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# **Congestion Pricing Exemption Wars:** ***The MTA Empire Strikes Back Against Private Buses!***



For more than a century, buses have been the beating heart of transportation in and around New York City. From the articulated New York City Transit buses to the double-deckers weaving through Manhattan streets to the intercity buses bringing travelers from across the country, these workhorses have ferried generations of New Yorkers and visitors alike.

In the early days, horse-drawn omnibuses transported New Yorkers along cobblestone streets. As the city sprawled and technology advanced, gasoline-powered buses took over, their rubber tires gliding over paved avenues. The iconic red double-deckers, introduced in 1905, quickly became a beloved symbol of the city.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the city limits, a vast network of intercity

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.topviewnyc.com/packages/brief-history-of-new-york-city-transportation>

buses connected New York to the rest of the nation, while smaller regional lines crisscrossed the surrounding states, transporting residents between rural towns and the big city.

Today, the bus industry in and around New York City is comprised of many service types and operators transporting millions of commuters, tourists, and students each day. These include school buses, publicly and privately operated commuter buses, intercity buses, tour and sightseeing buses, airport shuttles, and specialty operation buses. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) operates almost 6,000 buses,<sup>2</sup> making it the largest municipal bus fleet in the United States. As of the third quarter of 2023, MTA buses showed weekday ridership of approximately 2,150,000 passengers.<sup>3</sup> The Port Authority Bus Terminal, the largest bus terminal in the country serving commuters and intercity travelers, serves an estimated 260,000 passengers on a busy weekday.<sup>4</sup> Over 10,000 school buses operate in New York City<sup>5</sup>, serving 1.5 million students<sup>6</sup>, over 1 million of whom attend New York City's public schools.<sup>7</sup>

Buses, along with vans, have also found a place in limousine company fleets. These vehicles offer a number of advantages over traditional limousines, such as being more spacious and accommodating larger groups. They can also be equipped with amenities like Wi-Fi and entertainment systems, making them ideal for business meetings or airport transfers. Additionally, charter buses and vans can be more cost-effective than limousines, making them a more attractive option for budget-conscious clients. The shift to buses and vans is just one example of how the transportation industry is adapting to the changing needs of its customers.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://data.ny.gov/Transportation/MTA-2025-2044-20-Year-Needs-Assessment-Bus-Fleet-I/pssfs7fa/data\\_preview](https://data.ny.gov/Transportation/MTA-2025-2044-20-Year-Needs-Assessment-Bus-Fleet-I/pssfs7fa/data_preview)

<sup>3</sup> <https://metrics.mta.info/?ridership/daybydayridershipnumbers>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.panynj.gov/bus-terminals/en/port-authority/pabt-history-.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/school-bus-sftp-final.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/doe-data-at-a-glance>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.privateschoolreview.com/new-york>



*Image: Daniel Bowen*

Buses are a key piece of New York City’s transportation system. Not only do they transport people inside and outside the City, but they also mitigate congestion by taking millions of cars off the road. One bus can carry the equivalent of 40 to 60 single-occupancy vehicles but with fewer emissions and taking up less of the roadway.<sup>8</sup> The City and the surrounding region rely on buses to get people where they need to go. With the number of vehicles entering the City at an all-time high of about 335 million tolled bridge and tunnel crossings, congestion mitigation is more important than ever.<sup>9</sup> However, the MTA’s congestion pricing program – as currently proposed – may impact the costs and operations of many of those buses, whether under bus or limo operators. While private buses can and should be part of the solution, as an efficient form of shared mobility to complement public transit, the proposed congestion pricing does not include this policy acknowledgement.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.amli.com/blog/why-buses-are-more-sustainable-than-cars>

<sup>9</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/carmageddon-car-traffic-into-nyc-hits-new-high-mta-says>

## *A Long Time Ago in a Legislature Far, Far Away...*

Congestion pricing was first seriously examined by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Bloomberg and a specially appointed state commission pushed to create an \$8 fee for inbound car trips into the Manhattan core between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. It was projected to produce \$491 million annually for transit improvements, cut driving time spent in standstill traffic by 30 percent, and slash emissions.

