



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

# **Legislators & Advocates Unveil Momentous Subway Accessibility Bill**

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## **LEGISLATORS & ADVOCATES UNVEIL MOMENTOUS SUBWAY ACCESSIBILITY BILL**

*Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and State Senator Andrew Gounardes were joined by disability and transit advocates to announce legislation which would establish clear accessibility requirements for New York's subway system and the MTA.*

NEW YORK, NY – State legislators have introduced a bill with support from advocates which establishes clear targets for the MTA, long maligned for historic intransigence towards making New York City's subway system accessible to those with disabilities and other mobility limitations, to improve its compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A bill authored by Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and carried by State Senator Andrew Gounardes would codify accessibility goals established in New York City Transit President Andy Byford's "Fast Forward" plan to accelerate accessibility improvements and includes many goals long-sought by advocates who have maligned the inaccessible (and noncompliant) subway system.

Following the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the MTA was required by legal settlement to develop the 100 Key Station Plan which is scheduled

to be completed as part of the current 2015-2019 capital program. However, there has not yet been an approved plan to continue adding accessibility features such as elevators in the remaining 75% of inaccessible subway stations. Currently, fewer than 25% of the 472 subway stations in New York City are fully compliant with ADA requirements which limits the trip making capacity of people who require elevators to use the subway. Compared to people who can use stairs, people who need elevators have only 5% of the overall trip-making capacity when accounting for origin, transfer, and destination stations. Compounding this lack of accessible stations are frequent elevator outages and inadequate communication of real-time data to assist mobility-impaired transit users with their trip planning.

The proposed legislation would codify Fast Forward goals of:

- Full accessibility at 50 stations within the next five years (2020-2024 capital plan)
- Full accessibility at 130 additional stations in the following five years (2025-2029 capital plan)
- Maximum possible accessibility at all stations within fifteen years (by 2034)
- Accelerating installation of platform accessibility features, including tactile strips and reducing platform gaps
- Revising maintenance practices to provide continuous, uninterrupted elevator service during all passenger service hours
- Ensuring real-time data at all elevators, whether publicly or privately owned

The legislation would also require the MTA to:

- Include accessibility improvements during station closures or renovations longer than six months
- Collaborate in a public process to create criteria on which stations to prioritize for accessibility improvements

The bill would address inaccessible subways in a variety of ways and incorporates feedback from advocates who have frequently complained that the MTA is not putting enough effort or resources into making the subway system fully accessible. In recent years, the MTA has been rebuked both in civil court and the court of public opinion as multiple station renovation projects neglected to include accessibility upgrades despite station extended station closures and substantial financial cost.

**Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx) said:** “It is an absolute travesty that for so long, many New Yorkers have been excluded from our transit system. I am encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by NYCT President Andy Byford in his Fast Forward plan, and this legislation aims to support his efforts and also take his efforts a little bit further. Accessible subways help New Yorkers of all stripes - whether they use a wheelchair, walker, cane, stroller, shopping cart, and more. I hope to move this bill quickly through the legislature before the end of session, especially as we approach the upcoming approval of the MTA’s next capital plan for 2020-2024.”

**State Senator Andrew Gounardes (D-Brooklyn) said:** “New Yorkers deserve nothing less than a transit system that is completely, 100% accessible. Currently, none of the stations in my district have an accessible entrance. While I'm encouraged by the attention that the new leadership at the MTA has given to accessibility issues, we can and must do more. This legislation will codify the ambitious goals of the Fast Forward plan and ensure that no New Yorker is deprived access to our mass transit system because of a lack of access.”

“For too long young families, the elderly and disabled New Yorkers have had their access to our subways denied because of its lack of accessibility. By codifying New York City Transit President Andy Byford’s Fast Forward plan, the legislature will require the MTA to install elevators, ramps and other means of accessibility throughout our subway system. Coupled with the legislature providing historic funding to the MTA capital budget through Congestion Pricing, there can be no more excuses around making our subways accessible to all,” **said Assemblymember Robert Carroll.**

**Joe Rappaport, executive director of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled, said:** “For decades, the MTA has renovated stations at a cost of billions, blatantly evading the Americans with Disabilities Act. Under the Dinowitz-Gounardes law, the MTA finally would have to start serving all New Yorkers, not just some of them.”

**Jaqi Cohen, Campaign Coordinator for the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign said,** “New Yorkers deserve a transit system that is not only affordable and reliable, but one that is accessible, particularly for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who depend on elevators to access the subway system. This bill would reinforce the commitment made in New York City Transit's 'Fast Forward' plan towards improving subway accessibility, and I applaud Assemblymember Dinowitz and Senator Gounardes for their leadership on this issue.”

**Colin Wright, Senior Advocacy Associate at TransitCenter, said:** “New York City Transit’s Fast Forward commitment to prioritize subway accessibility for the 1.5 million seniors and people with disabilities who are denied access to hundreds of stations daily is commendable. But this pledge could be abandoned in the future for any number of reasons. This legislation will hold the MTA accountable to deliver on its own commitment.”

“For New York’s mass transit system to actually be considered world class, it must be accessible to all New Yorkers. For far too long, the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has treated accessibility as an afterthought, leaving mobility-impaired New Yorkers to use a separate and unequal system they are forced to patch together with grit and luck. The B/C stations at West 72nd Street were closed for five months to make cosmetic improvements. While I, my colleagues and advocates tried to shame the MTA into making this station accessible, the MTA did not listen, and my constituents, straphangers with disabilities and others cannot use this station. I am proud to support Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz’s new legislation, which will force the MTA to do what it should have been doing all along - getting every New Yorker, regardless of ability, where they need to go, when they need to get there,” **said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF -- Manhattan), who represents the neighborhood where the 72nd Street station is located.**

**State Senator Jessica Ramos said:** “I commend my colleagues, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz and State Senator Andrew Gounardes for introducing a bill that codifies the needs of our neighbors when it comes to accessibility in our public

transportation system. I am fighting with them to ensure we build a public transportation system that serves all New Yorkers.”

**Susan Dooha, Executive Director of Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY) said:** “We're grateful for this step forward and the commitment of elected officials in improving transit for their disabled and elderly constituents, a CIDNY priority since 1978. We'll keep working until NYC is 100% accessible.”

**Brett Eisenberg, Executive Director of Bronx Independent Living Services (BILS), said:** “BILS is thankful to Assemblyman Dinowitz and Senator Gounardes for taking the first steps in putting forward legislation towards a fully accessible subway system. BILS continues to advocate for 100 percent subway accessibility as it is our firm belief that all individuals should have equal access to all the Bronx and other boroughs have to offer. The lack of accessibility affects us all by making it harder to access healthcare, jobs, entertainment, etc. We look forward to working with legislative members and ensuring that 100 percent accessibility becomes a priority to everyone. We will not stand by and continue to let the MTA not make this a priority and deliberately not following ADA.”

**Riders Alliance Policy & Communications Director Danny Pearlstein said:** “A 21st century city needs an accessible transit system. Over a lifetime, every New Yorker will need an elevator to reach a train platform. That's why it's so important that a robust congestion pricing program bring in billions in new revenue to modernize the subway. Thanks to Assemblymember Dinowitz and Senator Gounardes for leading the charge to put station accessibility into law.”