I -- I --
13 I've changed my habits.

14 I expect congestion pricing will
15 change our habits and those of many
16 others who decide to go down there.
17 Occasionally, I'm going to end up
18 paying it and I will happily do so.

19 One of the advantages I think of
20 the un-congested Lower Manhattan will
21 be if I can drive around, get my chores
22 done and then come home without having
23 to sit in traffic, and -- and if this
24 works, I will be much happier. It will
25 be worth it. And I really greatly

1 support it for that reason.

2 Thank you very much. I yield the
3 rest of my time.

4 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

5 The next speaker is Carl
6 Wojciechowski, followed by Mamadou
7 Diallo.

8 The next speaker is Mamadou
9 Diallo, followed by Geidy Perez.

10 The next speaker is Geidy Perez,
11 followed by Gordon Lee.

12 GEIDY PEREZ: Hi. Can you hear
13 me?

14 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

15 GEIDY PEREZ: Hi. Thank you for
16 the opportunity to speak. I'm a
17 resident of Manhattan. I live about 20
18 blocks outside of the congestion
19 pricing area on 83rd Street.

20 I think this is a terrible idea,
21 and it's an extra tax for the residents
22 of Manhattan. You already took our
23 parking away about two years ago,
24 making us have to pay for parking. In
25 addition to that, you took away traffic

1 lanes to give them to bicyclists that
2 don't use them or abuse them, and don't
3 follow traffic laws.

4 So two-lane streets became a
5 one-lane street because now trucks and
6 cars are parked in one of the lanes.
7 So in addition to making life harder
8 for us, now you are going to make it
9 more expensive.

10 I work in Lower Manhattan, and I
11 have to leave work to pick up my
12 daughter on 92nd Street and go back to
13 Lower Manhattan because she has special
14 needs and she needs services in Lower
15 Manhattan. This will tax my family
16 \$12,000 a year, just going one way.

17 So this is wholly unfair, those
18 of us who pay the taxes in Manhattan
19 and that live in the area.

20 Thank you very much.

21 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

22 The next speaker is Gordon Lee,
23 followed by Cynthia Nwamarah.

24 The next speaker is Cynthia
25 Nwamarah, followed by Shane King.

1 The next speaker is Shane King,
2 followed by Judy Densky.

3 SHANE KING: Hello. Thank you
4 for the opportunity to speak. I live
5 in Central Harlem and work in -- start
6 my video -- apologize for that.

7 I live in Central Harlem, and I
8 work in Midtown. As such, congestion
9 pricing won't affect me because I
10 commute by bicycle. Even so, I want to
11 make the case for exempting motorcycles
12 and scooters from congestion pricing,
13 as most of the congestion plans in the
14 world already do. Doing so would have
15 benefits for congestion, pedestrian
16 safety, and I want to make the case for
17 why any plan must include residential
18 permit parking as a necessary
19 component.

20 I support congestion pricing
21 because there are simply no other way
22 to dissuade people from driving into
23 Manhattan than to make them pay for it.
24 It isn't hard to see that a lot of the
25 commuters drive SUVs and pickup trucks.

1 These larger and taller and heavy
2 vehicles have had a devastating toll on
3 pedestrian safety. As vehicles get
4 safer and safer for the occupants, they
5 become more and more deadly for
6 pedestrians, cyclists and smaller
7 vehicles.

8 The increased weight and taller,
9 flatter grills are significantly more
10 likely to cause fatal injuries than
11 lighter cars or shorter cars. We are
12 facing both the congestion issue and a
13 safety issue. On average, a pedestrian
14 is killed every three days in the city
15 by a car, truck or bus.

16 In contrast, it's been five years
17 since a single pedestrian has been
18 killed by a motorcycle in Manhattan.
19 When it comes to congestion, many more
20 motorcycles can fit on the road than a
21 car, SUV or pickup. Three or four
22 motorcycles can fit into a parking spot
23 of a single car. Motorcycles get
24 better gas mileage than any non-hybrid
25 vehicle, and scooters even more so.

1 Motorcycles have virtually no
2 impact on the roads compared to the
3 wear and tear caused by the
4 ever-increasing weights of SUVs and
5 pickup trucks. Many people already own
6 motorcycles, and they don't even
7 consider driving into the city.
8 Exempting them will get some people to
9 consider driving their pedestrian
10 killing trucks in the already crowded
11 streets of our city.

12 We should also consider returning
13 the motorcycle-only parking spaces that
14 the city removed during the Guiliani
15 and Bloomberg years. Anything that
16 encourages smaller more practical
17 vehicles should be encouraged.

18 In addition to consideration,
19 when implementing the congestion
20 pricing program is residential permit
21 parking. Neighborhoods like mine in
22 Harlem will become inundated with
23 commuters searching for free parking
24 once the congestion pricing takes
25 effect. This is not acceptable. This

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1 is not fair to the residents and this
2 is easily avoided. Permit parking like
3 there is virtually in every other city
4 in the country, must be enacted.

5 Is there any doubt that these
6 commuting residents of Westchester,
7 Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut
8 would not tolerate their neighborhoods
9 being overrun with vehicles searching
10 for free parking, and parking shouldn't
11 be free any way. Why who those of us
12 who own our vehicles think we are
13 entitled to store our personal property
14 on public streets at no cost. Permit
15 parking will have the added bonus of
16 cracking down on scofflaws who do not
17 register their vehicles in New York and
18 help alleviate the surge of phony
19 temporary plates that has infested New
20 York.

21 To sum up, motorcycles and
22 scooters are part of the solution to
23 congestion and pedestrian safety, and
24 should be exempt from this congestion
25 charges. Adequate parking should be

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1 allowed for motorcycles to encourage
2 their use. There's no implementing of
3 congestion charge without residential
4 permit parking unless the neighborhoods
5 outside of the congestion zone become a
6 free parking neighborhood for commuters
7 punishing the residents of the
8 neighborhoods.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

11 The next speaker is Judy Densky,
12 followed by Vaylateena Jones.

13 Our next speaker is Vaylateena
14 Jones, to be followed by our 180th
15 person to sign up, Roberto Rodriguez.

16 VAYLATEENA JONES: Are we up to
17 me --

18 MR. WOJNAR: Yup.

19 VAYLATEENA JONES: Okay. My name
20 is Vaylateena Jones. I'm a member of
21 the Lower Eastside Power Partnership.
22 I'm speaking as an individual.

23 I live in Manhattan -- oh. I
24 live in Manhattan Community District 3,
25 which is in the CBD tolling zone. I'm

1 a senior citizen. I have several
2 concerns, the major being the present
3 public health crisis. According to the
4 Center for Disease Control, early data
5 suggest older people are twice as
6 likely to have serious COVID-19
7 illness. This may be because as people
8 age, their immune systems change,
9 making it harder for their body to
10 fight off disease and infection. End
11 quote.

12 According to Web MD, researches
13 do note that a varied diet full of
14 vitamin and mineral rich food like
15 fresh vegetables and fruit helps your
16 body including your immune system
17 function at its best. End quote.

18 After reading this, I take
19 vitamins, eat vegetables and fruits
20 daily. It should not cost me or other
21 seniors more to decrease risk of
22 serious COVID-19, purchase fresh
23 vegetables and fruits, enhance our
24 immune system. My understanding is the
25 other places that have implemented

1 congestion pricing did not do it during
2 a global health crisis.

3 I think that one of the
4 approaches would be exempting trucks
5 that bring vitamins and fruits and
6 vegetables to Manhattan Community
7 District 3. I think present public
8 health crisis needs to be considered.

9 According to the map, figure
10 17-2, most of Manhattan Community
11 District 3 is identified as
12 environmental justice area. Manhattan
13 Community District 3 is not a Central
14 Business District. According to a
15 slide presented on Saturday at this
16 hearing, southbound, quote,
17 southbound/northbound FDR Drive between
18 East 10th Street and Brooklyn Bridge,
19 quote, would experience adverse effects
20 in the form of increased delays. This
21 area is in Manhattan Community District
22 3. From 10th Street to the bridge, to
23 Brooklyn Bridge, Community District 3
24 are several New York City Housing
25 Authority, Mitchell-Lama and affordable

1 housing developments.

2 My assumption is delays means
3 congestion, congestion eliminates the
4 benefits such as better air quality
5 stated for the Central Business Tolling
6 Program for the residents of Community
7 District 3 who live next to the FDR.
8 One of the things that health crisis
9 has emphasized is that approaches in CD
10 3 need to be reviewed before
11 implementation occurs.

12 One benefit stated is promoting
13 equity across transit system.
14 Presently East Broadway and Delancey
15 Street F stations both in CD 3 are not
16 accessible. One thing to do would be
17 to accessorize these stations before
18 congestion prices is implemented in
19 Manhattan Community District 3.

20 Once again, I urge, please look
21 at the health crisis and consider it.

22 MR. WOJNAR: -- your remarks --

23 Thank you. The next speaker is
24 Roberto Rodriguez, to be followed by
25 John Cimillo.

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1 ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ: Hi,
2 everybody.

3 MR. WOJNAR: Hello. Please
4 proceed.

5 ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ: I need the --
6 I need the translator in Spanish,
7 please.

8 You heard me?

9 MR. WOJNAR: Translation services
10 are available in realtime.

11 ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

12 (Speaking in Spanish.)

13 MR. WOJNAR: Your comment will be
14 translated, indexed and responded to as
15 part of the process.

16 The next speaker is John Cimillo,
17 followed by Tinatin Chargeishvili.

18 The next speaker is Tinatin
19 Chargeishvili, followed by Pierre
20 Benjamin.

21 Next speaker is Pierre Benjamin,
22 followed by Tal Barzilai.

23 The next speaker is Tal Barzilai,
24 followed by Donna Myers.

25 Tal, take yourself off mute. We

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1 can hear you to begin your comments.

2 You are still on mute. We cannot
3 hear you.

4 We cannot hear you. We will come
5 back to you, Tal.

6 The next speaker is Donna Myers,
7 followed by Amanda Levine.

8 The next speaker is Amanda
9 Levine, followed by Bradley Hershenson.

10 AMANDA LEVINE: Hi, everybody.
11 My name is Amanda Levine, as stated.
12 I'm a lifelong resident of Manhattan,
13 going on almost 50 years now. My
14 family actually on both sides arrived
15 in New York in the mid 1800s. I
16 actually took my permit test, my
17 driver's test at school. And I
18 currently live on 107th Street off of
19 Broadway. And my dad lives on 42nd
20 Street on the west side.

21 We both are on fixed incomes. My
22 dad is now 77 years old, and along with
23 his general age and health issues, he's
24 a part of the Twin Towers Fund, where
25 he incurred massive and life-altering

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1 health problems due to working down in
2 that area during the attacks, he's
3 forced to participate in daily health
4 care and constant doctor visits due to
5 his issues that he incurred from 9/11.

6 I'm his sole caregiver. I not
7 only have to visit his home several
8 times a week to ensure that he's taken
9 care of in his daily life, but I'm the
10 one who drives him to all of his
11 medical appointments, which are
12 multiple in number and several times
13 per week and growing in a number of
14 times he has to go. And if this toll
15 is put in place and charges are put in
16 place, I don't know what I'm going to
17 do.

18 I own a car and drive happily in
19 New York City. I'm proud of that. And
20 I'm scared and concerned and angry. In
21 all honesty, what are my dad and I
22 going to do? We cannot afford this
23 charge. Sorry, I'm getting emotional.
24 And who will care for him if not me?
25 He needs to go to all of his medical

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1 appointments and I need to drive him to
2 and from and wait for him from these
3 appointments at each one of them.

4 We are not wealthy, nor are we
5 even close to wealthy. And we get by
6 living in the city and barely get by as
7 is. I implore you, absolutely implore
8 you, do not do this. Think about me,
9 my dad and the other people like us who
10 live in the city here and need cars and
11 cannot afford to pay these tolls and
12 live here. This is just one of the
13 issues concerning the congestion
14 tolling for me. But this was the most
15 important one and the one I chose to
16 express to you because it is of the
17 most importance to me and my dad. And
18 this is what I wanted to focus on.

19 Again, I implore you, and I'm
20 actually quite begging you, which is
21 something I don't do, to not put these
22 in place. I'm going to kind of give
23 over my rest of my time to other people
24 because I know this is time consuming,
25 but I really appreciate it and I truly

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1 hope that you will care for the people
2 that actually live here and have lived
3 here for the lifelong amount of time
4 and really need to survive and drive.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

7 The next speaker is Bradley
8 Hershenson, followed by Kurt B.

9 BRADLEY HERSHENSON: Hi, can you
10 hear me?

11 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

12 BRADLEY HERSHENSON: Great. Good
13 afternoon, everyone. I hope you are
14 all doing well. It's only been --
15 what -- six hearings in a row for eight
16 hours a day? So now you know what it's
17 like to be a student nowadays,
18 especially on Zoom.

19 So my name is Brad Hershenson.
20 I'm a resident of the Upper East Side.
21 And I've lived here my whole life. I'd
22 like to speak against congestion
23 pricing as it is outlined, and I'd like
24 to just raise three points.

25 One, I want to say what message

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1 are we sending to the seniors and those
2 who are disabled? Many of my neighbors
3 have doctor's appointments particularly
4 below 60th Street. And they can't use
5 bikes or buses or subways to move
6 around the city. Many people live on
7 fixed incomes and they just simply
8 can't afford \$23 multiple times a week
9 just to go to the doctor or go out the
10 door for whatever the reason is.

11 Second, I want to mention that
12 I'm concerned about the area like
13 directly outside of the zone in terms
14 of parking, and with such a high
15 density, cars might be circling around
16 for 30, 40 minutes, an hour, maybe even
17 more, which is basically what it's like
18 any way right now. Trying to find
19 parking. And the higher VMT equals
20 lower air quality.

21 And we have many parks in my
22 neighborhood where people are playing
23 basketball, pickle ball, they're
24 running, jogging, walking their dogs,
25 and something has to be done with

1 respect to that, thinking about air
2 quality.

3 And lastly, if you are trying to
4 solve a congestion problem, I don't
5 think we should be attacking cars. I
6 think we should be enhancing public
7 transit and bike infrastructure. And I
8 challenge anybody on this call to ride
9 a bike right at the base of the
10 59th Street Bridge. It's really,
11 really scary. If we make the
12 infrastructure safer and better, more
13 people will probably ride their bikes
14 and walk around there. And fixing the
15 infrastructure of the city for transit
16 riders, and bikers, pedestrians, I
17 really believe it's the solution.

18 So to sum it up, and I'll save a
19 minute of everyone's time, I don't
20 think we can implement a plan that aims
21 to relieve congestion while creating a
22 handful of economic, social and
23 environmental hardships for our city's
24 residents.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

2 The next speaker is Kurt B.,
3 followed by Anna Pakman.

4 The next speaker is Anna Pakman,
5 followed by the 190th person to sign
6 up, Bryan Freeman.

7 ANNA PAKMAN: Hi, everyone. My
8 name is Anna Pakman. And I'm here in
9 my personal capacity as a person with
10 disability who has lived in the
11 congestion zone for the past 24 years.

12 I do not have a car or drive, so
13 I don't have a license plate. I'm also
14 not able to use most public
15 transportation because the system is
16 largely not wheelchair accessible and
17 Access-A-Ride is often unreliable, has
18 no CND service and uses routes that
19 adds hours to trips leaving me
20 exhausted to the point that it becomes
21 difficult to do anything else.

22 Instead, I rely on taxis, Ubers,
23 Lyfts, friends and family to either get
24 around or to get things to me.
25 Congestion tolling will have and

1 adverse impact on my life and those of
2 thousands of numbers of New Yorkers
3 with mobility disabilities because both
4 the direct and indirect cost of getting
5 anywhere will go up exponentially.
6 Ubers and Lyft are the most reliable on
7 demand wheelchair accessible services
8 in the city, and they're already
9 expensive. An additional surcharge
10 would make them financially
11 unattainable.

12 This holds true for travel and
13 personal cars too. So for example, my
14 brother lives in a town in New Jersey
15 that has no accessible transportation.
16 So he drives into the city to pick me
17 up. That's the only way I see my
18 nephew. I'm also concerned about the
19 cost of deliveries going up driving.
20 As I rely on delivery services for a
21 lot of essentials.

22 On top of that, there's an
23 indirect impact that will result for
24 neighborhood businesses raising their
25 prices. All of this served only to

1 further isolate people with
2 disabilities. Finding an affordable
3 apartment in the New York City area is
4 as common as finding a unicorn. So no,
5 I can't just move nor should I have to.

6 Because of the outsized negative
7 impact on the disabled community within
8 the zone, which is already subject to a
9 higher cost of living because of the
10 various disability expenses that
11 non-disabled communities doesn't even
12 need to think about, I oppose the plan
13 as is. Despite best intentions, it
14 will only make life more difficult for
15 people who cannot afford to shoulder
16 this burden.

17 There are other ways to raise the
18 funds the MTA needs to raise other than
19 taxing the very community that the MTA
20 has continued to treat like second
21 class citizens since the 1990 passage
22 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
23 Maybe try taxing all the billionaires
24 that don't live here instead.

25 Thank have you and I yield the

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1 rest of my time.

2 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

3 The next speaker is Bryan
4 Freeman, followed by Robert Brisman.

5 The next speaker is Robert
6 Brisman, followed by Ariel Shafir.

7 ROBERT BRISMAN: Good afternoon.
8 And on behalf of the Bus Association of
9 New York, BANY, our membership and our
10 millions of passengers, we appreciate
11 the opportunity to provide comments on
12 the Environmental Assessment analyzing
13 the impacts of the tolling plan, quite
14 undertaken and it's been quite
15 impressive.

16 Our membership strongly supports
17 the CBDTP's goal and contributes daily
18 to the Central Business District's
19 primary goals of reducing traffic
20 congestion, mitigating carbon emissions
21 and generating revenues for the
22 region's public transit system.

23 I only have a short period of
24 time and a few words to express
25 strongly how important it is for us to

1 all consider that buses, large buses
2 are the most efficient forms of mass
3 transport for all passengers and
4 minimize congestion.

5 A single bus with 55 passengers
6 often replaces 55 automobiles.
7 Therefore reducing congestion,
8 mitigation. And ironically, the more
9 successful that these buses are in
10 reducing congestion by taking cars off
11 the road, the higher the tolls they and
12 their passengers will be subject to pay
13 if included in the Central Business
14 District Tolling Plan.

15 A bus is environmentally clean
16 due to the new technology and engine
17 emissions. Upon this review, it would
18 be seen that bus travel through the
19 Central Business would be encouraged,
20 not discouraged by tolling it.

21 BANY believes it's to be
22 mentioned that all transportation
23 sectors have been negatively impacted
24 by the pandemic. And it is
25 particularly disheartening that New

1 York is even considering having its
2 private motor coach companies further
3 subsidize the MTA. Through the three
4 pandemic federal stimulus acts, the MTA
5 has received direct operating grants
6 totally 13.5 billion dollars, while New
7 York's motor coach companies continue
8 contributing millions of dollars
9 annually directly to the MTA's
10 operations and maintenance.

11 The EA, the Environmental
12 Assessment projects created -- creating
13 a toll Central Business District will
14 reduce vehicle congestion by as much as
15 20 percent, that's what they are
16 projecting. If this is accurate,
17 shouldn't the EA tell us if these
18 drivers now go to public transit or
19 will they just not come into the CBD,
20 further slowing the district's economic
21 recovery.

22 Finally, if the goal of the
23 Central Business District Tolling is to
24 reduce congestion, then the use of
25 privately owned motor coaches should be

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1 encouraged, not discouraged. One 55
2 passenger bus takes up to 55 cars off
3 the road, utilizes less street space
4 than 55 bikes and emits less carbon
5 monoxide than either commuter or
6 inner-city rail.

7 Thank you again for the
8 opportunity to provide testimony, and
9 we look forward to working together
10 through this review process.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. WOJNAR: The next speaker is
13 Ariel Shafir, followed by Steve Azor.

14 The next speaker is Steve Azor,
15 followed by Carl Mahaney.

16 The next speaker is Carl Mahaney,
17 to be followed by LD.

18 CARL MAHANEY: Hi, can y'all hear
19 me?

20 MR. WOJNAR: We can. Please
21 proceed.

22 CARL MAHANEY: Wonderful.

23 My name is Carl Mahaney. I live
24 in Manhattan and I fully support the
25 implementation of congestion pricing

1 with very limited exemptions.

2 I'm an architect. A livable
3 streets advocate, a husband, a father,
4 a neighbor, a colleague and a proud New
5 Yorker. I believe in this city's
6 ability to adapt, to evolve and to
7 lead. Congestion pricing is the law.
8 It's happening. Decades too late and
9 not a moment too soon.

10 Your job now is to implement this
11 program quickly, in the most effective
12 and fair way possible. Effective in
13 raising desperately needed funds to
14 improve public transportation and in
15 reducing the harms brought by an
16 unchecked flood of vehicles on our
17 streets.

18 Fair, to the majority of New
19 Yorkers who rely on degraded and
20 underfunded buses and subways to get
21 around, who suffer from noise and air
22 pollution and the loss of dignity and
23 freedom because of the ever-present
24 threat of traffic violence.

25 Freedom means choice, not the

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1 choice to drag a multi-ton piece of
2 heavy machinery along with you to your
3 job in Manhattan, or to leave a
4 polluting metal box on the street while
5 you take in a Broadway show. Freedom
6 is the choice to breathe in clean air,
7 to have a quiet conversation with
8 neighbors on the street, to take a
9 swift and reliable bus to the doctor.
10 To ride your bicycle to middle school.
11 These freedoms, these choices are
12 denied to far too many New Yorkers by
13 the status quo. Congestion pricing
14 disrupts that harmful status quo.
15 Congestion pricing is leadership.

16 This program will work. It will
17 be popular, and it will expand in the
18 years and decades to come. There will
19 be tweaks along the way and that's
20 good. That's progress. But let's
21 start with the most robust scheme we
22 can implement. The one that does the
23 most good for the most people.

24 We are so close. Let's stay
25 focused on the goal. Less congestion,

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1 better transit, more choices for more
2 New Yorkers. We need congestion
3 pricing now with very limited
4 exemptions.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. WOJNAR: Thank you.

7 The next speaker is LD, followed
8 by Henry Ward.

9 The next speaker is Henry Ward,
10 followed by Veronica Mosey.

11 The next speaker is Veronica
12 Mosey, followed by Lee Arthurs.

13 The next speaker is Lee Arthurs,
14 followed by Mic Nguyen.

15 The next speaker Mic Nguyen,
16 followed by Marylou Avanzino.

17 MIC NGUYEN: Hi. Can everyone
18 hear me?

19 MR. WOJNAR: Yes, we can.

20 MIC NGUYEN: My name is Michael
21 Nguyen, and I live in
22 Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. I'm a
23 writer and comedian. As a comedian, I
24 fear for the future generations of the
25 city should we pass congestion pricing.

1 I fear that with congestion pricing in
2 place, my children will be robbed of
3 that God-given birthright of every New
4 Yorker, that of complaining loudly and
5 frequently about the MTA.

6 I for one love being able to
7 limit the conditions of our crumbling
8 infrastructure. In fact, the vast
9 majority of my comedy routine is
10 dedicated to living in a city where
11 public transit fails. If we support
12 congestion pricing and public transit,
13 what would I joke about now? The
14 airport? LaGuardia is pretty nice now.

15 The MTA needs to consider that
16 failing public transit in fact creates
17 jobs by giving comedians further ground
18 for new material. Every time the Long
19 Island Railroad train is canceled,
20 every time the F train refuses to show
21 up. Every time there's a track fire,
22 every time we decide not to invest in
23 sustainable transportation --
24 sustainable transportation future,
25 that's not just a mild inconvenience or

1 short-sided decision making, that's
2 comedy gold.

3 I shutter to think of a future
4 where we can enjoy efficient, effective
5 and inexpensive public transit. What
6 will they complain about? Surely, the
7 Mets will continue to disappoint, but
8 what else? I look forward to a time in
9 the future when sea levels have risen,
10 extreme weather conditions are
11 commonplace and our city's
12 infrastructure has collapsed. A time
13 perhaps three, four, maybe even
14 five years away, when we can look back
15 on this day, at this meeting, when we
16 decided not to rob our children of that
17 bleak future. A future that while
18 perhaps a living nightmare to the
19 living, gives them something fun to
20 talk about at cocktail parties. That's
21 of course assuming that anybody can get
22 to cocktail parties because of the
23 aforementioned collapsed
24 infrastructure. Please think of the
25 children.

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1 Thank you. I yield the rest of
2 my time.

3 MR. WOJNAR: The next speaker is
4 our 200th person to sign up, Marylou
5 Avanzino, to be followed by Keri
6 Flaherty.

7 MARYLOU AVANZINO: Thank you for
8 the --

9 MR. WOJNAR: Go ahead.

10 MARYLOU AVANZINO: Thank you.
11 Thank you, Mic, for that humor. It
12 makes this whole event that much more
13 palatable.

14 Good afternoon, DOT and MTA
15 staff. And hello, support staff making
16 this meeting possible. I appreciate
17 the work you are doing to make the
18 Central Business District more livable.

19 I am a pedestrian and a bicyclist
20 in favor of congestion pricing because
21 moving around Manhattan can be a
22 dystopian experience because too many
23 vehicles are trying to use too little
24 street space. Doing nothing is not an
25 option, but after listening to scores

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1 of citizens' concerns, I do sympathize
2 with their fears. You, MTA staff and
3 DOT staff, have your work cut out for
4 you to appropriately soften the effect
5 of what congestion pricing will have.

6 But the fact is, if nothing is
7 done, the quality of life in Manhattan
8 will continue to deteriorate.

9 I want to highlight -- what I
10 want to highlight is enforcement. Or
11 more accurately the lack of
12 enforcement. Currently, vehicles all
13 over the city double-park, obstructing
14 flow of traffic with impunity.
15 Vehicles shamelessly block bike lanes.
16 I rarely see traffic officers enforcing
17 parking ordinances.

18 Today, I read that the MTA loses
19 144 million to bridge toll evaders.
20 I'm not sure of the accuracy of that
21 number, but I'm sure it's a lot of
22 money the MTA loses.

23 When there's a problem, when
24 there's -- then there's the problem of
25 drivers who purposely deface or obscure

1 their car license plates or use false
2 placards. If MTA continues to not
3 address these problems, how can MTA be
4 expected to successfully implement
5 congestion pricing?