Crucially, the plan also included a transit build-out. Expanded local and express bus and subway service was called for, in order to prove transit as a viable alternative for an even greater share of commuters and show the congestion fees weren't meant to be punitive. With the MTA, the city secured \$354 million in federal funds for these improvements, contingent on the passage of the plan. The plan was blocked in the state legislature and the improvements did not come to fruition.<sup>10</sup>

Fast forward to the summer of 2017, and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency for the MTA due to ongoing reliability and crowding issues on mass transit.<sup>11</sup> The subway was particularly affected by outdated infrastructure causing overcrowding and delays. By 2017, only 65% of weekday trains performed on time – the lowest rate since the 1970's. MTA buses were affected to a lesser extent. This crisis was called “The Summer of Hell.”

The main causes that attributed to this crisis were a lack of funds, signal slowdowns, and degrading infrastructure. Politicians at the mayoral and gubernatorial level were found to have removed \$1.5 billion of MTA funding through gradual cutbacks and maintenance deferments. Historically, MTA funds were also used as a “piggy bank” for the state, with the issuance of bonds benefiting the state at the MTA's expense. By 2017, a sixth of the MTA's budget was allocated to paying off debt, a threefold proportional increase from 1997. The MTA also was prone to overspending and focusing on superficial improvements over key infrastructure issues.<sup>12</sup> Later that summer, Governor Cuomo drafted a proposal for congestion pricing in New York City to raise funds for city transit and reduce congestion.<sup>13</sup>

The Central Business District Tolling Program, also known as congestion pricing, was officially conceived in 2019, over 150 miles away from NYC in the New York State capital of Albany, through the legislature's enactment of the MTA Reform and Traffic Mobility Act. This legislation directed the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA) to establish a tolling program to curb congestion in the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD). The CBD is defined as Manhattan south of and inclusive of 60th Street, excluding the FDR Drive, the West Side Highway, and any surface roadway portion of the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel connecting to West

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-16/new-york-city-has-a-new-congestion-pricing-plan>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/nyregion/cuomo-declares-a-state-of-emergency-for-the-subway.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/18/nyregion/new-york-subway-system-failure-delays.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/8/14/16142868/cuomo-congestion-pricing-plan-nyc>



Street.<sup>14</sup> By law, the Program must generate at least \$1 billion a year to finance \$15 billion for MTA transit and commuter rail capital projects.<sup>15</sup>



**Members of the TMRB from Left: Special Advisor, Juliette Michaelson; TMRB Chair, Carl Weisbrod; John H. Banks; Elizabeth Velez; and Kathy Wylde**

The Act established the Traffic Mobility Review Board (TMRB), which was tasked with issuing a recommended tolling structure for the Program.<sup>16</sup> On November 30, 2023, the TMRB produced its report, outlining its recommended tolling structure.<sup>17</sup> The “Base Auto” rate for passenger vehicles and passenger-type vehicles with commercial license plates is \$15, capped at once per day. All other types of vehicles will pay each time they enter the CBD unless they qualify for one of the very few exemptions. The rate for buses ranges from \$0 to \$36 depending on the nature of the bus’s operations and time of day. All rates would be 75% lower during overnight

<sup>14</sup> <https://new.mta.info/project/CBDTP>

<sup>15</sup> <https://new.mta.info/document/127761>

<sup>16</sup> <https://new.mta.info/project/CBDTP>

<sup>17</sup> <https://new.mta.info/document/127761>

hours (9 pm to 5 am on weekdays, and 9 pm to 9 am on weekends). These rates are for E-ZPass users, and will be higher for those not using E-ZPass.

