



CITIZENS BUDGET COMMISSION

One Penn Plaza * Suite 640 * New York, NY 10119

July 10, 2007

Dear Legislator:

I am writing to urge you to return for a special session on July 16. The current stalemate that has halted progress on many items important to New York's future must end. Chief among them is New York City's plan to implement congestion pricing.

Congestion pricing makes sense for New York City. It would improve the environment by encouraging commuters to switch to mass transit while also providing more funding for a system that faces major fiscal pressures and mounting capital needs. With the federal government's financial commitment on the line and a broad spectrum of supporters standing behind the proposal, you have a remarkable opportunity to act in the long-term interest of the public.

Other critical pieces of legislation that should be enacted in special session include amendments to the Public Authority Accountability Act of 2005 that would improve the accountability of the State's numerous public authorities and lessen the fiscal pressures posed by the onerous Wicks law. Both pieces of legislation have important fiscal ramifications. Public authorities carry an enormous amount of the State's debt load and make billions of dollars of critical infrastructure investments each year, and yet the totality of their activities is not comprehensively reported to the public. The Wicks law drives up the cost of public construction projects across the State and has long been a source of great dissatisfaction for local government officials who must finance the mandate with more expensive schools and facilities than they would otherwise have to build.

A special session to enact sensible congestion pricing in Manhattan, a stronger and better public authorities law, and loosen the overly binding and costly provisions of the Wicks law is required. Failing to act – yea or nay – on these key priorities will demonstrate that Albany's reputation for dysfunction continues to be earned.

Sincerely,

Diana Fortuna
President