



MHNA Survey 2021: “How will you be affected by Congestion Pricing?” Summary of Responses

Methodology and background

The survey, “*How will you be affected by Congestion Pricing?*” was sent by The Murray Hill Neighborhood Association to people on its email list of approximately 1,600 email addresses. The MHNA email list is composed of MHNA members and people who are interested in Murray Hill. Murray Hill is located in midtown Manhattan, in the proposed congestion zone. For this survey, the congestion zone was defined as Manhattan south of 61st Street.

The first email was sent on August 11, and the survey closed on September 5. Respondents had several opportunities to respond and were asked to respond only once. There were 448 responses to the survey.

The survey was comprised of 14 questions with structured answers and a free-format question for comments. Some of the structured questions permitted multiple responses. Questions could be skipped if respondents did not want to answer them, and the survey could be shared with people who were not on the MHNA email list.

Note that respondents who come to Kips Bay/Murray Hill’s world class medical facilities from areas outside the congestion zone were not represented by the MHNA email list, which reaches mostly people who live or work in the zone.

Raw data in PDF format for the survey responses is linked at the end of this document. Excel format can be provided on request to info@murrayhillnyc.org.

Summary

A large majority of the respondents (73%) would like to have less traffic in the congestion zone. 79% live in the congestion zone full time; 16% live in the zone part time. Forty-four percent of the respondents work in the congestion zone, 21% work outside of the congestion zone, and the question about work is not applicable to 33% of the respondents. The vast majority of respondents travel around NYC in many different ways: by walking (88%), bus/subway (78%), for-hire vehicles (54%), personal cars (36%), train (19%), bicycles or scooters (16%), Access-a-Ride (2%), in addition to other modes of transportation.

Sixteen percent of respondents said that they need accessible facilities some or all of the time. Fifty-seven percent of respondents own personal cars. In that group, 30% use their personal cars in NYC occasionally, 18% use their cars in NYC often, and 18% do not use their cars in NYC. Several people commented that they use cars because of mobility issues, to travel to or from areas that do not have convenient public transportation, because they are afraid of covid and crime on public transportation, to fulfill caregiving responsibilities and to transport bulky items. Forty-six percent of respondents garage their cars in the congestion zone.

Forty percent of respondents travel from outside of the congestion zone into the congestion zone at least once a day, 29% weekly, and 25% monthly. Most travel by bus or subway, but significant numbers use for-hire vehicles (48%), personal cars (46%), and rental cars (5%). The latter three groups are likely to be the ones most affected by congestion pricing.

Sixty-five percent of respondents indicated that a fair congestion pricing fee should be below \$5, with 31% picking less than \$1.50, 15% picking \$1.50 - \$2.49, and 19% picking \$2.50-\$5. Fourteen percent said that it should be more than \$5. Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated that people who live in the congestion zone should not have to pay a congestion pricing fee. This was amplified in the comments, where many respondents said that they shouldn't have to pay a tax to "return to their home." Twenty-one percent said that people who live in the zone should get a discount on the congestion pricing fee.

Some of the major themes expressed in the comments by people who oppose congestion pricing are: skepticism that the congestion pricing plan will be effective in either reducing traffic or improving the MTA, a profound sense of unfairness about being singled out to pay an extra "tax" when "returning home" because of where they live, concerns that businesses and real estate will be hurt and that everything will get more expensive in the zone with a congestion pricing tax, and the need to use a personal car to fulfill work or caregiving responsibilities and to accommodate for disabilities. Many respondents pointed out that people using cars in the congestion zone already pay bridge and tunnel tolls, garage rents and taxes, parking meter fees and taxi congestion fees. They cautioned that congestion pricing would cause a chilling effect on living and doing business in the zone and may cause residents on budgets and businesses to leave the zone.

There were also comments recommending exclusions (carve-outs) or discounts for specific groups of people: people with low income or disabilities, seniors, people with children, businesses, people who live, work, or have businesses in the zone. Suggestions for implementation were proposed, such as variable pricing, and giving residents 10 free passes per month.

Respondents who commented in favor of congestion pricing (many fewer than those who are opposed) look forward to less traffic, easier walking, improvements to air quality and health, and transit improvements.

Some of the comments defined the problem in more detail: the proliferation of for-hire vehicles (Uber and Lyft, etc.), large amounts of construction, poor road management, delivery vehicles, poor enforcement of traffic rules such as blocking the box, public transit that does not meet the needs of would-be riders, street re-design that added many bike lanes, bus lanes, pedestrian plazas and Citibike stands in the zone, resulting in fewer lanes for cars and increased congestion. Some pointed to MTA buses parked on the streets and large numbers of empty buses travelling the streets (not in bus lanes) as another cause of congestion.