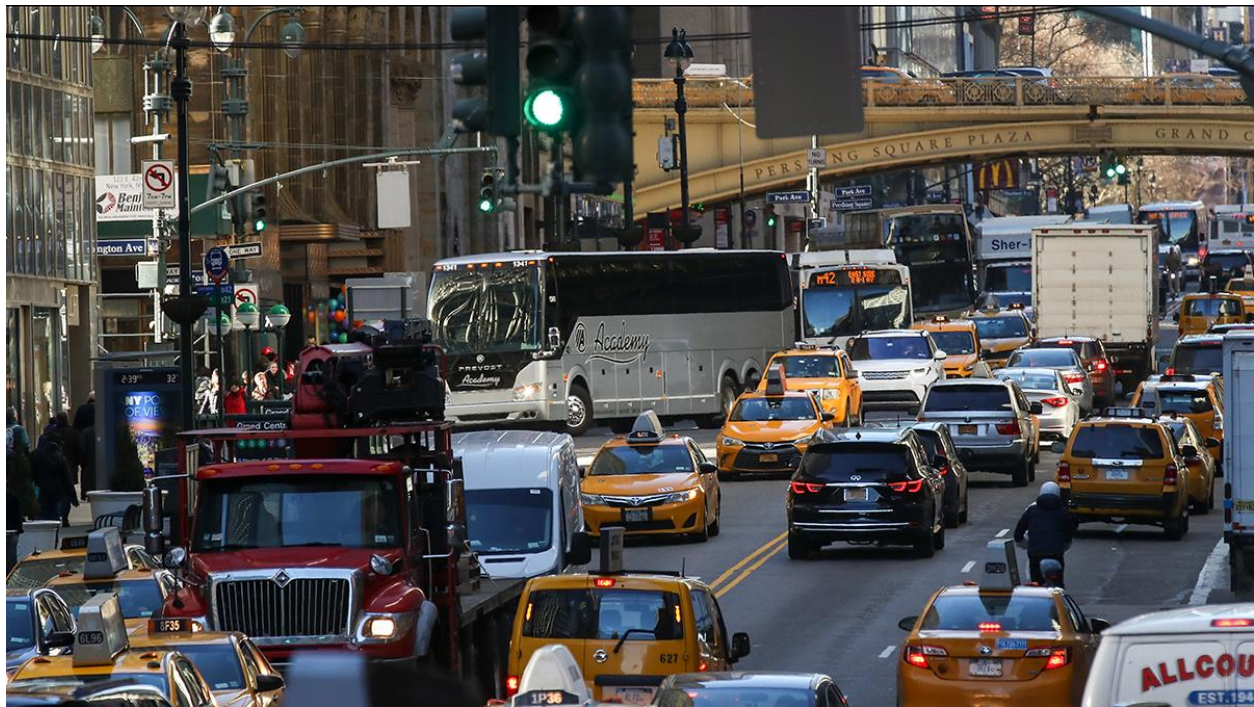
<b>Vehicle Classification</b>	<b>Charge</b>	<b>Overnight Rate (9PM-5AM weekdays; 9PM- 9AM weekends)</b>	<b>Crossing Credit for Lincoln, Holland, Hugh L. Carey, &amp; Queens- Midtown Tunnels</b>
Passenger Vehicles (Base Auto)	\$15 (capped at once per day)	\$3.75	\$5
Small Trucks (moving vans, box trucks)	\$24	\$6	\$12
Large Trucks (articulated, pulling one or more trailers)	\$36	\$9	\$20
Transit & Commuter Bus	Exempt	n/a	n/a
Intercity & Charter Bus	\$24	\$6	\$12
Tour Buses	\$36	\$9	\$20
Commuter Vans licensed by TLC	Exempt	n/a	n/a
Yellow taxis, green cabs, & black cars licensed by TLC	\$1.25 per ride to, from, and within the CBD	\$1.25 per ride to, from, and within the CBD	None
App-based FHV's licensed by TLC	\$2.50 per ride to, from, and within the CBD	\$2.50 per ride to, from, and within the CBD	None
Motorcycles	\$7.50	\$1.88	\$2.50

