



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge Toll Rebate

EVAN WEINBERG April 16, 2019

| ISSUE: **TOLLING OUTRAGE, STATEN ISLAND RESIDENT VERRAZANO-NARROWS BRIDGE DISCOUNT PROGRAM**



New legislation provides Kings County residents discount on excessive toll costs

Brooklyn, NY; April 16, 2019-- State Senator Andrew Gounardes (SD-22) and Assembly Member Mathylde Frontus (AD-46) have introduced legislation to provide Brooklyn residents who, in one month, make at least 10 trips across the Verrazzano-Narrows bridge using an E-Z Pass account, the same discount currently extended to Staten Island residents.

“The MTA has once again said to residents of the outer-boroughs that they just don’t matter,” said Gounardes. “At \$19, the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge is the most expensive toll bridge in the country. At this rate, commuters who regularly travel across the Bridge spend at least \$4,250 annually on tolls alone. For the thousands of Brooklyn residents who rely on the Bridge for travel to work, school and medical appointments, these outrageous rates are unaffordable, unacceptable, and highlight the gross inequities of New York’s transit system.”

“It’s time for the MTA to stop passing the buck. The New Yorker who commutes cannot afford to pay \$19.00 per day on a toll,” said Frontus. “Commuters within the city are already being forced to pay more due to a fare hike for subways and buses. The line has to be drawn somewhere when you see consistent increases in fares without corresponding tangible benefits being produced to match the burden.”

The bill will:

- provide for Kings County residents who, in one month, make at least 10 trips across the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge using their New York customer service E-Z Pass to receive the same discount that is available to Staten Island residents using a NY Customer Service EZ Pass.
- be applicable to non-commercial vehicles only.

Gounardes continued, “New York City should be known for pizza, bagels, and baseball. Not the most expensive toll bridge in the country. It’s time to level the playing field.”

“It’s about time that we recognize that Staten Island and Brooklyn are one community, and rising tolls are becoming a barrier between families on both sides of the bridge. I applaud Senator Gounardes’ efforts to give Brooklynites a break, and make it easier for them to reach

their jobs or visit their families on Staten Island,” said Congressman Max Rose (D-11)

State Senator Diane Savino (SD-23) said, “New Yorkers who travel back and forth between Staten Island and Brooklyn regularly for work, school, or to visit family desperately need relief from surging toll prices. I’m proud to support the proposed commuter rebate so that hard working residents can actually afford their commutes. I will continue to work with my colleagues to examine new ways that we can make traveling between boroughs more convenient and affordable.”

Councilman Justin Brannan (CD-43) said, “Last year they fixed the spelling of the Verrazzano Bridge. What they forgot to fix, though, is the outrageous disparity between what residents of Brooklyn pay in tolls compared to their fellow New Yorkers on Staten Island. Nobody is saying Staten Island shouldn’t get a discount, but what about Brooklyn? It’s about time we are part of the conversation since, last time I checked, the bridge has two sides.”

Gounardes and Frontus, whose districts in southern Brooklyn have been plagued by ongoing transportation issues, including large public transit “deserts,” have been staunch advocates of measures to decrease the burden of rising transportation costs in New York City, including shedding light on the disproportionate burden on residents of the outer-boroughs.

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Relates to a rebate for residents of Kings county who frequently commute across the Verrazzano-Narrows bridge

March 13, 2019

In Senate Committee Transportation

Sponsored by Andrew Gounardes

Do you support this bill?