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Speaking Up for Public Transit in a Time of Crisis, Broad Coalition Urges Governor Cuomo to Sign Transit Lockbox Bill, Passed Unanimously by NY Assembly and Senate

Press Conference and Letter Signed by 50 Organizations sent to Governor Urging Him to Sign Governor Vetoed Bill in 2013

Broad Effort from Environmental, Civil Rights, Labor, Social Justice, Good Government and Public Transit Advocates Underscores the Responsibility of State Government to Create and Protect Funding Sources for Public Transportation

New York, NY--A broad spectrum of labor, business, transit, environmental, civil rights, social justice and government accountability groups today urged Governor Andrew Cuomo to sign the transit lockbox bill (A8511/S6807), which unanimously passed both the State Assembly and Senate earlier this year. In a letter to the governor, the groups, including Reinvent Albany, the Riders Alliance, Amalgamated Transit Union, National Conference of Firemen and Oilers District of 32BJ/SEIU, AARP, General Contractors Association, Regional Plan Association, Environmental Advocates and dozens of other organizations demanded that the state take responsibility for funding public transportation and put an end to the practice of diverting money away from transit to other purposes, increasing fiscal transparency and public accountability. The bill requires the state budget director to issue a "diversion impact statement" detailing how the diversion of funds will impact riders in the form of changes to transit service, safety and maintenance.

The call comes as the State grapples with how to pay for a vital transit rescue plan that is estimated to cost tens of billions of dollars; in that context, the call for approval of the transit lockbox legislation serves as a reminder that only the State can create, sustain and protect the long-term sources of revenue that will be required to make a transit rescue plan a reality.

Groups argued that raiding transit funding undermines core public services and trust in government. New York City's population and economy rely on public transit, whether directly or because the subway and bus network enables the flow of car and truck traffic. One quarter of New Yorkers statewide take public transit to get to work. Riders pay transit fares and additional dedicated taxes support essential transit service. When the state takes money away from transit, speakers asserted, it weakens those services and riders' trust.

The legislation is also supported by two groups who are sending separate letters to the Governor: the New York Building Congress and New York Association of Counties.

Unfortunately, New York State has a history of raiding dedicated transit funds and shady budget maneuvers involving the MTA. In 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015, the state diverted a total of \$391.5 million from Metropolitan Transportation Authority funds to the state's general fund. In 2017, the state reduced its promised reimbursement to the MTA, made in exchange for a prior cut in a dedicated MTA tax, by \$65 million. Also in 2017, at the state's direction, the MTA sent \$4.9 million to upstate ski resorts as part of a state bailout after lift ticket sales suffered during a warm, dry winter. Importantly, the state has also promised but not yet delivered \$7.3 billion to fund the MTA's current \$33.2 billion fiscal year 2015 - 2019 capital improvement plan.

Prior attempts to protect transit funding have been frustrated. In 2011, the legislature enacted a lockbox bill but soon nullified it by removing the "diversion impact statement" as part of separate legislation. In 2013, both houses of the legislature again voted for a transit lockbox bill but Governor Cuomo vetoed it. The 2018 bill is identical to the 2013 bill. In 2013, both houses of the legislature also voted for a transit lockbox bill but Governor Cuomo vetoed it. The 2018 bill is identical to the 2013 bill.

The [letter to the Governor can be found here](#).