On December 6, 2023, the TBTA Board, which is coterminous with the (MTA) Board, voted to proceed with the steps necessary to submit for public comment a proposed toll schedule in compliance with the State Administrative Procedure Act (SAPA). As part of SAPA, TBTA will hold a public comment period and a series of public hearings before adopting a final toll schedule. A 30-day testing phase and a 60-day public information campaign will precede the start of toll collection. By law, for the first 60 days, only the established tolls – no additional fees, charges, or

finest – will be collected. When toll collection begins, vehicles that enter the Central Business District will be tolled.<sup>18</sup>

## *The MTA Empire Strikes Back Against Private Buses*

The TMRB’s recommendations group buses into three different categories. Intercity and charter buses comprise one group, which is charged a \$24 base fee. Tour buses are another group, charged a \$36 base fee. Lastly, transit and commuter buses – whether publicly owned or privately owned and under government contract providing commuter services – would be exempt along with commuter vans licensed by the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission. The TMRB did not recommend a general exemption for school buses because they are often deployed for purposes beyond transporting students to school. However, the TMRB urged the MTA to explore providing a specific school bus exemption when transporting students to and from school.



*Image: NBC New York*

The TMRB’s final report explains that “[c]ommuter buses merit an exemption from the CBD toll because they serve a public purpose and reduce congestion by offering affordable, predictable, and safe transit service for millions of people. They are a core component of the region’s public transportation system.”<sup>19</sup> For congestion pricing, commuter buses include private for-profit operators contracting with local, county, or state governments to provide public transit service. To qualify as a commuter bus, the operator must be under contract with a government

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<sup>18</sup> <https://new.mta.info/project/CBDTP>

<sup>19</sup> <https://new.mta.info/document/127761>



agency to provide fixed-route bus service. Otherwise, it will be considered an intercity bus and subject to a base toll rate of \$24 for each entry to the CBD, and \$6 overnight.

Unlike commuter buses, the TMRB reasoned, intercity and charter buses deployed for private for-hire transport do not serve commuters daily, “although they do provide an efficient, quasi-transit option, especially for people of more moderate means.” As for tour and sightseeing buses, the TMRB believes they “do [not] serve a quasi-public transit role and should be charged \$36 for the disproportionate congestion they cause in the CBD.”<sup>20</sup>

For limousine companies operating buses and vans, those buses will be charged the charter bus rate. While they may be transporting large numbers of people who would not find public transit suitable for their transportation needs, the TMRB viewed them as serving only a “quasi-public” transit role.

Exempting publicly owned and government-contracted buses helps maintain affordability and accessibility for millions of daily commuters, ensuring that these vital public services remain financially viable. There is a strong argument that buses serving all of the riding public – not just those who use public transit – should be exempt. The charge on private bus services could lead to an increase in operational costs and translate to higher ticket prices for passengers who rely regularly on essential intercity and charter bus services. At first glance, sightseeing buses may not appear to have a public transit role. Upon closer inspection, it is clear that some do. Thousands of tourists use “hop on, hop off” sightseeing buses every day to travel between iconic and famous sites around the City.

As of this writing, the MTA has taken the view that buses either fall into public or private functions. As noted below, this is a unique approach given the bus exemptions in place in the congestion pricing plans in London and Stockholm. Private and public busing operations serve much of the same purposes, often in different places or for different kinds of riders. It should not matter whether someone pays a private or public company for their transportation. What should matter is how effective a vehicle is at delivering large numbers of people to their destinations. Riders of private transportation companies already pay more than those riding public transit – often to or from places that public transit does not serve. The approach to buses should be neutral – and equitable – across the board.

