



## Commission to Formulate Traffic Reduction Policy

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What a week we have had in New York politics! On Monday the Mayor went to Albany to try to forge a deal with the state's power brokers to get approval on his congestion pricing plan (as well as many other environmental initiatives). With neither legislative branch even holding a vote on the matter and a Federal deadline for \$500 million passing by, it seemed that the whole ambitious plan may have crumbled under the weight of Albany's inertia and political wrangling.

But lo and behold, there is some sort of deal that is shaping up to let the Mayor's congestion pricing initiative live to fight another day. [Streetsblog](#) has a [good summary](#) of where the politics stand:

1. Mayor Bloomberg does not have a "green light" to move forward with congestion pricing, nor has he been granted any new powers. The deal denies him the authority to impose a pricing charge until approved by the City Council and state legislature.
2. The feds may still yet give New York City congestion pricing start-up funds despite the missed Monday deadline.
3. The deal mandates a very specific timeline by which the process will move forward and a 17-member commission that may become an important forum for the congestion pricing and broader transportation debate, good things could emerge.
4. Transportation policy and livable streets issues have moved to the top of New York City's civic agenda and will remain in the political spotlight for some time to come.
5. There are a ton of things that could still derail congestion pricing.

This is a moment that transportation advocates have been waiting for since the Rockefeller/Lindsey era which ended Robert Moses' grip on power. There is a chance to put into place the right infrastructure and the right supporting systems to make NYC's transportation system last another 100 years. It's the moment to put into place a transportation system that prioritizes moving people over moving automobiles. Congestion Pricing would create a virtuous cycle of new money for mass transit, a clear financial incentive to not drive to the most congested areas of the city and in effect put a price on the externalities of the automobile in dense urban areas.

But there is much more going on than just congestion pricing in NYC. The new Department of Transportation is starting to roll-out a whole slew of new ideas on street design to improve neighborhood quality of life and access for more sustainable modes like walking, biking and mass transit.

While the big stuff is sorted out by this new commission, community activists need to start

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thinking of different ways we can better use our streets than the simple and destructive  
facilitation of automobile driving.



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