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Thursday, March 6, 2008

TODAY'S NEWS

MTA HEARING LOGJAM

State Sen. John Flanagan, R-Long Island, postponed a hearing on MTA capital projects set for today when Lee Sander, the authority's chief executive, decided to testify before a hearing arranged by Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, D-Westchester, instead. Flanagan announced his hearing Feb. 25, while Brodsky—who has opposed congestion pricing to fund the MTA capital plan—announced his on Friday. The MTA had been scrambling to send a representative to both, but “getting someone other than Sander wasn't going to cut it,” a Flanagan spokesman says. Flanagan has not set a new hearing date.

CHALLENGING TOWNS

Kevin Powell is holding fundraisers and has launched kevinpowellforcongress.org in hopes of mounting a primary challenge to Rep. Ed Towns, D-Brooklyn. Powell, a political activist and writer, explored a run against Towns in 2006, but the effort fizzled for lack of funds. This time, he is leery of broadcasting his candidacy. “Call in two months, and we can have a real conversation,” Powell says.

TAPPAN ZEE PLANS

The state Department of Transportation is accepting comments through March 31 on its updated scoping document of a Tappan Zee Bridge overhaul. The document includes a “bus rapid transit” and Rockland-to-Manhattan commuter rail alternative that had

Congestion pricing backers eye City Council OK

Congestion pricing's first test in the City Council will be a vote this month by the State and Federal Legislation Committee, chaired by Maria Baez, D-Bronx. Speaker Christine Quinn, a pricing supporter, gave the measure a boost by assigning it to Baez's panel instead of the Finance Committee, chaired by pricing opponent David Weprin, who had requested it. Quinn added two members to Baez's committee last fall, improving the plan's chances for passage.

But committee member Lew Fidler,

D-Brooklyn, says the nine-member panel is split. He pegs the uncommitted Larry Seabrook, D-Bronx, as a potential swing vote. Looking at the council as a whole, Fidler says more members have pledged to oppose the plan than to support it, and he predicts a close vote.

Pricing backer John Liu, D-Queens, is confident that it will pass. He expects the council to tinker with the pricing plan recommended by a commission in January to make it more acceptable to the state Legislature.

been dropped over the objections of transportation advocates, who say the alternative would draw more riders than any other mass-transit proposal. Missing from the scoping report is any proposal to let single-occupancy vehicles drive in the car-pool lane for a fee.

CONDO GLUT

Some in the real estate industry are worried about a glut of new condominium apartments, but the Bloomberg administration has the opposite take. “Considering the continuing need for more housing in the city, we welcome a high level of housing construction,” says a Department of Housing Preservation and Development spokesman, noting the estimated housing deficit of 100,000 units citywide. The generous 421-a tax abatement program for new condos gets

stingier on July 1. The last time that happened, in 1985, new units flooded the market just ahead of a long downturn.

AT A GLANCE

HIRED: Angela Barranco began Monday as the new communications director for Rep. Joe Crowley, D-Queens. She succeeds Rohit Mahajan, who moved to the Senate.

MOVING UP: Sarah Krauss has been promoted to press secretary from deputy press secretary by Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. Krauss succeeds John Collins, who joined Rep. Anthony Weiner's staff. She had been a senior account executive at Edelman and Sen. Schumer's deputy press secretary.

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