While this issue now impacts only New York City and its metro area, other cities are considering implementing congestion pricing as well. If a precedent is set for charging commuter and other buses across the country, it would hurt an essential and affordable service for many Americans by raising operating costs and ticket prices everywhere. Buses should be exempt across the board, as they offer essential services to commuters and riders while reducing the number of private vehicles on the road, reducing congestion.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://new.mta.info/document/127761>

## *Impact on the Limousine and Black Car Industry*



Over the past few decades, the black car and limousine industry has undergone substantial transformation, spurred by technological advancements, shifts in consumer preferences, and evolving business models. Many operators have diversified the type of services and vehicles offered to meet the demands of corporate clients, wedding parties, and others. Traditionally associated with luxurious stretch limos and luxury sedans, the limousine industry has pivoted to include a wide range of vehicles catering to various preferences and occasions, including daily employee shuttles, airport transfers, and chartered groups. In addition to executive sedans and SUVs, customers now have access to luxury vans, party buses, shuttles, and motor coaches.

The amount that these different vehicles will pay to enter the CBD will depend on whether it is a TLC-licensed for-hire vehicle (FHV), a passenger-type vehicle, or a bus. Congestion pricing will see black cars and limousines licensed by the TLC charged \$1.25 per trip to, from, and within the CBD, similar to the Congestion Surcharge. The same rate applies to yellow and green taxis, as well. High volume, or app-based, FHV's will be charged a higher per-ride charge of \$2.50. This per-trip charge was devised after the MTA's original proposal to charge taxis and FHV's only once per day was panned as logistically difficult to pass on to riders and potentially a financial burden on drivers.

Based on the information currently available, limousines, black cars, and FHV's licensed outside of New York City will be subject to the Base Auto rate, which applies to sedans, minivans, SUVs, pick-up trucks, and small vans registered as passenger vehicles or have commercial license plates. The TMRB report does not specify vehicle seating capacity, but it includes a graphic to illustrate the types of vehicles that fall into the Base Auto category.

Sedans, minivans, SUVs, pick-up trucks and small vans are classified as autos, and subject to the auto rate.



*Image: TMRB*

It is important to note that there is a 75% discount for overnight entry—9:00 pm to 5:00 am on weekdays, and 9:00 pm to 9:00 am on weekends. If an employee shuttle service uses small vans and makes its first entry before 5:00 am, then it will pay only \$3.75 for the entire day. However, larger vehicles that do not qualify as passenger-type vehicles should expect to be categorized as an intercity/charter bus and charged for each entry, \$24 during the day and \$6 overnight.

### ***The Return of the Bus Jedi!***

The bus industry is pushing back against congestion pricing and the disparity in the proposed tolling structure among the different types of operations. In an open letter to the TMRB (<http://tinyurl.com/4hm2wjmy>), **Glenn Every, President of BUS4NYC**, and **Patrick Condren, Vice President and Secretary of BUS4NYC**, advocated for an exemption for all buses from congestion pricing. **BUS4NYC** is an NYC-based advocacy group comprised of bus company owners that promotes the industry as a viable transportation solution and local economic driver in New York City. In the letter, Bus4NYC points out that many privately operated services keep people out of their private vehicles. There are also vital commuter bus services that do not have a government contract but generate millions of dollars for New York State and the MTA. Charter

and tour buses arrive in New York City daily to bring crowds to Broadway and local businesses, while airport connections provide vital transportation to the millions of travelers who come through the area's airports.



*Michael M. Santiago via Getty Images*

BUS4NYC argues that all buses – regardless of whether they are transporting people under a government contract – are essential to reducing congestion in the CBD and should be exempt from the toll. BUS4NYC correctly notes that the congestion pricing programs in other major cities, including London and Stockholm, have an exemption for buses. In London, vehicles with nine or more seats, including buses, are exempt from the city's congestion charge.<sup>21</sup> In Stockholm, buses weighing more than 14 tons are exempt from the city's congestion tax.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the MTA's proposed tolling structure, these exemptions are not limited to commuter buses providing service under a government contract. Clearly there is life in the congestion pricing universe, and the MTA as well as congestion pricing advocates often refer to how London and Stockholm's experiments have been successful and that these systems are the justification for NYC's policies – yet the MTA's failure to sensibly justify this ripple in the force by not exempting buses is troubling to many in the bus industry. As the Mandalorians say – “This is the way!” – to follow the London and Stockholm models and give buses an exemption.

