



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Leroy Comrie

## Senator Comrie Calls on MTA to Enact Cashless Tolling Amnesty Program for New York City Motorists

LEROY COMRIE March 1, 2018

| ISSUE: **CASHLESS TOLLING, MTA, NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**



Kew Gardens, NY — New York State Senator Leroy Comrie and Assembly Member Stacey Pheffer Amato demanded Thursday that the MTA create a cashless tolling amnesty program for all MTA bridges and tunnels similar to the program that the New York Thruway Authority enacted for drivers who use the Mario M. Cuomo/Tappan Zee Bridge.

“While cashless tolling is not in itself a bad thing, the current system is wholly unfair to individuals who depend on the MTA’s bridges and tunnels,” said **State Senator Leroy Comrie**. “Drivers who have been properly using the tolls for years are suddenly seeing penalties in the hundreds or thousands of dollars. It’s not fair, and the MTA must find a solution.”

Residents of New York City are facing exorbitant fines for overdue toll charges from the newly implemented cashless toll collection systems on NYC area bridges and tunnels. After less than three months of being past due, some drivers have reported fines as high as \$100 for tolls as small as \$8.50.

“In South Queens, especially Rockaway, we use the bridge to do most of our everyday activities like going to work or dropping off our kids at school—so you’re talking about multiple trips a day. If you don’t know your account balance is low, or there is a malfunction with your E-ZPass you could possibly get thousands in violations—that’s real dollars and cents out of your pocket,” said **Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato**. “MTA dropped the ball and needs to step up and take responsibility for this hardship they are causing to our communities.”

In addition to violation forgiveness, the elected officials are calling for a publicly disclosed and consumer friendly fee waiver policy as well as a dramatic reduction of the amount of fees that can be charged to any one driver.

“The recent cashless toll collecting system has caused major headaches for dozens of commuters,” said **Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman**. “Paying up to \$100 for charges as low as \$8.50 is excessive and unreasonable, especially when motorists are not given sufficient notice. Though we should hold individuals accountable, we have to find sensible means of doing so. Things like a consumer friendly fee waiver and lowering the late fee can help to alleviate these issues. So today, we stand together to demand that the MTA devise a plan to

combat unfair fines on tolls.”

The National Motorists Association, a non-partisan, grassroots motorists' rights advocacy group, agrees. “To fine motorists exorbitant late fees is counterproductive and amnesty measures should be taken immediately until a better system can be implemented,” said **National Motorists Association Communications Director Shelia Dunn**. “In the meantime, the MTA needs to work harder to educate motorists about toll fees and any amnesty program put in place.”

Senator Comrie also announced that he has introduced legislation in the State Senate that would enact toll amnesty on MTA bridges and tunnels for a period of six months, provide for public disclosure of the current MTA fee waiver policy, and cap the fees for unpaid toll charges at no more than twice the cost of original toll during the first three months and three times the cost of the original toll during the four to six month range.

“We cannot allow the MTA to gouge working class New Yorkers,” said **Senator Comrie**. “We need to get back to a place where the tolls and penalties actually made sense.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2017-S7823**

- 
- Introduced
  - - In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Establishes a cashless tolling amnesty program

February 28, 2018

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Leroy Comrie**

Do you support this bill?