# New York's Congestion Relief Zone

## System Implementation, Initial Results, and Lessons

**Washington State Transportation Commission, Monthly Meeting**
**March 25, 2026**

MTA Bridges and Tunnels
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# Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

## Service Area

- 5,000 square miles (12,950 $km^2$)
- >15 million people

## Financials

- >70,000 employees
- $19.9 billion operating budget (2025)
- $68.4 billion capital budget (2025-2029, *proposed*)

## Facilities

- Largest bridge and tunnel toll authority in the United States
- Largest rapid transit system in the United States
- Largest bus fleet in the United States
- Two of the largest commuter rail systems in the United States
- *First-in-the-nation Congestion Relief Zone*

# Traffic Congestion Challenged Generations in NYC

## Traffic congestion in New York City consistently ranked among the worst in the United States

- 23% reduction in travel speeds, 2010-2018
- Ranked worst in United States for congestion
- 12 mph last-mile speeds

## Traffic congestion inflicted a cost on the region, the residents, workers, and visitors

- 102 hrs/yr/driver
- ~$1600/yr/driver
- >$20B/year drag on the economy (*Partnership for NYC*)

## No room to build our way out of this… and that doesn't work anyway!

# MTA's Transit System is Aged and Needs Repair and Modernization

| Annual Ridership (2025) | # Trips |
|---|---|
| Subway | 1.3 billion |
| Bus | 440 million |
| Commuter Rail | 150 million |

| | |
|---|---|
| > 6,450 | subway cars |
| 472 | subway stations |
| 665 | miles of subway track |
| 5,840 | vehicles in bus fleet |
| 327 | routes |
| 28 | bus depots |
| 249 | commuter rail stations |
| >1,475 | miles of railroad track |

# Congestion Pricing: How We Arrived Here

| | |
|---|---|
| **Apr 2007** | PlaNYC 2030 |
| **Jan 2008** | Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission Study |
| **Feb 2015** | Move NY Fair Plan |
| **Jan 2018** | Fix NYC Advisory Panel Report |
| **Dec 2018** | Metropolitan Transportation Sustainability Advisory Workgroup Report |
| **Apr 2019** | MTA Reform and Traffic Mobility Act |
| **Apr 2021** | Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process Begins |
| **Apr 2023** | Final Environmental Assessment |
| **Jun 2023** | Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) |
| **Nov 2023** | Traffic Mobility Review Board Makes Recommendations |
| **Nov 2024** | Value Pricing Pilot Program Agreement |
| **Jan 2025** | **Revenue Operations Began** |

# Key Features of the Toll Structure

## Time of Day Pricing

- Peak: 5am-9pm weekdays; 9am-9pm weekends
- Overnight: 75% reduction in peak toll

## Types of Vehicles

- Passenger/small commercial/motorcycles – charged once per day
- Single-unit trucks and buses
- Multi-unit trucks and tour buses

## Crossing Credits

- For customers using the tolled tunnels to enter the CRZ

## Taxis and For-Hire Vehicles

- Passenger pays a per-trip toll for entry, exit, and trips within the CRZ

**Discount and Exemption Plans**

Low-Income Discount

Individual Disability Exemption Plan

Organizational Disability Exemption

Emergency Vehicle Exemption

Bus Exemption

Specialized Government Vehicle Exemption

# Low-Income Discount Plan (LIDP)

## Eligibility

Registered owner of passenger vehicles with a valid NY E-ZPass account, who participate in qualifying government assistance programs (SNAP, TANF, or WIC) or report annual federal adjusted gross income of $50,000 or less

## Documentation

Enrollment verification document for SNAP, TANF or WIC OR IRS tax return, IRS tax return transcript, corresponding W-2 forms for the most recent tax year

| As of 1/31/26 | Enrollment | % of All Trips |
|---|---|---|
| LIDP | 1,505 | 0.2% |
| IDEP | 5,809 | 0.2% |
| ODEP | 109 | 0.1% |

# Individual/Organizational Disability Exemption Plans (IDEP/ODEP)

## Eligibility

- IDEP – persons with disabilities, including caregiver operated vehicles
- ODEP – organizations that transport persons with disabilities