Representatives from across the bus industry have spoken out about the congestion charge on buses. In addition to BUS4NYC, groups including the **United Motorcoach Association (UMA)** (<https://uma.org/>), the **American Bus Association (ABA)** (<https://www.buses.org/>), the **Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association (GNJMA)** (<https://www.gnjma.com/>), The **Bus Association of New York (BANY)** (<https://www.banybus.org/>), and leading companies including Coach USA and Panorama Tours, have called for parity between public buses and privately run commuter and tour services.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/discounts-and-exemptions>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.roadtraffic-technology.com/projects/stockholm-congestion/>



Congestion pricing has seen the bus industry unified in an unprecedented way, calling for the MTA to consider full exemptions for all buses entering the CBD. Periodically, the industry has operated on several joint efforts, but most issues before the bus industry tend to concern specific regional or local organizations. For example, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, which allocated funding mostly to traditional public transportation providers, did not directly allocate funding to private bus operators. Private bus operators and organizations together called for parity in fund allocation, as the bus industry serves the same riding public as public transportation systems. Later, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), allowed private providers of public transportation to be sub-recipients of funding provided under the Acts, meaning they could receive funding through public transit agencies that received CARES Act or CRRSAA money. Additionally, the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) program provided grants to eligible transportation service providers, including some private bus companies that were impacted by the pandemic.<sup>23</sup>

Congestion pricing in New York City affects not only a large geographic constituency of bus operators in the New York region but also every local bus organization across the country. Cities around the U.S. are considering steps to implement their congestion pricing programs, concerning bus operators and organizations everywhere. Congestion pricing has turned into a national issue on many fronts, namely congestion, pollution, and financing public transit, but also concerning questions about exemptions and potential tolling structures.

### *The Phantom Menace*

The TMRB said its proposed toll structure keeps congestion pricing “simple, easy to understand, and easy to administer.” The bus industry is arguing that a different price for a bus based on whether it is carrying passengers under a government contract, private ticket, or private charter is hardly simple and seems difficult to administer. For these operators, the TMRB’s reasoning for the different toll rates is hazy at best. Even though intercity and charter buses provide a “quasi-transit option, especially for people of more moderate means,” the TMRB recommends these vital services pay an uncapped \$24 toll. So what is going on?

Transport Workers Union leader John Samuelson resigned from the TMRB in protest the same day as the recommendation report was released. In his resignation letter, Samuelson charged the MTA with failing “to meet the moment” by not coupling congestion pricing with “massive increases and improvements in public transit,” including expanded express bus service.<sup>24</sup> Stockholm and London exempted all buses from their plans *and* implemented measures to encourage drivers to switch to mass transit by increasing bus frequency and availability. New York is doing neither in the lead up to the implementation of congestion pricing. The bus industry leaders point out that traffic will not be reduced without viable alternatives to driving, and that those who already use intercity and charter buses to travel to and from NYC will now be paying

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<sup>23</sup> <https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-Stimulus-Funding-for-Transportation-in-th/2cyr-4k8j/>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/24178816-november-30-2023\\_tmrbr-resignation](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/24178816-november-30-2023_tmrbr-resignation)

the MTA to do so. These bus operators have expressed their cynicism of a plan that creates distinctions (with exemptions) without a difference. They ask: Could it be that transit funding is so bad that the MTA has to minimize congestion pricing exemptions and maximize revenue sources just to keep the *status quo*?

### ***“Use the Force” – The Industry Must Be Heard***

As with any proposed toll ratemaking, this public comment period is being conducted under the State Administrative Procedure Act (SAPA), which requires the issuance of public notices and the holding of public hearings to elicit public comments on the proposed toll rates. The MTA is now accepting written and audio comments on the proposed tolling scheme and will hold four hybrid virtual/in-person public hearings in February and March to hear testimony from the public. The hearings will be held ***in person*** at 2 Broadway, New York, NY 10004 in the William J. Ronan 20th Floor Board Room, and will be live-streamed on the MTA YouTube channel ([youtube.com/@mta-live](https://youtube.com/@mta-live)) and on the project website ([mta.info/CBDTP](https://mta.info/CBDTP)). ***The hearings are scheduled for February 29 at 6:00 p.m., March 1 at 10:00 a.m., March 4 at 10:00 a.m., and March 4 at 6:00 p.m.***

