

Reinvent Albany
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled • Downstate New York ADAPT
Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY • League of Women Voters of NYS
New York Association on Independent Living
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest • NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)
Riders Alliance • Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group • StreetsPAC
Transportation Alternatives • Tri-State Transportation Campaign

VIA EMAIL

January 12, 2022

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader
New York State Senate

Re: Please Conduct Robust Public Hearings for MTA Board Confirmation

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins,

We write today to ask you and your colleagues to conduct robust public confirmation hearings for appointees to the MTA.

In the past, some confirmation hearings for the MTA Board, including the important Chair and CEO position, have been conducted with little to no advanced public notice, and during busy periods like the adoption of the state budget. This provided little time for members of the Senate to educate themselves about the candidates and their qualifications before voting to confirm them. On the other hand, some confirmation hearings have been scheduled further in advance by the Senate. This provided the opportunity for members to ask detailed questions about the qualifications of the individuals being nominated and more fully vet and address potential conflicts of interest.

It is expected that a number of MTA Board nominations will be coming to the Senate in the weeks ahead due to changes in state, city and county administration. Governor Hochul has already announced¹ that she is nominating Janno Lieber to become the permanent Chair/CEO, and Elizabeth Velez as a member of the MTA Board to fill a vacancy created by Linda Lacewell's departure. Additionally, there is currently a vacancy in the position of the MTA Inspector General. These nominations present an

¹ Office of the NYS Governor. "Governor Hochul Announces Nominations to MTA Board." January 8, 2021. <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-nominations-mta-board>

opportunity to conduct a robust confirmation process in which Senators can ask detailed questions and consult with stakeholders regarding their perspectives before decisions are made.

As many of our groups wrote to you in February 2019², there are a number of questions that we believe the Senate should seek to have answered during confirmation hearings:

1. How do appointees meet the qualifications required under section 1263 of the Public Authorities Law? Examples include experience with transportation, public administration, business management, finance, accounting, law, engineering, land use, urban and regional planning, management of large capital projects, and labor relations.
2. How would appointees improve the diversity of the MTA Board, or ensure better representativeness of the MTA's riders, including but not limited to racial diversity, cultural diversity, disability, age diversity, geographic diversity, sex/gender diversity, sexual orientation, and religious diversity?
3. How will appointees fulfill their fiduciary duty to the MTA and public as required by law?
4. What, if any, business dealings do appointees have before the state or local governments within the MTA region? What potential conflicts of interest do appointees have that should be considered and may require recusals from voting?
5. What commitments will appointees make towards greater transparency and accountability of the MTA, including overseeing implementation of the MTA Open Data Law?
6. How will appointees improve the MTA's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Human Rights Law and the New York City Human Rights Law? What do appointees consider to be some of the major issues concerning accessibility, and how they will support improvement?
7. How will appointees work toward the interests of the MTA region as a whole, while maintaining political independence and also be responsive to and representative of their appointing authorities?

We thank you for your consideration of our request. Please contact Rachael Fauss, Senior Research Analyst at Reinvent Albany, at rachael@reinventalbany.org or 518-859-5307, should you wish to discuss this matter further.

² Letter dated February 20, 2019 available at: <https://reinventalbany.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Public-Interest-Groups-Letter-to-Senate-on-MTA-Appointment-Hearings-February-20-2019.pdf>

Sincerely,

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Cc.

Senator Liz Krueger, Chair, Finance Committee
Senator Leroy Comrie, Chair, Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee
Senator Timothy Kennedy, Chair, Transportation Committee
All Members of the State Senate