**Citizens Budget Commission • Effective Transit Alliance**
**NYU Marron Transit Costs Project • Partnership for New York City**
**Regional Plan Association • Reinvent Albany**

September 01, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of the State of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We write to urge you to veto A10706/S9586, which would prohibit the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) from using one-person train operation (OPTO)—the global norm used by the vast majority of subway systems across the world—by requiring the presence of a conductor on all New York City Transit Authority trains that do not already use OPTO.

This legislation would prevent the MTA from realizing operational efficiencies that are enabled by new trains designed to work with the billions of dollars of advanced signaling technology being installed throughout the subway system.

Specifically, we recommend you veto this bill for the following reasons:

1. *OPTO can provide better service at a lower cost*. CBC estimates that using OPTO systemwide could save more than $425 million annually, which could be reinvested to close the MTA's structural operating budget gap or improve service for riders. For future expansion projects like the IBX, this legislation may increase operating costs that could potentially reduce frequency of service.

   Despite fully installed communications-based train control (CBTC) that allow the 7 and L trains to drive autonomously, both an operator and a conductor remain on board. The current capital plan will spend more than $12 billion on new rolling stock and modernized subway signals that will further reduce the need for conductors, yet this legislation would require their presence in perpetuity.

2. *OPTO is the international norm*. The NYU's Marron Institute of Urban Management's Transit Costs Project found that less than 6 percent of the 400 rail lines studied around the world use two or more operators. Of the 94 percent that use one or fewer operators, many are completely automated and more are working towards automation as modern signal systems are installed.

   New York City Transit and the Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) are the only two transit systems in the U.S., and among a rare handful in the world, that have both a conductor and an operator. Other legacy U.S. rail transit operators transitioned to OPTO long ago—the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority in 1984, the Chicago Transit Authority in 1998, and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in 2012.

   Newer systems in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Atlanta have used OPTO since they began operating. Legacy transit systems outside the U.S. have successfully transitioned to OPTO—

Stockholm in 1975, London in 2000, and Paris in 1968, which began operating driverless trains in 2013. These systems have operated safely without conductors, or any staff in some cases, on board. The MTA has also safely and successfully used OPTO on shuttles and at off-peak hours since 1996.

3. *Leaving operational strategies and decisions to management is the best, most flexible path to high-quality service at the lowest cost*. State laws should focus on ensuring agencies are high performing and transparent, and that management is accountable. The MTA should work together with labor through collective bargaining to increase efficiency. The MTA should be encouraged to implement national and international best practices, rather than stymied. Good management and reliable transit service are based on facts, not special interest politics.

We strongly support efforts to provide New Yorkers with world-class public transit. This bill does the opposite by raising MTA operating costs and constraining its ability to modernize its operations.

As a proven champion of better transit, we look to you to focus your efforts on forward-looking investments, not policies micromanaging subway staffing and operations.

We supported your veto of similar legislation last year, and we recommend you veto this bill that would impede the MTA's ability to provide more efficient, reliable, and modern subway service.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. We are available to discuss this issue at your convenience.

Sincerely,

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cc:

David Ullman, Deputy Secretary for Transportation