

EDITORIAL

Widen input for tolling plan

Let public, others voice ideas on traffic

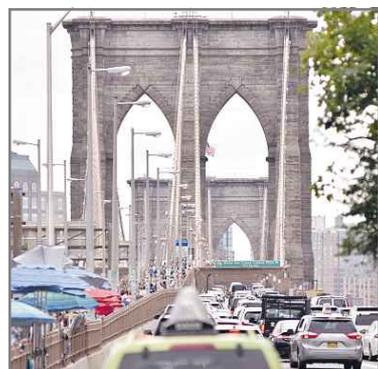
How do you "Fix NYC" without NYC?

The answer, quite simply, is you don't. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's efforts to create a congestion-pricing plan have inched forward with the forming of an advisory panel. He touted the group as filled with experts, local leaders, Metropolitan Transportation Authority representatives, and "stakeholders."

But this Fix NYC group of 16 doesn't include any current New York City official, even though the city is the largest stakeholder in this process.

That's not an auspicious start.

A plan to improve the flow of traffic on bridges, tunnels and roads, and change driving behavior is essential to the region's future. Proposals could include adding tolls to the now-free East River bridges, paired with lower costs on other crossings, a potential fee for entering midtown Manhattan, particularly at peak hours, surcharges for for-hire vehicles and even allowing, for a fee, single-occupancy vehicles to use high-occupancy highway lanes.



DAVID HANDSCHUH

Congestion pricing would likely bring tolls to the Brooklyn Bridge.

Such a pricing plan is designed to provide more funding for regional public transit and could add \$1.5 billion in annual revenue to the MTA's coffers. And it could reduce congestion on the highways of Long Island, the roads leading in and out of New York City and the busiest streets in midtown. Congestion pricing could bring a future with less pollution while making our day-to-day lives better in small ways and large ones.

But any congestion-pricing plan will meet with plenty of resistance no matter what. A group of 16 that includes just one woman and no City Hall representation sitting in a room together, crafting an answer to some of our region's greatest challenges in private, seems doomed to fail. The state has to be open to all ideas and concerns and those who can best express them, including the public. In cities where congestion pricing has succeeded, public outreach has been a critical component, and New York will be no different. State officials should waste no time in allowing opportunities for public comment and planning for hearings once they have a plan to discuss.

Meanwhile, the economic modeling to be done by a state consultant, and the cost and revenue projections to be reviewed by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, have to be shared so local residents know how a proposal would affect them.

And New York City must be a partner. Mayor Bill de Blasio, thus far has broadly slapped down the concept, but in an interview last week with this editorial board, he indicated a more nuanced view. He said he would consider a congestion pricing plan as a way to fund the MTA if it "is somehow going to get political support and be fair." But so far, de Blasio said, the city has never been consulted on the issue. "Let's have that conversation," he said.

Cuomo needs suburban and city support. Implementing congestion pricing will be difficult but with the right leadership and a plan that spreads around clear benefits to the city and suburbs, it could happen. This is one critical public policy initiative that shouldn't break down as it travels the hostile highways between Albany and City Hall.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Flexibility is needed to lure big employer

Columnist Joye Brown asked why Nassau County would change a formula in sewer hookup fees that would bring the county less revenue ["Fees cut despite cash crunch," News, Sept. 21]. The answer is that a sewer hookup fee is a one-time charge that can easily be made up in a few years from tax revenue generated by a given property.

Flexibility in sewer hookup fees can incentivize economic development, which not only generates sustained property tax revenue but can increase sales tax revenue and job creation. If we hope to attract companies like Amazon to our region, we will need every advantage.

The sewer hookup fee for Amazon's proposed 8-million-square-foot headquarters would be costly by any-

one's calculation. In Suffolk, there would be no negotiation. In Nassau, negotiating that fee would be part of the incentive package to attract this international megacorporation. Rather than characterize Nassau's policy as a conspiracy, we should debate whether flexibility or inflexibility brings the best rate of return for Long Island's economic growth.

Kyle Strober,
Hauppauge

Editor's note: The writer is executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island, a business advocacy organization.

N. Korea-U.S. taunts could bring disaster

Much has been written about how President Donald Trump was swept into office on a rising tide of resentment felt by millions of Americans, for whom official Washington

represented a useless enclave of power and privilege. Not enough has been written, however, about the virulent strain of anti-intellectualism that accompanied this populist uprising and that still predominates among many of Trump's most ardent supporters.

The latest example can be found in blindly supporting the provocative name-calling exchanges with North Korea's leader ["Trump: Don't talk to N. Korea," News, Oct. 1]. I don't see the reason other than the vague sense that Trump's hurling of schoolyard insults somehow upholds the honor of America and satisfies a childlike need to lash back at a despotic and unpredictable regime.

Little thought seems to have been given to the risk of nuclear miscalculation that can result from this type of impulsive, emotionally cathartic, but chillingly dangerous behavior. What might armed