6 It's important for MTA to get a
7 handle on the rule evaders for the
8 public to have confidence in the
9 fairness of the system. That's a lot
10 of money for MTA if it actually
11 collected fees and tolls lost to lack
12 of enforcement, evasion of tolls and
13 placard falsifications. If this money
14 could be added to the projected
15 congestion toll fees to be collected,
16 then congestion pricing tolls wouldn't
17 have to be so high, perhaps.

18 Once again, I'm in favor of
19 congestion pricing. If we maintain the
20 status quo, we would be putting our
21 heads in the sand and traffic
22 conditions will worsen.

23 Thank you for taking my comment.
24 In consideration, I yield my time.

25 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

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1 Our next speaker is Keri
2 Flaherty, followed by Juancarlos Marin.

3 Our next speaker is Juancarlos
4 Marin, followed by Emma Cintron.

5 Our next speaker is Emma Cintron,
6 followed by John Rozmus.

7 Our next speaker is John Rozmus,
8 followed by Denise Heby.

9 JOHN ROZMUS: Good afternoon,
10 everybody. Can you hear me?

11 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

12 JOHN ROZMUS: Thank you. I'm
13 sorry about the video. My camera isn't
14 working today.

15 I am an outer borough resident in
16 Brooklyn, and I oppose this congestion
17 pricing. As I walk through Manhattan,
18 all I see are Uber, Lyft vehicles, city
19 vehicles, MTA vehicles, and trucks. I
20 don't understand why everybody is being
21 punished by this congestion pricing
22 when Uber and Lyft are making up the
23 majority of the traffic.

24 The studies even showed from
25 2010, that Uber and Lyft and all these

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1 ride sharing companies are causing most
2 of the traffic in Manhattan. How come
3 they aren't part of the medallion
4 system where we can limit some of these
5 cars in Manhattan, that would be a
6 better solution than punishing
7 everybody.

8 I also wonder where this
9 surcharge, when I use an Uber, for
10 example, like where is this coming from
11 to the MTA? How is the MTA using this
12 money? The MTA also got a federal
13 bailout recently. Where is this money
14 going to? I just don't understand why
15 the MTA needs more and more money when
16 services go back.

17 Furthermore, congestion is caused
18 by the sheds, for example, the open
19 streets, the plazas. There's no room
20 for cars to drive anymore. And all
21 this stuff is making streets more
22 dangerous. When I walk in the street,
23 I don't even have a car, but I don't
24 feel comfortable with these new
25 projects that are happening everywhere

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1 in the city.

2 And that's it. That's all I have
3 to say.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Denise Heby,
7 followed by Joan Kimmel.

8 Our next speaker is Joan Kimmel,
9 followed by Michelle Koppersmith.

10 Our next speaker is Michelle
11 Koppersmith, followed by Carolyn
12 Protass.

13 Michelle, you may begin your
14 remarks. Michelle, you are unmuted,
15 but we can't hear you. You may begin
16 your remarks.

17 MICHELLE KUPPERSMITH: Can you
18 hear me now?

19 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

20 MICHELLE KUPPERSMITH: Okay.
21 Great. Thanks.

22 Good afternoon. Thanks for your
23 time. My name is Michelle Koppersmith.
24 I'm a resident of Manhattan Community
25 District 3 and a member of Community

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1 Board 3. I'm not here speaking on
2 behalf of the community board, but I
3 want to speak to my experience there,
4 which has shown me that we need to
5 implement congestion pricing
6 immediately, with no exemptions, other
7 than the ones already stipulated by the
8 law.

9 My neighborhood, the Lower East
10 Side, is plagued with congestion from
11 cars heading towards the Williamsburg
12 Bridge. For years, we have asked the
13 Department of Transportation for
14 solutions to mitigate the safety, noise
15 and pollution issues we face, but we've
16 repeatedly been told by the agency that
17 the only answer is congestion pricing.

18 We have explored many options
19 that the neighborhood has suggested,
20 that DOT has suggested and none of them
21 will be sufficient to keep our people
22 safe. I no longer feel safe crossing
23 the street with my dog because people
24 will drive the wrong way, go around
25 other cars or blow red lights just in

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1 an attempt to save 30 seconds to get to
2 the bridge.

3 As one of the city's oldest
4 neighborhoods, our grid is not designed
5 for this amount of car traffic and we
6 are desperately in need of congestion
7 pricing now.

8 I support no additional carve
9 outs because the point of congestion
10 pricing is to reduce the number of car
11 trips into the Central Business
12 District. Exemptions will continue to
13 induce demand, and there's a minimum
14 contribution from congestion pricing to
15 the MTA. So any additional carve outs
16 will inequitably make the congestion
17 tolling more expensive for those
18 subject to them.

19 So please, congestion pricing now
20 and no new carve outs. Also, it's
21 amazing that so many people who signed
22 up to speak here today have designated
23 themselves experts on economic
24 development, traffic engineering,
25 environmental science, behavioral

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1 science. And so I please ask you to
2 ignore the misinformation, as I know
3 that you are the experts here, and do
4 what's right, which is to implement
5 congestion pricing as soon as possible
6 because we need it.

7 Thank you so much for your time.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Carolyn
10 Protass, followed by LD.

11 Our next speaker is LD, followed
12 by John Marcus.

13 LD: Can you hear me?

14 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

15 LD: Having to clean up my blood
16 on the train was something we did not
17 have on our agenda, a direct quote from
18 ABC News article today. Ride share and
19 food delivery workers protested outside
20 the MTA during this hearing.

21 Of the 561 comments in a New York
22 Times article, the top one readers
23 picked is, Nice, strike while the iron
24 is cold as ice, abandoned storefronts,
25 people moving out, businesses moving

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1 out and people working from home. You
2 could not have chosen a worse time.

3 Your slide seven shows the
4 analysis is flawed. Your underlined
5 data ended in 2019, which preceded the
6 unprecedented devastating pandemic,
7 which created a hybrid workforce
8 thereby decreasing congestion.
9 Multiple slides show you are
10 redistributing congestion, thus
11 redistributing the adverse effects on
12 the environment.

13 By no means are you improving the
14 overall environment, you acknowledge
15 there are adverse affects, and have no
16 proof that your mitigation will be
17 successful.

18 You discussed temporary
19 disruptions. Temporary is relative.
20 You do not address the impact of those
21 disruptions. You have not addressed
22 the impact on tourism, entertainment
23 culture. The overwhelming number of
24 people who have spoken are against
25 congestion pricing. These legally

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1 required meetings are addressing the
2 MTA people who want the plan and need
3 the money and will not stop the
4 program, which was approved in a New
5 York budget.

6 The only way to impact this price
7 grab is for people to contact Governor
8 Hochul, state senators and state
9 assemblymen. The group of people who
10 will be impacted enormously, the
11 elderly, mostly do not use technology
12 or own devices to enable access to
13 Zoom. The fact was highlighted during
14 COVID with the elderly's challenges to
15 register for vaccines.

16 There is an impacted community
17 missing from these meetings. Many
18 seniors are incapable of using mass
19 transit. E-ZPass requires account
20 holders to leave a 25-dollar minimum
21 sitting in an E-ZPass. That is
22 ridiculous for E-ZPass to keep \$25 just
23 to have an account open if the account
24 is not being used. Think of the
25 interest on the collective \$25 that

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1 E-ZPass is taking, holding. What is
2 being done with that money? There
3 should not be a \$25 minimum to keep an
4 E-ZPass account open. For some, \$25 is
5 a hardship.

6 People have testified your price
7 grab will push them out of their home.
8 If you move forward with this plan, it
9 will represent tone deafness. You will
10 tear apart the fabric of New York. The
11 exorbitant fees you propose can make
12 the difference of people not being able
13 to afford food, medications or their
14 homes.

15 Your plan harms the vulnerable.
16 Please stop moving forward with the
17 inhumane plan which will harm and
18 cripple every-day New Yorkers. It will
19 have unintended consequences that have
20 not been adequately studied.

21 Why is the Chair and the CEO of
22 the MTA not present at these meetings?
23 Where is the \$15 billion the MTA was
24 recently given? It is an insensitive
25 and inhumane, selfish money grab for

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1 the MTA and disproportionately and
2 adversely affects and places an undue
3 burden on --

4 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
5 remarks.

6 LD: -- minorities and
7 disadvantaged people.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

10 Our next speaker is Joshua
11 Marcus -- excuse me. Jonathan Marcus,
12 followed by Emilio Estela.

13 JONATHAN MARCUS: Hi. This is --
14 I'm Jonathan. I'm a resident of the
15 CBD, and I'm very excited for
16 congestion pricing.

17 Every time I go through the city
18 in a car, I just remind myself, you are
19 not stuck in traffic. You are traffic.
20 The -- all this congestion, that's us,
21 that's all the people here trying to
22 get places. And I know that if I want
23 a better city, I myself have to make
24 different decisions.

25 So even though this -- even

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1 though this congestion tax will affect
2 me, I'm not here asking for carve outs,
3 I'm not here asking for exemptions.
4 I'm going to take this price increase
5 and I'm going to go take the subway,
6 which will run faster because of the
7 tax. I'm going to go take the bus,
8 which will move faster because there's
9 less traffic in its way. I'm going to
10 go bike and not have to swerve around
11 as many cars. Or I'm going to walk and
12 inhale a lot less automobile fumes.

13 Every other mode of
14 transportation gets better from this
15 tax. And so it will make it even
16 easier for me to make a better
17 decision, which helps everyone. And if
18 everyone thinks the same way I do, then
19 we'll have less traffic and the city
20 will be more livable.

21 Now, a lot of people have
22 mentioned the taxes, this is going to,
23 you know -- think of all the
24 hardworking folk. I'm a stay at home
25 dad. My wife is an architect. And she

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1 deals with electricians and carpenters
2 and plumbers every day. And you know
3 what, they all have baked into their
4 hourly rates, their -- their rates are
5 extremely high because they know how
6 much time they spend in traffic. If
7 they spent less time in traffic with
8 all their tools, with their ladders,
9 they could get to more job sites a day
10 and make more money, which would more
11 than offset this -- this tax.

12 So that's the thing we all need
13 to remember. It's about time. We are
14 already paying for the congestion.
15 It's just that we are paying it for --
16 we are paying for it with -- in this
17 noise, the air quality and the time we
18 all spend to get anywhere. And if we
19 can make our city less congested, then
20 we all get more time, and time is
21 money.

22 So it all comes back to what will
23 we individually do. We are not stuck
24 in traffic. We are traffic.

25 Let's make better decisions, all

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1 of us, no exemptions. And let's make
2 the city better. It's about time.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

5 Our next speaker is Emilio
6 Estela, followed by Christopher Ryan.

7 Our next speaker and 211th on the
8 list is Christopher Ryan, followed by
9 Julian Kline.

10 CHRISTOPHER RYAN: Hello.

11 MS. FLAX: You may begin your --

12 CHRISTOPHER RYAN: Hi. My name
13 is Chris Ryan. I'm a cyclist in New
14 York City for almost 30 years now, but
15 I am opposed to congestion pricing.

16 Why? Because I am also a vehicle
17 owner. Not because I'm a masochist or
18 anything, but because I need to get
19 around the city as a film technician to
20 various places all around the five
21 boroughs, all around the surrounding
22 tristate area that are not served by
23 public transportation at times that are
24 not convenient.

25 I'd have to be places at 6:00 in

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1 the morning, I'd come off of jobs at
2 11:00 p.m. I have to carry tools, I
3 have all of these things. And most
4 importantly, I live in the congestion
5 zone. I live in Downtown Manhattan.
6 There are still people who live here.
7 It is not just a tourist destination.
8 And the residents there are not just
9 ATMs to be used for unlimited money.
10 And there's no proof that this will
11 reduce congestion.

12 In London, they say it's reduced
13 to 20 percent. Let's say we get that
14 great result. That's still 80 percent.
15 All these deadly cars and demonization
16 of people who actually use vehicles,
17 blue-collared workers. There's still
18 going to be 80 percent of us out there.

19 The city -- being served -- who
20 don't get served by public
21 transportation, seniors. I have a
22 family of four. We take neighbors to
23 medical, I take my elderly neighbors to
24 visit gravesites on weekends. The car
25 is used. It's been a blessing. I

1 survived twenty years without a car.

2 When I was a single, privileged
3 person like these young people who
4 think the whole life can be solved by
5 just biking around, I'm not sending my
6 girls to school on streets that are
7 80 percent full with cars, that are
8 moving faster because of this alleged
9 congestion, lack of congestion. These
10 things slow down for about two hours at
11 rush hour each day. It's not going to
12 reduce congestion. It's another tax,
13 another mismanagement of money.

14 I implore you to make complete
15 exemptions for anyone below 60th Street
16 in Manhattan. If we live here, we
17 cannot be charged for the right to move
18 in and out of our houses. Not a
19 discount, not for discount for people
20 who make under \$60,000. Which a
21 fraction of a percentage. Two out
22 of -- make 60,000 a year and has a car.
23 And we are not privileged to be driving
24 our cars.

25 A car is a major pain in the

1 butt, and I know the people who have
2 cars in our neighborhood and they're
3 not privileged people. They would have
4 a garage if so. There's a community of
5 people who deal with the alternate side
6 parking and all that stuff and we know
7 each other. And we need cars. Some
8 people need cars. Your privileged
9 young lives are not everyone's reality.
10 I cannot afford this tax. No tax for
11 anyone under 60th Street.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

14 Our next speaker is Julian Kline,
15 followed by Teddy Edris.

16 JULIAN KLINE: Good afternoon.
17 And thank you for your time. My name
18 is Julian Kline, I'm the head of policy
19 at Tech NYC.

20 Tech NYC is a non-profit
21 member-based organization representing
22 over 800 technology companies in New
23 York. We work with government and
24 community partners to make New York the
25 best place in the country to build and

1 grow a technology company.

2 Tech NYC supports congestion
3 pricing. We recognize the impact it
4 will have on reducing congestion in
5 Manhattan and generating funding for
6 the MTA. It will improve quality of
7 life and make the city more attractive
8 to workers, especially in the
9 industries such as tech.

10 In choosing the best CBD tolling
11 model, it is important to evaluate not
12 just the revenue, but the impact the
13 tolls will have on drivers, commuters
14 and visitors.

15 The MTA should consider the
16 consequences of excessively tolling
17 for-hire vehicles such as Lyft, Uber
18 and Revel. Unreasonably high tolls
19 will lead to higher fees for
20 passengers, reduced income for drivers
21 and a poor quality of life for New
22 Yorkers.

23 Currently, each FHV ride
24 contributes a .3775 percent tax and a
25 \$2.75 to the MTA for rides originating

1 passing through or ending in Manhattan
2 south of 96th Street. We recommend
3 that the MTA continue the existing
4 \$2.75 congestion surcharge for FHV's,
5 and that the MTRB and MTA choose a toll
6 structure that exempts taxis and FHV's
7 from any new CBD entrance tolls.

8 Given that the congestion
9 surcharge was intended to pay for
10 subway repairs, we recommend that the
11 surcharges revenue be incorporated into
12 the new congestion pricing program to
13 increase funding capacity.

14 Because the proposed CBD tolls
15 are higher than the current congestion
16 surcharge, it is understandable that in
17 lieu of a new FHV toll to enter the
18 CBD, that the existing surcharge amount
19 may have to be increased as well. The
20 MTA must also assign a policy for tolls
21 applied on share or pool rides.

22 If CBD entrance tolls for FHV's
23 are not exempted, we recommend that the
24 tolls be lowest amount possible, while
25 balancing reasonable tolls rates placed

1 on passenger vehicles.

2 Regarding new employment options
3 for FHV drivers impacted by congestion
4 pricing, we also support for the
5 collaboration of the -- expands FHV
6 driver's ability to accept
7 Access-A-Ride customers. As the number
8 of wheelchair accessible for-hire
9 vehicles on the road has increased in
10 recent years, ride share platforms
11 offer a terrific opportunity to
12 modernize accessible transportation in
13 New York City.

14 Lastly, we are also concerned
15 with the impact congestion pricing will
16 have on truck traffic outside of
17 Manhattan. We encourage the MTA to
18 coordinate with the state and city on
19 the plans for encouraging electric
20 vehicle truck usage and increasing
21 the --

22 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
23 remarks.

24 JULIAN KLINE: -- for EVs in the
25 Bronx and throughout New York City in

1 order to reduce any increase in
2 emissions --

3 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

4 Our next speaker is Teddy Edris,
5 followed by Richard Robins.

6 Our next speaker is Richard
7 Robins, followed by Kevin Garcia.

8 Our next speaker is Kevin Garcia,
9 followed by Adina Shulmson.

10 KEVIN GARCIA: Hi. Good
11 afternoon, everyone, and thank you
12 again for your time today and your
13 endurance.

14 My name is Kevin Garcia, and I'm
15 the transportation planner with the New
16 York City Environmental Justice
17 Alliance. Founded in 1991, NYCEJA is a
18 non-profit city-wide membership network
19 linking organizations from low-income
20 communities of color in the struggle
21 for environmental justice.

22 NYCEJA and other environmental
23 justice advocates have supported the
24 concept of congestion pricing for over
25 15 years. However, to be a truly

1 environmental just plan, congestion
2 pricing cannot lead to any increases in
3 traffic or emissions in EJ communities,
4 particularly the Bronx.

5 From the Environmental
6 Assessment, it is projected that truck
7 traffic and emissions will increase in
8 some roadways in the Bronx. The CLCPA
9 called for the identification of
10 disadvantaged communities to properly
11 steer 35 to 40 percent of the states
12 and federal -- clean energy funds to
13 the most climate vulnerable
14 communities.

15 Under the draft climate criteria
16 released by the Climate Justice Working
17 Group, nearly the entire Bronx
18 qualifies as a disadvantaged community.
19 Also, under the CLCPA, DEC has embarked
20 on an unprecedented hyper local air
21 monitoring program for ten counties
22 across the state, including the Bronx,
23 with the intent of identifying
24 mitigation opportunities. In fact, in
25 her state of the state book, Governor

1 Hochul herself announced intention to
2 transform Hunt's Point into a clean
3 distribution hub.

4 The MTA's intent to address
5 increase traffic and emissions in the
6 Bronx is woefully inadequate. The MTA
7 and the Hochul administration have
8 obligations and ample opportunities to
9 not just shoot for a net zero approach
10 to increasing traffic and emissions in
11 the Bronx, but rather to commit to a
12 net positive approach, where the action
13 leads to lower levels of emissions than
14 would have otherwise occurred under the
15 MTA's proposal.

16 Here are some community supported
17 policies that can reduce emissions over
18 and above expected traffic emission
19 increases, and a more comprehensive
20 list will be submitted with our full
21 testimony next week.

22 First, electrifying the Hunt's
23 Point market, including eliminating the
24 use of all stationary Diesel units for
25 auxiliary storage at the Hunt's Point

1 food market, and installing curbside
2 charging stations in grid connections.
3 Second, creating green loading zones in
4 cool corridors. Third, replacing NYPA
5 peaker power plants in South Bronx with
6 clean, renewable energy, plus battery
7 storage. Fourth, salvage marine
8 freight terminal in Hunts Point to
9 displace trucks. Fifth, capping the
10 Cross Bronx Expressway.

11 We need emission mitigation
12 policies for the Bronx that are
13 transparent, accountable and
14 measurable. For congestion pricing to
15 authentically deliver on its promise
16 for environmental justice, it must
17 deliver on overall traffic and emission
18 reductions in the Bronx and other EJ
19 communities. And not indulge in
20 emission accounting slight of hand.

21 Thank you again for your time.

22 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Adina
24 Schulimson, followed by Michael Berman.

25 Our next speaker is Michael

1 Berman, followed by Dominick Sannino.

2 MICHAEL BERMAN: Good afternoon.

3 My name is Mike Berman. I'm the
4 Day & Nite family of companies' chief
5 operating officer.

6 Given the ubiquitous presence of
7 the black and white Day & Nite
8 refrigeration, black and white Day &
9 Nite HVAC, white and black all service
10 kitchen equipment technician vans in
11 New York Central Business District, one
12 could say we are part of the problem
13 being discussed today.

14 The research, analysis and
15 presentation opening today's session is
16 all very impressive. But echoing
17 several other speakers, most notably
18 Representative Weprin, the impressive
19 is insufficient.

20 My purpose attending today's
21 hearings is to speak on behalf of the
22 core industry the Day & Nite family of
23 companies serves. The very sector that
24 separates New York City from all other
25 cities in the world. Hospitality. So

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1 many of those in support of congestion
2 pricing spoke about the quality of life
3 in New York. And so certainly, the
4 restaurants, hotels, bars, venues
5 define that quality.

6 We have all been, every person,
7 every sector of the economy, every
8 institution, savaged by COVID-19, right
9 up to the present day of inflation and
10 scarcity and everything. But none have
11 been more devastated than the
12 restaurants, hotels, venues.

13 There's a very long, complicated
14 road ahead for hospitality and survival
15 is not certain. To impose these fees
16 at this time in this fashion would be
17 crippling, if not lethal to our great
18 hospitality industry. Now I open by
19 saying that the volume of our company
20 technician vans is part of the problem.

21 I am participating to be a big
22 part of the solution. Rather than
23 imposing these fees that will be passed
24 through to the customers that are
25 already burdened by everything by fuel

1 surcharges to other financial matters
2 they cannot handle, let us join with
3 you to come up with the proper
4 solutions.

5 The Day & Nite family of
6 companies, among other things, host an
7 annual hospitality and food waste
8 summit. Along with our customers, we
9 all want to reduce carbon emissions,
10 increase productivity, generate greater
11 efficiency in a safer environment.
12 Include us and we will deliver
13 constructive comprehensive solutions.
14 And we will energetically get behind
15 the right program.

16 We all want the same thing.
17 Let's do it together. You have my
18 contact information. Please take me up
19 on this.

20 And lastly, when I do commute in
21 and out of the city, you will find me
22 on Metro-North and the subway.

23 I yield the remaining 15 seconds,
24 thanking you so much. Please take me
25 up on it. We want to participate. We

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1 can solve it better with you.

2 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

3 Our next speaker is Dominic
4 Sannino, followed by Martin Landsman.

5 Our next speaker and 220th on the
6 list is Martin Landsman, followed by
7 Jacob Yahiyayan.

8 Martin Landsman? You are unmuted
9 and may begin your remarks.

10 MARTIN LANDSMAN: My business has
11 been at the same location in SoHo since
12 1954. New Yorkers must understand that
13 the congestion pricing proposal
14 presents a major tax increase that will
15 have a direct dramatic effect on New
16 York business and residential
17 communities. If you think I don't have
18 a car so who cares about this plan or
19 another driver into that area anyway,
20 think again. The impact of this plan
21 is massive and will affect an untold
22 number of people in unforeseen ways.

23 This plan, the first in the
24 United States, currently targets what
25 has been one of the most vital and

1 economically productive areas in the
2 world. But let's not forget the
3 businesses have a choice on where to
4 locate. From the strictly commercial
5 point of view, why would anyone
6 consider starting a new enterprise in
7 an area with an extra financial
8 liability, unlike any other locality in
9 the United States.

10 Many municipalities give tax
11 incentives to businesses to open. But
12 this plan does the opposite. Look at
13 the increasing number of vacant stores
14 in New York City, and think carefully
15 of this plan and the additional
16 closures.

17 Businesses would be subjected to
18 declining sales as customers decide
19 whether obtaining merchandise directly
20 from a location within the zone is
21 worth the extra toll. Once this trend
22 starts, it will be impossible to
23 reverse.

24 Every product and service coming
25 into the congestion area will see an

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1 increase in cost that will be passed
2 onto residents -- businesses. From
3 potatoes and lumbar, to the plumber and
4 electrician, everything will cost more
5 as stores and service personnel will
6 pass on the cost to the end user.

7 The proposal for vehicular
8 traffic will be burdensome at best.
9 The toll for trucks and commercial
10 vehicles will simply be onerous. The
11 cost of each product we sell will have
12 to increase to offset the extra inbound
13 freight charges. This type of pricing
14 makes us less competitive in the
15 marketplace. If our sales are affected
16 in a negative way, the tax revenue that
17 we send to the city will also be
18 affected.

19 Businesses generate sales tax
20 paid to the city to support services
21 and quality of life issues. Please do
22 not make this harder to operate in New
23 York City. There's no question in my
24 mind that my well established business
25 will be harmed by this massive

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1 overburdened, overregulated proposal.
2 The affects will be immediate and
3 devastating for the business community
4 and the city's overall economy.

5 This plan will kill the goose
6 that lay the golden egg. This --
7 this -- I foresee a bureaucratic
8 nightmare that is being proposed.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Jacob
12 Yahiayan, followed by Alexander Ross.

13 JACOB YAHAIYAN: Good afternoon,
14 everyone. I'm Jacob Yahiayan. I'm the
15 CEO of Verbo Logistics Advisory
16 Services. I'm a proud Brooklynite. My
17 Yahiayan family have been proud New
18 Yorkers for over 100 years. And I can
19 tell you as a business owner who has
20 100 people working across the city, I
21 oppose the so-called congestion tax. I
22 have lived in London and Singapore and
23 not the statistics that have been
24 provided today are entirely accurate.

25 First off, I want to bring

1 everyone's attention to that. Over the
2 last year, single family residents'
3 small mixed-use property owners
4 property taxes have increased
5 100 percent. We are already paying
6 various types of surcharges taxes in
7 numerous usage of assets. And those of
8 us individuals who essentially do have
9 to make a trip to Manhattan are already
10 paying upwards of 20 to 30 percent
11 taxes already, including company rental
12 cars, which come to almost the usual
13 level of 25 to 30 percent.

14 If we are really here to address
15 the congestion and air quality
16 scenario, the urban planning over the
17 last 20 years have been an abysmal
18 failure. Particularly around the Cross
19 Bronx, and particularly around Brooklyn
20 Gowanus and so on and so forth.

21 The density has become almost
22 unforgivable levels. And that's really
23 the true cause behind a lot of the air
24 quality scenarios of the poor density
25 and poor urban planning. New York

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1 City's small businesses are shutting
2 down. Small business operators are
3 moving out. Middle-income families are
4 moving out. It's statistics that you
5 have all been using are pre-COVID
6 pandemic levels. And I fear that we
7 are going into a macro level of timing
8 this additional regressive tax in the
9 worst possible time at all.

10 I would submit to the MTA and the
11 DOT for every 100 million dollars in
12 operating efficiency you save, then
13 come back to the business community,
14 and ask for that additional match
15 funding to improve this type of
16 congestion scenario. Not just to
17 blindly ask every small business owner,
18 every New York City individual who has
19 to make that essential trip to
20 Manhattan pay the tax.

21 Thanks very much. Enjoy the
22 Labor Day weekend.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Alexander
25 Ross, followed by Marek Kruszelnicki.

