



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Sen. Gounardes, AMs Dinowitz and Rosenthal Unveil 'Rider Representation Package' to Give Riders More Say in MTA Operations and Planning

ANDREW GOUNARDES May 20, 2025

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Following passage of largest-ever MTA capital plan, elected officials representing three boroughs call for riders from across the region to gain a voting seat at the table

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Albany, NY – New York Senator Andrew Gounardes and Assemblymembers Jeffrey Dinowitz and Linda Rosenthal announced today the Rider Representation Package, two bills aimed at providing voting representation for existing non-voting Rider Representatives on the MTA Board and ensuring the MTA's three advisory councils achieve full membership—with riders appointed from every corner of the MTA's vast service territory, and increased representation for disabled riders.

Following the fiscal crisis in the late 1970s, the State Legislature created a Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC) to be more responsive to transit riders who suffered from deteriorating and underfunded service. PCAC administers three rider councils representing regular users on New York City Transit, the LIRR, and Metro-North. Each council selects a non-voting Rider Representative to sit on the MTA Board.

The Rider Representation Act ([S.1148/A.1162](#)) would provide the MTA Board's existing non-voting Rider Representatives with full member privileges, including voting rights, the ability to chair Committees, and being counted toward a quorum. It would also add an additional independent seat recommended in consultation with disability advocates. It has garnered more than 50 co-sponsors across both houses of the Legislature, spanning the entire MTA service territory from Wyandanch to West-of-Hudson, as well as memos of support from disability, good government, transit advocates and business associations.

The R.I.D.E.R. 'Rider Interests Deserve Empowering Representation' Act ([S.7679/A.8169](#)) enhances local control by broadening the number of elected officials who can make recommendations to the MTA's three rider councils. The legislation would further ensure council vacancies are filled in a timely manner. Currently, 15 of 41 total council seats sit vacant.

"Riders use the transit system daily, and they have a special expertise that comes from real-world experience," **said State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. "They know if wayfinding signage is unclear because they've used it to navigate. They know how frustrating it is when service is delayed, because they rely on it to get to work and school. My Rider Representation Package gives New Yorkers a real say in the transit system they depend on. This is about building trust and building a public transit system that meets our needs. With so much on the line, riders deserve more than just a seat at the table—they need a voice, and a vote."

"The Rider Representation Act, A.1162/S.1148, urges the MTA to empower voting rights on its board. This legislation grants privileges to representatives from the NYC Transit Riders Council, LIRR Commuter Council, and Metro-North Commuter Council. It also proposes adding a voting board member recommended by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities," **said Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz**. "This reform is vital to ensure meaningful representation, especially for riders with disabilities during pivotal MTA decisions. Enacting this legislation would strengthen the MTA Board's ability to lead with accountability, close the gap between advocacy and decision-making, and ensure that those who rely on the system have a true voice in shaping its future."

"Our public transit system cannot work for everyday New Yorkers if they do not have a seat at the table where crucial decisions are made," **said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF - Manhattan), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing**. "The MTA's rider councils were designed to provide that representation, but the cumbersome process for selecting appointees has led to nearly half of the seats sitting vacant. My new legislation, the R.I.D.E.R. Act, will expand local control and empower more elected officials to make crucial nominations for this council and ensure those positions are filled in a timely manner. Empty seats do not help our rider councils drive change forward. It's time we pass the Rider Representation Package into law."

“Since its founding at the urging of the late, great MTA Chair Richard Ravitch in 1981, PCAC – its volunteer members and staff – have fought tirelessly for subway, bus, LIRR, Metro-North, and Staten Island Rail riders. Our work has steadfastly focused on ensuring the system gets the investment it needs, keeping fares reasonable, expanding programs like Fair Fares to more low-income New Yorkers, and broadening ticket options,” **said Lisa Daglian, PCAC Executive Director.** “This package of bills will give everyday riders more of a say in the MTA’s operations and planning, including allowing our Board Members to make motions in support of fare discounts across the system – something they currently cannot do. It will also update our three commuter councils to adapt to a new set of challenges in the 21st century, and grow riders’ trust in the MTA at a time of profound cynicism. Thank you to Senator Gounardes, Assemblymember Dinowitz, and Assemblymember Rosenthal for fighting to ensure riders’ voices are heard from in every corner of the MTA region.”

The Rider Representation Act (S.1148/A.1162) would:

- Provide voting representation to the MTA Board’s *existing*, non-voting Rider Representatives, as well as an advocate for individuals with disabilities recommended by the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.
- Allow Rider Representatives on the MTA Board to make motions, chair committees, contribute to a quorum, and use their votes as leverage to secure policy victories for subway, bus, express bus, and commuter rail riders.
- Resolve long-standing quorum issues on the MTA Board – of the 62 MTA committee meetings in 2024, 10 failed to achieve a quorum. Had the law been changed, these presently non-voting members would have fulfilled the quorum requirements.

The R.I.D.E.R. ‘Rider Interests Deserve Empowering Representation’ Act (S.7679/A.8169) would:

- Allow local elected officials such as city council members, town supervisors, mayors, state senators, and assembly members to recommend members to be appointed by Governor Hochul to the New York City Transit Riders Council, Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, and Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council – enhancing local control.
- Ensure vacancies on these councils are filled in a timely manner – 15 of the three councils’ 41 seats currently sit vacant.
- Conform the names of the councils used in statute with those used on official council documents and expand the jurisdiction of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council to include the Penn Access Line slated for completion in 2027.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2025-S1148

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Enacts the rider representation act relating to membership on the board of the metropolitan transportation authority

January 08, 2025

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Andrew Gounardes**

Do you support this bill?

2025-S7679

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Establishes the 'R.I.D.E.R Rider Interests Deserve Empowering Representation' Act; relates to the powers and duties of the citizens advisory committee of the MTA

April 29, 2025

In Senate Committee **Transportation**

Sponsored by **Andrew Gounardes**

Do you support this bill?
