



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith Announces Passage Of Traffic Congestion Mitigation Bill

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State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith (D-St. Albans) today announced that the Senate has passed a bill to address traffic congestion in New York City.

Today's bill, Smith noted, "presents a formal commitment to address the problem of traffic in New York City, strengthening the City's case for nearly \$500 million in federal funding to expand public transportation."

"This is the right way to handle traffic congestion, by taking a measured, well-thought-out approach that carefully weighs Mayor Michael Bloomberg's proposal," Smith said.

The legislation stems from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's campaign for a plan that would charge drivers a fee for entering a zone of Manhattan during high-traffic hours.

Smith and other elected leaders announced last week that an agreement had been reached on a bill granting the Mayor authority to present a detailed traffic mitigation plan "within a zone of severe traffic congestion in Manhattan." The legislation passed today requires that a special 17-member commission be set up to examine such a plan.

Under Mayor Bloomberg's original proposal, drivers were to be charged a fee for entering a zone of Manhattan below 86th Street -- a high-traffic region that receives approximately 800,000 cars and trucks daily -- with cars being tolled \$8 and trucks \$21. However, today's legislation provides room for altering the proposal, and in no way limits the congestion zone to a region south of 86th Street.

The 17-member New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission is to be comprised of appointments made by State and City officials who are charged with reviewing the Mayor's plan and issuing recommendations on how it should be implemented. One of those appointments would be chosen by Senator Smith.

The Mayor's plan is subject to the approval of the New York City Council and the State Legislature by March 31, 2008.

Smith said that though he recognizes the importance of establishing a traffic congestion mitigation commission, but expressed disappointment that his colleagues in the Senate Republican Majority chose not to take up other important legislation left on lawmakers' desks when the Senate's regular session ended in June, including Campaign Finance and Wicks Law reform.

He noted that other priorities include the Healthy Schools Act, Campaign Finance Reform, a bill to limit children's exposure to violent video games, legislation to spur upstate economic development and a measure to expedite Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment.

"I've heard reports that we might come back in September to address further legislation. Why wait?" Smith concluded. "These are commonsense bills that speak to the issues of most concern to all New Yorkers. We have the needs of an entire state to address. There is no time like the present for us to do so."