



OPEN LETTER FROM TED KHEEL TO THE RAVITCH COMMISSION

September 15, 2008

To the Members of the Ravitch Commission,

I understand that, on first impression, it might seem inopportune and even counterproductive to propose eliminating transit fares when the MTA is facing grievous financial problems. Look at the numbers though, and it will not seem so strange.

You will be hearing public testimony today on the MTA's needs and ways to address them. As you consider that testimony, I urge you to study carefully my 'balanced transportation plan,' which would tie free transit to a new congestion pricing initiative in a way that would *mitigate*, not exacerbate, the MTA budget problems.

The plan's economic benefits go further still, as it would also put an extra \$1,000 a year (after-tax) in the pockets of millions of working New Yorkers who rely on mass transit, *and* create a multimillion dollar public benefit through time savings from reduced traffic.

This is an idea I've been promoting ever since I negotiated a transit workers' strike in 1965 — and it's an idea whose time has finally come.

As you know, congestion pricing isn't just good economic theory — it's good public policy. Link it not just to gridlock reduction for drivers, but to economic benefits for all who live and work in New York City, and you've exponentially increased the number of people who will benefit from the plan. After all, as UCLA urban planning professor Donald Shoup has said, "The dilemma confronting congestion pricing is not that opposition is too high, but that support is too low."

Some may tell you today that a fare hike is the way to fund the MTA's needs. With the economy as it is, a fare hike, or a series of them, is the last thing that working families in New York need. Now is the time for bold ideas, and for creative solutions to large problems that won't otherwise go away. Now is the time for fare *elimination*.

I encourage you to find out more about my plan at www.kheelplan.org. Thank you for your time and your sober consideration.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theodore Kheel".

Theodore Kheel, Esq.

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