## Documentation

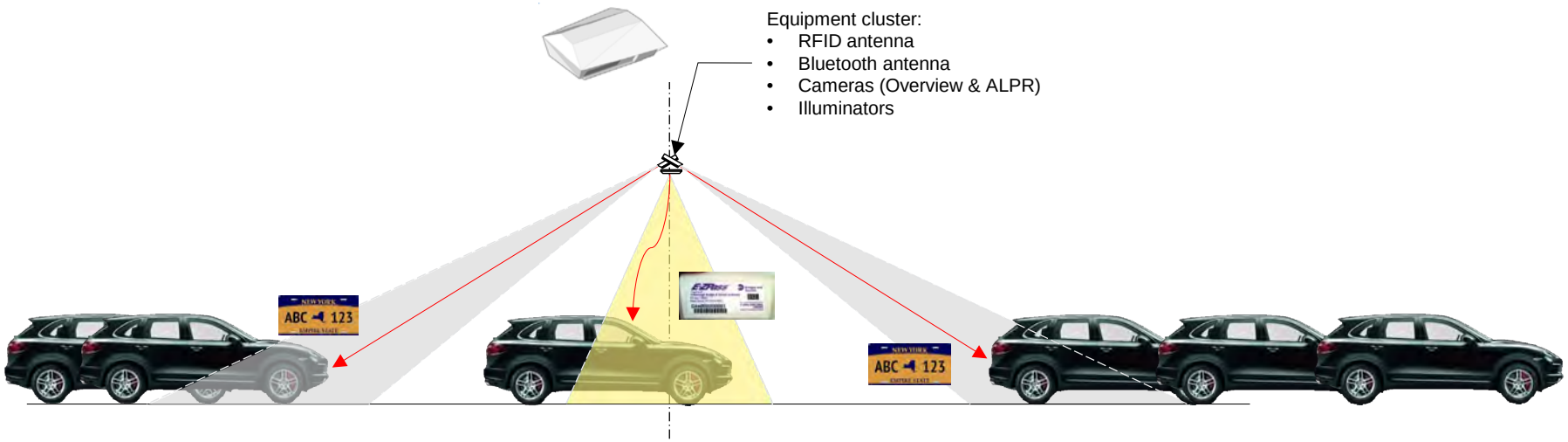
- IDEP – copy of valid MTA AAR ID Card; NYC PPPD ID number and expiration date; IDEP Assessment certification
- ODEP – proof of entity type (e.g., IRS Form 1040 Schedule C, Certificate of Incorporation); proof of qualifying category (e.g., contract number for AAR services, permit or license for paratransit/ambulette services, state authorization or administrator letter for special education busing)

# System Design

## Unique use of two technologies

- Cameras for license plate detection
- Antennae for identifying in-vehicle transponders

## Algorithm used for excluded roadways to minimize infrastructure footprint



# Customer Experience

## Fits Within the Urban Environment

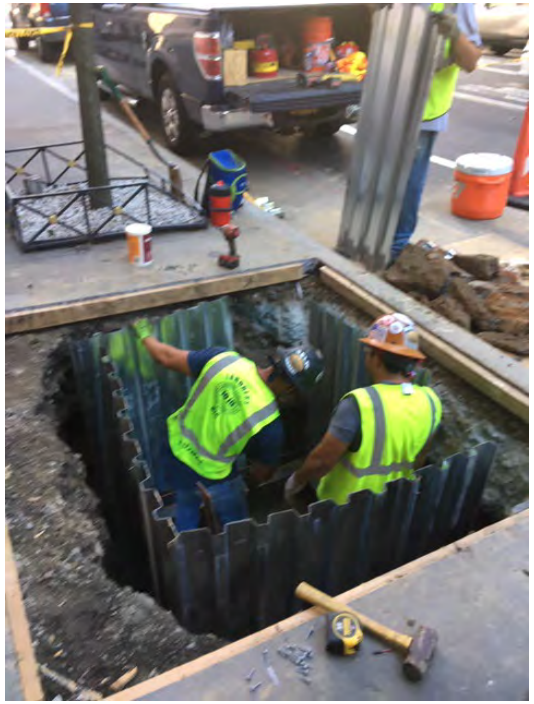
- Integrated housing designed to blend into the surroundings
- Utilized existing infrastructure where possible and similar infrastructure where new locations required
- Designed an algorithm to reduce the number of detection points on excluded roadways

