

**"They thought we would just believe all their promises. Not us.
We learned a long time ago that promises are not guarantees.
We got the facts. Their scheme doesn't work.
And that's a fact."**

State legislators need to know what they buy when they must go back to their constituencies to explain any vote they take. When it comes to a vote to toll the free bridges, promises of bus service enhancements make the rounds. No one questions the unfairness and inequitable, regressive levy that tolling represents. The promises of more service to induce legislators to vote for tolls and threats to cut service unless legislators cave in on tolling warrant a look at bus service issues.

If enacting tolls means more bus service, the MTA of two books fame must explain the source of the money when Keep NYC Free already documented the revenue issues associated with tolls – that tolls do not cut it and no net money exists under the current toll scheme. And for that matter, Ravitch testified that under the original scheme the MTA remains free to shift the toll money promised for bus service. The money is not there and will not be there through tolls.

And by the way, the MTA plans to rely on borrowing again and use the Ravitch proceeds to fund a capital plan. That model means we will still be paying for these projects years later and in year six, the Ravitch revenues will not be available to fund a new capital plan and the next round of gouging will be upon us.

Even if you believe tolls could provide some cash, note that the MTA ties bus service improvements to a new Regional Bus Authority – a new MTA-like agency, still subservient to the MTA, to combine city and suburban bus lines. A single regional bus authority for the entire MTA region, merging its city and suburban and former private line bus systems, just offers an excuse to combine the lower cost city routes with higher cost suburban routes. City routes could end up on the block to subsidize routes from outside the city; longer lines, longer waits, buses with riders packed in like sardines.

At a time when legislators press the MTA to cut its bloated staff, the geographic area covered by a massive new bus agency requires new tiers of management. The region remains too huge for its top officials to be hands on managers.

Other issues to look at include the under-funded pension systems of the suburban lines. Who pays if all go under the same roof? Want a hint?

Ridership helps determine the average cost per bus ride. The latest available 2006 data indicates that the average ride costs New York City Transit \$2.10, MTA Bus (former private lines subsidized by New York City) and Long Island Bus \$3.40, and Westchester's Bee Line \$3.60. Guess who might take the money under the Ravitch scheme? By the way, the MTA compiles no data on the cost per ride for different bus and subway routes. Hmm.

Keep NYC Free (Please visit www.KeepNYCFree.com) and others proposed sound, fair and equitable alternatives to tolls that we have previously shared and stand ready to discuss.

- Corey Bearak, Esq., Policy Advisor, Keep NYC Free
(718) 224-8010/ (718) 343-6779; cell: (516) 343-6207