

DANIEL R. GARODNICK
COUNCIL MEMBER, 4TH DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE
211 EAST 43RD STREET, SUITE 2004
NEW YORK, NY 10017
(212) 818-0580
FAX: (212) 818-0706

CITY HALL OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, ROOM 1841
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-7393
FAX: (212) 442-1457

garodnick@council.nyc.ny.us



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**Testimony of Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick
before the New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission**

January 16, 2008

Thank you to the members of the New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dan Garodnick and I represent the Fourth District of the New York City Council, which runs from 14th to 97th Streets on the East Side of Manhattan.

I am in the process of digesting the Interim Report that was issued last week. Let me be brief, both because I will have occasion to vote on your Final Report, but also because I am still carefully considering the merits of the alternatives. The Interim Report focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of several proposals; today, I want to focus on several elements that I hope that will emerge in your Final Report.

First, it is important that the Final Report not charge Manhattan residents for leaving the prescribed zone. As you know, I objected to that element of the Mayor's initial plan on the grounds that a resident in the zone should not be penalized simply for leaving during the business day. Creating the framework to charge for movement within the zone was also unwieldy and expensive. That charge created a need for many more charging stations, each with EZ-Pass readers and license plate recognition cameras. It increased the number of transactions that needed to be processed for each paying customer, and the hundreds of new cameras within and around the zone's perimeter raised legitimate concerns about individual privacy.

Second, the Final Report must make the City and State eligible for \$354 million in federal funding for transit and transportation system improvements. Of course, pricing needs to be the primary congestion mitigation mechanism for us to qualify for these critical funds. No plan should be sent to the City Council that this Commission in its judgment does not believe qualifies for those funds.

Third, the key to making a pricing model work is to ensure a significant reduction of vehicle miles traveled, and to raise revenue that is dedicated to our public transportation infrastructure. I am inclined to believe that New Yorkers will support a traffic mitigation plan only if they are assured the fees they pay will be dedicated to funding public

transportation – and public transportation projects only. It is commonly expected that revenue generated by congestion pricing would be used to bring our transit system up to a state of good repair and to fund system expansion projects. Unfortunately, there has been too little discussion of how we might be able to protect the funds generated from any congestion pricing plan and to ensure that they are dedicated to mass transit improvements. This should be clearly articulated in the Final Report.

Fourth, the plan should include a comprehensive approach to the issuance of parking placards. A startling report by the *The New York Times* last year concluded that some 35% of government workers in Manhattan drive to work.¹ In response, I introduced legislation in the City Council that would require the Mayor of the City of New York to disclose in his annual Management Report all parking placards that have been issued by a City agency. Just last week, the Mayor announced plans to require every City agency to reduce placards by 20%, to centralize their distribution, and to focus on enforcement to ensure compliance. I regard the Mayor's initiative as an important first step in managing placards. There is no public account today of how many agencies have the power to issue legal parking placards, or how many they actually issue. I encourage you to include the management of parking placards in your Final Report.

Let me conclude by saying that I am a supporter of a pricing model to reduce congestion in our central business district. In midtown Manhattan today, we are snarled in bumper to bumper traffic, blocked boxes, and exhaust fumes -- and we need relief. You deserve great credit for bringing forth some details for a variety of potential plans, and we in the Council look forward to seeing your recommendation in two weeks.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

¹ William Neuman, *In Traffic's Jam, Who's Driving May be Surprising*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, January 12, 2007