



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Steven D. Rhoads

## New York State Senator Rhoads & Assemblyman Ra Continue to Rail Against Congestion Pricing, Fight to Ensure Accountability, & Prioritize Public Safety

STEVEN D. RHOADS March 22, 2024

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Albany, NY – New York State Senator Steve Rhoads and Assemblyman Ed Ra introduced an amendment (S.5934) to congestion pricing that would force the issue of tolling to come back to the legislature to approve any recommended toll amount that is established before such toll amounts are established and adopted by the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority Board. This bill would also require the Traffic Mobility Review Board to recommend a

privacy risk plan in relation to the collection, processing, transfer, and disclosure of personal data. In the technological age, Senator Rhoads and Assemblyman Ra are committed to protecting resident's private data. The bill is currently in the Senate Transportation Committee and the Assembly Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee.

During Senator Rhoads' impassioned plea for the amendment on the Senate floor, he emphasized the importance of accountability as elected leaders in government. The residents of New York State who send their elected officials to Albany have the right to expect that their elected officials will own it when these congestion pricing tolls are established. **Senator Rhoads said**, "turning that responsibility over to random people who most of the public will never have the opportunity to meet instead of taking responsibility for a policy that the legislature created to actually establish those tolls is shirking our responsibility and this amendment will place the responsibility back where it lies – with the elected officials of the legislature."

The MTA is \$48 billion in debt and Congestion Pricing is expected to generate \$1 billion. This revenue is already earmarked to the MTA capital program, which currently already has a funding shortfall of \$3 billion. The predicted money generated by Congestion Pricing is just a drop in the bucket in comparison to the actual needs of the MTA. With this evident mismanagement in mind and fare-hikes coming soon, Senator Rhoads renewed his calls for a forensic audit of the MTA, which he refers to as "Money Thrown Away."

**Senator Rhoads added,** “Congestion Pricing is nothing more than a money grab with a facade of environmental justice that allows the MTA to take advantage of Long Island residents and businesses. This proposed amendment (S.5934) ensures residents have a voice in setting toll amounts – through their elected Albany representatives – and puts the safety of the taxpayers first by requiring the implementation of a data privacy plan. Tolls should not be left up to an unelected board of Albany bureaucrats. There needs to be accountability. The MTA Board has not historically been a vigilant watchdog for consumers or riders, but has been nothing more than a lap dog for the governor and a lap dog for the radical policies that are often passed by the State Legislature under one-party rule. While residents continue to grapple with the State’s self-inflicted migrant crisis, soaring crime, rising food costs, and one-party control in Albany continuously imposing heavy taxes, Congestion Pricing serves as yet another assault on the suburbs to fund the MTA's evident incompetence and lack of responsibility. Instead of going after the fare-evaders that cost the MTA \$700 million, the MTA is making it more difficult for first responders, essential workers, non-profit workers, teachers, as well as residents driving into Manhattan for work, education, medical appointments, or leisure activities. It is high time for this senseless cycle to come to an end and put the hardworking taxpayers first.”

“Congestion pricing is a flawed idea to further tax suburban taxpayers under the guise of environmental protection. Imposing further financial strains on residents already struggling with an affordability crisis should never be the default approach. Long Island taxpayers are tired of being treated like an ATM. To do so without even making an effort to heed the voices of those affected is negligent at best and devious at worst. Policies like congestion pricing must prioritize the well-being of all New Yorkers, and that is precisely the principle guiding our proposed amendment,” **said Assemblyman Ed Ra, 19th Assembly District.**