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### **Poll gives bridge-toll plan a lift**

New Yorkers like the idea of funding infrastructure by tolling free bridges and reducing high tolls



By [Erik Engquist](#)

An advocacy group's poll found more than half of New York voters favor the idea of tolling the East River bridges while lowering charges on high-toll crossings as a way to fund transit and road projects.

Supporters of a plan designed by traffic guru Sam Schwartz called Move New York hope the poll could give momentum to a bill in Albany that would enact it. The measure did not get a vote in either chamber last year, but the Assembly and Senate sponsors are pondering tweaking their [respective bills](#) this session to make them identical, thus improving the plan's viability.

But the bill faces an uphill battle in Albany without a nod from Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The governor has in the past said idea of tolling the Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg and Queensborough bridges has merit, yet has also downplayed its chances in the legislature. Mayor Bill de Blasio has called it worth exploring, but refrained from endorsing it, possibly because his support could well impair its chances of being embraced by the GOP-controlled state Senate and by Cuomo.

The poll shows strong support for Move New York's premise in Staten Island, which would see Verrazano Bridge tolls reduced under the plan. The Senate bill is sponsored by state Sen. Andrew Lanza, R-Staten Island, a member of the Senate majority. Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez, D-Manhattan, is carrying the bill in the lower chamber.

The poll, conducted in November on behalf of Transportation Alternatives but not released to the public yet, asked voters in the five boroughs what the governor should do first to help pay for improvements to the city's transit, roads and bridges. It preceded the question with a statement that read: "For years, New York City's subways, buses and road network have been underfunded and in need of investment, resulting in poorer service, crumbling roads and traffic congestion. Some drivers also pay high tolls to cross bridges in Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island, while other drivers pay no tolls at all on most bridges leading into Manhattan."

Poll respondents were given four choices for what Cuomo's first step should be, and 54% selected tolling the free bridges while lowering tolls on expensive ones. Another 16% said raise taxes on all residents, 6% said raise subway fares (which the Metropolitan Transportation Authority [just did](#)), 19% said "none of the above" and 5% said they did not know.

A majority in every borough chose the toll plan. The strongest support was in Staten Island with 62% in favor, followed by Queens at 55% (although elected officials from that borough have led the opposition to bridge tolls in the past). Brooklyn was last at 51%.

In another interesting result from the poll, only 28% of those polled knew that the governor controls the MTA. Another 28% thought the legislature did, while 13% guessed the mayor and 10% picked the City Council.