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Mayor's muscle helps move congestion pricing

The role that Mayor Bloomberg could play in future elections was a factor in yesterday's vote on congestion pricing. The mayor suggested last week that he might back City Councilman Hiram Monserrate's challenge to state Sen. John Sabini, D-Queens, effectively pressuring both of them to support congestion pricing. Sabini narrowly defeated Monserrate in the 2006 primary, and support from the mayor could tip the balance in Monserrate's favor this September.

A similar situation is brewing on Staten Island, where Councilmen Mike McMahon and James Oddo plan to run for borough president in 2009. Before the congestion pricing vote, Oddo complained that he hadn't received assurances that his borough would get its fair

share of benefits from the plan. McMahon remained coy to the last, saying he would not comment while engaged in "negotiations."

Meanwhile, the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. broke with its local elected officials and declared support for the program last week. The group—which is responsible for development of an airport village centered on the AirTrain—apparently decided that its relationship with Bloomberg was paramount. In a letter to the mayor, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Gov. Paterson, the group wrote that it had taken a "citywide perspective" and cited "the overriding importance to Jamaica of supporting transit." Copies were sent to Queens council members and state legislators.