



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anthony H. Palumbo

## New York State Senators, Union Leaders, & Farmers Rally To Oppose Congestion Pricing

ANTHONY H. PALUMBO November 19, 2024



Congestion Pricing Press Conference

Long Island, NY – Republican Senators, Steamfitters Union Local 638, New York Farmers Bureau, and community members rallied together to urge Governor Hochul to rethink her backing of the congestion pricing plan and call on the legislature and partners in the federal government to repeal her plan, which threatens to impose an additional hidden tax on New Yorkers and make New York even less affordable. The press conference even spotlighted two industries that would be affected by the ill-conceived congestion pricing plan – labor and

agriculture. Just one week following the recent election, Governor Hochul's apparent shift in gears on congestion pricing raises questions about the sincerity of her previous "pause" on the initiative, which is now seen as nothing more than a political maneuver. On Monday, the MTA board moved forward by approving a base toll of \$9, set to escalate to \$12 between 2028 and 2030, and eventually reaching \$15 by 2031. This decision marks a troubling trajectory for local businesses and commuters, who now face the reality of increased costs imposed by a system they believe primarily serves to further taxing already struggling families and enterprises.

During the press conference, Senator Rhoads read off direct quotes on the Governor's website from prominent officials praising the Governor's "pause" on congestion pricing back in June. With conviction, Senator Rhoads argued that these sentiments are just as relevant today as they were back in June:

**United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew said,** "Governor Hochul heard the concerns of educators and ordinary New Yorkers that this plan for congestion pricing just shifts pollution, congestion, and costs onto already struggling communities. As an organization that has gone to court to fight this plan, we applaud the Governor for making the right decision."

**New York City Police Benevolent Association President Patrick Hendry said,** "The governor made the right call here. The congestion tax is not only a burden on police officers and other essential commuters - it's bad for public safety. The NYPD is already severely understaffed and struggling to recruit and retain police officers, who can find better pay and benefits in almost any other police department. Forcing cops to dig deeper into their pockets just to report for duty will send even more of them running for the exits. A congestion tax would mean even fewer cops on the streets. New Yorkers can't afford that."

**Local 237 Teamsters President and Secretary Gregory Floyd said,** “Working people were saved today by Governor Hochul’s decision to indefinitely postpone congestion pricing. We would have paid the price which many of our members could not afford. Glad she understands.”

**Long Island Association said,** “Our region faces an existential affordability crisis which is why this is the wrong time to be saddling New York residents and businesses with additional cost burdens, so the Governor made the absolute right decision to suspend the implementation of congestion pricing.”

As the MTA begins a public education campaign to promote the imminent return of congestion pricing, the Senators remain concerned about the timing of this initiative, coinciding with the busy holiday season when public attention and engagement may be at its lowest. The implications for Long Island commuters, businesses, and local delivery services are profound, as they stand to be disproportionately affected by the toll hikes. Local Senators joining the conference voiced their strong disapproval, emphasizing that the congestion pricing scheme threatens to stymie economic recovery and innovation at a time when support for businesses is paramount. The call to action is clear: Governor Hochul must prioritize the needs of New Yorkers over the agendas of bureaucrats, flexing her leadership to protect local economies and the very fabric of our communities.

“Governor Hochul's immediate push for congestion pricing right after the election not only exposes a political stunt that prioritizes her radical agenda, but it also turns a blind eye to the real issue—MTA mismanagement—while imposing yet another burden on hardworking New Yorkers. Governor Hochul can't fool the public by framing this new tax as a "savings" plan simply because it will be phased in. It's become painfully clear that congestion pricing is not actually about the environment or stopping congestion—it's about money. Sadly, hardworking New Yorkers are the ones who will be paying the price for Governor Hochul's commuter tax, adding to the growing sentiment that that New Yorkers feel forgotten and

forced out of a state that has become unaffordable to live, work, and raise a family.

