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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

March 28, 2019

Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader of the New York State Senate
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the New York State Assembly
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie,

I am pleased to hear that the State of New York is moving closer to enacting congestion pricing on private and commercial vehicles that enter the Manhattan Central Business District.

When I supported a congestion pricing plan in 2008, congestion was one of the top issues facing our city then. Unfortunately the proposed plan failed and in the time since congestion has only worsened. According to the city's Department of Transportation (DOT), bus speeds across the city have now dropped to 7.44 mph and vehicles traveling within the Midtown core crawl at an even worse 5.0 mph. That congestion costs the metropolitan region \$20 billion a year in lost productivity, according to an analysis by the Partnership for New York City.

As you may know, I recently held a public hearing on congestion pricing as a means to engage residents of Manhattan not only on their opinions for or against congestion pricing but also, if passed, on what specific details they believed must absolutely be included in any successful program. A summary, but by no means exhaustive list, of the potential issues and concerns brought up at the hearing included:

1. Discounts or exemptions for people with disabilities, who may be unable to use our city's public transit system
2. The potential removal of the congestion fee currently in place on our city's yellow and green taxis given the current instability of the industry
3. Discounts or exemptions for residents who live within the proposed zone
4. Discounts or toll credits for drivers who pass through the congestion zone as well as another tolled crossing

5. Discounts or exemptions for drivers of more environmentally-friendly or space-efficient vehicles, like electric cars or motorcycles
6. Potential measures that the state will take to ensure that the MTA will spend the revenue generated from congestion pricing responsibly.
7. Earmarking of revenue generated by congestion pricing solely for the city's subway and bus systems, also known as MTA-New York City Transit
8. Steps the city and state must take to properly enforce bus lanes in order to ensure that alternative forms of transportation are as useful and successful as possible

As you continue to deliberate on the details of a potential congestion pricing plan in Albany, I'm sure you are discussing each and every one of the concerns listed above. There are three key issues listed above I believe must absolutely be addressed under any fair and workable congestion plan.

First, I wholeheartedly believe that people with disabilities, who either can not use or are locked-out from our inaccessible public transit system, must absolutely be exempted from congestion pricing.

Moreover, I believe that the \$2.50 congestion surcharge levied on taxi drivers last year must be put on hold until new regulations stabilize the industry. Furthermore, while residents within the potential tolling zone do contribute to congestion when they drive their vehicles and therefore should not have a blanketed exemption, I do think they should receive a discount, as was successfully done in London.

Finally, it is my hope that the State will be working hand-in-hand with both the MTA as well as the city DOT in advance of congestion pricing's potential implementation to increase public transit quality and access in all of our five boroughs. It is just common-sense that as we begin to charge for one transit option, we must increase both the quality and quantity of alternatives offered.

This was done successfully in other cities that have enacted congestion pricing—London, Stockholm, and Milan most notably—and must absolutely be done in New York. In Stockholm alone, in advance of the surcharge's implementation, the city invested in 197 new buses, 16 new bus routes, and increased and improved pedestrian and bike infrastructure. As we open up more space on our congested streets, we must look to fill it with environmentally-friendly and space efficient modes of transportation.

It would be a failure on our part if we enacted congestion pricing but failed to roll out increased bus service, bus lanes, widened sidewalks and expanded pedestrian space, as well as increase our protected bike lane network.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

cc: Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor, City of New York
Honorable Timothy Kennedy, Chair, NY State Senate Committee on Transportation
Honorable Leroy Comrie, Chair, NY State Senate Committee on Corporations,
Authorities, and Commissions
Honorable William Magnarelli, Chair, NY State Assembly Committee on Transportation
Honorable Amy Paulin, Chair, NY State Assembly Committee on Corporations,
Authorities, and Commissions
Patrick Foye, President, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Veronique Hakim, Managing Director, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Andy Byford, President, MTA-New York City Transit
Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner, NYC Department of Transportation
Bill Heinzen, Acting Commissioner, NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission
Kathryn Wylde, CEO, Partnership for New York City