Those who wish to comment in-person at the hearings or remotely via Zoom or telephone must register in advance online ([new.mta.info/agency/bridges-and-tunnels/cbd-tolling-hearing](https://new.mta.info/agency/bridges-and-tunnels/cbd-tolling-hearing)), by calling the Public Hearing Hotline at (646) 252-6777, or in person at the hearing. Registration will open one week before the start time of each hearing and will close 30 minutes after the hearing begins. Everyone who registers will have two minutes to speak.

***Those who wish to submit comments outside of the hearings may do so online submission, email, mail, and fax, or voicemail message through March 11, 2024.***

- **Online:** <https://contact.mta.info/s/forms/CBDTP>
- **Email:** [cbdtb.feedback@mtabt.org](mailto:cbdtb.feedback@mtabt.org)
- **Mail:** CBD Tolling Program, 2 Broadway, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10004
- **Phone:** 646-252-7440
- **Fax:** Send to (212) 504-3148 with Attention to CBDTP Team.

Submit your comments or register to speak at the hearings to have your voices heard. Following the public comment period, MTA Bridges and Tunnels will review the public comments. Then, the MTA Board will consider adopting a ratemaking regulation that includes any updates that may follow the public comment period.

### ***A New Hope – Charting a Path through Regulatory Hyperspace***

Congestion pricing is due to begin implementation this spring and is likely to stay on track. While COVID disrupted the congestion pricing timeline in the past, the TMRB’s hearings and subsequent report this past fall showed steady progress toward the program’s spring 2024 start.

Now, with a public comment period and hearing dates set and tolling infrastructure already being installed, the MTA certainly plans to begin implementation on time.

During the MTA Board's December 2023 meeting, it was made clear that additional exemptions would be difficult to implement. Another exemption or increase in credit would mean tolls increase for other drivers. In addition to increasing charges, changes to the existing tolling structure may also necessitate additional study, and delay implementation overall. While additional exemptions are unlikely in this case, the bus industry is expected to continue to make its voice heard – not just regarding NYC's congestion pricing program, but for other potential programs in the U.S. Bus operators across the country are concerned about what this precedent will mean for their operations. Increasing operating and ticket costs across the U.S. could severely impact what has become an affordable and accessible mode of transportation for so many Americans.

While the TMRB's rationale for excluding commuter buses acknowledges their public service role, the broader implications for the bus industry nationwide remain a point of contention. Bus operators must actively engage in shaping the discourse around congestion pricing as a national issue. The industry's collective voice is crucial to navigating these complex changes, ensuring that the bus's affordability and accessibility is not unduly compromised.

Despite the challenges, the impending launch of congestion pricing presents an opportunity to reshape the landscape of urban transportation for the better. With careful planning and collaboration, we can craft a system that not only reduces traffic and pollution but also strengthens public transit, making it a more attractive and viable option for everyone. **We need a New Transportation Republic, which considers equity and fairness for the people who use the entire multi-modal mobility ecosystem - including private bus businesses and workers.**

### **Epilogue: A New Bus Industry Republic** ***The Motor Coach Industry's Leadership Stands Together - United for an MTA Congestion Pricing Exemption!***



**Glenn Every, President of BUS4NYC, said, “Buses, whether public or private, are an essential component of our regional transportation system. They get people out of their cars and into the most environmentally clean and efficient mode of surface transportation available. Riders should not have to pay more just because they are riding on a privately owned bus. We applaud the efforts of the MTA in recognizing the vital role that buses play and urge that for the good of the traveling public, for the inhabitants of the CBD, and for the environment, all public and private buses be exempted from tolling under the CBDTP.”**



**Patrick Condren, Vice President and Secretary of BUS4NYC**, said, "As the CBDTP will soon hold a 60-day public hearing phase, BUS4NYC looks forward to MTA review of the proposed tolls to exempt all buses, for the benefit of the riding public. Private commuter buses with and without government contracts do provide efficient mass transportation services and are clearly meaningful for exemption." Mr. Condren is also excited to hear at the press conference, Chair Lieber announced more developments in bus lanes and utilization which supports the transport of the riding public on both public and private buses.

