

BY RICHARD GENTILVISO

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and a host of elected and non-elected representatives, including average citizens, registered opinions on Mayor Michael Bloomberg's pricing plan at York College last week.

"This is a huge issue, an alarming national issue," state Senator John Sabini, speaking before the New York City Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission, said.

Sabini said he opposed congestion pricing because it discriminates against communities in Western Queens. "The near-in outer boroughs," said Sabini.

"We will get the congestion. We will get the additional pollution," Assemblymember Catherine Nolan said.

Marshall said studies show more Queens residents drive into Manhattan for work than any other borough. "There's a good reason for that, she said, pointing to the fact the borough has only four major subway lines.

"Congestion pricing hurts more than it helps," said city Councilmember David Weprin, calling it a regressive tax that punishes the middle class and families. "I urge you not to adopt the current plan."

But Veronica Vanterpool of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign said 95.5 percent of Queens residents would not be affected by the proposed congestion pricing plan. "It is false and unfair to promote congestion pricing as a regressive tax," she said, noting the average annual income of people owning cars in Queens is \$64,000 while those without cars earn less than \$36,000.

"We live in a city where we can no longer overlook traffic congestion," said Vanterpool.

Assemblymember Rory Lancman said congestion pricing represents a \$2,000-a-year tax on working people "who drive less by choice than because of an unreliable transit system".

Lancman said not enough new mass transit options are in the congestion pricing plan and proposed \$500 million "to massively

Congestion Pricing Pros, Cons Aired



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expand express buses" in Queens.

Jeff Zupan supports the plan, at least for the three-year pilot study. "The risk to public health is too high and too great to the public economy," said Zupan, a senior fellow at

the Regional Plan Association. He said seven percent of Queens residents travel by car to Manhattan.

"We also have congestion problems here in Queens," said Councilmember Leroy

Comrie, concerned the plan's focus is only on the central business district below 86th Street in Manhattan.

In addition, Comrie is concerned about local commerce. "We have to be very careful about who we charge and what businesses we charge if we want to keep them in Queens," he said.

Walter McCaffrey, a former city councilmember, now a consultant for Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free, said, "Not a single bit of [economic] analysis has been done." He called congestion tolls "significant economic burdens that will soon be up to \$20 in a flash".

Karla Quantero deputy director of planning for Transportation Alternatives, a citizens organization dedicated to reducing automobile use, said federal money for mass transit would help to clean the air. "Neighborhoods in Queens need traffic relief. Congestion pricing is a means to this end."

Daniel Hendrick of the New York League of Conservation Voters also supported the congestion pricing plan because it would provide funding for mass transit. "Buses are in need of repair and subway service is lousy," he said.

Roland Lewis, president and CEO of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, spoke in favor of the plan largely because it could include subsidies for ferry service.

Joseph Hartigan, a resident of Far Rockaway, also spoke in favor of ferry services. "Why is it Staten Island gets to commute for free?" he asked.

The commission was created by the New York state legislature last July to make recommendations on traffic congestion in the city. Bloomberg has proposed creating a congestion zone in Manhattan south of 86th Street from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday with an \$8 daily charge for autos and small commercial vehicles entering or leaving the zone and \$21 for trucks. Their report is due by Jan. 31, 2008.

BY THOMAS COGAN

The October meeting of the 108th Police Precinct Community Council was held without the commanding officer presiding, since he had the misfortune of being ill. But Commander Captain Thomas Kavanagh had news to assuage his indisposition: he had been advanced to the rank of deputy inspector. Unlike some other Queens precincts, the 108th had not had a deputy inspector as commanding officer until now, though more than one previous commander had attained that rank after moving on to some other sector of the Police Department. In the commander's absence, Executive Officer Captain Joseph DiBartolomeo presided, delivering a report that showed yet another decline in the crime rate and handing out Cop of the Month plaques to three officers who solved an armed holdup and an assault. During the question-and-answer session that concluded the meeting, members of the audience had lots of complaints.

The first offense solved by the cops of the month occurred Sunday, October 7 on Northern Boulevard in Woodside. Two women in a car that was not in motion were approached by a man with a gun who

108th Precinct CO Promoted To Deputy Inspector

demanding their money, bullying about \$30 out of them before he ran off. Officers Thomas Hirdt and Patrick McMurray were assigned to the case and, according to Sergeant Robert Knights, the precinct's supervisor of detectives, had the alleged perpetrator apprehended within 48 hours. Knights said the pair's knowledge of street life was an aid in their investigation.

The other incident occurred the following Friday, October 12, on Queens Boulevard at 49th Street, where the No. 7 line turns to follow Roosevelt Avenue. There, a dispute between two men came to a climax when one slashed the other across the forehead with a knife and fled. Officer Victor Castillo was assigned to the investigation and soon apprehended the man accused of the assault. Knights said that Castillo has since then been made a detective.

DiBartolomeo reported that index crimes as a whole were off 28 percent in the past month, and that all such crimes in

particular were off except felony assaults (including the one described above), which were up 8 percent. The first person in the evening's audience to lodge a complaint could probably understand that last statistic, since she reported that Windmuller and Doughboy Parks, which adjoin each other along Woodside Avenue in the 50s, are frequent scenes of assault, though they are heavily trafficked. She said she reported an assault Saturday morning, October 28, but got no response that she could remember from precinct headquarters. A woman on 39th Street near Queens Vocational H.S. said she recently witnessed dozens of students standing and watching while one person beat up another. She called headquarters and got what she called a slow response, nor could she say she was encouraged by the response to her reports about drug dealing in her neighborhood. Officer Maro Youssef replied that an undercover cop had made drug possession arrests on 39th Place and in the vicinity

recently, and produced reports to back up his assertion. Alfredo Padilla, from 39th Street, said that, by his observation, a bodega at 39th Place and 47th Avenue is selling alcoholic beverages to minors. A woman on 60th Street between Woodside and 43rd Avenues said she's in graffiti hell because scrawlers in the neighborhood are tagging just about any unmarked surface they can find. She cited one of the taggers as particularly notorious because his mother adds to the neighborhood's discomfort by calling from her window in the early morning hours, begging for her son to come home.

In addition to replies by Yousef, who addressed another complaint by reporting that many summonses were issued the previous weekend to Woodside businesses on Northern Boulevard that parked their cars on the sidewalk, his predecessor, Detective Glenn Yule, had some commentary also. Yule, who now is attached to Patrol Borough Queens North, made a summary of what he believes is done right in the precinct, adding that there are an exceptional number of high schools full of restless teenagers within its boundaries. "The commanding officer does his best with what he has," he concluded.