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TimesLedger Newspapers (all editions)

MTA East River bridge toll plan unfair to residents of Queens

Letter to the editor, Thursday, December 18, 2008 12:35 PM EST

On Dec. 4, the Commission on MTA Financing, chaired by former MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch, released its proposals. It included an inefficient and inequitable toll tax that makes little sense and merits rejection.

The imposition of tolls on the currently free East River and Harlem River bridge crossings, including the Queensborough Bridge, essentially recycles the congestion tax. Both that tax and this new repackaged scheme would take \$2 for administration for every \$3 for transit. The state Assembly correctly shunned the parent scheme earlier this year.

Instead of the Ravitch plan that also disappointingly lets Albany and City Hall off the hook, we urge TimesLedger Newspaper readers and our public officials to look at our coalition plan that makes the city and state step up to the plate.

We identify specific revenues that empower the city and state to fund this core responsibility. This includes a modest 4 cent state gasoline levy (\$255 million), a vehicle registration fee increase (\$250 million), increased fines for illegal parking (\$75 million), higher parking meter rates (\$50 million) and more realistic city fees for the use of street space by construction contractors and utilities (\$500 million).

Other initiatives raise significant funds to support mass transit, including a non-resident income tax that apportions its proceeds between city and suburban transit projects (\$1.8 billion) and a modest real property tax surcharge on real estate development that benefits from mass transit (\$741 million).

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