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1 Our next speaker is Marek
2 Kruszelnicki, followed by Frances
3 Duffy.

4 Our next speaker is Frances
5 Duffy, followed by Kathryn Freed.

6 FRANCES DUFFY: Hello. My name
7 is Fran Duffy. I am a musician, I'm a
8 member of Local 802, the American
9 Federation of Musicians Union, and I
10 play Broadway shows and Carnegie Hall,
11 Radio City, City Center, the DiMenna
12 Center, Carolls Music, Lincoln Center
13 and various other venues throughout
14 Manhattan and the tristate area.

15 I am a harpist. And if you can
16 see in the background, those are my
17 instruments. Those are not instruments
18 that can be taken on the subway or any
19 other form of public transportation. A
20 lot of musicians have large
21 instruments, large musical equipment
22 that cannot be taken on public
23 transportation. I wish I didn't have
24 to have a car, but I do have to have a
25 car. And the only way for me to get my

1 instrument into the city is to drive it
2 in.

3 When I don't need to drive an
4 instrument in before the pandemic, I
5 absolutely used to try and take the
6 train and public transportation. It is
7 unfortunately not reliable enough.

8 It's not acceptable for me to be late
9 for a Broadway show. They don't hold
10 the curtain for the harpist. So I take
11 it upon myself to drive in. I'm
12 usually driving in off hours. If I get
13 out of a Broadway show and I miss the
14 train that I was hoping to get to, it's
15 a 40, 45-minute wait for the next one
16 in a very unsafe Penn Station or a very
17 unsafe Port Authority bus terminal.

18 This is not a choice that I want
19 to make. This is a choice I have to
20 make for my own safety. Right now, the
21 city is dangerous. The subways are
22 dangerous. Everything is a nightmare
23 in the city and unless it gets cleaned
24 up, congestion pricing is not going to
25 make a difference. The only thing

1 congestion pricing is going to do is,
2 it's going to price people like me,
3 middle income, middle class people just
4 trying to scrape a living together,
5 it's going to price us out of being
6 able to make a living.

7 The Broadway industry alone
8 contributes over \$14 billion to the
9 economy of New York City. Is this
10 really how you want to get people and
11 tourists and back into the city, making
12 it more difficult for them to afford to
13 come in and -- and why, to use us, on
14 the backs of us workers, to improve the
15 MTA and the subway? Make it safe and
16 people will come. Improve it. People
17 will come and they will naturally not
18 drive.

19 So the other issue is, where does
20 all this money go with the MTA? When
21 is it ever going to stop? It seems to
22 be a black hole. All this money goes
23 in and we never see the benefits of it.
24 I'm a New Yorker, too. I live in New
25 Jersey. I used to live in Manhattan

1 but I can't afford it anymore. I
2 couldn't afford it with my car because
3 I have to move a harp. A lot of
4 musicians and middle class people are
5 going to be priced out of being able to
6 stay in this area.

7 Thanks for your time.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Kathryn
10 Freed, followed by Erhan Tuncel.

11 Kathryn Freed?

12 Our next speaker is Erhan Tuncel.

13 Erhan, you may unmute yourself
14 and begin your remarks.

15 ERHAN TUNCEL: Hello. Can you
16 hear me?

17 MS. FLAX: Yes.

18 ERHAN TUNCEL: Thank you.

19 My name is Erhan Tuncel. I am a
20 Manhattan resident. First of all, I
21 want to thank the panel for accepting
22 such a daunting task of applying
23 fairness when -- with the congestion
24 charging. Again, my name is Erhan
25 Tuncel. I'm not only testifying as a

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1 New York City resident, Manhattan
2 resident, I'm also testifying on behalf
3 of New York City yellow medallion taxi
4 owners.

5 I'm an owner/driver of a New York
6 City yellow medallion. And I just want
7 to clear out a fact and urge -- urge
8 the panel not to compare apples and
9 oranges and put them in the same
10 basket.

11 I -- I'd like to remind everyone
12 that there were 11 -- a little over
13 11,000 medallion taxis serving the
14 riding public in New York City for
15 65 years until Mayor Guiliani decided
16 to auction off more medallions. And --
17 and that was followed by Mayor
18 Bloomberg and Mayor de Blasio. And
19 each time New York City wanted to
20 auction off a medallion, they had to
21 get permission from New York State, and
22 a major EPA study was done by New York
23 State, deeming every single medallion
24 that's auctioned off or on the street
25 serving the riding public as a

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1 non-air-polluting, non-noise polluting,
2 and not contributing to traffic in New
3 York City streets, including the CBD,
4 AKA congestion zone.

5 You have to remember that. That
6 every yellow taxi medallion have been
7 deemed non-congestion vehicle. They --
8 the -- we are essential part of New
9 York City Transit system. We move
10 hundreds of thousands of people every
11 single year. And there's also another
12 fact that only half of us are on the
13 road.

14 Currently, about 13,500
15 medallions exist, but only about 7,000
16 serve New Yorkers. I think everybody
17 knows why and what happened. I'm not
18 going to go there. But where I'm going
19 to go is -- we have Uber, Lyft, Via and
20 Revel and all private companies with
21 unlimited supply of capital dollars.
22 They were allowed by the same
23 regulators which regulate yellow taxis
24 to add a force of one hundred thousand
25 plus vehicles onto New York City

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1 streets, mostly cruising CBD, without
2 much of an oversight, as far as
3 environmental impact of such a huge
4 number of vehicles.

5 Since then, there were many
6 studies done showing ride share
7 companies as they'd like to call
8 themselves --

9 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
10 remarks.

11 ERHAN TUNCEL: As main culprits
12 of the way traffic congestion problem
13 in CBD.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 Our next speaker is Richard
16 Robins, followed by Kathryn Freed.

17 RICHARD ROBINS: Hi. Thank you
18 very much. Thank you for holding this
19 hearing. My name is Richard Robins. I
20 live in the Upper West Side. I own a
21 car, a bike, a MetroCard and many pairs
22 of walking shoes.

23 I've been on the other side of
24 many public hearings, and I know how
25 hard it is to listen to so many people.

1 I applaud you for doing so.

2 I'm going to make just three
3 quick points. Number one, the only way
4 that New York City functions is if most
5 people take public transportation. If
6 all estimated one million people
7 traveling into the Central Business
8 District every day took cars, whether
9 private or taxis, there would be
10 complete gridlock. People who drive or
11 take taxis are completely dependent on
12 millions of other people taking public
13 transportation.

14 Number two, congestion pricing
15 benefits the million people who take
16 public transportation, but impacts many
17 fewer people who drive. However, the
18 people who drive are more vocal because
19 they are finally being asked to help
20 pay the cost of all those people who
21 take public transportation, which
22 again, as per my first point, prevents
23 complete gridlock.

24 In deciding whether to move
25 forward, please realize that speakers

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1 today are part of a vocal minority,
2 while millions of people will benefit
3 from this proposal.

4 Number three, a report two days
5 ago from Germany found that a ticket
6 that let people use public
7 transportation across Germany for only
8 nine Euros, less than \$9 a month,
9 prevented some 1.8 million tons of
10 carbon monoxide emissions over the
11 three months that it was available.
12 About ten percent of a billion trips,
13 100 million trips would otherwise have
14 been made using cars. With our climate
15 crisis, we need to make it more
16 attractive for people to take public
17 transportation rather than private cars
18 or taxis.

19 For the benefit of the millions
20 of New Yorkers who would benefit from
21 this, please move forward with this
22 plan. And please do not give in to the
23 special interest that are trying to
24 weaken this vital step.

25 Thank you very much.

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1 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

2 Our next speaker is Kathryn
3 Freed, followed by Amedeo Pelin.

4 Kathryn, you are unmuted and may
5 begin your remarks.

6 Kathryn, you may unmute yourself
7 and begin your remarks.

8 KATHRYN FREED: Hi, I don't know
9 if you can see me.

10 MS. FLAX: We can hear you. We
11 cannot see you.

12 KATHRYN FREED: Okay. I hit the
13 video, but it doesn't seem to work. Oh
14 hi. There I am.

15 All right. Yeah, hi. I've been
16 a resident of Lower Manhattan for over
17 50 years. I'm a former Councilmember
18 and a former New York State Supreme
19 Court judge. I'll try to keep this
20 quick because I know people have gone
21 on for a lot of these.

22 I support the idea of congestion
23 pricing. I just have serious questions
24 about this. One of things I think we
25 should be trying to do is that first,

1 I'd like to know where the money went
2 that's already been paid into the MTA
3 and where this money will go and if we
4 can have some kind of auditing to make
5 sure that we can track where it goes.

6 I would suggest that we use
7 congestion pricing also to change some
8 habits. For instance, trying to get --
9 encourage vehicles to come in at
10 off-peak hours. I will also suggest
11 that we start not charging for
12 electrical. Especially electric
13 for-hire vehicles to encourage them to
14 become completely electrical. Which
15 would certainly reduce a lot of the
16 pollution. I think everyone will agree
17 that they cause a lot of the pollution.

18 I'd also like to see an economic
19 impact study because a lot of things
20 have changed since when you did the
21 original surveys through this because
22 it was pre-COVID.

23 I live in a transit desert, which
24 is also an Environmental Justice
25 community on the Lower East Side. Your

1 own figures show that between the
2 Brooklyn Bridge and the 10th Street
3 will be adversely impacted by
4 pollution. This is -- this is an area
5 that has 110,000 units of NYCHA
6 housing. It's overwhelmingly people of
7 color and lower income. And so not
8 only will we have to pay for higher
9 services and products, but we will also
10 not even get the benefits of lower
11 congestion and less pollution. So you
12 really got to look at that.

13 Your own figure show that you may
14 actually exceed the SEQRA threshold for
15 the amount of pollution that it's
16 causing, and I don't think changing a
17 few traffic lights around is going to
18 make the difference. If you look at
19 ways that you can mitigate that, maybe
20 you should look at covering the FDR
21 Drive and stopping that pollution.
22 Because recently, we also got our park
23 destroyed.

24 I would also suggest we need
25 better bus transportation because bus

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1 transportation sucks and obviously we
2 are nowhere near a -- we are nowhere
3 near a subway station because we are a
4 transit desert. And you should look
5 into maybe putting in elevators or
6 escalators in the closer stops at
7 specifically Essex Street and Delancey
8 Street.

9 And finally, we don't live in the
10 Central Business District. We are a
11 community, and it's unfair to price us
12 in a way as though we are in the
13 Central Business Districts when we get
14 all the negatives and none of the
15 positives. How about a carveout?

16 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
17 remarks.

18 KATHRYN FREED: All right. Thank
19 you.

20 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is Amedeo Pelin,
22 followed by Zaire Baptiste.

23 Our next speaker is Zaire
24 Baptiste, followed by Wain Chin.

25 ZAIRE BAPTISTE: Yes. So -- yes.

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1 Thank you for having this. And first,
2 I want to say it's a bit disappointing
3 that someone would gaslight others as
4 unfit or not being knowledgeable to
5 speak here and ask you to ignore them.
6 So I would like you to ignore that.

7 The MTA is not losing money
8 because of cars. It's losing money
9 because of years of documented
10 mismanagement of funds, and poor
11 overall management of their system.
12 It's not driver's faults. Multiple
13 streets throughout the city have been
14 turned into public streets, which is
15 okay. Bike lanes such as Eighth Avenue
16 which is a major corridor, which had
17 its usable lanes reduced, increasing
18 traffic around MSG, construction and
19 development go undeterred, dining
20 sheds, Citi Bike docs and the list goes
21 on.

22 None of this has been addressed.
23 And that's a problem that was created.
24 And then congestion pricing is being
25 justified as a solve for that.

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1 Congestion pricing is based on what is
2 taking place in other regions. And
3 drivers are being forced to pay for a
4 service that for the most part, we do
5 not use. And adding a toll will not
6 make me take the train or the bus.

7 The MTA board has said that they
8 are basing their findings off of what
9 had happened in other regions. If we
10 as a city recognize that this is the
11 most unique and diverse city in the
12 world, how can we honestly think that
13 the results will be the same? London's
14 congestion pricing is always used,
15 Milan, as an example of successful
16 congestion pricing, but I recommend
17 everyone on here to look it up. It has
18 actually failed to deliver on its
19 reduction of congestion or pollution.
20 And reports from their officials have
21 said that that congestion is actually
22 worse now than before.

23 So here we are today to talk
24 about whether congestion pricing is
25 right for the city and will it

1 inadvertently affect the residents.
2 Everything that the MTA has published
3 states that there is no adverse effect
4 on most things. And this -- this study
5 just really started, so how is it
6 possible in the short time that we have
7 truly reliable data. It is stated that
8 these things won't be affected.

9 Parking is already a problem. So I'm
10 sure people going outside the CBD will
11 cause a bigger parking problem. Outer
12 borough congestion, increased
13 environmental impact. The affect on
14 low-income and economically challenged
15 families and individuals. And a host
16 of other topics that have been reported
17 as being unaffected.

18 How can this be true? This is
19 actually a false statement. And we
20 should take issue with the misleading
21 of the public through hypotheses and
22 guessing. Again, this feels like the
23 books are being cooked to justify the
24 need for congestion pricing. It was
25 stated on many occasions that drivers

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1 abuse the streets, but pay nothing for
2 it. We have \$600 million in tickets,
3 300 million dollars in meters, motor
4 fuel tax, registration tax,
5 inspections. Truly, the rhetoric
6 should stop about drivers not
7 contributing.

8 And if this is truly about
9 congestion as well, why are there tolls
10 on the road after hours when the city
11 is not congested? I think that we
12 really need to look at true solutions
13 for this and not just throwing money at
14 the MTA or taxing the New York City
15 residents.

16 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
17 remarks.

18 ZAIRE BAPTISTE: Thank you.

19 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is our 230th
21 speaker on the list, Wain Chin,
22 followed by Jennifer MC.

23 WAIN CHIN: Hi. My name is Wain
24 Chin. I am a yellow cabdriver.
25 Owner/driver. Also a member of --

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1 (inaudible). Protesting -- paying MTA
2 for -- 50 cents since 2008 for each
3 ride to Manhattan. And in 2019, they
4 added a congestion surcharge \$2.50. So
5 we've been paying 3-dollar each ride to
6 the MTA in Manhattan, and you add
7 another tax on the -- at that fee, you
8 are going to give us -- to our industry
9 and also the riding public. We cannot
10 afford that. You know, we are going to
11 be out of business. Because we, the
12 driver are struggling with the mortgage
13 crisis as you know. And also
14 competition with the app driver. So we
15 cannot afford another fee, a third fee
16 from the MTA.

17 And also, you know, we had 6,000
18 cab in storage not even working on the
19 street. You know, we, the yellow taxi
20 essentially, we move the city, even
21 raining, shining, or even the subway
22 not running, we are running 24/7.
23 Okay, we need -- the city need our
24 service. Especially the elderly people
25 and people with accessibility issue.

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1 They cannot take a train. They need a
2 door-to-door service. They need a
3 service from us. So to our industry,
4 the driver income and then the rider
5 have to pay for it.

6 And also, you know, we are the
7 ambassador of New York City. Where the
8 tourist come to the country, from
9 airplane, LaGuardia, we are the first
10 to greet them. So we don't -- we
11 cannot afford to have another fee, a
12 third fee from the MTA. We are already
13 paying our share. Three-dollar ride
14 into the Manhattan. So I suggest we
15 exempt for us, the yellow cab from the
16 another fee. Because it will be
17 devastating to our income and the
18 riding public. Especially the elderly
19 people and people that have disability
20 issue.

21 Thank you for listening to my
22 concern. And also, please -- fee, we
23 pay --

24 So we -- you know, as -- as a
25 driver, owner/driver, you know, I have

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1 a 15 to 25 trips a day in Manhattan.
2 So collecting \$45 each day from the
3 driver, so every year, the --
4 contribute -- 10,000 to MTA already.
5 Another fee, it is going to be very
6 devastating for us. Please consider so
7 we pay our share already.

8 Thank you for listening to us.
9 Thank you.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Jennifer MC,
12 followed by Judy Pesin.

13 Our next speaker is Judy Pesin,
14 followed by Ashraf Ahmed.

15 Our next speaker is Ashraf Ahmed,
16 followed by Eugene Berardi Junior.

17 Our next speaker is Eugene
18 Berardi Junior, followed by our 235th
19 speaker, Matt Bewley.

20 EUGENE BERARDI JR.: Can you hear
21 me and see me?

22 MS. FLAX: We can hear you and
23 see you.

24 EUGENE BERARDI JR.: Okay. Here
25 we go.

1 Hello. I'm Eugene Berardi.
2 President and CEO of Adirondack
3 Trailways. Thank you for this
4 opportunity.

5 Adirondack Trailways is a fourth
6 generation New York State based
7 business that provides inner-city,
8 rural commuter service connecting over
9 100 communities within the State of New
10 York to New York City. And we do more
11 of that service than anybody else in
12 the state. Our customers from all
13 walks of life, including those who rely
14 on affordable public transportation,
15 such as students, the elderly, the
16 military, individuals with special
17 needs and others with limited means.
18 We are part of the statewide Stella
19 program, provide 5307 service, we
20 provide 5311 service throughout the
21 state.

22 Adirondack Trailways supports
23 congestion pricing, it will reduce
24 carbon emissions by having fewer cars
25 on the road and more people utilizing

1 public and private transit options.
2 But what that does not adversely affect
3 the people in the region and actually
4 meets its goal moving more drivers to
5 transit.

6 The assessment contains options
7 to charge buses the same rate as large
8 trucks. Every tolling authority in the
9 region recognizing environmental cost
10 benefits of buses charge them much
11 lower tolls than the large trucks.
12 Port minimizes local community and
13 environmental and traffic impacts with
14 street operations and provides bus
15 passengers with direct intermodal
16 connections to and from other inner
17 city buses, commuter buses and 11
18 subway lines. It is clear that any
19 tolling of inner city buses operating
20 out of the Port Authority terminal,
21 will reduce both motor coach and MTA
22 ridership.

23 We know the impact of the
24 pandemic, so it's particularly
25 disheartening that New York is even

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1 considering having its private motor
2 coach companies further subsidize the
3 MTA. Trailways and New York's other
4 motor coach companies are already
5 annually contributing millions of
6 dollars directly to the MTA's
7 operations and maintenance. Roughly 30
8 cents of every dollars in state taxes
9 paid on gasoline sold anywhere in the
10 state flows to the MTA, generating a
11 total of 628 million for the MTA in '19
12 alone, plus 2 billion in tolls for
13 drivers crossing bridges and tunnels.
14 Another 308 million from drivers
15 through MTA, A trust revenues. Put
16 this in perspective, in '19, Adirondack
17 paid over 676,000 in bridge, tunnels
18 and highway tolls, 139,000 in state
19 fuel taxes, 949 in Port fees and then
20 state bus registration fees.

21 According to the Citizen Budget
22 Committee, the MTA has only committed
23 68 billion of the 121 billion planned
24 for 2010 to 24, waiving 53 uncommitted.

25 Finally, if the goal is to reduce

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1 congestion, then the use of privately
2 owned motor coaches should be
3 encouraged not discouraged. When 55
4 passengers bus takes 55 cars off the
5 road.

6 Thank you for this opportunity to
7 submit written comments.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Matt Bewley,
10 followed by Joan Martinez.

11 Our next speaker is Joan
12 Martinez, followed by Aura E.

13 Our next speaker is Aura E.,
14 followed by Lisa Daglian.

15 Our next speaker is Lisa Daglian,
16 followed by Jessica Spezio.

17 Lisa, you may unmute yourself and
18 begin your remarks.

19 LISA DAGLIAN: Greetings. I'm
20 Lisa Daglian, the executive director of
21 the Permanent Citizens Advisory
22 Committee to the MTA, or PCAC.

23 Created by the New York State
24 legislature, PCAC is housed within the
25 MTA and is the official voice of riders

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1 of New York City subways and buses, the
2 Staten Island Rail, Long Island
3 Railroad and Metro-North. In that role
4 and on their behalf, I'm here to speak
5 in strong support of congestion
6 pricing, or more appropriately,
7 decongestion pricing.

8 The Environmental Assessment
9 shows that congestion pricing will
10 reduce traffic, improve air quality and
11 raise vital funds for critical transit
12 projects. Therefore, congestion
13 pricing meets the goals of the
14 Environmental Assessment and should
15 receive a funding of no significant
16 impact or FONSI.

17 That's what these hearings are
18 supposed to be about. Yet I have
19 listened hundreds of people for
20 countless of hours, as have you, and
21 heard so many asking to be exempt from
22 the tolls or have the lowest tolls
23 possible. The irony is lost on them
24 that the more exemptions, the higher
25 the tolls. And the fact the congestion

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1 pricing has been law since 2019.

2 I heard one speaker change his
3 mind about supporting congestion
4 pricing after listening to others'
5 testimony. It's important to remember
6 the millions of working class transit
7 riders who depend on congestion pricing
8 happening swiftly, but who cannot
9 afford to spend hours at these
10 hearings. And that the loudest voices
11 are often those resistant to positive
12 change.

13 And that's unfortunate because we
14 should all support this program that
15 will improve our quality of life. Help
16 protect us from the ravages of climate
17 change, allow emergency vehicles to
18 make better time saving lives, speed up
19 buses and raise billions for Transit
20 for infrastructure improvement, like
21 accessibility projects, come on
22 Mets-Willets Point, new signals,
23 station upgrades including places like
24 Valley Stream, new train cars and
25 electric buses. And improving equity

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1 by bring services to areas without it
2 via new train lines like the
3 Interborough Express.

4 These important projects will
5 benefit millions of riders, and support
6 our region's economy, including
7 creating much needed construction jobs
8 for decades to come.

9 More than 90 percent for people
10 who travel into the CBD take transit,
11 including people coming from New
12 Jersey. You'd never know to hear the
13 testimony of the past few days. I
14 lived for decades in Hell's Kitchen and
15 saw standstill traffic tie-ups every
16 day, and spent hours cleaning filthy
17 soot from cars and trucks from my
18 window sills. That went right into our
19 lungs.

20 Now I live above the Midtown
21 Tunnel and watch a growing number of
22 cars trying to cram into the tunnel at
23 all hours of the day and night to get
24 into Manhattan. I wonder how they can
25 all fit. And that's the truth. They

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1 can't. Manhattan's streets are
2 making -- are overburdened with traffic
3 and they are not safe for pedestrians.

4 We need congestion pricing to
5 reduce traffic, improve air quality and
6 raise these needed funds for Transit.
7 That's what it will do. That's why --

8 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
9 remarks.

10 LISA DAGLIAN: That's why the
11 FONSI should be awarded. Thank you.

12 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

13 Our next speaker is Jessica
14 Spezio, followed by Raphael Wakefield.

15 Our next speaker is Raphael
16 Wakefield, followed by our 241st
17 speaker, Joseph Stoffel.

18 JOSEPH STOFFEL: Hello. Good
19 afternoon. My name is Raphael
20 Wakefield, and I live in Jersey City,
21 New Jersey.

22 The word equity is mentioned
23 several times in the Environmental
24 Assessment in the context of air
25 pollution. Maybe in some objective

1 sense, this can even be achieved. But
2 in a larger context with regard to
3 congestion pricing, equity is a
4 slippery word that means nothing.
5 There is no equity to some crossings in
6 Manhattan currently being tolled and
7 other crossings not.

8 What's more, the concerns from
9 someone's ox being gored has been the
10 exact logic of inaction that's led to
11 the current dysfunctional system. For
12 example, the idea that Staten Island is
13 always treated unfairly was used to
14 justify opposing the earlier Move New
15 York plan and also unjustify ever lower
16 tolls on Staten Island residents to the
17 Verazano Narrows Bridge. Yet this
18 accommodation has delivered nothing
19 from the perspective of the CBD, except
20 a few thousand cars from Staten Island
21 every day, clogging up Manhattan
22 streets even as the vast majority of
23 Staten Island travelers use transit to
24 reach Manhattan.

25 As the Traffic Mobility Review

1 Board has no doubt noted, there was a
2 correlation between the county of
3 origin of personal cars and the
4 availability of direct un-tolled
5 crossings or unlimited tolls from those
6 counties. If Staten Islanders had no
7 Verazano Bridge discount, you can
8 safely assume that there'd be more cars
9 going to Manhattan from the Long Island
10 boroughs and counties because driving
11 for them is free and demand to enter
12 Manhattan is high. There's no equity
13 possible in this circumstance.

14 One point which would argue
15 against implementation is a general
16 poor performance of transit today. I'm
17 talking about the handicap
18 inaccessibility of the subway system,
19 and the balkanized regional transit
20 system. For example, we must pay two
21 fares from PATH to New York City
22 Transit here in New Jersey.

23 There's also the issue of the
24 Port Authority capriciously opening and
25 closing the bus -- express bus lane in

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1 the Lincoln Tunnel, wasting bus riders'
2 time in order to funnel more cars into
3 Manhattan for the sake of their own
4 toll revenue. Or the fact that
5 dedicated bus lanes in New York City
6 are routinely many blocked with
7 impunity by cars. Or the fact that
8 mask mandates are not being enforced on
9 transit, or the fact that the MTA's
10 bloated capital of operating costs,
11 revenue raised by congestion pricing
12 will not go very far.

13 There is also the reality of
14 illegal parking obscured or fake
15 license plates and fraudulent parking
16 placards are rampant and public
17 employees are the worst offenders. As
18 the Environmental Assessment projects,
19 simply stripping public employees of
20 parking placards and enforcing parking
21 honestly will actually reduce cars by a
22 number of equal to that of congestion
23 pricing. In other words, theft of
24 public space for free private parking
25 is a subsidy to these people alone for

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1 the same attitude as the revenue
2 congestion pricing for everyone.

3 Given these and other factors may
4 well be that CBD tolling does not
5 achieve its goal. But that's an
6 argument for the responsible agency and
7 politician -- not giving up without
8 even trying.

9 Already, the spurious demands of
10 the federal DOT have created
11 unwarranted delay in implementing the
12 program. The result has been over a
13 thousand pages of documentation as
14 assessments created at taxpayer
15 expense, an assessment that is
16 unnecessary for a highway expanding
17 like the Belt Parkway widening that MTA
18 is currently pursuing. The legislature
19 passed this, the governor signed it.
20 The time has passed to implement
21 scenario A and see what happens and
22 adjustments can be made from there if
23 necessary.

24 Thank you.

25 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

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1 Our next speaker is Joseph
2 Stoffel, followed by Randy Kative.

