Explanation:
Lead service lines are the greatest contributor to lead in drinking water, which is a significant source of lead exposure. Formula-fed infants can receive 40-60% of their lead exposure from water. Even at very low levels, lead can cause decreased cognitive function, developmental delays, behavioral problems, and other harmful health effects.

There are an estimated 494,000 lead service lines across New York. However, the exact number of lead service lines still delivering drinking water to homes and businesses remains unknown. Most water utilities have not conducted a comprehensive review of their written records to determine how many of their service lines are lead, how many are not lead, and how many are of unknown material.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is requiring every water utility to develop an inventory identifying the location, material, and other information of each of its service lines by October 2024. Many New Yorkers, however, will not be able to access this critical data online, especially those served by small, rural water utilities.

This bill codifies EPA’s requirement that water utilities create and regularly update a service line inventory, and further directs the NYS Department of Health (DOH) to ensure that this information is easily accessible to the public. Under the bill, DOH must publish all service line inventories on its website and develop interactive maps of certain water utilities’ inventories so the public can visualize their risk of exposure to lead in drinking water.

Certain water utilities have been proactive in developing inventories and interactive mapping, such as New York City and Rochester. This bill would ensure that there is transparency about the scale and extent of lead service lines statewide. With a better understanding of the problem, policymakers will be able to target state and federal funding to equitably and efficiently replace all of New York’s lead pipes. We can’t fix what we don’t measure.

Summary:
This bill adds a new section to the Public Health law to make information about the number and location of lead pipes easily accessible to the public and decision-makers, so that state and federal resources can be secured and efficiently targeted to get the lead out of New York’s drinking water by removing all lead pipes.