

Lower Manhattan residents expressed their opposition to the City's congestion tax scheme at a Community Board 1 forum organized by Council Member Alan Gerson



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Traffic-riddled Lower Manhattan was once thought to be fertile ground for congestion pricing support, but Silver said he has heard strong opposition and support from his constituents. Two Downtown congestion pricing forums last week suggested that there is no consensus in Lower Manhattan.

At a Community Board 1 forum Wednesday, the handful of board members who spoke, disparaged congestion pricing or expressed skepticism about the idea.

C.B. 1, which covers most of the area south of Canal St., has not taken a position yet.

“There is a clear diversity of opinion [in Lower Manhattan],” said Councilmember Alan Gerson, who co-sponsored both forums. “The mayor’s original plan was draconian for Downtown and I don’t think people have had enough of an opportunity to digest the alternatives.”

But C.B. 1 members who spoke two days later did not see it that way. Ro Sheffe said he was skeptical the congestion pricing money would really go to mass transit, a concern that also resonated at the C.B. 2 forum.

Kathleen Moore, who lives near the World Trade Center site, said she was skeptical because if the plan is too successful reducing traffic, it may mean little money for the subways. “It’s not cutting congestion — it’s shifting things around,” she said. “The money disappears.”

C.B. 1 member Allan Tannenbaum, fresh off of a trip to London, warned the panelists not to apply London’s congestion pricing plan here. “London is not New York,” Tannenbaum said. He added that drivers are increasingly willing to pay the fees in London, so congestion there is returning.

Tannenbaum gave his own list of suggestions for reducing traffic: stricter enforcement of blocking the box and jaywalking laws, smaller cabs, limits on corporate black cars and, as his “most radical” suggestion, affordable housing so first responders who work Downtown can live Downtown too.

Read the entire article at http://www.downtownexpress.com/de_246/silversignals.html