



MEMO OF OPPOSITION

[A1599 \(Pheffer Amato\)](#)

Exempts first responders from congestion pricing tolls

January 24, 2025

TITLE OF BILL

An act to amend the vehicle and traffic law, in relation to establishing a central business district toll exemption for first responders.

STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION

Reinvent Albany strongly opposes this bill, which exempts first responders who enter the central business district with their personal vehicles from congestion pricing tolls.

This bill is an attempt by a special interest to win special treatment through political influence in the Legislature after the proposal was rejected by an independent panel and its staff experts.

The Traffic Mobility Review Board (TMRB) spent months evaluating more than 120 requests for congestion toll exemptions, largely from special interest groups – including first responders.

We observed the entire process very closely and believe TMRB honored its stated goal of basing its decisions on three fundamental principles:

1. Serve the many, not the few.
2. Act as fairly as possible.
3. Keep tolls as low as possible by limiting toll exemptions for special interests.

We credit the TMRB with creating a toll exemption policy that is extremely fair and provides the greatest benefit to the greatest number of New Yorkers. We ask the Legislature to respect that policy and its commitment to basic fairness.

The Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee (PCAC) to the MTA and Regional Plan Association [found that](#) exempting municipal workers would cost \$140 million/year

under a \$15 toll. According to the PCAC, exempting NYPD members alone from the updated \$9 toll would cost \$22 million in toll revenue in 2025 and more annually as planned toll increases are phased in.

It would be contrary to notions of basic fairness to pass this bill and reward a powerful special interest with a costly handout that will ultimately be paid by other toll payers or taxpayers.

We urge the Legislature to NOT pass this bill.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

Section 1 adds a new subdivision 2-a to Vehicle and Traffic Law §1704-a providing that first responders employed by the state, any municipality, a recognized corporation or authority, or certified organization shall not be charged for entering the central business district of Manhattan. “First responder” is defined as including but not being limited to police officers, firefighters, EMTs, correction officers, dispatchers, or other uniformed officers.

Section 2 states that the bill takes effect immediately.