3 Our next speaker is Randy Kative,
4 followed by Milana Meytes.

5 Randy, you may unmute yourself
6 and begin your remarks.

7 RANDY KATIVE: Hi. My name is
8 Randy Kative. I live in Fort Lee, New
9 Jersey. I'm almost 75 years old. I'm
10 a cancer survivor. I emphasize the
11 word survivor because of the health
12 care I have received in Midtown
13 Manhattan. Through many of your
14 wonderful, wonderful facilities.
15 Through trials and many other medical
16 opportunities that did not avail
17 themselves in the suburbs or out of
18 major cities.

19 It will be an economic hardship
20 for me to continue with my medical
21 journey, both dental as well as
22 physical medical journey, between the
23 fees for parking or share ride or a
24 limo service and the congestion parking
25 and the parking in -- in parking

1 facilities.

2 I am a widow. My husband passed
3 away. He spent over 169 days in the
4 Midtown New York City hospital fighting
5 a wicked cancer. I had to go into the
6 city every day to be with him. It
7 would have been an economic bombshell
8 for me if this existed at that time.
9 Notwithstanding, I went through bridge
10 gate trying to get to him for six of
11 the days that he was dying.

12 I will not belabor my own
13 personal issues, but it is a hardship
14 for all of the wonderful medical
15 facilities in Midtown and for the
16 people that avail themselves trying to
17 get there. And for the people on this
18 call who said take public
19 transportation, my answer is when you
20 are on chemo therapy, you take public
21 transportation.

22 The other issue I'd like to
23 address very quickly is, your
24 highlights. You are going to increase
25 the speed of the escalators? How do

1 you think that's going to impact
2 seniors? You are going to have a lot
3 of accidents, guys. You are going to
4 reduce parking demand, well the parking
5 lots will just increase their prices.

6 And in conclusion, the adverse
7 effects which you said will not affect
8 industry or occupational categories,
9 let's look at entertainment,
10 hospitality, theater, restaurants,
11 hotels, healthcare and parking garages.
12 Not alone, when you are in a taxi cab,
13 you are going to pay for the taxi cab,
14 as well as the congestion pricing.

15 I think this is a disaster, and I
16 think that we should also ask what have
17 you spent so far and what is this going
18 to cost going forward now that we are
19 post COVID.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Milana
23 Meytes, followed by Joshua Cintron.

24 Our next speaker is Joshua
25 Cintron, followed by our 245th speaker,

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1 Noah Lenovitz.

2 Joshua, you may unmute yourself
3 and begin your remarks.

4 JOSHUA CINTRON: Okay. I am
5 unmuted. Thank you.

6 Good afternoon, everybody. My
7 name is Joshua Cintron. I'm from
8 Brooklyn, New York. I work within the
9 Manhattan CBD as an IT professional. I
10 speak as a long time enthusiast and
11 consumer of the New York City subways,
12 buses and commuter rails. And a
13 proponent of the Interborough Express.

14 I also find myself in a very
15 unique position. I also speak as -- I
16 also speak as a member of the blind and
17 visually impaired community. And as
18 somebody with Albanism who operates a
19 motor vehicle under strict
20 qualifications set forth by the DMV.
21 And I'm speaking against congestion
22 pricing.

23 I do believe that other efforts
24 can be done to make the city safer for
25 everybody. But it starts with taking

1 accountability. The MTA and managing
2 their money, cyclists and pedestrians
3 using common sense while crossing the
4 street. And drivers exercising their
5 own due care instead of penalizing the
6 middle class, the backbone of this
7 city.

8 Uber, Lyft, all the ride share
9 apps with the TLC plates, maybe look
10 into them. There was a gentleman this
11 August 27th, as a matter of fact, from
12 Crown Heights who was talking about how
13 this whole thing was a money grab. And
14 I'm -- unfortunately, I'm going to have
15 to agree. A lot of the rhetoric that
16 I've heard from proponents is damn near
17 ageists, ableists, disingenuous and
18 pseudo-moralistic. I hate to say it,
19 but that's just what it is. And the
20 one thing that I found absolutely
21 insulting was that we shouldn't be
22 listened to. And I'm not going to take
23 that lightly.

24 I am a proponent of public
25 transit, I am definitely an enthusiast

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1 of public transit and I do want to see
2 our public transit get better. So much
3 so that I wanted to take on a position
4 as a conductor, and I couldn't take it
5 because of the crime and the other
6 issues that are going on in the subway
7 right now. So I had to pass on that
8 job.

9 Unfortunately, MTA has been
10 mismanaging their money for a very long
11 time. And throwing money at this
12 problem isn't going to be -- it's not
13 going to help. So I'm urging the MTA
14 and NYC DOT to not alienate people like
15 me. You know, people who use the motor
16 vehicles, disabled, senior citizens, as
17 a -- you know -- as a guise for, you
18 know, advocating for the environment.
19 That's all I have to say.

20 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is Noah
22 Lenovitz, followed by Jessica Spezio.

23 NOAH LENOVITZ: Hello, can you
24 hear me?

25 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

1 NOAH LENOVITZ: Thank you.

2 Hello. My name is Noah Lenovitz. I
3 live in Lower Manhattan and work in the
4 Flat Iron District. I commute to work
5 by bicycle and public transportation.
6 I don't support congestion pricing and
7 think it's a very bad idea for the
8 city.

9 On my commute via bicycle, I get
10 to see large parts of the city at
11 different times a day. I only really
12 see congestion at the entrances and
13 exits of the bridges and tunnels. I
14 think the city did a great job with
15 installing bike lanes which provided
16 much needed safety for bicyclists,
17 while also deterring cars from driving
18 in the city.

19 Since the beginning of the
20 pandemic, the side streets are mostly
21 empty in the Flat Iron, Union Square
22 and Chelsea areas specifically.
23 Commercial parking spots are never
24 really hard to find as there are many
25 vacant storefronts. Adding congestion

1 toll, especially for commercial
2 vehicles, will increase the cost of the
3 few businesses that are still trying to
4 recover from the loss of office
5 workers. These increased costs will
6 trickle down to the every-day consumer,
7 while we are still facing unprecedented
8 inflation levels.

9 The MTA should look at making
10 cuts to their bloated budgets and focus
11 on stopping fare evasion, which is
12 rampant and has been quoted as costing
13 the MTA approximately 400 million per
14 year. The MTA should also place the
15 toll -- if they do do the toll, just on
16 Uber and Lyft rides. There's over
17 90,000 cars each day and they cause
18 most of congestion.

19 Thank you very much for
20 listening.

21 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Jessica
23 Spezio, followed by Israel Peskowitz.

24 Jessica, you may begin your
25 remark.

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1 JESSICA SPEZIO: Good afternoon.
2 My name is Jessica Spezio, and I'm the
3 administrative assistant for the
4 Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee
5 to the MTA, PCAC. I'm speaking today
6 in support of congestion pricing on
7 behalf of transit riders and drivers
8 around the region.

9 I live in a subway desert in
10 Bergen Beach, Brooklyn. My options to
11 get to work in Lower Manhattan are
12 limited with no rail service close by.
13 I can take the express bus, a slow
14 local bus to a long subway ride or
15 drive my car.

16 Taking transit is still my best
17 choice because it's more affordable.
18 Even when taking the more expensive
19 express bus. And often faster than
20 driving. My express bus commute gives
21 me a pleasant and comfortable one-seat
22 ride into Lower Manhattan or Midtown.
23 But during rush hour, the ride can be
24 slow and backed up due to traffic in
25 the tunnel or on the highway.

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1 Often, an excessive number of
2 vehicles slow down and delay the
3 express bus, even when it's in the HOV
4 lane. With school starting up again,
5 my express bus ride will take even
6 longer than during the summer with more
7 vehicles on the road, with people
8 driving to drop off their kids.

9 Congestion pricing would speed up
10 my express bus commute and make it an
11 even more convenient way for me to get
12 to Manhattan. By decreasing traffic in
13 and around the Central Business
14 District, I'm looking forward to a much
15 faster trip into and out of the city to
16 and from the southeast end of Brooklyn.

17 Congestion pricing would even
18 help make taking the local bus to the
19 subway more reliable and fast. My bus
20 options include the B41, which runs on
21 the extremely congested Flatbush
22 Avenue, and takes much longer than it
23 should to travel towards the two and
24 five trains or Downtown Brooklyn. By
25 reducing traffic, our bus network will

1 speed up and become a more dependable
2 and efficient way of getting to work.

3 The funding brought to the MTA by
4 congestion pricing will go towards
5 making the transit system more
6 accessible and reliable for all riders.
7 As a former subway conductor, I know
8 how old some of the signals and systems
9 are. They need upgrades and the funds
10 that congestion pricing will bring in
11 will help pay for them. I'm excited by
12 the potential of projects like the
13 Interborough Express and the future
14 subway extensions to bring subway
15 access to neighborhoods like mine that
16 do not currently have rail stations.

17 Congestion pricing will help fund
18 these critical improvements and
19 upgrades to the transit system,
20 speeding up commutes for the majority
21 of New Yorkers who travel by transit.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker is Israel
25 Peskowitz, followed by Karen

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1 Schlachter.

2 ISRAEL PESKOWITZ: Hi. Can
3 everyone see me?

4 MS. FLAX: Yes.

5 ISRAEL PESKOWITZ: Wonderful.

6 My name is Israel Peskowitz. I'm
7 a lifelong resident of central Queens.
8 I'm a fourth generation New Yorker. I
9 live in what used to be called the
10 two-fare zone, that is I had to take a
11 bus in order to get to the subway in
12 order to get to anywhere else.

13 New York City is already too
14 expensive. Why are you making it even
15 more expensive? The MTA estimated that
16 a round trip from Rego Park in central
17 Queens neighborhood, closer to
18 Manhattan than I am, would cost \$57.
19 This plan was conceived and voted on in
20 2018/2019. The road has changed
21 immensely since then, and the future of
22 Manhattan as a world center seems
23 uncertain. Making Manhattan even more
24 overpriced could be the final nail on
25 the coffin.

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1 When I was a young man, as a
2 photographer, shooting concerts by
3 local bands, shows that ended at 2:00,
4 3:00, 4:00 a.m. Afterwards, I had to
5 wait a half an hour for the train, take
6 an hour ride back to Queens, stopping
7 at all local stops. And then wait out
8 in the freezing cold for upwards of an
9 hour for a bus to come and get me home.
10 Plus, I had to worry about protecting
11 my camera, the most expensive thing I
12 owned, and if it was stolen or damaged,
13 I'd be out of a job. But when I could
14 use a family car, I drove, I was there
15 within an hour, parking was plentiful
16 late at night, and I'd get home in 30
17 minutes and security was much less of
18 an issue.

19 The original point of congestion
20 pricing was to charge people driving to
21 Manhattan when it was congested. Now
22 you have a plan that would charge
23 people like me to drive in and out of
24 Manhattan late at night when it's not
25 congested. I urge the commission to

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1 set minimal fees for off-peak, late
2 night and weekend hours. I urge the
3 commission to start off-peak and late
4 night hours at 7:00 p.m. when
5 many meters turn off and many events
6 begin.

7 Manhattan is already in trouble.
8 Don't kill off our nightlife. Don't
9 make life unlivable for the younger
10 generation, the kids going through what
11 I went through 20 years ago. These
12 tolls are a regressive tax. Working
13 class, outer borough people like me
14 will not be able to afford to easily
15 get to Manhattan in the evening. It
16 will also bring us another step closer
17 to Manhattan being a playground of the
18 rich, while the rest of us are priced
19 out by tolls on top of tolls.

20 I urge the commission to give
21 higher crossing credits to any driver
22 using any of the tolled tunnels and
23 buses to enter Manhattan. I urge the
24 commission to exempt cabdrivers who
25 already pay their own congestion fee

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1 from being forced to pay it twice.

2 I also urge the commission to
3 consider not tolling intercity buses.
4 I recently took a bus from Baltimore
5 for the first time since COVID. I
6 discovered my favorite carrier had gone
7 out of business, and the cost of a
8 ticket had nearly tripled. If the
9 prices raise even higher due to
10 congestion fees, it will become cheaper
11 for me to drive.

12 I also -- elected leaders to note
13 the overwhelming outcry against this
14 plan. I encourage listeners, look up
15 how their elected state representatives
16 and senators voted on this issue and
17 vote accordingly in November.

18 Since I still have some time
19 left, I'd like to thank the entire
20 commission and I also like to give a
21 shout out to Assemblyman David Weprin,
22 and Assemblyman Daniel Rosenthal for
23 leading the fight against congestion
24 pricing.

25 Thank you all for your time and

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1 have a nice day.

2 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

3 Our next speaker is Karen
4 Schlachter, followed by Marcia
5 Dreson-Tepler.

6 Karen, you may begin your
7 remarks.

8 KAREN SCHLACHTER: Can you hear
9 me? I don't want to --

10 MS. FLAX: Yes.

11 KAREN SCHLACHTER: Okay. I
12 wanted to thank Israel because I don't
13 have anything prepared. I am long-time
14 New Yorker, having grown up in
15 Queens -- in the Bronx as a child,
16 daughter of an immigrant. And I used
17 to ride the subways day or night. But
18 we are going back quite a while when
19 they were safe, when they were clean.
20 And I think before we go into
21 congestion pricing, we really have to
22 improve a system that is not safe any
23 longer.

24 I drove into the city to work as
25 a social worker in teaching hospitals,

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1 or through the city to go to a position
2 in Yonkers as a social worker in a
3 foster care agency for over 35 years.
4 I felt that my -- I have a right to
5 drive my car. I am not an elitist.
6 I'm on a fixed income, currently
7 retired. And I still drive into the
8 city. I drive into the city to go to
9 the theater. I leave my house in north
10 Queens at 4:00 p.m. because I know
11 where to park. And I sit in my car
12 until 6:00 o'clock so I can go to the
13 theater. I get my tickets at a reduced
14 rate at the TDF. And I come in on the
15 weekends, I come in on Sundays because
16 I know where to park and I can take
17 advantage of all the wonderful museums
18 in Manhattan.

19 I really think this is
20 discriminatory against people who
21 either don't have access to public
22 transportation or since COVID don't
23 feel safe on the trains because there
24 are no mask mandates, there are
25 homeless people all over the trains as

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1 well as the city, and it is no longer a
2 safe place to be.

3 As far as the people who are
4 concerned with motorists hitting people
5 or going on the curbs, I've never hit a
6 pedestrian. I'm a defensive driver. I
7 don't block the box. However, I see a
8 lot of people who don't know what yield
9 means, who go through red lights and I
10 don't see the police enforcing any of
11 these regulations. And I think that
12 that has to be a priority.

13 Crossing the street one day while
14 I was in Time Square, going to the
15 theater, I was hit by a bicyclist
16 coming around the corner despite the
17 fact that I was crossing at a light.
18 He didn't stop. Myself and my friend
19 were both knocked down. We got up, we
20 brushed ourselves off and we went to
21 the theater where we requested ice
22 packs for our various injuries.

23 But I really think that this is
24 going to be a financial burden on
25 Manhattan, on business owners and

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1 definitely for people who live in the
2 outer boroughs who don't have access to
3 public transportation or don't feel
4 safe on public transportation any
5 longer.

6 So I hope you will reconsider
7 this. Thank you very much for your
8 time.

9 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

10 Our next speaker is Marcia
11 Drezon-Tepler, followed by Jonathan
12 Oakley.

13 Marcia, you may unmute yourself
14 and begin your remarks.

15 MARCIA DREZON-TEPLER: Hello?

16 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

17 MARCIA DREZON-TEPLER: Okay. Do
18 I have the video too --

19 Hello? Can you see me also?

20 MS. FLAX: Yes. We can.

21 MARCIA DREZON-TEPLER: Okay.

22 Very good.

23 I live on the Upper West Side of
24 Manhattan, and I want to say that the
25 MTA and the City Council are making the

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1 city unlivable for the middle class.
2 The MTA is actually causing the
3 congestion that is the problem, with
4 its bike lanes, bike racks, bus lanes
5 and pedestrian walkways in the streets.
6 Highways and streets have been reduced
7 to one lane.

8 In Downtown Manhattan on lower
9 Broadway, there is one lane for traffic
10 because there is a bike lane and a bike
11 stand and if passengers need to be --
12 to get off, to be dropped off for a
13 doctor's appointment, they have to get
14 out into traffic, which is extremely
15 unsafe, needless to say.

16 The roads are for vehicles and
17 sidewalks are for pedestrians. And I
18 also really resent that city council
19 members who have continued to work from
20 home are passing regulations and
21 telling me to take the unsafe subways.
22 You know, my husband tried -- drove me
23 to work a few times, but he had -- he
24 spent five hours looking for parking on
25 his way home. So we have to restore

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1 sanity to our streets and city. And
2 congestion pricing is not the way to do
3 this.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Jonathan
7 Oakley, followed by our 250th speaker,
8 Bernardo Celerino.

9 Jonathan, you may unmute yourself
10 and begin your remarks.

11 BERNARDO CELERINO: Hello?

12 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

13 BERNARDO CELERINO: Great. I
14 just wanted to say that I hope that the
15 MTA gets everything they want. They
16 usually do. There's a lot of taxes on
17 things already. The TLC got a fee for
18 getting into a cab, got fees for
19 getting into Ubers, there's fees on my
20 cell phone, fees on Con Edison, fees
21 for just about everyone. On my
22 registration, my inspection.

23 So this should be no different.
24 I'd like to know where all the money is
25 going with all the people that you have

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1 riding your trains, entering the
2 Midtown Tunnel and the Battery Tunnel,
3 all of these -- the Verazano, it's just
4 unfathomable what you do with all this
5 money.

6 I'm just -- whether I'm an
7 opponent of congestion pricing, I'd
8 like to say I'm in the middle of the
9 road. I'd like to first know, I would
10 like to have you audited, first of all.
11 I would love very much for an
12 independent auditor, hopefully the
13 federal government. Because I can
14 remember there was a time there was an
15 investigation into the MTA's finances
16 and it revealed that you had two sets
17 of books; one that said that you
18 were -- had a deficit and one that said
19 you had a surplus. I haven't forgotten
20 that.

21 And I would just very much like
22 to see a federal investigation by the
23 Department of Justice or the FBI as to
24 where these finances are going, and
25 whether you are the agency fit to run

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1 congestion pricing. I would like to
2 give it over to the Port Authority. I
3 don't think there's -- I've seen as
4 much scandal of abuses of overtime.
5 It's just ridiculous. And I hope that
6 whoever is listening right now, if you
7 are a member of the Department of
8 Justice or the FBI, I would hope that
9 one day, before this actually goes into
10 effect, that you would take the time to
11 do an investigation into the MTA's
12 finances.

13 And that's all I have to say.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 Our next speaker is Bernardo
16 Celerino, followed by Liam Jeffries.

17 Our next speaker is Liam
18 Jeffries, followed by Norman
19 Buenaventura.

20 Our next speaker is Norman
21 Buenaventura, followed by Osama Sehgol.

22 Our next speaker is Osama Sehgol,
23 followed by Wolf Hertzberg.

24 OSAMA SEHGOL: The Zoom screen
25 changed.

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1 Hello. Hi, how are you? So I
2 live in Brooklyn, New York and with my
3 wife and a four-year-old, a daughter.

4 So I was quite surprised that
5 this -- the congestion charge came this
6 far. I honestly thought it would kind
7 of be stopped earlier. I am obviously
8 not in support of the congestion charge
9 with good reason. I find that it is --
10 I'm very sympathetic to climate change
11 and the causes of climate justice. But
12 I felt that the environmental impact
13 report didn't address -- didn't look at
14 New York City holistically. It
15 definitely ignored the middle class.
16 It definitely ignored the people who
17 are aspiring to, you know, climb up the
18 ladder, so to speak by impacting
19 disproportionately communities that are
20 on the lower income or lower middle
21 class. Whether in the city or outside
22 from, you know, people on the west of
23 Hudson, et cetera.

24 So my take is that the people who
25 are passionately in support of -- and

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1 I've been here since 10:00 o'clock in
2 the morning, just demographically
3 speaking, people do want to create this
4 barrier around Manhattan, so that a lot
5 of people who are not well off, they
6 drive their cars, they can afford to
7 pay for cars, but don't take the subway
8 because they have kids or they have
9 health issues, you know, they -- they
10 do come to Manhattan and rely on the
11 services. They don't take their car
12 every day to commute to Manhattan. But
13 they do, you know, use --

14 So what I'm trying to say is that
15 it seems like it's very exclusionary
16 and there's not a whole lot of
17 consideration that has gone into this.
18 I've also looked up into the Singapore
19 and London model or Stockholm model.
20 And it seems that people aren't really
21 taking this into consideration, that in
22 Stockholm, the prime minister or, you
23 know, half their government also
24 rollerblade or bicycles to work. So
25 they apply the standard equally.

1 In Singapore, it's heavily
2 managed. Like there are racial quotas
3 and 80 percent of the housing there
4 that's provided by the government. So
5 over here in New York, it's very
6 different. You know, everybody has to
7 make their own way. But in putting
8 this invisible barrier, monetary
9 barrier around Manhattan, that just
10 sounds very unreasonable.

11 So, you know, we are -- obviously
12 we heard from people who are priced out
13 from their health access and whoever
14 said oh hey, you can -- Brooklyn has
15 great hospitals, I'd like you to try
16 the difference between Manhattan and
17 Brooklyn hospitals. I've tried them
18 both. They're very different.

19 So thanks.

20 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is Wolf
22 Hertzberg, followed by our 255th
23 speaker, David Gil de Rubio.

24 Our next speaker is David Gil de
25 Rubio, followed by Sudeep Uprety.

1 David Gil de Rubio?

2 Our next speaker is Sudeep
3 Uprety, followed by Golam Istiaque.

4 We will go back to David Gil de
5 Rubio, who is now connected. After
6 speaker David Gil de Rubio will be
7 Sudeep Uprety.

8 DAVID GIL DE RUBIO: Can you hear
9 me?

10 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

11 DAVID GIL DE RUBIO: Yeah, my
12 video should be working, but -- okay.
13 We'll start.

14 So I find it rather ironic that
15 I'm being referred to as an entitled
16 driver, when I see that the majority of
17 the people who are for congestion
18 pricing are entitled White people who
19 are probably upper income and are more
20 prone to using Lyft, Uber and any of
21 these services that -- that are really
22 the cause of most of the congestion.
23 If you look back at your statistics,
24 from 2010 and 2011, when Uber was
25 launched in San Francisco.

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1 If anything, this is a regressive
2 tax, and it's a war on the middle
3 class. Many of the people who have
4 said they're against congestion pricing
5 live in the outer boroughs. Obviously,
6 it's a Manhattan centric program
7 because it takes place in Manhattan.
8 But any of the fixes are going to go
9 towards Manhattan. Especially people
10 who live in two-fare zones. I live in
11 both the business district that's going
12 to be affected and also in Queens. So
13 I see both sides of this.

14 I would say that if you are
15 insistent in going forward with this
16 plan, one compromise might be to sync
17 up when the tolling is in place to be
18 concurrent with metered parking. So
19 Monday to Saturday, from 9:00 a.m. to
20 either 7:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. Because
21 I also drive in the wee hours of the
22 morning getting back to Queens.
23 There's no congestion. And if
24 anything, you want to shift traffic,
25 you can have trucking go overnight and

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1 maybe not incur a cost and that way the
2 economy is not taking as much of a hit.

3 So yeah, that's pretty much what
4 I have to say. Oh -- one more thing,
5 someone mentioned something about there
6 being plenty of good doctors in Queens
7 and Brooklyn, and I find that absurd
8 because if you have some kind of
9 specialized health concerns like the
10 lady from New Jersey who was talking
11 about having cancer and having to see
12 specialists in Manhattan, I think
13 that's a pretty rude and insensitive
14 way to view things and it's really
15 unfathomable to me.

16 Further, I just want to close by
17 saying that there are a couple of
18 people who are talking about, oh I'm
19 having to deal with living by the
20 Prospect Parkway and all the congestion
21 and the exhaust and stuff like that,
22 well, then don't live by there.

23 And lastly, if we are talking
24 about environmental impact, apparently
25 it's only important if it affects

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1 people in Manhattan because people
2 living by the Cross Bronx Expressway
3 are going to have to deal with that,
4 with the increased truck traffic.

5 Thank you for your time. Thank
6 you for the study and the time to weigh
7 in. Have a great day.

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Sudeep
10 Uprety, followed by Golam Istiaque.

11 SUDEEP UPRETY: Hello?

12 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

13 SUDEEP UPRETY: Hi. Good
14 afternoon. I'm here to speak against
15 the congestion pricing. First and
16 first, whoever said NYC subways are
17 safe are really out of touch with
18 reality. According to latest NYPD
19 statistics, robbery has soared by
20 72 percent and felony assaults are up
21 by 20 percent. Grand larceny by
22 ten percent. Please tell me how subway
23 systems are safe. This statistic alone
24 is from January 1st to April 10 of
25 2022.

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1 Starting in 2019, we TLC drivers
2 have paid more than three billion
3 dollars in congestion surcharge. Where
4 did that money go. Who will audit MTA
5 for the expenses? How will we make
6 sure that MTA's accountable in this
7 money? We the TLC drivers cannot
8 afford to pay any more surge pricing.
9 Lots of people here complain about car
10 and said people driving are privileged
11 and reckless. Let me make it clear,
12 not all people driving cars are
13 privileged. For some of them, it's a
14 necessity to make their ends meet and
15 make a living.

16 I -- I personally have seen lots
17 of bicyclists driving recklessly.
18 Running a red light, driving on a
19 one-way street, and not following any
20 traffic rules. Like doesn't traffic
21 rules apply to bicyclists or the
22 traffic rules only apply to car owners?

23 And I do agree that there are way
24 too much trucks and cars double-parked
25 in CBD streets. That double-parking

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1 needs to be addressed. That even if we
2 address the double parking, the
3 congestion will be slightly better.

4 And one more question, like, lots
5 of Amazon trucks, they are operating in
6 CBD district without any warehouses.
7 They are double-parked, they are
8 blocking the parking and they deliver
9 the stuff in the bikes to be delivered.
10 Like why are they not being regulated?
11 Is MTA too scared to take on big
12 company like Amazon?

13 We are the TLC drivers and middle
14 class people cannot afford to pay
15 anymore extra tolls. I think during
16 the pandemic, nine of the TLC drivers
17 killed themselves and how many more
18 suicide do you want on hand? Like this
19 CBD toll will definitely bring
20 financial hardships on all the TLC
21 drivers.