## Grounded in What is Familiar, While Building for the Future

- Payment mechanisms are the same as used elsewhere in the region
- Future Third-Party Provider(s)

# Customer Experience During Construction

Foundation Excavation



Foundation Placement

Foundation Protection

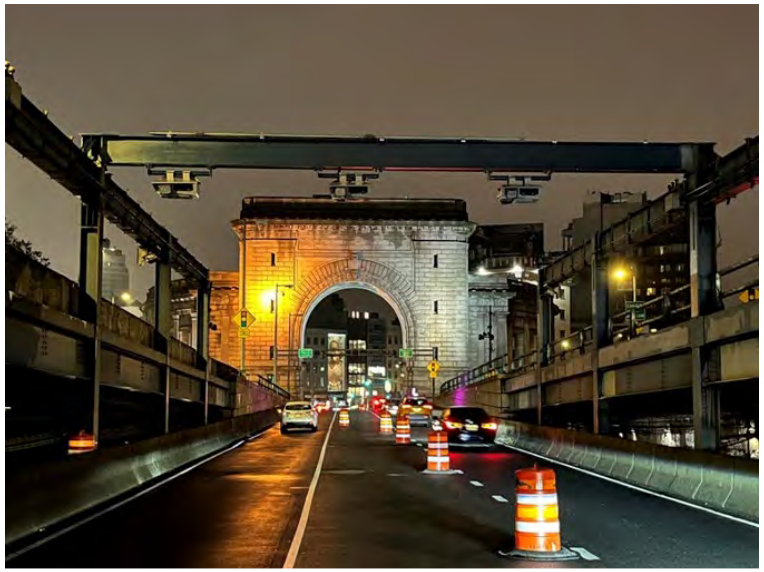
Pole and Equipment Installation

# Visual Experience

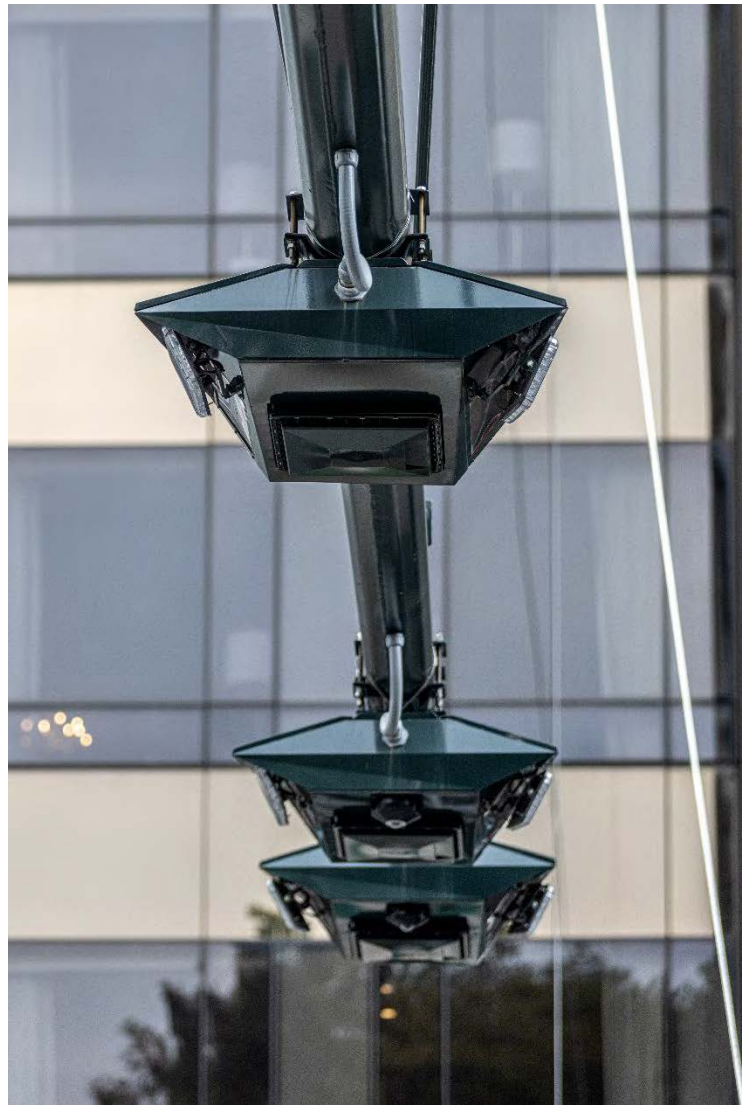
