



Congestion pricing is just the city's next big scam

By [Michael Goodwin](#)

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Government scams come in many guises, but few are more misleading than the boondoggle known as congestion pricing. The [version threatened for Manhattan](#) has little to do with relieving congestion and everything to do with pouring another mountain of cash down the transit-system sinkhole.

The worst part is that the enormous new tax, likely more than \$11 for cars and \$25 for trucks, wouldn't fix either of the problems it is ostensibly meant to solve. Advocates don't expect much of a reduction in traffic, and they concede that the \$1 billion collected annually would not be nearly enough to rescue the MTA.

Nonetheless, it's full speed ahead on the road to nowhere. This is New York at its worst.

If cutting congestion were really the aim — and it should be — there are easier and cheaper ways to make a difference. Limiting delivery and commercial trash pickups to off hours and raising penalties for double-parking would be good places to start.

Then there are the invasive bike lanes. It is no coincidence that congestion grew worse just as bike lanes spread like the plague. And I'm not alone in noticing that most lanes are empty most of the time and that the most frequent users are restaurant delivery guys. Limited use doesn't justify the cost or the impact on vehicular traffic.

For pedestrians, especially the elderly, bike lanes often make crossing streets a more dicey proposition because riders routinely run red lights and go against one-way traffic.

Sure, the advent of Uber and other ride services brings more cars into the city, but all the more reason why efforts to keep traffic moving should be the first order of business.

If clean air is the issue, the worst pollution comes when cars, trucks and buses sit idling. Engines are more efficient when vehicles are moving.

Instead, anti-car zealots in the city and Albany, like former mayor Michael Bloomberg before them, want to make a buck off the misery of drivers they helped to create through poor traffic management. They don't even pretend that charging drivers astronomical sums for the privilege of inching along would end gridlock. Bloomberg wanted to charge private cars \$8 and trucks about \$21, all to eliminate as little as 6 percent of vehicles.

Despite the big hike in the planned charges for both cars and trucks, there is little talk about whether Midtown speeds would actually increase.

Nor is there any analysis about the impact on the cost of living in New York, with the price of every bottle of beer and quart of milk rising as delivery companies pass along their higher costs to consumers.

And what about the bureaucracy that would be needed to administer the plan, including the establishment of residential parking permits for people who live just outside the congestion zone.

Otherwise, commuters will drive to the edge of the zones and look for street parking to avoid the usurious fees, creating gridlock there.
And for what?

To reward the [MTA for its poor management](#) and wasteful ways.
All the descriptions of the agency as “cash-strapped” are true only in the sense that its best talent is burning money.

No matter how much it gets, it will never be enough.

Recall that [New York Times story](#) showing it cost \$3.4 billion for a single mile of new tunnels and tracks on the East Side Access project, seven times the worldwide average.

To that end, [Gov. Andrew Cuomo is proposing changes to the MTA’s governing structure](#) to give himself more power and be ultimately responsible. It’s an interesting argument, in part because it aims to obscure the fact that Cuomo already has effective control, as he proved by hiring top leaders and dictating that the Second Avenue Subway get top priority.

Still, Cuomo is right that power was split to protect the agency from politics, but it also shielded everyone from accountability. His idea might be better, but that can’t be assumed.

So here’s a modest proposal: A test period of, say, two years where Cuomo gets all the MTA power and the headaches. If it is clear that, after the two years, he has made major reforms, including on better financial controls, then the hunt can begin to find additional money.

Read the op-ed on line at: <https://nypost.com/2019/01/15/congestion-pricing-is-just-the-citys-next-big-scam/>