22 And currently, lots of mom and
23 pop store have been opening their door.
24 So they are --

25 Okay. That's it because my time

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1 is done. It's too -- it's a very less
2 time to say lots of things.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

5 Our next speaker is Golam
6 Istiaque, followed by Richard Chalfin.

7 Our next speaker is Richard
8 Chalfin, followed by Howard Shafer.

9 Our next speaker is Howard
10 Shafer, followed by Rosalie Shields.

11 Our next speaker is Rosalie
12 Shields, followed by our 261st speaker,
13 Jose Altamirano.

14 Our next speaker is Jose
15 Altamirano, followed by Eric Goldstein.

16 Jose Altamirano?

17 JOSE ALTAMIRANO: Hello. Can you
18 hear me?

19 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can. You may
20 begin your remarks.

21 JOSE ALTAMIRANO: My name is Jose
22 Altamirano. I am the president of
23 Livery Base Owners. We represent
24 over -- (audio interruption) -- New
25 York City, which serve approximately

1 150,000 New Yorkers each day.

2 Our bases are small mom and pop
3 businesses which are owned and operated
4 by immigrants and serve a largely
5 immigrant and first generation American
6 population of this city. Known as the
7 community car service, our livery bases
8 and drivers have stepped in to fill in
9 public transportation deserts across
10 the five boroughs. The communities we
11 serve trust us and provide safe and
12 reliable transportation. Many of our
13 trips are local in nature. Our
14 communities rely on us to travel in and
15 out of Manhattan Central Business
16 District for a variety of reasons.

17 (Technical interruption.)

18 MS. FLAX: Jose, we lost you. We
19 paused the timer. Are you able to --

20 JOSE ALTAMIRANO: Okay. I'm
21 here. Sorry about that. Okay. I'll
22 continue.

23 This testimony is submitted to
24 stress the need to mitigate the harmful
25 affects that congestion pricing will

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1 have on livery bases, drivers and
2 passengers. Specifically, we are
3 requesting an exemption from congestion
4 pricing. The exemption will provide
5 drivers from what the Environmental
6 Assessment describes disproportionately
7 high and adverse harmful effects that
8 congestion pricing will have.

9 The livery sector of this city
10 for the for-hire vehicle industry, also
11 known as community car service, has
12 faced serious dilemmas in the past
13 decades. While demand has remained
14 steady, the car service has lost both
15 their braces affiliated drivers to the
16 overregulation by the city, including
17 the 2018 cap on for-hire vehicles for
18 licenses.

19 In 2014, a segment of the FHV
20 industry operated almost 30,000
21 vehicles. Compare that to 2022, when
22 we are less than 9,000.

23 To be clear, there's lots of
24 working New Yorkers. The vehicles
25 don't drive themselves. Rather each

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1 vehicle is driven by one or more
2 drivers that are independent
3 contractors. In fact, the
4 Environmental Assessment has pointed
5 out that our drivers are qualified as
6 racial minorities, and that
7 approximately 91 percent of them are
8 immigrants. Without an FHV exemption,
9 this path to the American dream will
10 further be closed.

11 The passengers that we serve are
12 not wealthy people. They are price
13 sensitive and many pay their fares in
14 cash. Adding another five, ten or more
15 than 20 surcharge on top of the regular
16 fare will cost -- (audio
17 interruption) -- sticker shock and not
18 allow these passengers to attend the
19 central district.

20 It's also important to note that
21 the livery bases have been paying
22 congestion fee per trip to MTA since
23 phase one was in February 29, 2019. We
24 also reject the proposal by the MTA to
25 make our drivers MTA employees, bus

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1 drivers, and we further urge the --

2 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
3 remarks.

4 JOSE ALTAMIRANO: -- for-hire
5 vehicle, the exemption for the
6 congestion pricing.

7 Our goal --

8 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Eric
10 Goldstein, followed by Suzanne Musho.

11 Eric, you may begin your remarks.

12 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you to the
13 panel for your active listening
14 throughout these marathon hearings.
15 I'm Eric Goldstein from the Natural
16 Resources Defense Counsel. And NRDC
17 strongly supports the proposed
18 congestion pricing strategy that's the
19 subject of these hearings.

20 In the 1970s, our organization
21 represented citizen groups seeking to
22 implement New York City's
23 transportation control plan which would
24 have tolled the East and Harlem River
25 bridges and directed the proceeds to

1 support public transportation. After
2 five decades of planning, discussion
3 and debate, and in an era of increasing
4 climate disruption, the time for
5 congestion pricing has arrived.

6 The proposed congestion pricing
7 program, regardless of the scenarios
8 selected, will significantly benefit
9 the region's subway, bus and commuter
10 rail system by allowing the MTA to
11 secure 15 billion dollars in funds for
12 transit capital improvements. This
13 system's is the region's life blood and
14 indispensable to mobility and the
15 economy of the entire tristate area for
16 all residents, including motor vehicle
17 owners. Securing these funds to help
18 keep the transit's network in the state
19 of good repairs should be one of the
20 government's highest public policy
21 priorities and congestion pricing is
22 the single best local mechanism to
23 obtain the funds needed to ensure the
24 long-term health of our subway bus and
25 rail network.

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1 The proposed congestion pricing
2 program will also be broadly beneficial
3 to the region's populace, including
4 low-income residents. More than four
5 out of five commuters to the Manhattan
6 CBD take public transit and only about
7 11 percent drive to work. These
8 percentages are essentially the same
9 for people of color and low income
10 communities. Over 600,000 POC
11 commuters travel to the Manhattan CBD
12 via transit, and they will benefit
13 significantly from the benefits that
14 the congestion pricing monies bring in.

15 In short, congestion pricing is
16 not a tax, and it is not regressive.
17 The proposed congestion pricing program
18 will also reduce congestion and the
19 enormous cost of congestion imposed on
20 the region's economy.

21 Singapore, London, Stockholm and
22 Milan are among the many cities that
23 have implemented congestion pricing
24 programs successfully. And in 2018,
25 report by the Partnership for New York

1 City documented that the pollution
2 generating, time wasting, temper
3 raising congestion that Manhattan's CBD
4 streets face every day cost our economy
5 as much as 20 billion dollars a year in
6 lost productivity, fuel and operating
7 costs.

8 Finally, however, the congestion
9 pricing strategy that's ultimately
10 selected must address environmental
11 justice inequities and protect
12 neighborhoods that have for decades
13 suffered disproportionately from the
14 adverse impacts of pollution. Among
15 these is the South Bronx with 700
16 additional diesel fuel trucks are
17 likely to shift to the Cross Bronx
18 Expressway, even under -- at least
19 under one of the proposed scenarios.

20 We join with the New York City
21 Environmental Justice Alliance, in
22 calling upon Governor Kathy Hochul and
23 the MTA to not only implement
24 additional mitigation measures, but to
25 commit to a broader plan to reduce

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1 emissions and enhance air quality
2 throughout the South Bronx. We set
3 forth these recommendations in a
4 written statement, and I thank you for
5 your attention.

6 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

7 Our next speaker is Suzanne
8 Musho, followed by Aaron Bloom.

9 Our next speaker is Aaron Bloom,
10 followed by our 265th speaker on the
11 list, Nicole Albergo.

12 AARON BLOOM: Hello. My name is
13 Aaron Bloom. I live in Brooklyn. I'm
14 a fourth generation New Yorker. You
15 guys are champs for listening to all of
16 us. I'm squeaking in just before
17 5:00 o'clock after being here since
18 10:00.

19 I'm here to speak on behalf of
20 motorcyclists everywhere. Nearly every
21 other city in the world that employs
22 congestion pricing gives complete
23 exemptions for motor cycles. Why?
24 Motor cycles help to solve the problems
25 of congestion, pedestrian safety and

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1 pollution. Motorcyclists, like board
2 members, government workers and
3 reporters, are often unfairly
4 stigmatized. Unlike how Hollywood
5 would portray us, the vast majority of
6 us are responsible, upstanding citizens
7 and drivers. We are the only
8 two-wheeled vehicles on the road who
9 are insured, registered, licensed and
10 trained by law.

11 If congestion is the problem,
12 then motorcycles are part of the
13 solution. With congestion, you are
14 talking about both parking vehicles in
15 motion. There's a famous picture out
16 there of two identical parking spaces.
17 One holds a large SUV, the other has
18 ten parked motorcycles. In motion,
19 motorcycles are far more fluid than
20 cars and trucks. Think of a fish or a
21 bird moving around obstacles. Or use
22 another metaphor, think of our city
23 streets as a glass jar. Cars and
24 trucks are large stones you are putting
25 in, whereas motorcycles are mere grains

1 of sand.

2 If pedestrian safety is the
3 problem, motorcycles are part of the
4 solution. There's a 2019 Department of
5 Transportation report on accident
6 deaths in the entire State of New York.
7 That year, there was exactly one
8 pedestrian death resulting from a
9 motorcycle accident in the entire
10 state. Motorcyclists may have increase
11 risk to themselves, but statistically,
12 contrary to stereotypes, with
13 motorcycles, we basically have achieved
14 Vision Zero.

15 If pollution and environmental
16 issues are the problem, motorcycles are
17 part of the solution. Motorcycles have
18 extremely low or no emissions. A
19 recent scientific study shows that
20 motorcycles utilize the same amount of
21 energy per passenger as public buses in
22 transporting people.

23 It is for all these reasons and
24 many more that London, Singapore and
25 nearly every other city in the world

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1 that utilizes congestion pricing gives
2 full exemptions to motorcycles.

3 Please be rational and follow the
4 successful examples of every other
5 congestion pricing city in the world.
6 Thank you so much to all of you,
7 Richard, William, Rick, Lou, Allison,
8 and Nicoli. Thank you all so much for
9 listening.

10 MS. FLAX: Please conclude
11 your --

12 AARON BLOOM: You are almost
13 through. Thank you.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 Our next speaker is Nicole
16 Albergo, followed by Joe Troiano.

17 NICOLE ALBERGO: Yes, hi. Good
18 afternoon, MTA board. Can you hear me?

19 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

20 NICOLE ALBERGO: I do not want to
21 be on speaker -- on video. I'm just
22 going to speak.

23 So good afternoon, MTA panelists.
24 I live in New Jersey. I commute every
25 day into New York City. I provide

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1 valuable services to New York City
2 public school students. I'm a teacher.
3 I'm on a fixed income. I'm on a
4 salary. I'm a paraprofessional.

5 I moved out of New York City
6 about two years ago post pandemic when
7 it was first starting, and I couldn't
8 afford to live there because it's
9 ridiculously out of control with the
10 amount of money that you are paying in
11 rent, paying to the MTA with your
12 so-called fare increases on a regular
13 basis. The MTA needs to find other
14 ways to make sources of money rather
15 than taking it from me, from a New
16 Jersey resident. I don't find that
17 very fair.

18 Also, to my parents who have to
19 come pick me up on a regular basis to
20 come see my grandmother who is
21 literally dying. She is 97 years old
22 and as a result of you putting
23 congestion pricing into effect, that
24 will greatly affect me. Because I
25 won't be able to see my grandmother

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1 because my parents will not be able to
2 come get me. Because, again, they're
3 retired, they're on a fixed income.
4 And they are not going to be able to
5 afford the congestion pricing to come
6 pick me up so that I can spend valuable
7 time with my grandmother. And not to
8 mention that more than half of my
9 family lives in New York City still.

10 And I made the escape to get out
11 to have a better life in New Jersey,
12 not to keep pouring money into the New
13 York City subway system and into the
14 MTA. That is not fair to me, not fair
15 to New Jersey residents and that is not
16 fair to residents who commute from
17 Upstate New York.

18 I'm completely against congestion
19 pricing. That's Manhattan's problem.
20 Find another way to reduce emissions.
21 Do not tax people who come in from the
22 outer boroughs and people who come in
23 from out of state, New Jersey, Upstate
24 New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.
25 That's your problem that you can't

1 afford to find money, to find your
2 so-called MTA problem.

3 Why don't you go ask the federal
4 government for money. That's all I
5 have to say. What I am going to tell
6 you, get your act together and stop
7 relying on people like me who provide a
8 valuable service to our students of the
9 New York City public school system.
10 And --

11 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Joe Troiano,
13 followed by Christopher Thomas.

14 Our next speaker is Christopher
15 Thomas, followed by Donald Alberti.

16 Christopher, you may unmute
17 yourself. We can hear you.

18 CHRISTOPHER THOMAS: Hi, I'm
19 Christopher.

20 So I'm definitely against
21 congestion pricing. I actually live in
22 the Bronx, and I kind of find it
23 disturbing that you guys are going to
24 be charging people to come below 60th
25 Street and to hell with the people who

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1 live in the Bronx who have to breathe
2 in the air. This is like another
3 redlining, basically.

4 Yes, the MTA has to have the best
5 job in the world. Because I have a few
6 friends who work for the MTA. And from
7 what they're telling me, they have it
8 very well. They get paid for
9 eight hours and only work four hours a
10 day. And the rest of the time that
11 they're working, they go underneath the
12 ground and they sleep, then they clock
13 out and then they go home. So if
14 there's anybody want to know where the
15 money goes, that's where it goes.
16 Because the managers of the MTA that
17 watches people and they're supposed to
18 be employing and stuff like that, they
19 don't really care. I've never seen a
20 company before have employees that work
21 for -- an eight-hour shift they're
22 scheduled for and they only work for
23 four of those hours. And then the rest
24 of the time they're just sleeping or
25 just hanging out in the break room and

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1 then they clock out and go home.

2 I think it's utterly ridiculous.

3 You guys shouldn't be charging us to

4 come downtown. We get punished for

5 having a car to come to Manhattan,

6 that's ridiculous. We should be able

7 to drive wherever we want to. We live

8 in New York. And since when does the

9 MTA own the city street? I own a condo

10 in the Bronx. Since when does the MTA

11 own the city streets? That's what I

12 want to know. Because the streets are

13 messed up, but I don't see the MTA

14 going and fixing them. So who is

15 paying for the streets that we are

16 driving on to come down here?

17 The other thing is that a lot of

18 the people who were speaking, they're

19 working from home. I have to come to

20 work every day. I take the train to

21 and from the Bronx. But then, when I

22 want to come downtown to go out, I

23 drive my car down to Manhattan and I

24 park. And I -- this is around

25 7:00 o'clock p.m. There's no traffic.

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1 Who are you guys taxing? Who are you
2 guys tolling? There's no traffic.
3 There hasn't been traffic here for
4 three years since COVID happened.
5 There's no traffic anywhere over here.

6 So this looks like -- I'm on
7 Fifth Avenue. This is Fifth Avenue.
8 No traffic. It looks like a cash grab.
9 And we are getting sick and tired of
10 it. We are very sick and tired of it.

11 So you guys really need to do
12 something other than look for money.
13 You guys need to help your employees
14 that are currently working for you guys
15 to become more productive in the time
16 that they're supposed to be working.

17 So that's all I have to say.
18 Thanks.

19 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

20 The next speaker is Donald
21 Alberti, followed by Irwin Miller.

22 The next speaker is Irwin Miller,
23 followed by our 270th speaker, Bonnie
24 Gallet.

25 Our next speaker is Bonnie

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1 Gallet, followed by Katherine
2 Plyshevsky.

3 BONNIE GALLET: Good morning --
4 good afternoon, everyone. I've been
5 watching this hearing since 10:00 a.m.,
6 and I feel as if I know every one of
7 you personally at this point.
8 Congratulations to those of you who
9 haven't even taken a bathroom break.

10 Seriously, I've lived in
11 Manhattan since 1978 and yes, I have a
12 car. The overwhelming majority of the
13 previous speakers have spoken
14 eloquently about the burden this toll
15 will place on the elderly, disabled and
16 others. I agree. I live just a few
17 blocks north of the perimeter of CBD.
18 I was a single mother, and I always
19 worked in the outer boroughs. I had to
20 get my children to school by 8:00 a.m.,
21 and then get to work by 9:00 a.m. But
22 if I didn't have a car, I would have
23 had to take a bus, to a subway, to a
24 ferry and then walk half a mile. I
25 never would have made it to work on

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1 time if I did not drive. I had a
2 government job and I could never have
3 afforded the proposed fares.

4 I applaud your goals to raise
5 revenue and improve our environment.
6 But this plan will have a negative
7 economic impact on residents and
8 commuters who work in the city. As
9 stated by several speakers, people
10 cannot take the large tools of their
11 trade into Manhattan on the subway.

12 This is a regressive tax and it
13 will affect the people who can least
14 afford it the most. A person who lives
15 on Fifth Avenue and has a building
16 named after him can afford this. But
17 ordinary New Yorkers who make this city
18 great cannot. We need to keep Midtown
19 financially accessible for people from
20 all five boroughs, the Greater New York
21 Metropolitan area and -- and many
22 people cannot take public
23 transportation for reasons including
24 geography and physical limitations.
25 Public transportation is not accessible

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1 for many. And businesses and cultural
2 institutions will suffer by this plan.

3 Please note, I am of a certain
4 age and I cannot ride a bicycle or a
5 motorcycle. I would also like to note
6 that vehicular traffic in Midtown
7 changes every weekday evening and all
8 day on Saturday and Sunday. Simply
9 put, there's no congestion and a toll
10 during those hours will not cure an
11 environmental problem that does not
12 exist.

13 Do your research. London's
14 pricing system is only in effect from
15 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. According to
16 the London website, residents and motor
17 coaches are exempt. Their system is
18 far more equitable. The only time we
19 have congestion in Manhattan after
20 8:00 p.m. is when the tree is lit. And
21 I hope you all know what tree I'm
22 talking about.

23 I fear these hearings are PR and
24 the plan will be enacted despite
25 objections by the majority and you will

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1 forge ahead with your plans. Please
2 don't do that. Please listen to us.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

5 The next speaker is Katherine
6 Plyshevsky, followed by Paige Alenius.

7 KATHERINE PLYSHEVSKY: Hello?

8 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

9 KATHERINE PLYSHEVSKY: Okay.

10 Great.

11 Hi. I'm a mother of two living
12 in the CBD. My husband has a
13 disability that does not allow him to
14 take public transit. My elderly
15 parents live in an area of Connecticut
16 that is not accessible by public
17 transit. We only use our car to get
18 out of the CBD. Therefore, not
19 contributing to congestion in the CBD.
20 Yet, we will have to pay to leave and
21 come home.

22 With the current increase in rent
23 and inflation, it's already very
24 challenging to stay in New York City.
25 This would be yet another expense that

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1 we cannot afford. An honest look at
2 this plan shows that it will not do
3 much to decrease pollution in the
4 longterm. This is a regressive tax
5 that is providing funding to the poorly
6 managed MTA. If this were truly about
7 congestion, we can start by enforcing
8 the current laws like ticketing --
9 (audio interruption) --

10 Sorry.

11 And not providing corporations
12 with discounts on these fines. You can
13 use those violation revenues to fund
14 the MTA. For-hire vehicles create much
15 of the congestion. Decreasing their
16 numbers would decrease congestion. I
17 suggest an exemption or discount for
18 CBD residents, as they -- as they will
19 bear an unfair burden just by the
20 virtue of where they live.

21 I suggest a scheme that would
22 allow for a ten-minute grace period to
23 leave and return to your parking spot
24 in the congestion zone for residents.
25 If I leave my garage and am on the FDR

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1 within ten minutes, I shouldn't be
2 charged. If I get off the FDR and park
3 within ten minutes, I'm not
4 contributing to congestion, so I should
5 not have to pay. I also believe it is
6 essential to have the exemption for
7 people who are disabled and cannot
8 travel by public transit.

9 To summarize, it feels arbitrary
10 to be penalized for living below 60th
11 Street. It would be up to a tune of
12 \$5,000 for our family a year versus
13 someone who just happens to live above
14 60th Street. We did not -- when we
15 chose to live in this area, we did not
16 realize that there would a \$5,000 a
17 year tax in order to depart with our
18 family from the CBD without actually
19 causing congestion in the area.

20 Thank you for listening, and I
21 yield the rest of my time.

22 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Paige
24 Alenius, followed by Morgan Adzei.

25 PAIGE ALENIOUS: Hi. Am I on?

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1 MS. FLAX: Yes, you are.

2 PAIGE ALENIUS: Okay. Hi. My
3 name is Paige Allen. And I have lived
4 in Hell's Kitchen for 40 years. I use
5 all forms of transit. I walk, I use
6 the train, the subway, the buses. I
7 have a Citibank -- Citi Bike membership
8 and my own bike.

9 I also own a small car, which I
10 pay to have garaged. I work as an
11 actor in television and film. And
12 unfortunately, I am aging and there's a
13 lot less work for me than there used to
14 be. The reason that I am able to eke
15 out my meager living and just qualify
16 again for my health insurance is
17 because I have my car. Production will
18 hire me because they want the car on
19 camera or I am able to self-report to a
20 location that's inaccessible by mass
21 transit.

22 Now, would I like less congestion
23 in Hell's Kitchen? Of course I would.
24 But when I spoke at -- I think it was
25 the first Zoom meeting on congestion

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1 pricing last year, I was upset at the
2 thought of being exorbitantly charged
3 for a problem I wasn't really creating
4 because my car is being paid for in a
5 garage. But to hear now that there is
6 an aim to charge vehicles per day that
7 they're in the zone whether or not
8 they're being driven is astoundingly
9 wrong. It is astoundingly unequitable,
10 astoundingly unfair.

11 And for many of us who live here
12 in the zone, this is going to make it
13 extremely -- for lower income people,
14 extremely difficult for us to make ends
15 meet. And the repercussions of that
16 might very well be a huge new burden on
17 city government and state federal
18 programs that we may need to reach out
19 to and utilize to keep a roof over our
20 heads.

21 I mean, has anybody considered
22 this? If there is not a complete
23 exemption for lower income people, I
24 don't mean a tax credit, I mean an
25 exemption. And one of my -- (audio

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1 interruption) -- this, my neighbors and
2 I. And they pointed out to me the
3 other day that if we are being gouged
4 with a charge every single day, we may
5 as well drive every single day to do
6 errands or for any reason. We can't
7 afford to give the MTA another subway
8 fee or -- or Citi Bike charge when we
9 are already paying for our vehicles
10 whether we drive or not. So you get
11 more congestion.

12 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
13 remarks.

14 PAIGE ALENIUS: More congestion.
15 Not less.

16 Thank you.

17 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

18 Our next speaker is Morgan Adzei,
19 followed by Donald Alberti.

20 Morgan, you may unmute yourself
21 and begin your remarks.

22 MORGAN ADZEI: Hi, guys. So I've
23 had the luxury of hearing a lot of
24 people speak eloquently. My name is
25 Morgan, I'm a son of Gotham, born in

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1 Manhattan. I think that the congestion
2 pricing overall is very inconsiderate.
3 I think it's overall a cash grab, like
4 many people have said.

5 During the pandemic, I had
6 traveled to the city just to watch the
7 change. Because I was born here for 45
8 years. And the city was empty.

9 Particularly CBD district, which was --
10 and I do commercial leasing -- which
11 was totally vacant of life because all
12 of the properties there have been
13 converted to strictly commercial.
14 That's another conversation.

15 Caregivers, bus drivers,
16 residents who pay rent and live on the
17 island of Manhattan should not be
18 broken up into below 60th or above
19 60th. It should be one island and not
20 a dime should come from anyone that
21 lives on the island at the bare
22 minimum.

23 Regarding some of the statements
24 that other people made regarding the
25 MTA and where they're pulling this fund

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1 from, I think quite frankly that they
2 should be audited. Some of the
3 salaries within the MTA are exorbitant.
4 We really appreciate those people who
5 stayed down there under those tunnels.
6 Who wants to do that on a daily basis?
7 God bless them. But at the same time,
8 we have to take account that this
9 system is not going to be funded by
10 people who are out and aboveground. It
11 is not fair, it is not right. You have
12 many people here who have gotten cars
13 because they do not believe in the
14 system that's belowground because it's
15 quite dangerous.

16 I think there have been some
17 entitled comments by people who said I
18 can get on my bike, I can get on this.
19 But you go ahead and do that. The
20 80-year-old lady who has to go to
21 dialysis, she's not doing this. I was
22 a caregiver for my mom. I really
23 resonated with that gentleman very
24 early on this morning who also
25 expressed this.

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1 I think there is a way for you
2 guys to grab some cash. In Zurich,
3 they have a system where residential
4 parking permits are for certain cars.
5 You have many people parking -- sorry.
6 You have many people parking cars, to
7 give you an example, commercial trucks
8 like that, things that shouldn't be on
9 the sidewalk where people can have good
10 parking spaces. Some of these people
11 also come from out of state, and they
12 leave their cars so they can maneuver
13 in the city.

14 If you guys gave some residential
15 parking and it's quite scary to think
16 that crossing The High Line, there's a
17 camera between 12th and 11th Avenue
18 that's going to be flagging my car. I
19 mean, that's not a way to live. the
20 city has changed too much. And the son
21 of Gotham says, guys, figure out a
22 better way.

23 My 30 seconds, I shall yield to
24 somebody else because I was waiting all
25 day and I like the other lady said,

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1 bathroom breaks are important.

2 Chow, everybody.

3 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

4 The next speaker is Donald
5 Alberti, followed by Brian Hess.

6 Donald, you may unmute yourself
7 and begin your remarks.

8 DONAL ALBERTI: Did I just hear
9 that there's a proposal to tax vehicles
10 that are in garages if they're unused
11 on a daily basis?

12 Well, any way, I have lived below
13 Houston Street since 1977. In which
14 time I moved to New York City in search
15 of a community of light-minded artists
16 and intellectuals. I'm a member of the
17 9/11 World Trade Center Survivors
18 Health Program, and so far a cancer
19 survivor. I'm 71, retired and living
20 on a fixed income of Social Security
21 and a small pension.

22 In 2014, aware that the
23 rent-stabilized loft rental where I
24 maintained my painting studio at home
25 for 35 years and raised a son was

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1 unsustainable due to inevitable luxury
2 decontrol. I looked for an alternative
3 retirement solution, which resulted in
4 moving to a much smaller apartment in
5 the Hillman co-ops on Grand Street.
6 It's two blocks by foot from the FDR,
7 or a half mile or two-minute drive to
8 the nearest FDR entrance at Montgomery
9 Street.

10 After a two-year wait list, a
11 parking spot opened for me in the
12 Hillman garage. When I gave up my
13 studio on Crosby Street, I moved to a
14 location, a studio location outside of
15 Manhattan that I could afford. I'm a
16 CBD resident that was -- that uses a
17 vehicle to drive to my work studio and
18 return to New York City. There's no
19 public transportation available to
20 reach my workplace. So now I have a
21 reverse commute and operate my vehicle
22 in an un-congested are of the zone for
23 less than ten minutes during a round
24 trip over a course from the FDR Grand
25 Street exit or the Montgomery Street

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1 entrance to my co-op garage. Will I be
2 charged twice for operating my vehicle
3 exiting the zone and on my return home?
4 Forty-six dollars to leave and return
5 home?

