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NFTA makes first stop on ride to accountability

Next stop: voting seats for riders

Statement from NYSTEAL's Steering Committee

Today, the New York State Assembly passed a bill (Maziarz [S6536](#)/Schimminger [A9455](#)) that will add a non-voting member, specifically representing transit riders, to Buffalo's struggling Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) board. The bill, which had already passed in the Senate, will add a crucial voice for transit riders to the Authority's governing process.

The New York State Transportation Equity Alliance (NYSTEAL), a coalition of over 80 organizations across the state, applauds the NFTA for its outreach to Senator Maziarz and Assemblyman Schimminger to create a new seat on its board for a representative of the "transit dependent and/or disabled community"—i.e., those who are most severely impacted when fares are raised, or service is cut.

While this vote today represents an important first step, there is still room for improvement. This voice at the table for one transit authority needs to be followed by the establishment of a vote at the table for boards across the state. NYSTEAL has been working closely with members of the legislature to introduce legislation that will establish voting seats for transit riders on all 5 of New York's major transportation authority boards.

The recent rollercoaster in Buffalo perfectly illustrates the need for a transit rider voice and vote on the board. This past fall, the NFTA governing board proposed a devastating 22% cut to its service miles. In response, riders came out and said that if there have to be cuts, it is preferable that the bus be a bit more costly, than not come at all. The NFTA thus went forward with a scaled-back service cut, and a \$.25 fare increase to balance its budget. Riders could have been spared this ordeal if they would have been at the table in the first place.

This bill marks an important first step towards filling gaps in the NFTA board. However, if riders are to have their system be truly accountable to their needs, then they must be treated as full members at the table. We look forward to carrying this momentum to ensure that riders are meaningfully represented at the table with a vote.

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