

ADVERTISEMENT

NEVER STOP

Learn how in the fight against COVID-19, we are leveraging our innovations and expertise in ways that can make a real difference.

FUJIFILM
Value from Innovation

United States

Apr 6th 2019 edition >

It's not up to you

Manhattan embraces road pricing

NYC should copy Singapore rather than London



NEW YORK



New York's congestion is among the worst in the world, according to an advisory panel's report published in January last year. Crossing midtown by car is soul-destroying. In 2016 the average speed was 4.7 miles per hour, not much quicker than a brisk stroll. But relief is in sight. On April 1st (no, really), state lawmakers agreed to implement congestion-pricing, making New York the first big American city to do so. By 2021 vehicles will have to pay to enter Manhattan south of 60th street.

Similar proposals go back 50 years but have always stalled. The Regional Plan Association proposed road-pricing in 1996. Michael Bloomberg's 2007 plan was not even debated on the state legislature floor. This time, with Andrew Cuomo, the state governor, at the wheel and Bill de Blasio, New York's mayor, riding shotgun, it looks as if this time is different.

ADVERTISEMENT

PRODUCED BY BrandConnect

How can technology improve vascular care?

Learn More >

Much of the detail, including how much drivers will have to pay, how they will pay and how often they will pay, have yet to be decided. A "traffic mobility review board" will be set up to work all this out. New Yorkers living in the fee zone who make less than \$60,000 a year will be exempt. Other drivers, including motorcyclists, the city's civil servants, disabled drivers, the trucking industry, New Jersey's governor and commuters, all want discounts, credits or exemptions, too, which bodes ill.

If done right, congestion-pricing could be expanded beyond Manhattan. New York can learn from other cities. Singapore, for instance, which has had pricing for decades, adjusts prices regularly. It can also learn from mistakes. London, which rolled out its pricing in 2003, bizarrely is only starting to charge on-demand car hires like Uber. Stockholm exempted too many vehicles, which caused a drop in fee revenue.

Other car-clogged cities considering tolls, including Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle, are watching New York. A mayor-appointed task force in Boston recommended a \$5 fee, but so far Marty Walsh, the mayor, is pumping the brakes. "We really have to be a good example," says Nicole Gelinas of the Manhattan Institute, a New York think-tank. Moody's, a credit-rating agency, said the plan is a "credit positive" for the city, the state and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The only possible roadblock to the scheme is New Yorkers themselves—54% oppose fees.

This article appeared in the United States section of the print edition under the headline "It's not up to you"

Reuse this content

The Trust Project

More from United States

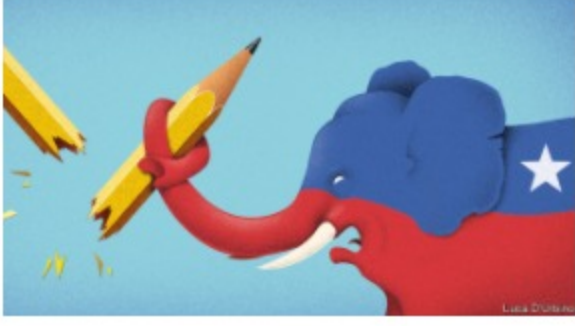


Covid-19 in the White House

The virus has hit President Donald Trump and his re-election hopes

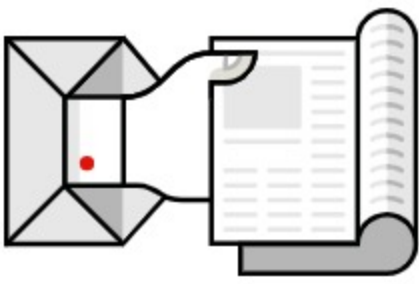
Voter suppression

At risk of losing Texas, Republicans scheme to limit Democratic votes



Ohio, bellwether again

A close race in Ohio is bad news for Donald Trump



The best of our journalism, hand-picked each day

Sign up to our free daily newsletter, The Economist today

Sign up now

- Subscribe
- Group subscriptions
- Help

Keep updated



Published since September 1843 to take part in “a severe contest between intelligence, which presses forward, and an unworthy, timid ignorance obstructing our progress.”

The Economist

- About
- Advertise
- Press centre

The Economist Group

- The Economist Group
- The Economist Intelligence Unit
- The Economist Store

- Careers
- Which MBA?
- GMAT Tutor

- GRE Tutor
- Executive Jobs
- Executive Education Navigator