



Queens Civic Congress

P.O. Box 238, Flushing, NY 11363 (718) 343-6779 fax: (718) 225-3366
www.queensciviccongress.org queensciviccongr@aol.com

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Contact:
Jim Trent
(718) 343-8830

Testimony to the NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission

Prepared by Queens Civic Congress Transportation chair Jim Trent (Creedmoor Civic)

Presented by Vice President Kathy Masi (Glendale Civic)

January 16, 2008

Thank you for the opportunity to present the concerns of Queens residents to the NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission. My name is Kathy Masi and I serve Vice President of the [Queens Civic Congress](http://www.queensciviccongress.org), an umbrella organization of more than 100 neighborhood based civic organizations representing property owners, including those owning coops and condos, and tenants who reside in every part of Queens County. I present this testimony on behalf of our Transportation Committee chair, Jim Trent, also QCC's Treasurer.

From our review of the report issued on January 10, it appears very plain to us that the commission failed to hear the voices of Queens residents. No alternative presented reflects our sound recommendation; The proposals appear to reflect the same top-down approach taken by those responsible for PlaNYC who FAILED to consult with the community of Queens; compare PlaNYC to CIVIC 2030 – the Queens Civic Congress plan and the difference becomes very compelling. It may help explain tax schemes that give out-of-towners a pass. Worse, the commission proposes a series of tax schemes without any guarantees that anything other than alternative funding actually materializes to replace pre-existing allocations.

The Queens Civic Congress remains rather familiar with the long records of New York City and State going back several administrations of using NEW funding to replace existing tax levy or other revenue sources. This includes:

- The state lottery where tax levy contributions decreasing as lottery net revenues for education increased
- State aid increases for education to New York City often - despite the past Stavisky-Goodman and current 2002 schools governance Maintenance of Effort laws too often enable the City to reduce its funding for our schools.
- The Safe Streets/ Safe City program that funded the expansion of the City's police force and helped to stem the crime reduction we experience to this day included funding for human services, school safety, seniors and other non-police programs meant to enhance safety but actually REPLACED existing funding that supported existing programs rather than create new programs or enhance existing programs.

- The E9-1-1 surcharge that was meant to sunset got used for everything under the sun while we waited and in many ways still wait for a fully enhanced emergency communications system to protect the public.

New Yorkers do not want to see money billed to deliver better service simply lost in the ozone again as the state and city and the MTA do not make good on capital investment that increases services from Queens, as well as Brooklyn and and The Bronx and relieves the severe overcrowding on many subway lines.

City administrations made commitments concerning the 7 line that now faces overruns and frankly, Queens residents as well as those from Brooklyn and The Bronx residents and Staten Islanders, and even residents of Manhattan, ought not to see new transit funding diverted to such projects.

The Queens Civic Congress calls on the NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission to promote measures that address congestion, funds for mass transit and most importantly, increase bus and subway service — not the pittance thrown as a bone to our borough to support the congestion tax scheme which merely remains a scheme to establish East River Tolls on the free crossings. Queens Civic Congress finds offensive the toll tax schemes that the commission continues to advance in apparent disregard of sound alternatives. This includes our [plan](#) which produces the greatest revenues - double any other plan -- with the greatest fairness and equity. It also includes the approach to traffic mitigation outlined in our Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free coalition's [report](#). The commission appears poised to show its true colors as a fig leaf for the city's plan or a copycat variant -- all of which gouge city residents, especially those from our home borough of Queens. Our legislators ought to commit NOW to declaring any toll/tax plan DOA.

The Queens Civic Congress [CIVIC 2030](#) platform states rather plainly: "*Maintain free use of all non-TBTA East River and Harlem River bridges for all city residents, and oppose any plan or scheme to impose a tax, fee or toll on vehicles to enter Manhattan such as the "fee" proposed by the Mayor as part of "PlaNYC".*" We stated [that](#) in March 2003 with respect to tolling the East River Bridges; the justification remains the same.

Thank you.

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<http://queensciviccongress.org/organization/members.php>