Unpausing congestion pricing is not courage, it cowardice as the Governor is sidestepping the tough budget choices a true leader should make in this situation.” **said Senator Steve Rhoads (SD5).**

“The farm community works on razor thin margins and any additional cost or burden on the farmers is going to impact everyone. This will severely impact the farmers as it’s going to increase the cost of doing business that will ultimately be necessary to pass along to the consumers and the people that consume the local products,” **said Rob Carpenter, Administrative Director and County Manager of the New York Farmers Bureau.**

“Our brothers and sisters are already struggling with inflation and cost of living and this is just another tax that is going to get passed along to the hardworking middle class workers of New York. This is just going to be another tax on top of our members. Additionally, all the contractors that are in the HVAC or construction industry will be taxed. We have to bring equipment in, servicing buildings in the city, and when our contractors are sending their service trucks in their getting taxed. I’ve been a life-long registered Democrat, and I’ve always voted Democrat, I never left the party, based on these policies, it seems like they left behind the hardworking middle-class workers of this country,” **said Vincent Gaynor, Business Agent for Local 638 Steamfitters.**

“Congestion pricing is nothing less than a commuter tax on our over-taxed, hardworking Long Island families. No amount of spinning by Governor Hochul can change the fact that we’ve been lied to, nor somehow change a tax into a savings. It’s a tax and this tax hurts our families and businesses and makes it harder for New Yorkers to make ends meet. Our Long Island communities deserve better,” **said Senator Jack Martins (SD7).**

“We knew Governor Hochul's move to pause congestion pricing just before an election was politically motivated, but her recent move to proceed with this commuter tax plan almost

immediately after the election confirms this was simply a ploy from the Governor to escape accountability from New York voters for the unpopular policies that have resulted under Albany's one-party control.

Nassau County residents depend on their cars for work, medical care, and family visits, yet they'll bear the brunt of this \$9 toll—which is expected to eventually increase—along with added costs for trucks, buses, taxis, and ride-shares. The real issue isn't traffic, it's the MTA's mismanagement. Instead of taxing drivers, the MTA should address inefficiencies and toll evasion. This tax will only worsen affordability and continue to drive families and businesses out of the State. New Yorkers deserve real solutions, not politically driven gimmicks," **said Senator Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick (SD9).**

"Governor Hochul and New York's Democrat leadership are once again looking to Long Islanders to bail out the MTA. The Governor paused this tax only long enough to get past Election Day. It is a slap in the face to struggling Long Islanders to ask them to once again pay higher taxes just to get to work. Now more than ever, Long Islanders needed relief. Instead, they got deception and higher taxes," **said Senator Anthony Palumbo (SD1).**

"Before asking New Yorkers to provide more funding for the MTA, we must first demand that the MTA gets it's fiscal house in order," Murray added, "Let's start with these 4 steps... first, have the State Comptroller conduct a forensic audit of the MTA... next, replace all waist-high turnstiles with head-to-toe turnstiles to eliminate turnstile jumping... also, crackdown on toll evaders who are using "ghost plates", plate covers or other methods to obscure their license plates... and finally show 100% compliance with the use of the fingerprint scanners for tracking overtime," **said Senator Dean Murray (SD3).**

"The return of the congestion pricing scheme just over a week after the 2024 election clearly shows that June's delay was politically driven. This unfair tax will take money out of the

pockets of the very residents who have already voiced their opposition to this money grab without even giving them a chance to have a say in its return. That is clearly the wrong approach and demonstrates again how our residents are viewed as the ATM for the rest of New York. Instead of asking them to give more, why doesn't New York State tap into the close to \$5 billion that were wasted on the illegal migrant fiasco or make more of an effort to fight fare evasion? It is time for the state to end the congestion pricing fiasco for good and start finding alternative and fair ways to fund transit in New York," **said Senator Mario Mattera (SD2).**

"Congestion pricing is just more bad policy put in place by the one-party-rule of New York State. The solution is simple, crack down on theft of services like people jumping turnstiles. Instead, Governor Hochul continues to punish those who are law-abiding citizens just trying to live and work in New York, while rewarding crime and criminals," **said Senator Alexis Weik (SD8).**