6 Some might say it's entitled or a
7 luxury to drive and have a studio out
8 of town. But the luxury for me was to
9 have a live/work studio in New York
10 City which I could afford at the time,
11 and required no driving. I'm not a fan
12 of auto culture or driving. I had to
13 drive in New York City as a salesman.
14 Driving is a liability. I'm a
15 proponent of public transportation and
16 the goals for reducing New York City
17 traffic to mitigate harmful effects of
18 pollution and carbon emissions.

19 If there's to be congestion
20 pricing, I'm appealing for a
21 residential exemption or consideration
22 similar to the residential parking tax
23 exemption. How many vehicles are
24 registered to addresses in the zone?
25 What's the data show? Or consider a

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1 technological solution in which the
2 EZ-Passes configure the time, motion
3 and distance and peak, off-peak hours
4 and charge accordingly. As a matter of
5 fairness and equity, five minutes on
6 the periphery should not be equivalent
7 of four to 12 hours in congested areas.

8 I also have concerns about the
9 constitutionality in the use of
10 tracking data, which could be used in
11 unknown future ways, but that's a
12 subject for a separate forum.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

15 MR. OLIVA: Allison De Cerreno
16 has informed me that she would like to
17 correct some statements that several
18 speakers have made. So I will let
19 Allison De Cerreno state that now.

20 DR. DE CERRENO: Thank you. And
21 thank you again, everyone, as we are
22 listening to the comments. We really
23 appreciate your staying here all day
24 with us.

25 I would like to just take a

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1 moment to correct some information
2 that's been said a few times. And you
3 can see this in the EA. We will not be
4 charging for the vehicles that remain
5 parked entirely during a day within a
6 garage or even on a street. They will
7 only be charged, as we described, for
8 entering or remaining when they're
9 moving. So those of you who have
10 expressed some concerns that you will
11 be charged a toll while your vehicle is
12 in a garage and has not been used, you
13 will not be getting a charge for that.

14 Thank you.

15 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
16 Brian Hess, followed by Alex Wintz.

17 Our next speaker and 275th on the
18 list is Alec -- excuse me -- Alex
19 Wintz.

20 ALEX WINTZ: Yes. Hi. Can you
21 hear me?

22 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

23 ALEX WINTZ: Thank you.

24 I'm sorry, I'm not on video
25 anymore. But I'm actually driving

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1 right now in the CBD. I just pulled
2 over, actually. And I'm driving right
3 now. I do not want to drive right now,
4 but I'm driving right now to go to
5 work.

6 Now, what is it that I do for
7 work? I'm a professional musician.
8 I'm a jazz musician. I play guitar and
9 I've played at all of the major musical
10 venues that New York has to offer.
11 Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, et
12 cetera. However, all of who are
13 musicians don't just play at places
14 like that all the time. We play at a
15 lot of bars and clubs and restaurants
16 in the CBD. And a lot of us like
17 myself have to bring heavy, expensive
18 equipment around after-hours,
19 especially during rush hour on a train.

20 So right now, in my car, I have a
21 guitar, expensive guitar. I have an
22 expensive guitar amp, and I have an amp
23 cart. And I also have a case with
24 guitar pedals in it. So that's about,
25 you know, 40, 50 pounds of gear that I

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1 will be logging back and forth. I have
2 one gig from 6:00 to 9:00, and then I
3 have another from 10:00 to 1:00.

4 So, you know, I just want that
5 the panel to consider the fact that a
6 lot of what makes the CBD and New York
7 City so great, the music industry is
8 going to be suffering from this.

9 Because base players, drummers,
10 keyboard player, DJs, we don't -- we
11 can't take our equipment on a train.
12 We -- we have to use a car. I do not
13 want to have to take a car.

14 And also the part that was kind
15 of disturbing to me to find out about
16 today is that -- so when I get out of
17 my work today around 2:00 a.m., when
18 there's no cars out, I will still be
19 charged again when nobody is on the
20 road. That just seems pretty unfair to
21 those of us who work in entertainment,
22 night life and -- and something -- a
23 lot of the things that make New York
24 City so great, right.

25 So I ask the panel, next time you

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1 go to see a musical event and you see a
2 band up there with big instruments and
3 you say how did they get there? Well,
4 most of the time we get there by
5 driving. So, you know -- and the last
6 thing I'll say too is that I made an
7 investment during COVID to stay in New
8 York City when a lot of my musical
9 brothers left because it got too
10 expensive. And so I live further out
11 in the Bronx because it's more
12 expensive to live here. And the
13 idea -- I understand that there are
14 some households that earn 60,000 and
15 individuals earn 60,000. But I suggest
16 you do some research as to how much it
17 cost to live in New York City at the
18 moment when the credit exemptions
19 starts at 60,000 a year.

20 Thank you. Consider the arts and
21 entertainment. Have a good day.

22 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is JoAnn
24 Roberts, followed by Cindy Solorzano.

25 Our next speaker is Cindy

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1 Solorzano, followed by Joseph Barmore.

2 Cindy, you may begin your
3 remarks. Cindy, you are unmuted. But
4 we can't hear you. You may begin your
5 remarks.

6 Unfortunately, because we can't
7 hear your remarks, we'll have to come
8 back to you. We can see you. Can you
9 try unmuting again?

10 CINDY SOLORZANO: Hello.

11 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

12 CINDY SOLORZANO: Okay. Hi.
13 Good afternoon. My name is Cindy
14 Solorzano. I'm a resident in Queens.
15 I fully support congestion pricing. I
16 also support exemptions for yellow and
17 green taxis. I support exemptions for
18 motorcycles that are electric and to
19 disabled plates. And possibly a tax
20 credit for people in the arts.

21 I own a car, but I don't drive it
22 all the time because I live near a
23 train station. That said, the train
24 stops running in the evenings, right.
25 Like weekends or late at night.

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1 Everything gets delayed. And I really
2 am excited for the subway system and
3 the buses to get better. And I
4 really -- I trust you guys that you are
5 going to do a great job to benefit
6 people in the boroughs, in New Jersey,
7 and Long Island.

8 Anyone that takes public
9 transportation should be made to see
10 the difference that they're going to
11 experience. I feel like the phrase
12 your taxes at work is just kind of a
13 joke to people when they think that
14 nothing is being done with the money
15 they're paying, that we are paying, to
16 be administered and I think that you
17 should focus on a campaign that shows
18 people that the alternative to not do
19 anything and to not contribute to
20 saving the planet is not good. It's
21 already not good.

22 We -- we are -- we're not being
23 seen -- we are not being made to see
24 what the difference is going to be.
25 And the benefits that everyone,

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1 everyone that has spoken in these
2 meetings that has a condition, that
3 doesn't feel safe in the subway right
4 now, that they feel like -- they --

5 I have heard this, we have to
6 pay. Why do I have to pay? Why should
7 I pay? Why should I -- I -- I. New
8 York takes pride in being a community.
9 We have gone through a lot of things.
10 I was displaced during Hurricane Sandy,
11 and I was helped by my friend, by my
12 neighbors. I was here for 9/11 and I
13 saw solidarity. And I know that if New
14 Yorkers can be made to see the
15 difference in how much they're going to
16 help every community, what affects
17 people in Queens affects people in
18 Downtown Manhattan. What affects
19 people in the Bronx is going to affect
20 people in the Upper West Side, in the
21 Upper East Side. If we can be made
22 seen that our contributions are going
23 to be put to work and are going to make
24 the planet a better place and our
25 neighbors safer, I think that you are

1 going to be very successful.

2 Forget about London. New York.
3 We are good at this. We can support
4 each other. I really think so. And I
5 really have faith that this is going to
6 help everybody. Even the people that
7 right now don't see it. I know that
8 they're going to see the benefits. But
9 it's your job to inform them of what
10 those benefits are going to be.
11 Campaigning throughout. Please do it.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

14 The next speaker is Joseff
15 Barmore, followed by Craig Siel.

16 JOSEFF BARMORE: Hello, can you
17 hear me?

18 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

19 JOSEFF BARMORE: Okay. My name
20 is Joseff Barmore. Good morning --
21 good afternoon and thank you for the
22 space to share our thoughts on
23 congestion pricing.

24 I currently live in Westchester,
25 near the Bronx, and I worked in New

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1 York City for over 12 years. I like
2 the idea of getting rid of congestion
3 in the city as I've spent innumerable
4 hours stuck in traffic. I also like
5 the potential positive environmental
6 implications, but I do not feel that it
7 should be burden of the citizens that
8 already have some of the highest tax
9 burdens in the country to further fund
10 the MTA at this time. Especially at a
11 time when inflation is at an all-time
12 high, and affordability is a major
13 issue to many in the tristate area.

14 The MTA receives billion --
15 received billions in pandemic aid to
16 balance their budget, in part because
17 of the loss of ridership. Every year
18 since 2009, the MTA has raised fares to
19 balance their budgets. Out of all the
20 money the MTA brings in, I don't
21 believe the cost of operation matches
22 the services that many every-day
23 patrons get.

24 Congestion pricing I believe is
25 supposed to raise about a billion

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1 dollars a year. How much of that
2 billion dollars is actually going to
3 use for the projects that are proposed
4 and not get stuck in operational costs
5 and other waste. We've often seen MTA
6 projects and general infrastructure
7 projects in New York City go insanely
8 over budget and completion of
9 timelines. New York City and state
10 taxpayers already pay hundreds of tax
11 subsidies to the MTA every year,
12 whether we use it or not.

13 From a personal standpoint, no
14 matter how much money we give the MTA,
15 service does not seem to improve much
16 and in certain areas, the system has
17 declined, in my opinion.

18 I think most people with the
19 means wouldn't mind doing their part
20 with congestion pricing that was a few
21 dollars, but these fees up to \$23 a day
22 potentially will keep the lowest income
23 workers off the roads and put those who
24 have no choice under greater financial
25 duress.

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1 With my current job, I'm on the
2 road before 5:00 a.m. and to my
3 destination before much of the traffic
4 even began. I was also considering
5 purchasing a fuel-efficient car to help
6 the environment and cut down on my own
7 personal gas cost. I believe a person
8 is not a part of the direct problem,
9 they should get discounts on these
10 fees. Twenty-three dollars a day is
11 about 460 a month or about 5500 a year.
12 It's outlandish fees of prices to take
13 on for a family.

14 Furthermore, I believe in order
15 to force people off the roads, you need
16 to provide better alternatives. I
17 would love it if there was clean,
18 reliable public transportation. But
19 that does not currently exist, from my
20 standpoint of taking public
21 transportation.

22 Prior to living in Westchester, I
23 was a long-time resident of New Jersey.
24 I used to participate in the carpool
25 rule -- three or more people, you can

1 get a discount on your tolls. This
2 essentially allowed us to save money
3 and decrease the amount of vehicles on
4 the road. But this practice has been
5 discouraged many times in the past and
6 now canceled since all the new toll
7 systems have been put into place.

8 Would it be impossible to
9 innovate a system with the Port
10 Authority where they can bring this
11 back?

12 Please consider greatly reducing
13 the congestion cost or at least giving
14 better alternatives and incentives that
15 would achieve similar goals.

16 Thank you very much and enjoy the
17 rest of your time here.

18 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

19 Our next speaker is Craig Siel,
20 followed by our 280th speaker, Justin
21 Gundlach.

22 Craig, you may unmute yourself
23 and begin your remarks.

24 CRAIG SIEL: Thank you very much.
25 Good afternoon. I'm Craig Siel. I

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1 live and work within the proposed
2 Central Business District. I'm an MTA
3 transportation rider and supporter.
4 Though I also walk, ride bicycles, such
5 as Citi Bike. And I'm a motorcycle
6 rider, weather-permitting, within and
7 around Manhattan and to the other
8 boroughs, as well as getting outside of
9 the city.

10 As a resident within the proposed
11 CBD area, I don't believe that it would
12 be fair for me to pay a toll to travel
13 in and out of my neighborhood that I
14 live in when using my motorcycle and/or
15 to pay when coming back in to just park
16 my motorcycle in a garage that I
17 already pay for and pay tax on. I
18 already pay enough taxes to live here,
19 plus tolls when I use the bridges and
20 tunnels to enter into the city from out
21 of state.

22 I find many of the comments and
23 statements of my fellow New York City
24 residents and commuters that have
25 spoken thus far and a lot of cases to

1 be somewhat inflated or unsubstantiated
2 without noting verifiable preferences.
3 Though I would like to applaud the
4 efforts of Zaire Baptiste and Aaron
5 Bloom, where I thought their comments
6 were right on.

7 With that said, I'm once again
8 advocating for exemption of motorcycles
9 from the CBD tolling. Motorcycles not
10 only do not contribute to the factors
11 that would warrant CBD tolling like
12 parking, congestion, air quality stress
13 on our infrastructure, but rather
14 motorcycles help to alleviate them. I
15 haven't seen any reports or studies
16 that specifically indicate that
17 motorcycles contribute to any of the
18 factors that would again warrant
19 congestion pricing for them.

20 Most, if not all the cities
21 around the world exempt motorcycles
22 from congestion pricing, and there's no
23 reason why New York City should not
24 follow suit. Congestion pricing
25 studies referenced within the Board's

1 presentations and studies that were
2 shared exempt motorcycles. Stockholm
3 exempts motorcycles. London exempts
4 motorcycles, providing they meet the
5 minimum EU emissions or they pay an
6 ultra low emission fee zone or fee for
7 that said zone. Most motorcycles
8 manufactured after July 2007 adhere to
9 those standards.

10 Some talking points to note,
11 virtually every municipality around the
12 world where congestion pricing has been
13 imposed exempts motorcycles.
14 Motorcycles indisputably reduce traffic
15 congestion. Motorcycles are
16 impressively fuel efficient, and
17 produce significantly less greenhouse
18 gases as compared to cars. Motorcycles
19 are lightweight and do less wear and
20 tear on the roads. Two-wheel vehicles
21 take up a small fraction of space when
22 parked.

23 Also, moving forward, if there
24 was legalization of lane splitting as
25 done in several other cities and around

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1 the world, that would further assist
2 with congestion.

3 There's a good study --

4 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
5 remarks.

6 CRAIG SIEL: Sure.

7 There's a study out of California
8 that is well known about lane splitting
9 and the safety of that.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Justin
12 Gundlach, followed by Alec Raggio.

13 Our next speaker is Alec Raggio,
14 followed by Harry Schwartz.

15 Our next speaker is Harry
16 Schwartz, followed by Tony Thompson.

17 Our next speaker is Tony
18 Thompson, followed by our 284th
19 speaker, Ben Garron-Caine.

20 Our next speaker is Ben
21 Garron-Caine, followed by Allie Ryan.

22 Ben, you may unmute yourself and
23 begin your remarks.

24 BEN GARRON-CAINE: Hi. I would
25 like to recommend the implementation of

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1 congestion pricing without exemptions.
2 I am a, more or less a lifelong
3 resident of Kings and Queens counties.
4 I currently work on the weekends and do
5 ride a bicycle into the -- into the
6 Metropolitan Museum of Art. So through
7 the Central Business District.

8 And I think that the benefits of
9 congestion pricing outweigh any of the
10 negative effects that the previous
11 speakers have mentioned. I
12 particularly find spurious the argument
13 that congestion pricing negatively
14 affects working class and immigrant
15 people. And that's been stated several
16 times today, including by the speaker
17 representing the Independent Drivers'
18 Guild.

19 I have lived in an immigrant
20 neighborhood and the stat has been
21 stated previously, that more than
22 90 percent of low-income people by
23 these studies measured use transit to
24 access the Central Business District
25 and not private vehicles.

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1 So I think we need to be truthful
2 about our statistics before we can have
3 any reasonable debate. I'd also like
4 to mention that in 2016, the then mayor
5 of New York City, along with the
6 council speaker at the time, proposed a
7 cap on Uber and for-hire vehicles. The
8 cap would have eliminated expansion of
9 the for-hire vehicle black fleet to
10 one percent a year, and would have
11 created a cap at 80,000. And as some
12 speakers have mentioned earlier, we are
13 now at 90,000.

14 So it's unfortunate that our
15 legislatures who have expressed dismay
16 about congestion pricing, people like
17 Assembly Member Weprin and Councilwoman
18 Brooks-Powers weren't on the front
19 lines in 2016, trying to help the mayor
20 and trying to help the speaker of the
21 city council get passed legislation
22 that would have had vision in limiting
23 all these taxis in Manhattan and all
24 these for-hire vehicles, which are now
25 causing congestion and -- and -- and

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1 creating the problems.

2 That's all I want to say. I
3 thank you for the time and I yield.

4 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

5 Our next speaker is Allie Ryan,
6 followed by Ahmad Saeed.

7 ALLIE RYAN: Hello. Can you hear
8 me?

9 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

10 ALLIE RYAN: Okay. Hello. My
11 name is Allie Ryan, and my family lives
12 in the Lower East Side. I am
13 testifying against congestion pricing
14 again today, I testified yesterday,
15 even though I am a pedestrian, a
16 bicyclist and I use the MTA. This is a
17 war on the middle class, on
18 fixed-income people, on the backbone of
19 Manhattan, its residents.

20 The high-income,
21 financially-secured Manhattanites and
22 the non-residents activists who believe
23 this tax on the average citizens is
24 some virtuous solution for global
25 warming are naive and anti New Yorker.

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1 Congestion pricing is really
2 about creating a new income stream for
3 the MTA, not solving congestion. How
4 is \$18.6 billion not enough to run the
5 MTA? MTA and recent New York City
6 policies, are causing more congestion.
7 The MTA presentation focuses on drivers
8 coming into the Central Business
9 District, yet many people are working
10 remotely. And according to the city,
11 New York City's office occupancy just
12 reached 41 percent in June 2022. Which
13 makes me question why commuters are
14 conveyed as congestion villains in the
15 Environmental Assessment, and that the
16 MTA congestion pricing income stream
17 will be significantly lowered than
18 projected.

19 Politicians must start taking
20 public transportation and paying for it
21 out of their own pockets before we will
22 take them serious or consider
23 reelecting them. Ridership is at
24 60 percent of pre-2020 levels and fare
25 evasions costing hundreds of millions

1 of dollars.

2 I have found myself in unsafe
3 situations recently on the subways and
4 I will not be taking them with my eight
5 and ten-year-old daughters until the
6 MTA and transit police can properly use
7 their budgets and deal with crime on
8 subways.

9 There's an unconciousful (sic)
10 absence in the MTA presentation on how
11 congestion pricing will affect
12 residents who live in the Central
13 Business District. I'd like to share
14 how congestion pricing would impact my
15 family.

16 My husband is a freelance
17 electrician and works within the five
18 boroughs at odd times of the day. And
19 if my husband pays a congestion fee to
20 leave our neighborhood and return home,
21 it has a real financial impact on my
22 family, which equates to \$230 a week,
23 and then multiplied by 50 weeks,
24 \$11,500 a year.

25 We have already cut our expenses

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1 to the essential and we pay our fair
2 share of taxes. This is a war on
3 low-income and middle-income residents
4 who have chosen to not --

5 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
6 remarks.

7 ALLIE RYAN: -- city.

8 Fix the MTA, respect New Yorkers
9 and their different stories --

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Ahmad Saeed,
12 followed by Breogan Vasquez.

13 Our next speaker is Breogan
14 Vasquez, followed by Daniel Reid.

15 BREOGAN VASQUEZ: Hi. Good
16 afternoon. Can you hear me?

17 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

18 BREOGAN VASQUEZ: Thank you very
19 much. First, thank you for all the
20 moderators for staying with us. I hope
21 you were able to get some food at some
22 point and also to the translator. I
23 hope you were able to eat something.

24 I'm a father of two. I am a
25 sufferer from a debilitating tinnitus,

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1 which is basically ringing in my ears.
2 I feel like I have a train whistle in
3 my ears, and I am not able to take
4 public transportation. It is so
5 debilitating that I had to quit my
6 full-time job, and now I work as a
7 part-time professor at Rutgers. And I
8 also teach self defense and for rape
9 prevention for women in Brooklyn.

10 I live in the congestion area.
11 Some of us do not have the ability to
12 take public transportation. And to me,
13 frankly, what I understand a lot of the
14 other implications, it is somewhat
15 shocking that we have not seen anything
16 regarding exemptions with people with
17 disabilities like myself. That I used
18 to take public transportation, but I
19 just can't do that anymore. And this
20 is not because I don't want to. It's
21 because I can't.

22 So how can we not talk to people
23 like myself, people that have autism,
24 people that have claustrophobia.
25 People have mentioned that they are

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1 suffering from cancer. A lot of people
2 that are COVID -- that they're very
3 vulnerable to COVID that cannot take
4 public transportation because they're
5 going to be exposed.

6 This will be a very limited --
7 have a very limited economic affect
8 because there's not that many of us.
9 But, it will make a huge life
10 difference for some of us that are
11 suffering, and some of us that have
12 very debilitating diseases. I heard
13 somebody also with multiple sclerosis,
14 et cetera.

15 On a more general level, as a
16 person of the -- that lives in the
17 zoning question, any time I take my
18 car, I go form Avenue B to the FDR. I
19 am contributing -- I'm contributing
20 very minimally to the actual
21 congestion. Yet, in a lot of your
22 plans, I'm going to be taxed and I'm
23 going to be charged for going from
24 Avenue B to the FDR the same exact
25 amount that an Uber car that is picking

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1 up 20, 30 rides and is also driving
2 around the congestion area, while
3 listening -- while waiting for those.

4 So how can 30 people that are
5 taking Uber rides that are creating
6 much more congestion than I am not
7 participate in this anti-congestion
8 policy. So from an economic point of
9 view, which by the way, this is what I
10 teach at Rutgers, this makes no sense
11 that the people that are creating the
12 problem, which are the Uber riders, are
13 in a lot of -- in some of your plans,
14 are being taxed the same thing that a
15 person like myself that only goes from
16 Avenue B to the FDR.

17 And finally -- and also the truck
18 drivers, while again, I do understand
19 the economic consequences of taxing
20 deliveries, the major culprits of
21 congestion are truck drivers that are
22 double-parked and are taking sometimes
23 one lane one side, and one lane on the
24 other side and creating the congestion.

25 So please take this into account

1 as you look at your economic
2 projections.

3 And finally, if I could clarify,
4 Allison, when you said about people
5 driving in and also driving within the
6 zone, I didn't understand whether there
7 was just people coming in or driving
8 within the zone. Because I have to
9 move my car for alternative parking
10 every two days, and I don't think I
11 should be taxed for moving my car if
12 it's something that the city is
13 mandating me to do.

14 Thank you so much for your time.
15 I really appreciate the opportunity to
16 talk to you.

17 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

18 Our next speaker is Daniel Reid,
19 followed by Anna Kokkinis.

20 Our next speaker is Anna
21 Kokkinis, followed by Benjamin
22 Tolentino.

23 Our next speaker is Benjamin
24 Tolentino, followed by our 291st
25 speaker, Gregory Cohen.

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1 Our next speaker is Gregory
2 Cohen, followed by Laneya Wiles.

3 Gregory, you may unmute yourself
4 and begin your remarks.

5 GREGORY COHEN: Thank you for the
6 opportunity to testify today. I'm Greg
7 Cohen, government affairs
8 representative for Greyhound Lines.
9 Greyhound's largest hub in North
10 America is located at the Port
11 Authority bus terminal. Millions of
12 our passengers arrive and depart there
13 each year. We have a 108-year history
14 as an affordable transportation
15 provider that serves the public, and we
16 are strengthened by our fully unionized
17 driver and mechanic workforce.

18 In London, Singapore, and
19 Stockholm, congestion pricing
20 specifically exempts large buses from
21 their pricing scheme, and our biggest
22 concern is that there are more
23 scenarios in this EA that do not exempt
24 inner city buses than that do. That
25 being said, two scenarios, B and F do

1 appear to exempt buses. So these would
2 be our preference at this time.

3 Regardless of which option is
4 ultimately selected, inner-city buses
5 that serve the public on a fixed
6 schedule must be exempted for the
7 following reasons:

8 First, for most inner-city trips,
9 they provide the most affordable and
10 most carbon intensive transportation
11 option to consumers. Bus riders carbon
12 footprint in an inner-city bus is
13 average occupancy is a mere zero point
14 one seven pounds per mile, the smallest
15 footprint of any mode for a person
16 traveling alone or with a companion.
17 As buses pull up per passenger
18 emissions drop further.

19 The key objective of congestion
20 pricing is to reduce emissions of VMT,
21 our buses carry 50 people and can take
22 50 cars off the record.

23 In keeping with that objective,
24 tolling the buses make no sense.

25 Second, we have serious concerns

1 that the EA's environmentally justice
2 section completely missed any
3 discussion analysis of the impacts of
4 pricing on inner-city bus passengers.
5 It's astonishing actually because I
6 know we commented on this in scoping.

7 The majority of Greyhound's
8 customers are minorities. Most earn
9 less than \$35,000 a year, and tolls
10 paid by Greyhound have to be passed
11 onto those customers.

12 Third, Greyhound and all class
13 one schedule service bus companies are
14 now one hundred percent ADA accessible
15 with wheelchair lifts. With many more
16 passengers without wheelchairs that
17 also have special needs.

18 EA recognizes that vehicles with
19 disabled plates should be exempt, but
20 fully accessible buses like Greyhound
21 do not display these plates, while
22 having high frequency of passengers who
23 qualify for such permits if they were
24 in a car. Clearly, ADA compliant buses
25 should be exempt like any other vehicle

1 that carries -- regularly carries
2 disabled passengers.

3 Fourth, under federal law, there
4 is not specific language requiring toll
5 equity between publically operated
6 buses and FHWA sponsored projects.
7 Although this project is being
8 developed as part of the valued pricing
9 program. The toll equity provisions
10 from sections 129 and 166 still apply.

11 Finally, the goal of congestion
12 pricing should be to reduce the number
13 of cars and trucks in Midtown and
14 Downtown. Buses entering Midtown are
15 critically beneficial. Our buses have
16 no other reasonable option that could
17 avoid congestion north of 59th Street
18 because our -- no other facility can
19 handle things -- buses like the Port
20 Authority.

21 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
22 remarks.

23 GREGORY COHEN: Thank you again
24 for the opportunity to raise these key
25 points, and we'll have written

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1 testimony.

