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Lhota's Appointment as MTA Chief Draws Praise & Questions



Joseph Lhota is back at the MTA as chairman. (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

Written by Rebecca Gold

As construction and real estate executives praise the appointment of Joe Lhota as chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, questions remain on whether he will have enough time to devote to helping the transit agency.

On Wednesday, June 21, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced Lhota's nomination. According to a statement from Cuomo, Lhota will serve part-time as chairman, while keeping his full-time position at NYU Langone Medical Center as senior vice president, vice dean and chief of staff. In 2014, he earned a salary greater than \$1.35 million according to his employer's 990 form.

The Republican-controlled Senate was quick to confirm Lhota's nomination, which drew praise from business leaders across the city. Lhota already led the MTA for two years, up until 2013 when he withdrew to run for mayor.

The New York Building Congress' president and CEO Carlo Scissura said, "Joe knows the good and the bad of the MTA, he's very trusted and he has run major organizations and he's someone who lives in Brooklyn and knows what it's like to commute. Joe will assemble the right team and the right plan for the agency."

A NYC major landlord, Scott Rechler, who Cuomo appointed last week to the MTA's board, also supports Lhota's appointment.

Rechler said, "I think he is the perfect person for the job. He understands the nuances of the MTA, knows how to lead in a crisis, is well respected by civic and business leaders and has a mandate to do what needs to be done to bring the MTA into the 21st century."

Cuomo's office release a press release that said an executive officer will soon be chosen to lead the day-to-day operations at the MTA.

In a statement, Cuomo said, "There is much hard work to be done to address the MTA's current failures, and the level of service and daily frustrations commuters are experiencing are completely unacceptable. I know Joe will

move to address these issues immediately and ensure a reliable and effective transportation system worthy of the city it serves."

The transit watchdog group the Riders Alliance's executive director John Raskin, said that Cuomo is still responsible for plans to address the MTA's failing infrastructure and funds to improve the transit system, regardless of the leadership of the agency.

Raskin told Crain's news, "The questions about MTA leadership or board governance are just distractions from the core issue—that Cuomo needs to take the lead and put together a plan to fix the subways and find the funding to make it work."