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Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC)
Reinvent Albany • Riders Alliance • Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

February 20, 2019

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Temporary President and Majority Leader
New York State Senate
188 State Street Room 907, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Hold Public Confirmation Hearings for MTA Vacancies

Dear Leader Stewart-Cousins,

Thank you for the important hearings that the Senate is currently conducting on the effectiveness of New York State's transit systems, ensuring more robust legislative oversight of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

We write today to ask that the State Senate build upon these hearings through public confirmation hearings for forthcoming appointees to the MTA. The MTA currently has a number of vacancies for which the Senate will be required to provide advice and consent, including the following:

- Chairman/CEO
- Dutchess County Board Member
- Nassau County Board Member
- Rockland County Board Member
- Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council (non-voting)

Press reports indicate that an additional seat will become vacant at the end of February with the resignation of Scott Rechler, an appointee of the Governor. A recommendation from the Governor for the Chairman/CEO position may also come forward in the coming weeks, likely after the conclusion of the budget process.

The Senate Democratic Conference in 2009 held a public hearing for the appointment of Jay Walder as Chairman/CEO, during which a number of important issues were raised.¹ The State Senate should follow this example in consideration of any forthcoming appointees for the MTA.

Questions that should be asked of such appointees could include the following:

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. What, if any, business dealings do appointees have before the state or local governments within the MTA region? What other potential conflicts of interest may appointees have that should be considered?
3. How will appointees fulfill the fiduciary duty to the MTA and public as required by law?
4. What commitments will appointees make towards greater transparency and accountability of the MTA?
5. How will appointees work toward the interests of the MTA region as a whole while maintaining political independence and also being responsive to and representative of their appointing authorities?
6. How would appointees improve the diversity of the MTA Board, or ensure better representativeness of the MTA's riders?
7. 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?

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

Sincerely,

Beth Finkel
New York State Director
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¹ Video of hearing available on NYSenate Uncut, Youtube, <https://youtu.be/Rtq175f2-t4>

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Cc.

Senator Leroy Comrie, Chair, Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee
Senator Timothy Kennedy, Chair, Transportation Committee