

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES DENOUNCES TESTIMONY OF
CONGRESSMAN ANTHONY WEINER BEFORE TRAFFIC MITIGATION COMMISSION**

**LETTER TO COMMISSION COMPLAINS OF “GROSSLY MISREPRESENTED FACTS”
AND “UNSUBSTANTIATED CONSPIRACY THEORIES” WITHIN TESTIMONY**

October 30, 2007 – New York, New York: In a letter sent to the New York City Traffic Mitigation Committee today, Transportation Alternatives’ Executive Director Paul Steely White took significant issue with the credibility of Congressman Anthony Weiner’s testimony before the Commission last week.

In his letter, White initially complains that “Congressman Weiner does nothing to help the work of this Commission by presenting an ‘alternative’ plan to mitigate congestion that includes a hypothetical blank check from the federal government to pay for it. Choices the Congressman suggests like eliminating congestion pricing, lowering truck tolls at off-peak times, providing off-hour delivery tax credits to businesses and building a cross-harbor tunnel carry an exceptionally high cost while providing no substantial revenue streams. The \$15 million secured by the Congressman for three high speed ferries hardly represents a multi-billion dollar commitment by the federal government to implement the Congressman’s plan.”

White also took strong exception to Congressman Weiner’s statement that “I have a feeling – not to accuse anyone of doing something cynical – but they haven’t been doing all they can to enforce existing laws because they need to continue the rationale for the plan they have out there.” White criticized the speculative testimony, saying that “[t]he idea that the NYPD intentionally subverts traffic enforcement so that the Mayor has a better case for his congestion pricing plan is absurd and suggesting such borders defamation.”

Finally, White noted that the centerpiece of Congressman Weiner’s presentation – his enumeration of several, allegedly new “elements that any plan approved by this Commission should take” – merely reiterated existing portions of the current PlaNYC congestion pricing proposal. White’s letter offered the Commission a theory to explain the Congressman’s curious testimony: “As Congressman Weiner waived around a 10-page document for effect during his testimony,” White wrote, “it became painfully clear why the Congressman had mistakenly referred to [his proposals] as ‘missing elements’ and why he claimed, ‘there are more words in my introduction than in this entire [PlaNYC] plan.’ Apparently, what Weiner thought was the entire text of PlaNYC was, in fact, only its 10-page introductory summary.” White promised the Commission that “Transportation Alternatives will send Congressman Weiner a copy of PlaNYC’s full 166-page technical report, which he apparently has yet to see. . . .”

Transportation Alternatives letter was not entirely critical of Weiner’s testimony. It did note that “Transportation Alternatives supports [Congressman Weiner’s] proposals to expand bicycling to a 10% mode share.”

(A FULL COPY OF THE ABOVE REFERENCED LETTERS FOLLOWS THIS RELEASE)

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Transportation ALTERNATIVES

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Your Advocate for Bicycling, Walking and Sensible Transportation

October 30, 2007

Dear Members of the New York City Traffic Mitigation Commission:

On behalf of Transportation Alternatives, New York City's leading advocate for cycling, walking and environmentally sensible transportation, I am writing to express my dismay at Congressman Anthony Weiner's testimony to the Congestion Mitigation Commission on October 25th. The Congressman grossly misrepresented facts about congestion pricing and resorted to unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and rhetorical devices to defend his position. Frankly, the Congressman's constituents — 93% of whom do *not* commute by car to the Manhattan congestion zone and would clearly benefit from congestion pricing plan and the improved mass transit it will bring — deserve better.

First and foremost, Congressman Weiner does nothing to help the work of this Commission by presenting an "alternative" plan to mitigate congestion that includes a hypothetical blank check from the federal government to pay for it. Choices the Congressman suggests like eliminating congestion pricing, lowering truck tolls at off-peak times, providing off-hour delivery tax credits to businesses and building a cross-harbor tunnel carry an exceptionally high cost while providing no substantial revenue streams. The \$15 million secured by the Congressman for three high speed ferries hardly represents a multi-billion dollar commitment by the federal government to implement the Congressman's plan.

Although Transportation Alternatives supports proposals to expand bicycling to a 10% mode share, we were baffled by many portions of the Congressman's testimony, including his conspiracy theory about why traffic enforcement is lacking in New York City. Congressman Weiner stated that "I have a feeling – not to accuse anyone of doing something cynical – but they haven't been doing all they can to enforce existing laws because they need to continue the rationale for the plan they have out there." The idea that the NYPD *intentionally* subverts traffic enforcement so that the Mayor has a better case for his congestion pricing plan is absurd and suggesting such borders defamation. To the extent traffic laws are under-enforced, it is because the State Legislature has denied the city automated traffic enforcement devices like red light cameras, bus lane enforcement cameras and speed enforcement cameras and because the NYPD lacks the funding it needs to hire more traffic enforcement officers, and certainly not because of some grand mayoral conspiracy to dupe New Yorkers and this Commission into supporting congestion pricing.

During his testimony, Congressman Weiner enumerated several "elements that any plan approved by this Commission should take." Curiously, most of his "elements" are already part

of the existing Congestion Pricing plan. A few examples are below.

Weiner statement: “We have to improve mass transit and personal transit options first.”

FACT: The proposed congestion pricing plan includes 367 new buses, Bus Rapid Transit, expanded ferry service and new express bus lines in every borough before congestion pricing goes into effect.

Weiner statement: “We have to do what the plan seeks to do, which is take existing traffic and try to distribute it better throughout the day using various congestion pricing techniques.”

FACT: 40% of traffic in the neighborhoods of Downtown Brooklyn is from Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridge-bound motorists avoiding the Battery Tunnel toll. Congestion pricing, by equalizing tolls, will equalize and reduce traffic at this and other neighborhoods adjacent to the Congestion Zone.

Weiner statement: “Incentivize trucks to come in during overnight and off-peak hours to make their deliveries—you do that by dramatically increasing their toll to drive into the city during certain hours”

FACT: Congestion pricing encourages off-peak deliveries by charging big trucks \$21 during the day and \$0 at night and on weekends.

As Congressman Weiner waived around a 10-page document for effect during his testimony, it became painfully clear why the Congressman had mistakenly referred to the above as “missing elements” and why he claimed, “there are more words in my introduction than in this entire [PlaNYC] plan.” Apparently, what Weiner thought was the entire text of PlaNYC was, in fact, only its 10-page introductory summary. Rest assured that Transportation Alternatives will send Congressman Weiner a copy of PlaNYC’s full 166-page technical report, which he apparently has yet to see, despite the fact that it is available for download on the Internet at www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/downloads/pdf/tech_report_transportation.pdf.

New Yorkers deserve an honest, thoughtful discussion about congestion pricing and its benefits, not the bombast, conspiracy theories and grandstanding exhibited by the Congressman during his Commission testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Steely White
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives

CC: Hon. Anthony Weiner (with copy of PlaNYC’s full technical report)