



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Transit Funding Lockbox Act Passes New York Senate

MARTIN J. GOLDEN June 23, 2011

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Senate Votes Unanimously To Secure Transit Funds For Transit Riders

New York - In a major victory for New York's transit riders, the State Senate voted unanimously yesterday to put a stop to continued raids on dedicated funding for public transit by passing the Transit Funding Lockbox Act. The Transit Funding Lockbox Act (S4257) aims to prevent public transit fare hikes and service cuts. The Assembly version of the bill (A6766), sponsored by James Brennan (D-Park Slope), is now in the hands of Assembly Member Denny Farrell and Speaker Sheldon Silver. With few hours remaining in the current session, and a capital plan \$10 billion short, advocates for the plan remain hopeful.

"This is a vote to secure the future of public transit in New York," said Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. "The millions of New Yorkers who rely on public transit every day deserve nothing less. It's time for the Assembly to join their colleagues in the Senate and send Governor Cuomo this vital legislation."

Transportation Alternatives' Rider Rebellion campaign mobilized over 620 transit riders to call Albany in support of the Transit Funding Lockbox Act. The Rider Rebellion campaign unites transit riders in support of affordable fares, better service and the end of service cuts and is supported by the J.M. Kaplan Fund and the Scherman Foundation.

Senator Marty Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn) stated, “I sponsored the Transit Funding Lockbox Act in the State Senate so to stand up for all those who ride the buses and trains and have been asked to pay more for less service. This legislation will guarantee that funds dedicated to support the Metropolitan Transit Authority’s commuter system, will actually be spent for such purposes and not get lost on the account of other State expenses. I urge the Assembly to pass this legislation and Governor Cuomo to sign it into law so to create greater financial integrity for the Metropolitan Transit Authority and end the days of simultaneous fare hikes and service reductions.”

Over the last three years, the State Government raided a total of \$260 million from dedicated MTA funding. These raids caused the worst fare hikes in a generation, the anniversary of which is coming up on June 27th. As a result of the ongoing revenue crisis, New Yorkers are saddled with the highest fare burden in the nation and the capital plan, which will make overdue station rehabs and track repairs, is facing a \$10 billion shortfall.

The Transit Funding Lockbox Act is intended to address this problem by making it much more difficult for legislators to raid dedicated transit funding. The bill would require the Legislature to write a “diversion impact statement” whenever transit funds would be used for other purposes. The Transit Funding Lockbox Act then adds transparency and accountability to budget decisions that affect transit funds.

The Transit Lockbox Act is supported by a diverse coalition of groups, including transit and environmental advocates, good government watchdogs, labor and business interests.

Coalition members include: Amalgamated Transit Union Locals - 726, 1056, 1179, 1181, American Railway & Airway Supervisors Association Local 5197, Bridge and Tunnel Officers Benevolent Association, District Council 37 Local 375, Empire State Transportation Alliance, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 754, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 808, the New York Building Congress, NYPIRG Straphangers

Campaign, NCFO/SEIU32BJ, New York State Council of Machinists, SSOBA, Transit Workers Union Local 100, 252, Transportation Alternatives, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Reinvent Albany, United Transportation Union 1440, WEACT for Environmental Justice, Pratt Center for Community Development, UPROSE, Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA and the New York League of Conservation Voters.