



A.3379 (ROSENTHAL, ET AL.)
S.4810 (PERKINS, DILAN)

Summary

This bill removes language from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) operating statute exempting many of its actions from the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

Explanation

The state environmental quality review process required by Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law is among the cornerstones of environmental protection in New York State.

Simply put, SEQRA requires state and local government agencies and public authorities to consider the environmental impacts of their decisions. For actions that require a full environmental review, SEQRA provides for the preparation of environmental impact statements, the collection of public comments, and opportunities for public hearings on the proposed action, as well as the mitigation of negative environmental consequences when such consequences are likely to occur.

The MTA currently enjoys an exemption from SEQRA for many of its actions. For example, per existing law, a project to expand an existing rail line along pre-existing track may not be subject to the requirements of SEQRA, despite the fact that after completing the project the new rail line would be used more frequently. The increased air pollution associated with the expanding the line in the area should be considered in context with other project benefits, such as reduced automobile traffic. All of these environmental impacts should be thought through in an environmental impact statement.

In short, no state or local agency or public authority should be exempt from SEQRA. Other regional transportation authorities do not have such exemptions and the MTA's should be repealed.

Environmental Advocates of New York strongly supports this bill.

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