



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

Senator Reichlin-Melnick Calls for Exemption from Congestion Pricing at Today's Public Hearing

ELIJAH REICHLIN-MELNICK August 29, 2022

| ISSUE: **CONGESTION PRICING**

ROCKLAND, NY - Today Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick delivered the below remarks during the public hearing on congestion pricing. [Click here to view the video of the Senator's comments at today's public hearing.](#)

Remarks on Congestion Pricing Delivered at Today's Public Hearing

Rockland County must be exempt from congestion pricing.

How can proponents of this plan possibly justify forcing Rockland residents to pay the same congestion pricing tax as people who live east of the Hudson where there are vastly better public transit options into Manhattan?! Westchester County has 43 train stations, Rockland has 5!

Until Rockland has vastly improved transit access to Manhattan, congestion pricing is an unfair tax to subsidize a transit system that does not equitably serve our community. Charging our drivers thousands more a year just to get to their jobs in the city, without quick and easy mass transit alternatives, will be worse than useless for reducing congestion.

Year after year Rockland is forced to subsidize transit for the rest of the region as we contribute tens of millions of dollars more annually than the MTA ever invests in our county.

There have to be better, more direct, transportation options for Rocklanders to get into New York City. A train over the Tappan Zee Bridge would be the best option, followed by restored passenger service on the West Shore Line—a freight line that served Rockland commuters for decades before passenger service was ended in the late 1950s. Upgrading the right of way to restore commuter train service and building new stations would be an appropriate use of the taxes that Rockland residents have handed over to the MTA for decades. The benefits for commuters in much of Rockland would be immense, with possible new stations in Tappan, Orangeburg, Blauvelt, West Nyack, Valley Cottage, Congers, and Haverstraw providing a wealth of new transit options to everyone living in eastern Rockland.

The complete disregard for the needs of people who live west of the Hudson is evident at every step of this plan. Those who will pay the biggest burden won't even get a seat at the table. The Traffic Mobility Review Board has representation from Long Island, Westchester, and NYC—and when that board considers their recommendations to the MTA for the implementation of congestion pricing, there will be NO voice at the table from west of the Hudson.

Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski and I are preparing legislation to amend the congestion pricing law that was passed in 2019. Our bill would exempt Rockland and Orange Counties from congestion pricing. Assemblyman Zebrowski voted against the congestion pricing plan when it was introduced, as would I if I had been in office then.

A legislative solution is not ideal. It would be much more expedient for the Traffic Mobility Review Board, and ultimately the MTA, to agree to exempt Rockland and Orange Counties

from congestion pricing unless and until we have a one-seat ride to Manhattan.

As an environmentalist and as a former regional planner, I strongly support investment in public transportation. But we cannot put the cart before the horse and try to get people out of their cars when there are no good alternate options for Rockland residents to get to NYC.

I strongly urge you to exempt Rockland County drivers from congestion pricing until we have the transit that our region, and our county, deserves.

[Click here for more information about the public hearings.](#)