West 34th Street

WSH Chambers St (Tribeca Ped Bridge)

WSH OSS Near Gansevoort St



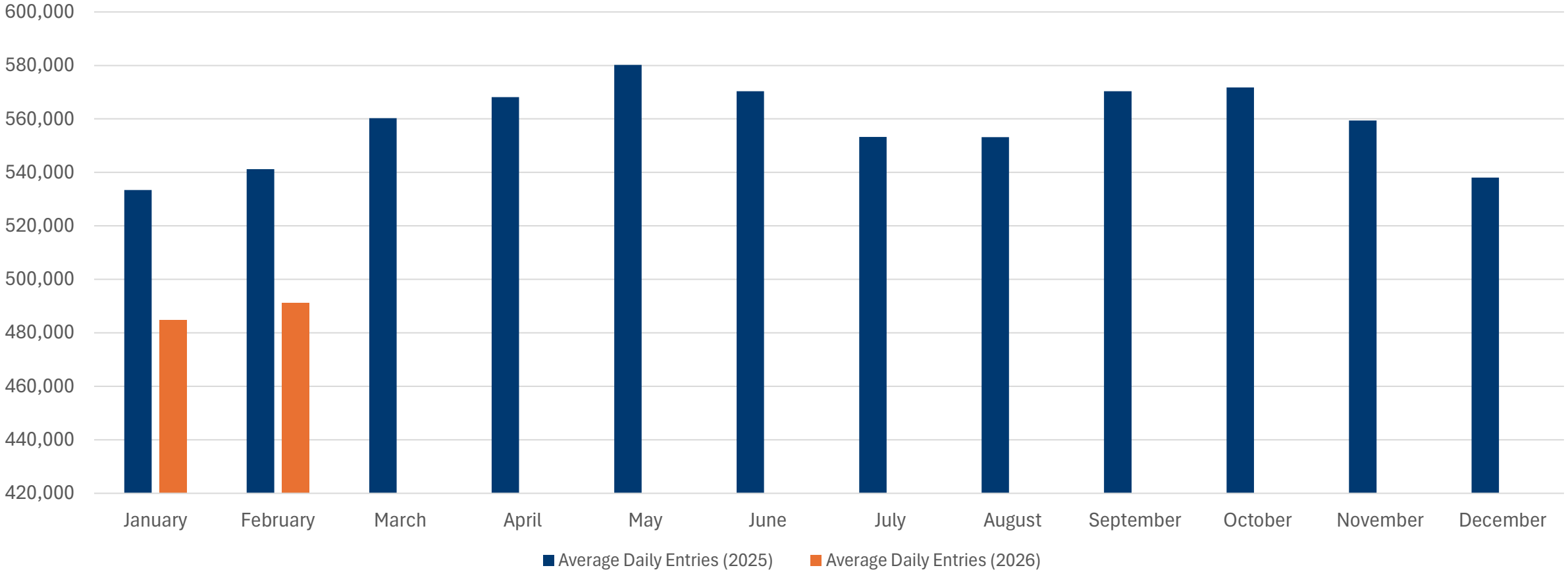
Manhattan Bridge – Center Roadway



# Traffic is Down

In the first year of operations, 11% fewer vehicles entered the CRZ

Those trends are sustained in 2026




*Daily Average Entries* include all entries into the CBD, including excluded roadways, for all weekdays and weekend

