

THE MTA



CHARLES ECKERT

pricing plan for Manhattan as part of their MTA overhaul.

cratic state senator, Todd Kaminsky of Long Beach, said he plans to question MTA leaders about what the proposed restructuring would mean for Nassau and Suffolk commuters during a public hearing scheduled for Friday in Mineola.

“It is critical that any comprehensive plan ensure that LIRR riders receive significantly improved, sustainable service, and that any congestion pricing plan contain a dedicated revenue stream for the LIRR,” Kaminsky said.

Similarly, Kevin Law, president of the Long Island Association, which represents businesses across Nassau and Suffolk, said, before being able to support the proposal, his group needs to review the details of the plan to see “how they will impact Long Island commuters and taxpayers.”

Also proposed by the governor and mayor is the creation of a “Regional Transit Committee” to review the

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Get the details right in overdue MTA revamp **A22**

MTA’s five-year Capital Program, which funds major infrastructure investments throughout the agency. The panel would comprise transportation, engineering and governments experts with “no existing financial relationship with the MTA.”

The plan specifies that the panel would include “organizations representing subway riders and driving commuters,” but makes no mention of a representative for riders of the MTA’s commuter railroads, including the LIRR.

“I think, clearly, it shows a disdain for the commuter railroads,” said Mark Epstein, chairman of the LIRR Commuter Council, which represents railroad riders. “I hope it’s an oversight.”

MTA moving ahead with rate-hike vote

BY ALFONSO A. CASTILLO
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The MTA Board will vote Wednesday on the same plan to raise fares for Long Island Rail Road riders that the agency proposed last year, despite taking an extra month to consider other options, an MTA official said.

In January, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board postponed a vote on a plan to raise fares and tolls across its agencies by about 4 percent, saying it would use the time to mull alternatives. Among the ideas floated by board members were tying fares to transit agencies’ performance and weighing a fare increase more heavily on single-ride commuter rail customers than on monthly ticket-holders.

But MTA Board member Mitchell Pally, of Stony Brook, said the plan — to be voted on at the agency’s monthly meeting at 9 a.m. in MTA headquarters in Manhattan — is largely identical to the one previously proposed, and altogether “unchanged” as it pertains to LIRR riders. He declined to comment further on the proposal until the meeting.

An MTA spokesman confirmed that a vote on a fare and toll change was scheduled for Wednesday.

Under the plan proposed late last year, the maximum increase on weekly and monthly LIRR tickets would be 3.85 percent, with dollar increases capped at \$15 for monthly tickets and \$5.75 on weekly tickets. If approved, increases would go into effect mid-April, according to Pally.

The MTA floated various proposals for raising fares on buses and subways, and Pally said the agency has chosen a plan that would keep the “base fare” for a single ride at the current rate of \$2.75. That likely would mean doing away with the 5 percent “bonus” credit on the purchase of any MetroCard.

At Monday’s meeting of the MTA’s Finance Committee, Lisa Daglian, executive director of the authority’s Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee, which includes the LIRR Commuter Council, said that “while it’s good news that the base fare is being kept flat, there should be no mistake: There is still a fare hike.

“What I think has been lost in a

lot of the message is that we’re still looking at a fare increase for the weekly and monthly [MetroCard users] and the commuter railroad users,” Daglian added. “What’s really needed is sustainable and reliable funding.”

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, in a 10-point plan to restructure the MTA unveiled Tuesday, pushed for the passage of a congestion pricing bill that would generate new revenue for the MTA. They also said fares “must be controlled in future years through cost containment actions and improved management.”

Two different toll increase proposals would raise the cost of crossing one of the MTA’s major bridges and tunnels by between 23 cents and 46 cents.

Wednesday’s meeting is expected to include a familiar face from the past. The State Senate on Tuesday confirmed David Mack as the board’s latest member representing Nassau County. Mack, a real estate executive, was forced out in 2009 by then-Attorney General Cuomo after Mack refused to cooperate with Cuomo’s investigation into the State Police.

‘Congestion’ price may hit twice

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
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ALBANY — Commuters from Long Island and Queens who take the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge and then travel into the proposed congestion pricing district in midtown and lower Manhattan would face double charges under Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo’s state budget proposal.

Cuomo’s Jan. 15 budget proposal omitted the RFK-Triborough Bridge — as well as the George Washington Bridge from New Jersey — from a plan to provide credits to commuters using bridges and tunnels so they wouldn’t have to pay both a toll and a congestion pricing fee, the administration confirmed. Cuomo didn’t change that in his 30-day amendments to his budget last week, but said the issue would be discussed behind closed doors with legislative leaders.

Cuomo’s budget includes cred-

its for commuters using the Queens Midtown Tunnel, the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel, the Holland Tunnel, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Henry Hudson Bridge. Cuomo singled out a few bridges and tunnels for credits because providing credits to all commuters would defeat the purpose of creating a new congestion pricing fee, the administration said. The congestion pricing fee is aimed at reducing traffic going into Manhattan and raising money to fund city subway repairs and improvements.

“The statutory language creates winners and losers,” said Richard Brodsky, who studies state government at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Service at New York University and is a former Democratic assemblyman. “Take the QMT, Holland Tunnel or HHB and you receive a substantial economic benefit. Take the RFK Bridge or the GW Bridge and you don’t ... put that on top of the regressive and dis-

criminatory nature of the congestion fee itself and you have every reason to vote no.”

Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach) said he will push for credits for RFK Bridge tolls during budget negotiations, which are underway.

“Ensuring Long Island drivers are not hit twice in the same commute is a top priority during this budget season if congestion pricing is going to be seriously considered,” Kaminsky said.

Cuomo’s proposed budget says commuters using the selected bridges and tunnels would be “credited an amount equal to the toll charged to such vehicle for the use of such crossing immediately prior to entry into such zone.”

Cuomo defended the plan not to credit commuters for tolls at the RFK and GW bridges, saying few commuters drive from Long Island and Westchester to Manhattan anymore because of the cost, including parking.