2 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

3 Our next speaker is Laneya Wiles,
4 followed by Elizabeth Pugh.

5 Our next speaker is Elizabeth
6 Pugh, followed by Steve Sibiga.

7 Our next speaker is Steve Sibiga,
8 followed by Sharon Wynne-Carmona.

9 Our next speaker is Sharon
10 Wynne-Carmona, followed by Barry
11 Genessen.

12 Our next speaker is Barry
13 Genessen, followed by Renee St.
14 Jacques.

15 Our next speaker is Renee St.
16 Jacques, followed by our 298th speaker,
17 Efraim Aaron.

18 Renee? You may --

19 RENEE ST. JACQUES: Hi, yes.

20 MS. FLAX: You may begin your
21 remarks.

22 RENEE ST. JACQUES: Hello. Hi,
23 yes. This is Renee St. Jacques. I'm
24 with New York Farm Bureau, associate
25 director of policy. New York Farm

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1 Bureau is the state's largest
2 agricultural advocacy organization. We
3 represent farmers from across the
4 agricultural community in New York,
5 clean dairy farmers, fruits, vegetable
6 growers, maple producers, livestock
7 farms, bee keepers. So many. And many
8 of these farmers are concerned about
9 the tolls they will have to pay as they
10 transport food products into the
11 central business district.

12 We recognize the purpose of
13 congestion pricing, but it is also
14 imperative that New York farmers can
15 affordably transport New York food
16 products throughout New York City. The
17 pandemic has shown the important role
18 of New York farms in combating food
19 insecurity. Especially in urban areas.
20 Central Business District does include
21 farmers' markets, including Union
22 Square Green Market. This market is
23 open Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays,
24 Saturdays year round. And during the
25 peak season, there are more than 140

1 farmers, many of them New York farmers,
2 selling their products to more than
3 60,000 people visiting the market.

4 Farmers participating in this
5 market and others will have to pay
6 these tolls each time they bring their
7 products to sell. So instead of
8 increasing the transportation cost for
9 farmers and creating more barriers to
10 combating food insecurity, the New York
11 Farm Bureau recommends the
12 establishment of a toll exemption for
13 agricultural vehicles transporting farm
14 products into the Central Business
15 District.

16 We urge you to take into
17 consideration the negative impact these
18 proposed tolls will have on New York
19 farmers and their ability to provide
20 fresh farm products to food insecure
21 residents of New York City.

22 Thank you very much for your time
23 and consideration of these comments.

24 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

25 Our next speaker is Efraim Aaron,

1 followed by Andrea Kaye.

2 Efraim Aaron?

3 Our next speaker is Andrea Kaye,
4 followed by our 300th speaker, Rona
5 Rubinstein.

6 Andrea, you may unmute yourself
7 and begin your remarks.

8 ANDREA KAYE: Can you hear me?

9 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

10 ANDREA KAYE: Okay. My name is
11 Andrea Kaye, and I was born, raised and
12 continue to live in Brooklyn. I'm
13 strongly against congestion pricing.
14 Several of the many issues surrounding
15 congestion pricing include, congestion
16 pricing is nothing more than another
17 money grab, another tax against the
18 already financially burdened lower and
19 middle classes. And much of the
20 congestion is a result of the 80,000
21 plus Uber and Lyft vehicles. Start by
22 eliminating the number of these
23 vehicles in the city.

24 Additional major contributors
25 include middle of the street parking

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1 classes, bicycle dockings stations and
2 dining sheds, among many others. If
3 you are removing lanes from automobile
4 travel, how can you not expect more
5 congestion? Road and utility repairs
6 and maintenance that block lanes and
7 roadways are another constant that
8 create congestion. Some of these
9 repairs have been going on for years.
10 It seems to be never-ending.

11 Bicycling has been suggested as
12 an alternative to autos. Other than
13 the most passionate bicyclists, how
14 many people are really going to bicycle
15 into the city from the outer boroughs?
16 Especially in the winter and in
17 inclement weather. And what financial
18 contribution do bicyclists really make
19 to the city? Automobile owners
20 contribute to city and transportation
21 costs with payments from driver's
22 licenses, registrations, inspections,
23 gas, parking garages, as well as taxes
24 applied to utility bills. What
25 financial contributions to bicyclists

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1 make? Since they are using many of the
2 same facilities as cars, they too
3 should be paying for the use of the
4 roadways and bridges.

5 It's nice to be young and in good
6 physical condition. But how will these
7 people react to the price gouging if
8 they or family or friends become
9 physically limited and can no longer
10 bicycle or take mass transit. And what
11 about consideration for the elderly and
12 the disabled. And to the young man who
13 earlier today told people to use
14 doctors in Brooklyn and Queens, how
15 dare you. And to avoid this proposed
16 23-dollar toll, those who can, will
17 avoid coming into the city to get to
18 the tunnels and bridges, and increase
19 traffic inclusion in the outer
20 boroughs. Especially the Cross Bronx,
21 the Staten Island Expressway, the BQE,
22 the Belt, the Gowanus and many others.

23 Once delivery and home services
24 are required to pay this additional
25 toll, who do you think is going to

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1 ultimately pay for this? Of course
2 it's the residents of all of Manhattan.
3 And you know it will be passed along to
4 the people in the outer boroughs as
5 well.

6 As far as the MTA itself,
7 everyone knows nobody is held
8 accountable for costs. Anywhere from
9 the overblown salaries to the work
10 itself. Why don't we know how the
11 billions of dollars that the MTA
12 received from the federal government
13 has been spent? And before tolling is
14 implemented, the MTA needs to document
15 each work effort, its detail cost and a
16 timeline. How soon after this tolling
17 effort is implemented will we see
18 results. So from the start of tolling,
19 how and when will transportation be
20 improved for current and new riders --

21 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
22 remarks.

23 ANDREA KAYE: And the last thing,
24 you know that tolls will be increased.
25 It won't take long.

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1 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

2 ANDREA KAYE: Thank you.

3 MS. FLAX: Our next speaker is
4 Rona Rubinstein, followed by Jeff
5 Schwane.

6 RONA RUBINSTEIN: Hello?

7 MS. FLAX: You may begin your
8 remarks.

9 RONA RUBINSTEIN: All right.
10 Well, first, my name is Ron Rubinstein.
11 I've lived almost 30 years in Brooklyn,
12 almost 20 years in Queens. I currently
13 live in Manhattan, and I travel to
14 Staten Island and the Bronx. Not just
15 for Yankee games.

16 I had submitted a question to the
17 panel because I'd like to know where
18 you folks reside, what county you live
19 in, whether you work in an office
20 currently and how you get to the
21 office. I hope you'll answer those
22 questions later on.

23 Because I live on the Upper East
24 Side and I'm going to tell you, what
25 you need first is additional traffic

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1 officers to control traffic. But they
2 must be trained and know what the hell
3 they're doing. Because sometimes,
4 there's a traffic officer and he lets
5 people block the blocks.

6 I waited for a bus on
7 Third Avenue two weeks ago. That bus
8 on Third and East 38th Street, my bus
9 was held up for four lights because the
10 box was blocked on East 36th Street.
11 There's no enforcement. Nobody really
12 gives a damn. All right? You have
13 double-parking. First Avenue used to
14 be a beautiful street to drive on. Now
15 you have a bike lane, which frankly you
16 don't need except for delivery people
17 there.

18 On the Lower East Side, when I
19 eat there, I see numbers of people
20 using the bike lane. So next to the
21 bike lane, on the Upper East Side,
22 there's a parking lane. And all of a
23 sudden, First Avenue that had four
24 lanes is now down to two. And then we
25 have double-parking.

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1 So when somebody said about
2 19 percent of the New York bus lane --
3 I mean, that's pretty damn good because
4 the other boroughs don't need
5 congestion parking. They don't need
6 congestion pricing because they don't
7 have any traffic. So how can you give
8 us statistics of the difference in time
9 of bus. I ride the bus. They are damn
10 good with the bus lane.

11 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
12 remarks.

13 RONA RUBINSTEIN: We don't need a
14 bus lane -- two bus lanes on Lexington
15 Avenue.

16 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

17 Our next speaker is Jeff Schwane,
18 followed by Shane McMorrow.

19 Our next speaker is Shane
20 McMorrow, followed by John Banzer.

21 Our next speaker is John Banzer,
22 followed by Sonal Jessel.

23 John, you may unmute yourself and
24 begin your remarks.

25 JOHN BANZER: Can you hear me?

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1 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

2 JOHN BANZER: Excellent. How are
3 you? I have a -- I'm completely
4 against the congestion charging for a
5 number of reasons. They are -- we've
6 reached a point of enforcement versus
7 enticement and you can't enforce this
8 dream on people. You know, I'm a
9 mentally disabled artist, I'm a
10 write-in candidate for governor. I'm
11 not taking any money. Spell my name
12 correctly in a box if you want to see
13 some fun stuff happening in November.
14 But everybody on this panel has to have
15 their -- their -- their private
16 investment portfolios torn apart.
17 Because if I find out anybody here has
18 been making money off of Uber, Lyft, or
19 anything that's been going on
20 throughout the pandemic, we are going
21 to have bigger problems.

22 And somebody brought up an even
23 better point that I completely glossed
24 over. If I find out so much as one
25 first responder can't make it to their

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1 appointments because of this nonsense,
2 everybody involved with this is going
3 to be excommunicated with the city.
4 Because it's easier to not play with 30
5 people such as yourselves and anybody
6 else who fancies themselves as a leader
7 than it is to harm one more person.

8 My dad was a first responder, a
9 sheet metal worker and a sandhog. He'd
10 been all -- to the depths of the city
11 and to the top. And the first thing he
12 said when he retired, never wanted to
13 go west of 110th again. Doesn't matter
14 what I'm trying to do or perform. I
15 can't get anybody to go anywhere, to go
16 anywhere near the city. And I'm stuck
17 out on this island. It's a none
18 starter. You are going to start a
19 fight with every construction worker in
20 the entirety of the surrounding area of
21 that city.

22 We are not paying anymore money
23 to go to work. As an artist, I have a
24 right to take my drunk friends home
25 without it costing them four hundred

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1 dollars total and three separate cabs.
2 I can't take my tools on the train as a
3 carpenter. I can't take my tools on
4 the train as an artist because if the
5 train stops and my 50 pounds worth of
6 speakers or my three-hundred pound
7 toolbox keeps going, it's going to kill
8 somebody. It's not going to be pretty.
9 And the bad thing about a toolbox is
10 once it starts and the drawers open,
11 guess what keeps flying out?
12 Everything that's in there.

13 So my goals for all of everybody
14 here, is for 40 percent reduction in
15 tolls across New York and the tristate
16 area, and you are going to make sure
17 that every single new train station is
18 a library. Because I'm not giving a
19 billion dollars to be poured
20 underground as the sea levels are
21 rising. If you can see how we've
22 already had to shut down the subways
23 due to inclement weather.

24 We don't have the -- we don't
25 have anything set up, and I'm not

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1 paying for it because you are going to
2 be calling people like me to come help
3 build it. I'm not paying to go to
4 work. And that being said, you better
5 get an army together because the first
6 person who is a single mom who gets
7 arrested because she couldn't pay to go
8 to work that person is getting ripped
9 in half.

10 You want to see fun? That's --
11 don't do that. Let's do something
12 productive like putting solar panels on
13 Sunrise Highway.

14 Thanks.

15 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

16 Our next speaker is Sonal Jessel,
17 followed by Xiaoshu Chen.

18 Our next speaker is Xiaoshu Chen,
19 followed by Lionel Morales.

20 Our next speaker is Lionel
21 Morales, followed by our 307th speaker
22 on the list, Lopen Zuo.

23 LIONEL MORALES: Hi. Can you
24 hear me?

25 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

1 LIONEL MORALES: Thank you.
2 Good afternoon. My name is
3 Lionel Morales, and I'm the
4 communications, outreach and marketing
5 manager of the Black Car Fund. Thank
6 you for the opportunity to testify on
7 behalf of the black car industry at
8 today's hearing.

9 The Environmental Assessment
10 before you now envisions scenarios that
11 will impose significant harm on black
12 car drivers. It acknowledges that the
13 tolling scenarios it envisions will
14 have a disproportionately high and
15 adverse affect on the taxi and for-hire
16 vehicle driver populations. That means
17 reduced wages and lost jobs.

18 Under federal directives, no
19 program can proceed until those harms
20 are mitigated to the extent practical.
21 But the Environmental Assessment before
22 you has not even began to do so. The
23 most obvious and effective mitigation
24 would be to exempt for-hire vehicles
25 from the toll all together. An option

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1 that the Environmental Assessment does
2 not meaningfully consider. This is
3 completely arbitrary where the
4 assessment notes that an exemption
5 could be granted while maintaining the
6 programs revenue goals.

7 This is a practicable mitigation
8 measure that the environment assessment
9 declines to consider without
10 explanation. At a minimum, the agency
11 should reject any scenario that does
12 not include a once-a-day cap on tolls
13 charged to for-hire vehicles. While a
14 cap would not be as effective as a
15 complete exemption, it would at least
16 reduce some of the harm the drivers
17 will suffer, which is more than can be
18 said for the so called mitigation
19 measures considered in the
20 Environmental Assessment. The
21 assessment suggestion that efforts
22 should be made to ensure that
23 passengers rather than drivers pay the
24 toll is hardly mitigation at all. It
25 does nothing to address the effect that

1 such a policy would have on a demand
2 for taxi and for-hire vehicle services.
3 A toll is going to reduce the demand
4 for drivers. The drivers will pay the
5 price for that even if passengers
6 supposedly pay the toll.

7 The second mitigation measure
8 proposed, converting drivers to other
9 jobs, is a little more than wishful
10 thinking. The assessment suggests that
11 for-hire vehicle drivers who lose their
12 jobs can work for the MTA or as a
13 para-transit driver. There is no
14 analysis as to whether the demand for
15 such drivers is sufficient to help the
16 number of drivers likely to lose their
17 jobs, nor is there any analysis of
18 whether these new positions will
19 provide comparable wages, let alone
20 living and working conditions. These
21 proposals simply do not satisfy the
22 mitigation requirement.

23 Not long ago, during the
24 pandemic, black car drivers were
25 considered essential workers. Now, in

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1 this assessment, it seems that those
2 same drivers are expendable. No real
3 efforts are proposed to mitigate the
4 devastating affects the tolling program
5 will have on these drivers. And that's
6 contrary to multiple federal agency
7 directives. Also, it's just wrong.
8 The Environmental Assessment as it's
9 written must be rejected.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Lopen Zuo,
13 followed by Erika Flores.

14 LOPEN ZUO: Hello. I'm Lopen,
15 and I'm a resident of greater Harlem.
16 I'm a high schooler at Stuyvesant High
17 School.

18 As someone that commutes the
19 Financial District for school on
20 transit and bicycle, I have firsthand
21 experience of the negative affects of
22 traffic motor vehicles. Every day at
23 3:35, thousand of student crowd onto
24 the nearby sidewalk along Chamber
25 Street where vehicular traffic is

1 usually slower than the congo line of
2 students walking to the subway. It's
3 excessive traffic, much of which is
4 caused by drivers that don't need to
5 drive, causes air and noise pollution
6 that affects students, residents and
7 workers alike.

8 New York City is extremely
9 vulnerable to climate change and rising
10 sea levels. So this form of pollution
11 reduction must be implemented. An NYU
12 study of people commuting into
13 Manhattan Central Business District
14 found that only 11 percent or one in
15 nine people commute in Manhattan by
16 single person private vehicles, who are
17 disproportionately wealthy.

18 The eight and a half percent of
19 people that use sustainable climate
20 friendly modes of transit use the great
21 public transit system, biking, bike
22 sharing, walking should be prioritized
23 over the small minority of private
24 drivers. As one of the densest areas
25 in the world, cars should not have free

1 access to Manhattan who was not built
2 for cars.

3 For example, the M22 and M9
4 buses, which links Stuyvesant and the
5 Financial District with the low income
6 neighborhoods of the Lower Eastside and
7 Chinatown are often slower than walking
8 pace. As a pedestrian, on the same
9 half mile corridor, I often beat the
10 buses by two to three minutes.

11 Essentially, the 25 people riding a bus
12 should be prioritized over the five
13 people in cars blocking the bus from
14 moving. Due to traffic, buses in the
15 CBD often operate only four miles an
16 hour, which is just over walking pace.

17 According to the DOT, bus speeds
18 have a constant decrease and travel
19 speeds within the CBD have declined by
20 25 percent since 2010. The extra
21 funding caused by this program is
22 needed to improve our transit which has
23 been in dire need of funding, due to
24 years of underfunding from the federal
25 and state government.

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1 It is absolutely ridiculous to be
2 stuck north of Union Square on a train
3 for 20 minutes due to switch problems.
4 Since many contributors in past
5 hearings complain about rise in crime,
6 I do want to point out that
7 statistically, the transit system is
8 still much safer than trusting other
9 drivers which are possibly drunk,
10 sleepy, texting or road raging from not
11 crushing into you.

12 However, I do have two complaints
13 to make. Stuyvesant is located at
14 Chamber Street and the West Side
15 highway, an intersection that is so
16 dangerous that when it was built, a
17 30 million-dollar bridge had to be
18 constructed so that the school's 3,500
19 students didn't have to cross 11 lanes
20 of absolute chaos. The West Side
21 Highway is not a highway. It is not an
22 limited access road. There are
23 intersections everywhere. And
24 therefore, it should not be exempted
25 from this plan.

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1 Pedestrians die crossing this
2 highway, and it's a high speed road.
3 It's not a highway. Also, free parking
4 should not be kept in neighborhoods
5 outside of the CBD, as the EA estimates
6 that a lot of vehicles will be diverted
7 into neighborhoods outside of the CBD.
8 And the city should not be providing
9 free real estate for drivers to park
10 their 2 tons blocks of metal.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

13 Our next speaker is Erika Flores,
14 followed by 30d.

15 Our next speaker is 30d,
16 followed by our 310th speaker on the
17 list, Robert D'Angelo.

18 Our next speaker is Robert
19 D'Angelo, followed by Mary Perillo.

20 Our next speaker is Mary Perillo,
21 followed by Luigi Kapaj.

22 MARY PERILLO: Can you hear me?

23 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

24 MARY PERILLO: Okay. My name is
25 Mary Perillo, and I'm a lifelong New

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1 Yorker living in Manhattan for 45 years
2 in the Financial District for the last
3 39 of them.

4 I support the goals of reducing
5 pollution and mitigating congestion,
6 but I don't think this plan will do
7 that. I'm a serious walker,
8 occasionally use Citi Bike. But almost
9 every time I leave my neighborhood, I
10 take the subway.

11 I don't want to start with the
12 MTA, but I think this plan has been
13 looking in the wrong pockets. In
14 recent years, there's a massive
15 increase in traffic downtown in the
16 smallest streets on Manhattan island,
17 and it happened when the city decided
18 to shove tens of thousands of black
19 cars down our throats.

20 I'm having a problem because I
21 can't roll my -- uh-huh -- I'm just
22 stuck in Zoom and I can't get my Word
23 document.

24 Okay. So what my point is, is
25 that there's a way to do what London

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1 did and make certain -- certain --

2 I'm blowing my time. Let me see
3 if I can do it in -- the thing I just
4 sent out -- shoot -- open -- message
5 viewer -- nope. I'm trapped.

6 I am going to put it online and
7 give my time to someone else. I'm
8 sorry for my technical difficulty. It
9 will be in print.

10 MS. FLAX: Thank you. All
11 comments received in writing or at
12 hearings are considered equally and
13 we'll make sure that you have the right
14 information about how to submit in
15 writing.

16 The next speaker is Luigi Kapaj,
17 followed by Tamir Adams-El.

18 The next speaker is Tamir
19 Adams-El -- excuse me, is Luigi Kapaj.

20 LUIGI KAPAJ: Hi. My name is
21 Luigi Kapaj. I'm a native New Yorker,
22 lifelong, father of three kids. I
23 regularly drive because I need to. I
24 live in Staten Island. It's a
25 necessity. But I also use public

1 transit whenever possible.

2 Before the lockdowns for the
3 pandemic, I was in the city six days a
4 week using bus -- you know, using
5 express bus. And I am keenly aware
6 that one of the major problems with
7 this, is there is no viable
8 alternatives.

9 Yeah, it may be great to use
10 your -- you know, to walk or bike if
11 you live in Manhattan and you are going
12 a few blocks away. But coming from
13 another borough, you are going, you
14 know, over several bridges, there's
15 no -- you know, there's no alternative
16 that compensates for being able to
17 drive.

18 Express bus service -- I mean,
19 the express bus service alone, they
20 eliminated every single stop that I
21 used. They eliminated the stop during
22 my weekend activities, they eliminated
23 the stop near my house. They
24 eliminated the stop near my job. I
25 mean, it's just not a use -- you know,

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1 they made the service worse and they
2 increased the tolls.

3 So how is that supposed to work,
4 you know, if congestion pricing is not
5 going to encourage someone to take the
6 bus when the bus doesn't suffice for
7 what they need.

8 You know, the other thing is I
9 live in Staten Island, but my kids go
10 to a citywide school in another
11 borough. The DOE refuses to provide
12 yellow bus transportation to across
13 boroughs. So I have to drive my kids
14 to school. I am not sending my
15 six-year-old on a subway for a two-hour
16 commute, minimum, because it's not
17 in -- because it's not a direct, you
18 know, go to work pipeline. I have to
19 drive the kids to school.

20 Is there going to be an exemption
21 for this? Because if not, I'm looking
22 at an additional \$4,000 a year just to
23 take my kids to school. And if the
24 stated purposes is to prevent people
25 from using cars, you are now telling me

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1 that I shouldn't take my kids to
2 school. That's a little ridiculous. I
3 mean, are you going to have passes for
4 people taking their kids to schools?
5 Exemptions for that?

6 Now, if you really think about
7 it, we already have congestion pricing.
8 I come from Staten Island. There is no
9 way for me to drive from one -- from
10 Staten Island to anywhere else in the
11 city without paying a toll. You know,
12 you are just talking about increasing
13 the tolls and -- you know, dressing it
14 up. You are not doing anything that's
15 actually going to reduce congestion
16 here. You are just going to redirect
17 it, you going to put more traffic in
18 other areas. That even your own model
19 says it's -- you're just going to move
20 traffic around. You want less cars in
21 Manhattan. Either they're going to go
22 in any way because they need to, or
23 they're just going to drive somewhere
24 else.

25 Basically, bottom line, the city

1 needs to be accessible to all
2 residents. This is a plan that's very
3 short sided. It only serves a few New
4 Yorkers, it does not serve the outer
5 boroughs. It simply punishes residents
6 of the outer boroughs.

7 And the vast majority of the
8 congestion are for-hire vehicles.
9 Regularly, you can see almost every
10 other car is an empty Uber, driving
11 around, causing congestion, waiting for
12 passengers. For all these people that
13 are complaining about congestion.

14 Thank you.

15 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

16 Our next speaker is Tamir
17 Adams-El, followed by Oren Baarzilay.

18 Our next speaker is Oren
19 Baarzilay, followed by Ronnie Dreyer.

20 OREN BAARZILAY: Good afternoon,
21 can you hear me?

22 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

23 OREN BAARZILAY: Good afternoon.

24 My name is Oren Baarzilay. I'm
25 president of FDNY EMS Local 2507,

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1 representing EMTs, paramedics and fire
2 inspectors.

3 Congestion pricing could be a
4 death blow to members of the FDNY EMS.
5 Let's start by acknowledging that
6 members of FDNY EMS are at a stark
7 economic disadvantage being paid at
8 near poverty wages. Our members make a
9 little over the hourly rate that's set
10 by New York State. Despite EMS
11 members' absolute devotion to protect
12 the lives of New Yorkers and our
13 society's most vulnerable, many of our
14 members simply cannot afford to live
15 anywhere close to the city that they
16 serve because of the uncompetitive
17 wages.

18 This is why 30 percent of FDNY
19 EMS members resign within three years
20 and 70 percent resign within five years
21 for higher paying jobs. It already
22 amounts to a costly brain drain for the
23 city's medical first responders
24 agencies and its workforce.

25 Adding more costs roughly few

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1 thousand dollars a year onto the
2 shoulders of poorly paid FDNY EMS staff
3 might just be the straw that breaks the
4 camel's back.

5 FDNY EMS members are the medical
6 first responders for the entire city,
7 meaning all five boroughs and not just
8 Midtown and Lower Manhattan's
9 congestion pricing zones. It will be
10 critical that policy makers recognize
11 that our assigned work shifts are not
12 9:00 through 5:00, but 24/7, 365 days a
13 year. And that being ordered to do a
14 double shift or reassigned to work in
15 another area is common occurrence and
16 out of our control. As the uniformed
17 paramilitary style organization, and
18 emergency response agencies, we don't
19 have the luxury of choosing our work
20 site, curating our work hours. We
21 simply report where, when, and as
22 ordered.

23 Our fire inspectors use their
24 personal vehicles. They travel in and
25 out of the zone routinely to conduct

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1 inspections. These men and women will
2 now face additional expenses as the
3 FDNY does not provide transportations
4 for them to conduct these inspections.

5 Those needing the money grab for
6 the MTA need to understand that it is
7 quite common that our members must
8 travel from far away communities just
9 to serve. FDNY members don't generally
10 have the luxury of being able to afford
11 living within the MTA one or even two
12 fare zone because the cost of housing
13 is simply too rich for our wages.
14 Making the job of being one of New York
15 City's medical first responders more --

16 MS. FLAX: Please conclude your
17 remarks.

18 OREN BAARZILAY: -- without the
19 City of New York paying a livable wage
20 first.

21 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Ronnie
23 Dreyer, followed by Frank Hardaway.

24 Our next speaker is Frank
25 Hardaway, followed by Anonymous 2.

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1 Our next speaker is Anonymous 2,
2 followed by Emmanuel Candelaria.

3 Our next speaker is Emmanuel
4 Candelaria, followed by Katy Wong.

5 EMMANUEL CANDELARIA: Hello. We
6 are communicating on regards to our
7 family. And we are against congestion
8 pricing because there are a few things
9 that aren't being considered, like the
10 MTA has a lack of reasonable service in
11 the sense of ventilation on the -- on
12 the trains, disability, meaning the
13 elevators, as well as there's always
14 traffic or slow train service. So it's
15 hard to say get on the train because
16 it's not always reliable, and we can't
17 always count that we are going to be
18 able to get there.

19 For example, also with the buses.
20 And someone had said earlier there was
21 an issue with like emergency vehicles,
22 if that's the case, they can have a
23 lane for emergency vehicles and the bus
24 lane and then prohibit commercial cars
25 from parking. We live in the Downtown

1 area, and a lot of times that's the
2 problem. There's a lot of commercial
3 vehicles always blocking those bus
4 lanes.