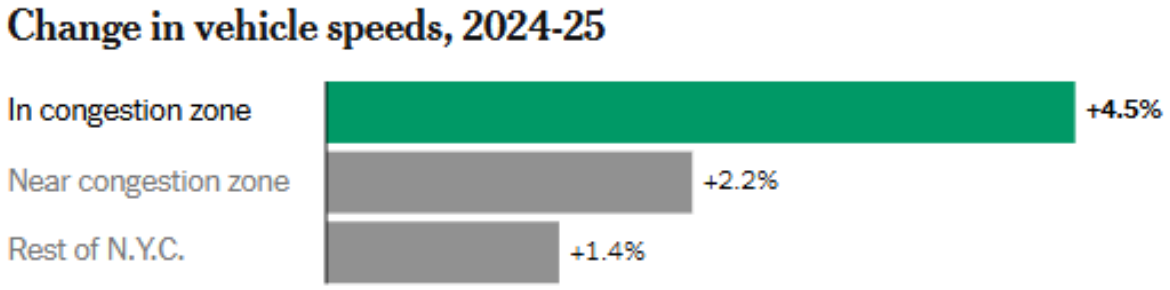
# MTA Buses are Moving Faster … and So Is Everyone Else!

From Jan. 5 through the end of 2025, bus speeds improved 2.2%, including express, limited, local and SBS buses.

**Change in Speeds at Crossings into the CBD**

| Crossing | 2024 | 2025 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brooklyn Bridge W | 20.4 | 23.6 | 15.70% |
| Holland Tunnel E | 11.2 | 16 | 42.90% |
| Hugh L. Carey Tunnel W | 21.9 | 23.1 | 5.60% |
| Lincoln Tunnel E (South Tube) | 10.3 | 12.9 | 25.00% |
| Manhattan Bridge W | 22.7 | 24.4 | 7.70% |
| Queensboro Bridge W (Lower Level) | 12 | 15.1 | 25.60% |
| Queens-Midtown Tunnel W | 15.6 | 17.8 | 13.90% |
| Williamsburg Bridge W | 11.6 | 15.2 | 30.80% |

Source: HERE Technologies, Traffic Analysis Data




From: E Badger, et al., "27 Million Fewer Car Trips: Life After A year of Congestion Pricing," *The NY Times,* (Jan. 5, 2026)
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/05/upshot/congestion-pricing-one-year.html

# What Others are Saying

NEW YORK STATE | GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

*"'The results are in and it is clear that in just one year, congestion pricing has been an unprecedented success in New York," **Governor Hochul said.***

*https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/less-traffic-better-transit-its-first-anniversary-governor-hochul-celebrates-transformational*

The Economist

United States | It tolls for thee

Congestion pricing in Manhattan is a predictable success

RPA LAB

**Congestion Pricing: Faster All Around**

*"Since the start of the Central Business District Tolling Program (CBDTP) on January 5th, 2025 the program has reduced traffic not only in Manhattan's congestion relief zone (CRZ) but on roadways across the region."*

*https://rpa.org/news/lab/congestion-pricing-getting-around-faster-all-around*

## Researchers Publishing with National Bureau of Economic Research

*"…we find that the policy increased speeds on CBD roads by 11%…. Speeds also increased on roads outside the CBD that are commonly traversed by drivers headed to/from the CBD."*

*https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w33584/w33584.pdf*

## TomTom

*"After months of data collection, it's clear: New York City's congestion pricing is working. TomTom data shows downtown Manhattan has witnessed a notable decrease in traffic and congestion, and a drop in travel times."*

*https://www.tomtom.com/newsroom/explainers-and-insights/the-data-behind-nyc-s-congestion-pricing-success/*

PARTNERSHIP for New York City

NEW POLL: NY Voters Say Congestion Pricing Has Led to Faster Commutes and Less Traffic

February 03, 2025

*"Seven in 10 Manhattan voters, six in 10 NYC voters, and a majority of metro area residents outside NYC agree there has been less traffic congestion as a result of congestion pricing."*