

# A!ert

dvrpc | April 2019

*Alert is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.*



## Air Quality Regulations

### New York Adopts Congestion Pricing for Parts of Manhattan

On April 1, 2019 New York State legislators announced an agreement to approve a congestion tolling policy for Manhattan as part of a broader package of funding and reforms to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) that was included in the state's \$175 billion budget. The key details of the plan, including the price of the tolls, will be worked out on a future date.

Under the agreement, tolls would be activated by the end of 2020 and charge drivers as they pass 60th Street in Manhattan. The FDR Drive and West Side Highway would be excluded. Car owners living within the tolled district who make less than \$60,000 a year would be eligible for credits, according to the budget. Drivers wouldn't be tolled more than once per day.

A six-person Traffic Mobility Review Board will recommend toll pricing next year which could vary based on the time of day, as well as other exemptions and potential credits for drivers on the MTA's Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, which will oversee the program and give the state significant say over city traffic. The plan is expected to raise \$1 billion a year, which the MTA could bond against for up to \$15 billion.

Advocates and proponents of congestion pricing who had been pushing for the city to adopt a plan for the better part of a decade cheered the agreement as a "historic" day for New York City, the environment and for the more efficient movement of goods and people.

According to Alex Mathiessen, a spokesman for the advocacy group Fix Our Transit, which helped shape the congestion pricing policy, "Congestion pricing will create a dedicated funding stream to upgrade the transit system while balancing out and reducing traffic across the city." Mathiessen also noted that congestion pricing will improve New York's air quality, claiming that exhaust emissions declined by 14 percent in Stockholm, Sweden since that city implemented congestion pricing.

A handful of cities in Europe and Asia already have congestion pricing in place; it has helped clear roads in London, Stockholm, and Singapore. But it has also been assailed by drivers and critics as an unfair tax that hurts the poor.

Fueled by an economic boom, a revival of urban areas, a proliferation of Uber and Lyft cars, and growth in package deliveries propelled by online commerce, the average speed in urban downtowns fell to 15 miles per hour last year, down from 18 miles per hour in 2015, according to INRIX, a transportation analytics company.

The number of people driving to work climbed to about 130 million in 2017, up from 121 million in 2012, according to an analysis of census data by Social Explorer, a research company. Of those, more than 116



## Save the Date

Friday  
May 10, 2019  
Application Deadline for  
PA DEP Class 8 Diesel Truck  
and Transit Bus Grant  
Program

For information on the grant  
program, please visit:  
[www.depgis.state.pa.us/  
DrivingPAForward](http://www.depgis.state.pa.us/DrivingPAForward)

Friday  
June 28, 2019  
Application Deadline for  
DVRPC Congestion  
Mitigation and Air Quality  
(CMAQ) Program in PA

For information on the  
funding program, please  
visit:  
[www.dvrpc.org/cmaq](http://www.dvrpc.org/cmaq)

million drove alone, and only 14 million car-pooled. Just 8 million workers took public transportation. America's roads are carrying more people than ever before.

The increasing traffic has been accompanied by concerns over health, safety, and environmental conditions, as many large cities continue to violate federal ozone standards, with on-road mobile transportation emissions accounting for almost 40 percent of ozone forming emissions. More than two dozen major American cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Austin, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, have more congestion now than a decade ago, according to an annual global traffic scorecard by INRIX.

The most recent scorecard found that congestion left American drivers sitting in traffic an average of 97 hours last year, up from 82 hours in 2015. That, in turn, cost the economy roughly \$87 billion in lost productivity last year, up from \$74 billion in 2015, according to INRIX.

The adoption of congestion pricing in New York is being closely watched by other congested cities that are searching for dedicated funding for mass transit and new strategies to combat congestion and help meet federal air quality standards.

"If New York City can prove that congestion pricing can work and gain public acceptance, it could give cities like Portland a boost as we look to introduce pricing," said Travis Brouwer, an assistant transportation director in Oregon, which has considered congestion pricing for traffic-jammed Portland.

According to the *New York Times*, Philadelphia is also considering congestion pricing for the first time, closely watching New York's move, "to see how this can help improve equity, safety, sustainability, and mobility," said Kelly Cofrancisco, a spokeswoman for Philadelphia's mayor, Jim Kenney.

For more information on New York's Congestion toll policy, please visit: <https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/congestion-pricing>



## Air Quality News

### Pennsylvania DEP Unveils Plan to Increase Electric Vehicle Use in PA

According to the *Pennsylvania Electric Vehicle Roadmap* released by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in February 2019, Pennsylvania could gain almost \$2.8 billion in benefits from lower greenhouse gas emissions, help reduce respiratory disease, increase consumer savings, and create jobs if electric vehicle (EV) ownership across the state was increased to three in ten vehicles.

Transportation generates 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in Pennsylvania, according to DEP's draft 2018 Greenhouse Gas Inventory. In order to reduce these emissions, Governor Wolf's Executive Order on climate change requires that 25 percent of state government passenger cars be replaced with electric vehicles by 2025. The state's EV Roadmap builds on the Governor's executive order and local efforts from cities, such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, to expand EV use across the state.

"Interest in EVs is increasing, but until now there's been no statewide plan to foster a cohesive approach," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "We developed research-based strategies for government and private planning and policy decisions to help increase the opportunities and benefits of EVs across the state."

DEP's Electric Vehicle Roadmap identifies seven strategies to start to overcome barriers to EV adoption in just two years. The strategies include setting EV sales goals, increasing investment in charging stations, encouraging utilities to invest in transportation electrification, and implementing various consumer education and outreach campaigns. The strategies all share the ultimate goal of expanding EV market share in the state.

For more information on the DEP EV Roadmap, please visit: [www.dep.pa.gov](http://www.dep.pa.gov) and search "EV Roadmap".



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