Respondents also suggested ways to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety through better enforcement of traffic and parking rules for cars and bicycles, better road design and management, better planning for construction sites that take up lanes of traffic, and less emphasis on developing high-density tall buildings in the congestion zone. Better enforcement of traffic rules might also be a source of funding for the city.

The need for transit improvements was cited by respondents on both the pro and con side of the proposal. Skeptical respondents who oppose congestion pricing also remarked that the MTA needs to be fixed, that it is wasteful and inefficient. Some respondents commented that there must be other ways to fund the MTA.

There are misconceptions on both sides. On the *pro congestion pricing* side, some comments indicate a belief that all people who live in Murray Hill and have cars have high incomes. On the *con* side, some comments indicate a belief that people driving into Manhattan always have a choice of how they travel.

Questions and response tallies

1. Do you want to have less traffic in the congestion zone?
 - Yes (73%)
 - No opinion (15%)
 - No (9%)
2. Do you live in Manhattan south of 61st Street? (pick one)
 - Full time (79%)
 - Part time (16%)
 - No (3%)
3. If you live in Manhattan south of 61st Street, do you live in Murray Hill?
 - Yes (90%)
 - No (7%)
4. Do you work in Manhattan South of 61st Street?
 - Yes (44%)
 - Not applicable (33%)
 - No (21%)
5. How do you get around the city? (Check all that apply.)
 - Walk (88%)
 - Bus/Subway (78%)
 - For-hire vehicle (54%)
 - Personal car (36%)
 - Train (19%)
 - Bicycle or scooter (16%)
 - Rental car (3%)
 - Access-a-Ride (2%)
 - Other (2%)
 - Motorcycle (1%)

6. Do you travel from places outside of the congestion zone to the congestion zone, including from airports? (pick one)
 - More than once a day (5%)
 - 1 - 7 times weekly (35%)
 - 1 - 5 times monthly (29%)
 - 1 - 12 times yearly (25%)
 - Less than once a year (4%)
 - Never (1%)
7. If you travel from places outside of the congestion zone to the congestion zone, what mode of transportation do you use? (Check all that apply.)
 - Bus/Subway (57%)
 - For-hire vehicle (48%)
 - Personal car (46%)
 - Walk (29%)
 - Train (23%)
 - Bicycle or scooter (6%)
 - Rental car (5%)
 - Other (2%)
 - Access-a-Ride (1%)
 - Motorcycle (1%)
8. Do you require accessible facilities to travel around the city?
 - No (81%)
 - Sometimes (10%)
 - Always (6%)
9. Do you own a personal car?
 - Yes (57%)
 - No (41%)
10. If you own a personal car, do you use it in NYC? (pick one)
 - Occasionally (30%)
 - Often (18%)
 - No (18%)
11. If you own a personal car, do you (check all that apply)
 - Garage it in the congestion zone (46%)
 - Park on the street in the congestion zone (11%)
 - Not garaged in NYC (6%)
 - Park on the street outside of the congestion zone (3%)
 - Garage it outside of the congestion zone (3%)
12. Should the congestion pricing fee be waived if a household has a low income?
 - Yes (42%)
 - No (30%)
 - No opinion (26%)
13. What do you think a fair congestion pricing fee should be?
 - Less than \$1.50 (31%)

- \$1.50 - \$2.49 (15%)
 - \$2.50 - \$5 (19%)
 - More than \$5 (14%)
 - No opinion (17%)
14. Do you think that people who live in the congestion pricing zone should (pick one)
- Not pay a congestion pricing fee (64%)
 - Get a discount on the congestion pricing fee (21%)
 - Pay the full congestion pricing fee (9%)
 - No opinion (4%)

Conclusion

The vast majority of respondents are opposed to congestion pricing, coming from a deep sense that it is unfair to have a targeted tax on people just because of where they live or do business. There was also skepticism that the congestion pricing fee would be effective at reducing traffic or improving the MTA. Some people felt that it would have negative unintended consequences, hurting business and residents in the area and causing prices to rise. Those who supported congestion pricing were more accepting that government had correctly defined the issues and consequences, and would deliver on the promises of the program.

[Raw data – Questions and tally](#) (451 pages)

[Raw data – Comments, coded and sorted](#) (46 pages)