

More 'Nays' From Queens For Mayor's 'Congestion' Plan

Queens pols and businessmen greeted Mayor Michael Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan announcement with loud cries of "no way". Meanwhile, a new study was released confirming that Queens would be the borough hardest hit under the proposed plan.

The initial Queens outcry to the mayor's announcement 11 days ago came from Borough President Helen Marshall and the Queens Chamber of Commerce, supported by Congressman Anthony Weiner, State Senators Frank Padavan and Serphin Maltese, both Republicans and John Sabini, a Democrat; Assemblymember Catherine Nolan and City Councilmembers David Weprin and James Gennaro, all Democrats.

Last Sunday, the *Daily News* published an analysis of the plan, which showed Queens would be the hardest hit borough, Councilmembers John Liu (Flushing), Leroy Comrie (St. Albans) and Joseph Addabbo Jr.

(Ozone Park), all Democrats, also called on the mayor to provide fast and affordable public transit to all city residents before his plan goes into effect.

Under the plan, cars would pay an \$8 fee and trucks \$21 to enter Manhattan south of 86th Street between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The measure is intended to drastically reduce pollution.

Liu, chair of the council Transportation Committee, said, "People drive to work in Manhattan primarily because they lack real transit options. To impose these fees on commuters without giving them feasible alternatives would be unfair."

He and members of his committee called for expanded bus service, increased

access to commuter rail lines and high speed ferry service. These alternatives are to be provided at no more than a \$4 fare each way.

The *News* analysis found that six community board areas in Queens were among the top 10 in the city from which the most Manhattan-bound motorists travel each day.

Board 7 in Northeast Queens topped the list with 8,700 vehicles going into Manhattan, Board 13 in Southeast Queens had 6,800 and Board 5 (Ridgewood, Maspeth Glendale, Middle Village and South Elmhurst) had 5,800.

Weiner, who's expected to run for mayor in 2009, bashed Bloomberg for his statement equating the congestion fee with the \$12 one pays to see a movie.

The mayor's plan needs the state legislature's approval to go into effect. Opposition from Padavan and Maltese, both leaders in the Republican-controlled senate, does not bode well for the mayor's plan.

WEINER'S CALL FOR TERROR AID ANSWERED: After repeatedly calling upon Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to release \$24 million in security grants to high-risk non-profit and religious institutions, Congressman Anthony Weiner was finally informed last week that Chertoff had released the funds.

The grants will go to yeshivas and synagogues in the five boroughs as well as New York City landmarks such as the Museum of Modern Art and the New York Public Library, Weiner (D-Queens/Brooklyn) said.

The lawmaker, who is on the Congressional Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security, said the

institutions will get "significant funding" to implement security measures at what are considered "potential targets".

After waiting a year for Chertoff to release the funds, Weiner stated: "It's high time the Department of Homeland Security realized that our non-profit institutions were at risk. Worshippers, museum-goers and hospital visitors expect and deserve a safe environment, and these grants will go a long way towards ensuring their safety."

In Fiscal Year 2005, Weiner helped secure \$6.3 million to protect dozens of non-profit institutions in New York City, including \$2 million for 30 yeshivas and synagogues, with an average grant of \$65,000. Eligible institutions can receive up to \$100,000, which can be used to train security personnel and install security measures such as surveillance cameras, barriers and controlled entry systems. The objective is to protect visitors to these institutions and valuable artifacts from harm.

QUEENS DEMS HONOR CROWLEY: The Queens Democratic organization chose the biggest gun in its arsenal—County Chairman Congressman Joseph Crowley to be the honoree at the organization's annual spring dinner-dance on Thursday evening, May 17. Tickets are pegged at \$300 per guest for the event, which will be held as is customary at Antun's in Queens Village with a 6 p.m. start.

GOP PLANS REGISTRATION DRIVE: Following up on a pledge he made when he was elected Queens Republican County Leader Phil Ragusa has announced creation of a Republican Voter Registration Drive Committee to try to get more GOPers elected to public office.

At the same time, Ragusa announced that attorney Kimon Thermos would head the committee. He noted that Thermos switched from Democrat to Republican

last year and distinguished himself as a fundraiser for state Senator Frank Padavan.

Ragusa, an accountant, said he would urge every candidate campaigning in the next few elections to include a rigorous voter registration drive in their efforts. "If we've even nominally improved the registry in one cycle, in two or three cycles, we might turn a noncompetitive district into a swing district, taking back Queens one district at a time," he said.

PADAVAN WANTS DEATH PENALTY FOR COP MURDERERS: Following the murder of a state trooper during the pursuit of a suspect in the Catskills, Padavan called on the Democrat-controlled Assembly to support a bill that would mandate the death penalty for people who kill police officers.

"[The Assembly] has dragged its feet long enough on this issue," Padavan (R-C, Bellerose) declared. "I'm embarrassed to be in the same legislature as them and their politicking."

Padavan said eight New York City police officers and state troopers and two Auxiliary Police Officers in Manhattan had been slain in the line of duty since 2005.

WOULD CLOSE GUN SALE LOOPHOLES: City Councilmember Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona) and state Senator Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn) intend to introduce legislation to close dangerous loopholes that permit access to gun parts, magazine clips, and other gun paraphernalia by individuals who are not licensed to carry or possess firearms in New York City.

The two ex-cops said that currently many of these products can be purchased in gun shops, through mail order catalogues and on the Internet without a gun permit.

Monserrate said he has always supported stiff gun controls and restricting the purchase of these other items the same way as gun purchases "just makes sense".



National Crime Victims' Rights Week



The Office of District Attorney Richard A. Brown sponsored a community awareness program on Thursday, April 26 as part of the 27th annual commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, which honors the victims of crime and pays tribute to those who provide services and support to such victims. The program was held in the Queens Criminal Courthouse in Kew Gardens. Students from Public School 106 kicked off the program by leading those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a vocal selection by Jerriese Johnson of the East Village Gospel Choir and musical and theater performances by students of P.S./I.S. 268 and P.S. 106. Mary Overton, a Eucharistic Minister, delivered the closing Benediction. Brown also presented \$50 saving bonds to four Queens fifth-graders who were chosen as the winners of a poster contest in which they were to create an artwork which reflected support and lending a helping hand. The winners were Najee Prophete, Anniesa Baldeo, Olufemi Agoha, and Nyla Biggs, of Public School 106. Pictured l. to r.: District Attorney Richard A. Brown, Mira Shapiro, Senior Director of the Queens Child Advocacy Center, and NYPD Assistant Chief Diana Pizzuti, Borough Commander of Patrol Borough Queens North, presenting \$50 saving bonds to P.S. 106 students Olufemi Agoha, Najee Prophete and Anniesa Baldeo, winners of the poster contest.