5 Also, there should be some type
6 of exemption based on license
7 registration, where your car is
8 registered at because now we are paying
9 from the ours of 6:00 a.m. to 8:00
10 p.m., \$23, \$24 a day just to come into
11 the city or just to go home where we
12 live.

13 The MTA also has a very bad
14 history of misusing their funds that
15 they get. For example, in Madison
16 Square Garden, they just built a fancy
17 train station. We don't need fancy
18 train stations. We need working trains
19 and on time trains.

20 So I just want to say that we are
21 against the congestion pricing.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 The next two speakers -- the next
25 speaker is Katy Wong, followed by Devin

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1 Deser.

2 KATY WONG: Hi. My name is Katy
3 Wong. I'm an Asian American woman who
4 lives with my extended family in
5 Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. We live well
6 below multiple poverty lines, like many
7 other Asian American New Yorkers, as
8 per a recent city report and we own a
9 car. I make these points because my
10 borough president and others refer to
11 car owners and drivers as white
12 wealthier people. And that is not my
13 experience as someone born and raised
14 in an immigrant family in Brooklyn.

15 Like many Asian families, I grew
16 up and still live in a
17 multigenerational household with aging
18 parents and elderly grandparents.
19 We've relied on our car my whole life
20 because we run errands all together.
21 Like frequent shopping trips for large
22 quantities of groceries in Manhattan
23 Chinatown and Costco bulk household
24 item purchases. Which is frowned upon
25 on and even glared at by other riders

1 if we take the train for these trips
2 with our purchases.

3 We seek medical care in Manhattan
4 even more now because that is where our
5 PCPs refer us to the best doctors,
6 especially since my Medicare
7 grandparents are much older, and I
8 anticipate the same happening with my
9 parents when they soon reach senior
10 citizen status.

11 My family visits multiple doctors
12 and specialists in the proposed zone,
13 including my grandparent who had a
14 stroke right before the pandemic. The
15 subway does not guarantee seating for
16 elderly and those who cannot stand for
17 a decent period of time. It also does
18 not have consistent accessibility like
19 ramps and elevators, clean and open
20 bathrooms and multilingual signage and
21 assistance throughout the whole system.

22 So in our subway rides, assuming
23 no delays, is too much for families
24 like mine, mentally and financially.
25 Our medical trips are by a car that is

1 not registered under my grandparents
2 and these trips tend to include three
3 to four people, the patient driver,
4 main caretaker and a bilingual family
5 member to help translate. The subway,
6 during this third year of the pandemic,
7 remains incredibly unsafe for those
8 immunocompromised, even the young ones
9 who have underlying conditions and we
10 are unable to isolate in a
11 multigenerational household.

12 My household and community are
13 also terrified of anti-Asian attacks on
14 the streets and on the subway.
15 Especially when they are targeted at us
16 women and our elderly, often leading to
17 death and hospitalization.

18 The subway system, including my
19 own home station, has gone through so
20 many so-called repairs without any
21 accessibility improvements. Even
22 shutting down both sides of the station
23 for over a year, years ago. The
24 service and the station continue to
25 crumble throughout my whole life as

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1 fares increase. CP will become another
2 huge burden on low-income,
3 multigenerational immigrant families
4 like mine, as we cannot receive the
5 medical care in Brooklyn. And we
6 cannot afford any further fees to be a
7 New Yorker who also frequents Manhattan
8 Chinatown for community visits and
9 resources.

10 There needs to be exemptions for
11 poor and working class immigrant New
12 Yorkers who rely on cars out of
13 survival. As we saw huge lines when
14 Green Light New York passed, and how
15 the five cent fee was exempt for poor
16 New Yorkers because every cent counts.
17 But now, the \$23 is going to kill us.

18 We also need more inclusive
19 intentional research into this program
20 before it even passes in Albany. So
21 low-income communities of color are not
22 impacted disproportionately by this and
23 are included in such hearings.

24 MS. FLAX: Conclude your remarks.

25 KATY WONG: Thank you.

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1 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

2 We have reached the final two
3 speakers on the list. After they have
4 been called, we will call the names of
5 all the speakers who we've previously
6 called, but did not yet speak. As we
7 make our way through the list of
8 speakers for the second time, those
9 present who have not spoken yet will be
10 given an opportunity to comment.

11 If you miss your name being
12 called, did not sign up to speak but
13 would like to speak, or have joined the
14 Zoom under a name that is different
15 from the one you used when you signed
16 up to speak, please identify yourself
17 in the Q and A function. You may also
18 request to speak anonymously.

19 Our next speaker is Devin Deser,
20 followed by Elderly New Yorker. Our
21 next speaker is Elderly New Yorker.

22 ELDERLY NEW YORKER: Can you
23 hear?

24 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

25 ELDERLY NEW YORKER: Mass transit

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1 is a fast paced environment. Slow,
2 frail, elderly New Yorkers with brittle
3 bones from osteoporosis can be killed
4 by being pushed down or trampled.

5 Actually, there's a victim of subway
6 violence in a -- a victim in a coma.
7 Mass transit is not for disabled with
8 balance problems, immunocompromised, et
9 cetera. Mass transit is not
10 appropriate for everyone. The push
11 back in the meeting is loud and clear.
12 Clearly overwhelming.

13 Billions of dollars given by
14 federal governments to corporations and
15 foreign countries. The federal
16 government has given billions of
17 dollars to corporate America in
18 bailouts during financial crises and
19 during COVID-19 on the backs of the
20 more than taxpayer. And federal
21 government has bailed out the auto
22 industry, the airline industry, the
23 hospitality industry, has given
24 billions of dollars in PPP loans that
25 were given to wealthy people like

1 Jarred Kushner, Tom Brady, Khloe
2 Kardashian and has given billions of
3 dollars in aid to foreign countries.
4 Let the federal government bailout,
5 further support MTA. The federal
6 government has already recently given
7 the MTA \$15 billion. What happened to
8 the \$15 billion? That was given to the
9 MTA?

10 The MTA needs money. But it is
11 not fair to take the money out of the
12 pockets of sick elderly individuals who
13 are on fixed income. There are so many
14 groups that have valid reasons for
15 exemptions that congestion pricing
16 should not move forward as per all the
17 testimony. The congestion tax will
18 cause so much pain and financial
19 hardship. Congestion price is a
20 heartless, unfair, money grab by the
21 MTA, and the plan does nothing to
22 improve the congestion and environment
23 but merely redistributes negative
24 affects of congestion and negative
25 effects on the environment.

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1 People need to contact -- and
2 state senators and assemblymen to
3 protest this outrageous congestion tax.
4 These public meetings are being
5 transcribed, and the transcription
6 should be made available to the public.
7 It is part of your job to listen to the
8 meetings. The general public should
9 not have to listen to the hours of
10 videos to learn everything that was
11 said at the public hearings.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

14 We will now read the names of
15 those on our list who have not spoken
16 for a second time, starting with those
17 we believe may be present.

18 Douglas Desir.

19 Douglas Desir, if you are
20 present, you may unmute yourself and
21 begin your remarks.

22 DOUGLAS DESIR: Can you hear me?

23 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

24 DOUGLAS DESIR: Oh my gosh.

25 Okay. I was on since 10 o'clock, so I

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1 actually went through a whole process.

2 The price -- let me recall this
3 again. Well, what it is, I'm against
4 it because what happens is that I --
5 well, I work in Manhattan in the Upper
6 East Side. I work -- my job starts at
7 midnight until 8:00 in the morning. I
8 don't deal with traffic. I don't know
9 why I have to deal with this congestion
10 price. I've been working in the city
11 for thirty-five years. And at the same
12 time, I also have a part-time job where
13 I deliver medicine, food and things to
14 people in Manhattan. But if this
15 congestion pricing goes on, I can't do
16 this anymore.

17 Tell you the truth, I did used to
18 deliver in Manhattan, and I couldn't
19 deal with it because the traffic was
20 bad and you couldn't find parking and I
21 was getting tickets one after another.
22 So after three attempts, I gave up on
23 it. So I decided to keep my deliveries
24 in the other four boroughs, Brooklyn,
25 Queens and Staten Island and Long

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1 Island and that's about it.

2 But if you do the congestion,
3 I'll say one thing. I feel sorry for
4 the people who live in Manhattan.
5 Because I think these are the people
6 that's actually pushed more than
7 anybody else. Because they're more
8 worried about their environment. I
9 think the MTA is looking for a hat in
10 hand to join the people in Manhattan to
11 cause this -- this drastic thing to
12 happen to us. Because it's going to
13 hurt the people in the outer boroughs.

14 So I can't make deliveries in
15 Manhattan anymore because I can't
16 afford to do that. And eventually, the
17 people in Manhattan, they're going to
18 lose business. That's what it comes
19 down to. The people live in a house
20 who don't work, who work from their
21 home are not going to get their food
22 deliveries, they're not going to get
23 anything done, their business is going
24 to close. I work in the Upper East
25 Side, and I look around. I don't know,

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1 maybe these people hide in their
2 apartments, but you look around
3 businesses are closing everywhere. And
4 there's homeless people sleeping in
5 front of shops. And that's not just in
6 Brooklyn and Queens, that's in
7 Manhattan all over the city.

8 So this price congestion is not
9 going to help anybody. You couldn't do
10 this at a worse time. I'm 62 years
11 old. Thank God, in a couple more
12 years, I'm going to retire because it
13 doesn't pay for me to work. It just
14 pays for me to go home, cash my pension
15 and everything else, and then that's
16 it.

17 And with this, you know, I'll
18 give the time back to anybody. Thank
19 you for e-mailing me this text. If I
20 didn't get this text, I wouldn't know
21 what was going on in the city. And
22 it's a very dangerous and bad time
23 situation we're going through. I
24 haven't taken a train in over 25 years,
25 and I'm not about to take it. Now, the

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1 last time I took it, there were people
2 doing drugs on the train and that
3 was -- okay. Thank you very much.

4 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

5 Our next speaker is Tal Barzilai.
6 Tal Barzilai, followed by Efraim Aaron.

7 Tal --

8 TAL BARZILAI: Yeah, I'm here.

9 MS. FLAX: Great.

10 TAL BARZILAI: Okay. You can see
11 me now? Can you? You can see and hear
12 me now?

13 MS. FLAX: Yes.

14 TAL BARZILAI: All right. Look,
15 congestion pricing was never supported
16 when it was first launched back when
17 Mike Bloomberg wanted this. It is not
18 supported now. The only thing it is
19 seen as, is a regressive tax to those
20 on lower incomes while a punishment to
21 those who do not have viable
22 alternatives.

23 But I feel like the groups that
24 advocate it either do not drive on a
25 regular basis or can easily afford it.

1 That is why they're the ones pushing
2 for it. And if it wasn't for the
3 relentless push, it'd be long dead
4 right now.

5 As a matter of fact, you said
6 that car ownership is not big in New
7 York City. Well, New York City is not
8 just Manhattan. Also, the city
9 boundaries do not stop where the subway
10 lines do. And there are even transit
11 deserts even in city lines itself. But
12 as a resident of Pleasantville in
13 Westchester County, even I would find
14 it faster to drive. Because during off
15 peak hours, both Metro-North and B line
16 have sporadic schedules, to which
17 driving would get me there sooner as
18 opposed to taking either of those.

19 I feel like sometimes, people do
20 not look at the causes to why we drive
21 and rather focus on the effects. If we
22 had better viable alternatives, we
23 wouldn't have to drive. But I feel the
24 main priority of congestion pricing is
25 not really to reduce congestion or to

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1 have cleaner air. It's to make a
2 revenue. Because if it got people out
3 of all their vehicles, there's no
4 revenue on this. And then it will be
5 just seen as a net money loser.

6 So yeah, if you really thought it
7 was about those things, then I guess I
8 got a bunch of New York City bridges
9 and tunnels to sell you on that. We
10 should not amend this idea. We should
11 just end it already. If you really
12 want to help the people in the outer
13 boroughs, especially in the outlying
14 areas, build that IND second system and
15 Triborough X that you were supposed to
16 build decades ago and didn't.

17 Until then, there will be
18 driving. The same thing goes for the
19 suburbs, with commuter transit having
20 sporadic schedules during off peak
21 hours. As long as that exists, as long
22 as you have those built around those
23 with just regular work schedules, those
24 that don't have it will always resort
25 to driving.

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1 So once again, you got to look at
2 the causes and not the effects. You
3 got to help them. Even in London, they
4 already improved their transit even
5 before their congestion pricing, not
6 after it. And that's the problem.
7 This doesn't really help anyone. So
8 please, do not amend this idea. End
9 it.

10 Okay. There. I'm done.

11 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Efraim Aaron,
13 followed by Jesus Urena.

14 Efraim, you may unmute yourself
15 and begin your remarks.

16 Our next speaker is Jesus Urena.

17 Jesus, you may unmute yourself
18 and begin your remarks.

19 JESUS URENA: Well, yes. Hey,
20 good afternoon. Thank you guys for
21 taking on the time, giving me the
22 opportunity to speak.

23 I drive for Uber and for Lyft.
24 During the pandemic, things were really
25 tough. I contracted COVID about three

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1 times, all while having a family. And
2 it wasn't only for monetary reasons, I
3 also wanted to contribute, I also
4 wanted to give back. You know, we were
5 considered essential workers. And as
6 it has been mentioned here by other
7 people, like it's -- it just feels like
8 we are being thrown aside. Like we're
9 no longer important. Even after, you
10 know, contributing, even after, you
11 know, being there for the city.

12 It's really unfortunate. I feel
13 like there's other solutions, other
14 ways to go about it. Currently, we are
15 in a recession, coming out of a
16 pandemic. It's just kind of nuts to me
17 for this to take place this coming
18 year, given the current state of things
19 right now. Rent being as expensive as
20 it is. Groceries being as expensive as
21 they are.

22 And then for this to go forward
23 and kind of just decimate our -- you
24 know, just decimate our -- you know,
25 the industry and put us out of a job,

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1 you know, it just -- it really doesn't
2 make sense to me. I feel like some
3 more time can be taken to find better
4 solutions to the issues.

5 Like, I struggle with it. I have
6 a newborn on the way, and now I got to
7 work finding an alternative job that
8 might compensate, you know, the same
9 way. You know, it's -- it's heart
10 wrenching. I really wish that, you
11 know, the people that are looking at
12 this will take more time, put this on
13 hold. Reevaluate it. Find better
14 solutions, a better way to get that
15 income for the MTA.

16 I understand the needs for
17 repairs. There just has to be a better
18 way to go about it. Especially after
19 coming out of a pandemic. After all,
20 these businesses are closing down after
21 inflation being what it is. There just
22 has to be a different alternative.
23 More research needs to be done before
24 this happens. It feels like no -- no
25 consideration is being taken,

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1 considering the current state of
2 things.

3 You know, people are struggling
4 out here. And it would just -- it
5 would just put us out of a job, a lot
6 of the drivers, Uber drivers, Lyft
7 drivers. People that were here for the
8 city. And not to mention everybody
9 else, all the residents and citizens
10 that I pick up that complain about how
11 much they're struggling to make ends
12 meet.

13 But thank you. Thank you for the
14 time. That will be all.

15 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

16 Our next speaker is Erika Flores.

17 ERIKA FLORES: Hello?

18 MS. FLAX: We can hear you.

19 ERIKA FLORES: Okay. Hi. Sorry.
20 One second -- so my name is Erika
21 Flores, and I'm a resident of what's
22 being called the Central Business
23 District. I've spoken before, and I
24 just want to reiterate a couple of
25 things that I've shared.

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1 I think that there's this notion
2 that the people who live in the CBD are
3 all wealthy and that we would be able
4 to kind of, you know, take on this --
5 this additional expense. We just heard
6 a gentleman who just spoke about the
7 current state of things. Groceries are
8 up. Just last week, I spent 6.99 on a
9 dozen eggs, a carton of eggs was 6.99
10 in my neighborhood. I don't live here
11 because I'm wealthy, I live here
12 because it's what I can afford. I live
13 with family.

14 It's just, you know, this -- this
15 proposal, it's going to hurt a lot of
16 people, not only within the CBD, but
17 outside of it. Neighboring -- this
18 just shuffles around, the problem. The
19 impact for the -- the -- you know, the
20 potential impact that we've seen in
21 London, how it's a disaster there, it's
22 not worth putting New Yorkers in more
23 of a financial debt. People are
24 struggling. And we are only going to
25 shift the problem to other

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1 neighborhoods, where there's going to
2 be congestion now above 60th Street.
3 Folks are going to be parking their
4 cars in those neighborhoods and then
5 kind of hopping on the train, which is
6 already an insufficient -- ridership is
7 down. Crime is up on trains. People
8 are scared. And you are going to have
9 people who are either going to hop on
10 the train and cause more delays there
11 and make that less of a -- of a
12 reliable system and people getting in
13 the cabs. So I don't understand how
14 this makes any sense.

15 In the presentation earlier, you
16 know, there's a lot of buzzwords being
17 used like environmental justice. In
18 your research alone, you show that
19 areas like neighborhoods that surround
20 the Cross Bronx or the Bruckner are
21 going to be further disadvantaged
22 because of this.

23 So how is this an environmental
24 justice policy when Black and Brown
25 people in those communities that are

1 already youth there and adults, the
2 highest asthma population in the world,
3 you are just further going to
4 disadvantage them. You are going to
5 reroute traffic.

6 And this is just not a good
7 policy. It's a money grab. We've
8 heard that over and over. These calls
9 have been by far of people saying that
10 they're against this policy. And we
11 should have -- there should have
12 been -- these sessions should have
13 happened long before.

14 I really hope that you take all
15 of this into consideration. People are
16 going to suffer, and -- disabled
17 people, poor people, people of color.
18 The very communities that you are
19 saying you are trying to help. I just
20 don't understand it. And I hope that
21 you all listen to us.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

24 We'll now continue reading the
25 list of speakers who have not spoken

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1 yet for a second time.

2 If you hear your name being
3 called, please let us know in the Q and
4 A function.

5 Sarah Gribetz. Steven Salvessen.
6 Quentin Heillbroner. Sophia Kakarala.
7 Arnold Hamilton. Peter Triestman.
8 Andrew Grossman. Darrin Gitlitz.
9 Marietta Viera. Nicole Love. David
10 Geizhals. Hassan Elhelwa. Louise
11 Torres. Bill Feinberg. Miyer Florez.
12 Cressida Connolly. Mohammed Islam.
13 Greywolf Richards. Nomi Castillo.
14 Nevena Kocic. Patricia O'Rourke.
15 Stephen Graham. Alberto Alamo. Keala
16 Montgomery. William Delaney. Rose
17 Marie Chatterton. Cullen McGraw. Adam
18 Albarran. Dario Cremades.

19 Darrell G Fulton. Donovan Hunt.
20 Craig Hudson. Haydar Akbar. Jonathan
21 Tineo. Warren Green. Kevin Ritter.
22 Rodney Hughes. Eric Diaz. Michael
23 King. Jody Stewart. Seva Giamaras.
24 Gordon Watt. Polly Brewster. Donna
25 Bartolini. Michael Golz. Bhairavi

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1 Desai. Tayo Adjapon-Yamoah. Sophia
2 Feist. Adham Ahmed. Constance
3 Stellas. Thomas Grech. Eric Dorfman.
4 Sarah Hughes. Imani Mckinnon. Jordan
5 Force. Erica Schwartz. Wendy Brawer.
6 Ahmad Qayyum. Faraz Qureshi. Carol
7 Parker. Christopher Sanders. Lena
8 Melendez.
9 Christian Arrue. Michael
10 Huarachi. Vishaan Chakrabarti. Jon
11 Jadrosich. Michelle Grossman. Caspar
12 Lant. Muneeb Rehman. Michael Prisco.
13 Mitch Watson. Christine O'Brien.
14 Sheila Pierre. Chris Castillo.
15 Caswell McLean. Alfred Lynch. Connie
16 Zambianchi. Cecilia Guerra. Filipp
17 Shinelev. Jorge Urena. Krishaveni
18 Drummond. Raul Rivera. Peter
19 Costello. Elizabeth Larkin. Patricia
20 Keenan. Beatrice Chisholm. Leo
21 Straus. David Schroeder. Cathryn
22 Myers. Charlene Burke. Charles Yu.
23 Scott Henry. Michelle Winfield. Carl
24 Wojciechowski. Mamadou Diallo. Gordon
25 Lee. Cynthia Nwamarah. Judy Densky.

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1 John Cimillo.

2 Tinatin Chargeishvili. Pierre
3 Benjamin. Donna Myers. Kurt B. Bryan
4 Freeman. Ariel Shafir. Steve Azor.
5 Henry Ward. Veronica Mosey. Lee
6 Arthurs. Keri Flaherty. Juancarlos
7 Marin. Emma Cintron. Denise Heby.
8 Joan Kimmel. Carolyn Protass. Emilio
9 Estela. Teddy Edris. Adina Shulimson.
10 Dominic Sannino. Alexander Ross.
11 Marek Kruszelnicki. Amedeo Pelin.
12 Jennifer MC. Judy Pesin. Ashraf
13 Ahmed. Matt Bewley. Joan Martinez.
14 Aura E.

15 Joseph Stoffel. Milana Meytes.
16 Bernardo Celerino. Liam Jeffries.
17 Norman Buenaventura. Wolf Hertzberg.
18 Golam Istiaque. Richard Chalfin.
19 Howard Shafer. Rosalie Shields.
20 Suzanne Musho. Joe Troiano. Irwin
21 Miller. Brian Hess. JoAnn Roberts.
22 Justin Gundlach. Alec Raggio. Harry
23 Schwartz. Tony Thompson. Ahmad Saeed.
24 Daniel Reid. Anna Kokkinis.
25 Benjamin Tolentino. Laneya

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1 Wiles. Elizabeth Pugh. Steve Sibiga.
2 Sharon Wynne-Carmona. Barry Genesen.
3 Efraim Aaron.

4 Jeff Schwane. Shane McMorrow.
5 Sonal Jessel. Xiashu Chen. 30d.
6 Robert D'Angelo. Tamir Adams-El.
7 Ronnie Dreyer. Frank Hardaway.
8 Anonymous Speaker number 2.

9 Devin Deser.

10 Devin, you may unmute yourself
11 and share your remarks.

12 DEVIN DESER: Okay. Can you all
13 hear me?

14 MS. FLAX: Yes, we can.

15 DEVIN DESER: Thank you so much,
16 everyone. I'm sorry for joining so
17 late.

18 But yes, I just wanted to quickly
19 say that I definitely disagree with
20 this congestion pricing policy that the
21 city is going to implement. Mainly for
22 me, the reasons that have already been
23 stated by many other New Yorkers or
24 other residents who depend on driving
25 into the city to support their way of

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1 life or how they've been moving
2 throughout this crazy, crazy, insane
3 time we've been through.

4 I think that an additional fee
5 that's levied upon different drivers is
6 quite disastrous in this time when
7 there's, again, record levels of
8 inflation, all the goods and prices are
9 increasing, rent is increasing.
10 Everything seems to be getting more and
11 more expensive in this time period.
12 And I feel that the city using a policy
13 as more of a disincentive versus
14 focusing on one that provides more of
15 an incentive to use public
16 transportation is not the best move at
17 this time period.

18 You know, some other people have
19 stated this well too, that the subway
20 system has not been safe for many
21 people and there are different
22 viewpoints on it. I do think that if
23 the city was to first begin with
24 providing a level of confidence that
25 they can provide a safe subway system

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1 or alternative method of transportation
2 for people to get in and get out of the
3 city effectively and efficiently, then
4 I think we can start into the
5 conversation about should people be
6 needing to drive into the city.

7 But I feel like as it stands
8 right now, some people are definitely
9 not feeling that the subway system is
10 safe. As well as driving into the city
11 as well too already has a lot of
12 disincentives already that the drivers
13 take on, including excessive fine-age
14 if you are a minute or two over the
15 parking meter, getting your car towed
16 by the Department of Transportation and
17 having to pay upwards of a 300-dollar
18 fee already. So there's a lot of
19 disincentives driving to the city. So
20 when people are going in and driving,
21 they need to get there. It's not a
22 pleasurable thing. Sometimes they
23 really do need to drive. So it's not a
24 question of like, oh, you know, it's
25 just a luxury to do so. We understand

1 the situation, the risks that are
2 involved and that type of situation.
3 So adding an additional fee on top of
4 the already excessive fees that drivers
5 already deal with, including the levels
6 of insurance, which are record high
7 across New York City, plus whatever the
8 car payments are, it's an additionally
9 excess.

10 That's all I had to say for
11 today. Thank you for listening.

12 MS. FLAX: Thank you.

13 That concludes our reading of the
14 list of speakers for a second time.

15 MR. OLIVA: Thank you all for
16 joining us today.

17 For the record, during today's
18 hearing, Paul Freidman stepped in as
19 hearing officer when I took a short
20 break.

21 For those who did not do so
22 already, we encourage you to take our
23 short survey via the QR code or link
24 currently being displayed. The link
25 can also be found in the Q and A

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1 section of the Zoom.

2 For details about the Central
3 Business District Tolling Program and
4 the Environmental Assessment, please
5 visit the project website at
6 MTA.info/CBDTP.

7 As the final reminder, in
8 addition to the six virtual public
9 hearings that have been held, there are
10 several other ways you can provide
11 comments on the Environmental
12 Assessment through September 9, 2022.
13 We encourage the public to comment via
14 the CBDTP website where you can also
15 find the latest project information and
16 sign up to stay informed via e-mail.

17 You may also e-mail comments to
18 CBDTP.org, send them via mail to CBD
19 Tolling Program, 2 Broadway, 23rd
20 Floor, New York, New York 10004, or
21 call (646)252-7440.

22 Comments may also be provided
23 directly to the Federal Highway
24 Administration via e-mail to
25 CBDTP@dot.gov, or via mail to FHWA-NY

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1 Division, RE: CBDTP, Leo W. O'Brien
2 Federal Building, 11A Clinton Avenue,
3 Suite 719, Albany, New York 12207.

4 The time is currently 6:58 p.m.
5 This concludes the hearing. Thank you
6 again for your participation.

7 (TIME NOTED: 6:58 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

:SS


COUNTY OF NASSAU)

I, Elbia Baires, a Notary Public
within and for the State of New York, do hereby
certify:

I reported the proceedings in the
within-entitled matter, and that the within
transcript is a true record of such proceedings
to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not
related to any of the parties to this action by
blood or marriage; and that I am in no way
interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand this 2nd day of September, 2022.


Elbia Merino (Baires)