In a [recent op-ed for AM New York Metro](#) advocating for exemptions for all buses, Mr. Condren wrote, "Buses are the solution, not the problem, whether public or privately owned."



**Scott Michael, CEO of the United Motorcoach Association**, said, "Motorcoach companies offering non-taxpayer subsidized commuter and charter services play an important role in mitigating congestion and reducing emissions in New York. This is in addition to the vital role the industry plays in New York's important tourism economy. UMA is actively advocating for a full exemption from the congestion toll for bus and motorcoach carriers."



**Peter Pantuso, President and CEO of the American Bus Association**, said "New York City and New York State have long appreciated the value that buses (motorcoaches) bring to the city, not only taking 50 people out of cars, but the economic impact buses have when they bring visitors to work, eat, dine, see shows and experience all the City has to offer. It is unconscionable that motorcoaches are not receiving the same treatment as transit buses and government-funded commuter buses when they provide the same role of reducing congestion. Even the MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber noted that 'One bus can take 50 cars off the road.' In his statement, he did not distinguish between differing types of buses, because there is no distinction. All buses, public, private, commuter, charter, transit, all do the same job: take cars off the road and mitigate congestion, and should be exempt from the tolling plan, regardless of who funds them. The federal government has long recognized toll parity between privately

operated buses and public transit for the important role we play in local, intercity, and national transportation. It is baffling how the MTA Board is unable to see the same thing."





**Patricia Cowley, Executive Director of the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association**, said, "The Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association is a non-profit organization with the mission of advocating for the private contractors in and around New Jersey. Our association works in cooperation with national and other state industry associations, local, state, and federal agencies, legislators, suppliers of products and services to the operators, attractions, destinations, and other entities to promote the betterment and welfare of our industry, members, and association objectives. We are governed by a Board of Directors, who are primarily owners of motorcoach companies, and a few non-voting directors from our supplier and destination members. We have been beating a consistent drum going back a few years on congestion tolling. Our stance has been and continues to be EXEMPTION for all buses. All

private charter buses, school buses, motorcoaches, commuters and alike. We are the solution to reducing congestion; we are not the problem. Motorcoaches provide the greenest and most economical mode of mass transportation. We lower carbon emissions and rid city streets of cars. We also provide enormous economic value to NYC in tourism."



**Michelle Petelicki, President and CEO of Panorama Tours**, said, "The TMRB stated in Key Priority #5 of their report, 'Keep it simple.' However, when dealing with buses, their recommendations are inherently complex. Motorcoaches are categorized as commuter buses, charter buses, or tour buses depending on who they are transporting at that time. Each bracket has a different pricing schedule. Determining the fare is contingent on identifying the type of ridership. How will that be enforced? Globally, every other congestion program recognizes

that all buses alleviate congestion. Why complicate it? It is crucial for the MTA to recognize this oversight and address it."



**Robert Brisman, President of the Bus Association of New York State**, said "The Bus Association of New York State (BANY) membership strongly urges that all public and private bus operators be exempt from congestion pricing tolls. Buses are a critical component in lowering carbon emissions and reducing congestion throughout the region, especially in the Central Business District. That is why we were shocked to see for the first time, under the TMRB's recommendation, private buses entering Manhattan would be tolled at the same rate as tractor-trailers. Currently, all 13 bridges and tunnels controlled by the MTA and PANYNJ provide significant discounts for private buses entering the City. Until now, the MTA and PANYNJ have provided discounts on their tolling facilities because every bus mitigates congestion. All public and private bus operators should be treated the same under the congestion pricing program."