

Empire State Transportation Alliance Position Paper

The Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA) supports tolling of East River bridges as an effective means of reducing traffic congestion and raising additional funds to support transportation projects. Mayor Bloomberg proposed using new toll revenue to maintain current city services during this fiscal crisis, but determined that tolls could not be instituted fast enough to contribute to the current budget. In any case, over the long-term tolls should be directed to maintain, rebuild and expand the city's transportation system. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should begin immediately so that tolling can be put in place as soon as possible.

We envision E-ZPASS variable tolling on the East River bridges as the first step in a smart congestion pricing system for New York City. The current system encourages drivers to go out of their way to access the free bridges, underutilizing the MTA's tolled bridges and creating debilitating congestion at the free bridges, especially during rush hour. Placing tolls on the currently free East River bridges would rationalize the overall transportation system, moving some drivers to public transportation and others to the most conveniently located crossing.

Moreover, the toll system for the East River bridges should be a value-pricing system, wherein tolls are higher during peak travel periods each day and discounted off-peak. Value pricing, utilizing proven E-ZPASS technology, would significantly decrease rush hour congestion and provide a monetary benefit to those able to travel in off-peak periods. This system should be applied to the city-owned bridges and the MTA crossings to create a consistent pricing system, utilizing the MTA's expertise in operating toll bridges. Modern E-ZPASS technology means that tolls can be put in place with high-speed collection systems, avoiding long lines. These systems are being installed throughout the region now.

Tolling would generate approximately \$500 million annually. Any agreement on tolling should guarantee that over the long-term the full annual revenue be dedicated to supporting transportation, with a focus on capital investment. The toll surpluses on the MTA facilities are already used to fund transit service, fares and capital improvements. While ESTA strongly backs tolls on the East River bridges, the tolling plan must result in a net revenue gain for the city's transportation system.

American Planning Association

CIVITAS

Council on Transportation

Environmental Defense

General Contractors Association

New York Building Congress

New York League of Conservation Voters

New York Public Interest Research Group Straphangers Campaign

Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Regional Plan Association

Transportation Alternatives

Tri-State Transportation Campaign

The above are preliminary signers.

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