



BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT VANESSA L. GIBSON

August 31, 2022

Dear MTA and Traffic Mobility Review Board,

The Central Business District Tolling Program (CBDTP), better known as congestion pricing, will benefit the greater New York City metropolitan area. While the overall impact of the CBDTP will be positive and will ultimately cause an overall reduction of mobile air toxins across the region, the proposed program does increase air pollution within the Bronx.

Even as the Bronx has taken steps forward with reducing carbon emissions, this is a step back for the neighborhoods surrounding the Cross Bronx Expressway, due to the increased air pollution from vehicles on the highway. The MTA's report notes an overall decline in air pollution across the city and region, but an increase for the Bronx. This is primarily due to increased vehicle miles travelled on the Cross Bronx Expressway, and the reality is there would be an additional increase on other highways, including the Bruckner Expressway and Major Deegan, through secondary transportation pressure, even if the methodology doesn't show an increase. The CBDTP is therefore an issue affecting health, equity, and environmental justice issues for these communities, which have taken on more than their fair share for decades.

In order to have my support for the CBDTP, these Bronx neighborhoods need to see direct benefits that will result in a reduction of mobile air toxins. The best solution would be prioritizing the capital funding for the capping of the Cross Bronx Expressway. Money was allocated as part of the bipartisan infrastructure bill that Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman Ritchie Torres were both instrumental in getting passed, but the project will need additional resources and it should be prioritized by the city and state. It is also important that the deck on top of the Cross Bronx provide additional long-term benefits, such as providing green space or by creating a public transportation light rail line. This line could provide an east-west railway link stretching from Washington Heights to Parkchester, creating connections across eight subway lines and serving the nearly 600,000 people that live in adjacent neighborhoods.

In addition to fully funding the Cross Bronx decking, further priority should be given to projects that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as providing free buses across the entire city, or, at a minimum, within Bronx environmental justice areas harmed by the CBDTP to further incentivize public transportation options for residents that need it the most. The city should also pass electric vehicle supportive legislation that will remove hurdles for where electric vehicle charging stations can be located and provide opportunities for electric vehicle investment across the city. This will encourage the transition to electric vehicles, which will be key to reducing emissions within the city.

Other ways the city can support these environmental justice areas include prioritizing and further incentivizing renewable energy bonuses for building upgrades. The Bronx has many buildings with low-income residents and the city needs to support improvements to these buildings in order

for building upgrades to happen. For NYCHA buildings, the city needs to prioritize and fully fund building conversions to PACT/RAD programming while also providing enough capital to add renewable energy upgrades.

While I want the focus of this testimony to be on the Cross Bronx, I also want to acknowledge the impact this will have on workers such as livery, taxi, and cab drivers who must enter Manhattan and should not be penalized for it. These drivers should be treated like passenger vehicles that will be charged only once each day for entering or remaining in the Central Business District, as this will avoid them being penalized for taking fares that have them cross the congestion pricing boundary.

I acknowledge that the CBDTP will be a benefit for much of the city, but the Bronx has been burdened by the Cross Bronx since its construction under the notion that it is good for the region as a whole. With the CBDTP adding to that historical burden, it is time the Bronx receives major capital improvements that will provide real health benefits in these environmental justice communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vanessa L. Gibson".

Vanessa L. Gibson

Bronx Borough President