

# S.1148 (Gounardes)/A.1162 (Dinowitz)

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<b>BILL</b>  S.1148 (Gounardes)/A.1162 (Dinowitz)
<b>SUBJECT</b>  Rider Representation Act
<b>DATE</b>  May 16, 2025
<b>SUPPORT</b>

The Business Council of New York State strongly supports the Rider Representation Act, which would grant full voting rights on the MTA Board to rider representatives and add a new voting seat; for advocating riders with disabilities. These commonsense reforms would bring the voices of everyday transit users, which is the lifeblood of our state's economy directly into the room where decisions are made.

New York's economy moves on transit. The MTA serves a region that drives nearly 75% of all business activity in the state. One in five New York State workers rely on the MTA to get to work. Transit isn't a convenience; it's an economic necessity. Every train and bus carry the workforce that powers our small businesses, anchors our institutions, and fuels our global industries. And yet, the very people who depend on and understand this system best, its riders have no vote on how it's run.

This bill would fix that. It gives formal voting authority to the three existing rider representatives from the NYC Transit Riders Council, the LIRR Commuter Council, and the Metro-North Commuter Council, which in fact are positions created by the Legislature more than four decades ago. It also creates a new voting seat for a representative of riders with disabilities, ensuring that accessibility concerns are heard and addressed at the highest level of MTA governance.

Currently, rider representatives are barred from making motions, chairing committees, or even being counted toward quorum. They are uniquely required to ride the system but uniquely excluded from shaping it. That contradiction weakens the MTA Board and shortchanges millions of daily users. Riders see what works and what doesn't. They see the service gaps, equipment failures, accessibility issues, unsafe conditions and their firsthand perspective is essential to responsible oversight and better outcomes.

At a time when the MTA is navigating workforce shortages, capital investment needs, and ridership recovery, the Board cannot afford to overlook the very people whose commutes, livelihoods, and families depend on the system. Elevating rider voices is not symbolic, it's strategic. It means better decisions, more trust, and stronger alignment between the MTA's priorities and the public's needs.

Business depends on a functional transit system. It's how employees show up, how clients connect, how goods move. Investing in transit is investing in economic growth, and that investment, should be guided by the people who use the system every day. Giving riders a real vote will strengthen accountability, improve service, and help the MTA deliver on its mission to keep New York moving

For these reasons, the Business Council of New York State urges swift passage of the Rider Representation Act. This legislation reflects a simple truth: transit riders deserve a real voice and a real vote.