

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

SENATE, No. 2917

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

DATED: SEPTEMBER 8, 2026

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Establishes NJT Office of Customer Advocate and Rider Advocacy Commission.

Type of Impact: Annual increase in State expenditures.

Agencies Affected: New Jersey Transit Corporation; Department of the Treasury.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Annual
State Expenditure Increase	Up to \$1 million

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that this bill would result in an increase in State expenditures of up to \$1 million annually, primarily due to the establishment of the New Jersey Transit Office of Customer Advocate and the Rider Advocacy Commission in, but not of, the Department of Transportation.
- The magnitude of the cost increase will depend upon how the required changes are implemented, most notably in the potential size of, and staffing for, the office, which are not specifically prescribed in the bill.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill establishes a Rider Advocacy Commission in, but not of, the Department of Transportation and requires the commission to establish a New Jersey Transit Office of Customer Advocate. The bill authorizes the office to investigate, monitor, promote, and advise on all customer-experience matters pertaining to the operation of the New Jersey Transit Corporation. The commission is empowered to engage and dismiss staff as necessary, including the appointment of a Rider Advocate.

As the head of the office, the Rider Advocate is required to report directly to the commission and has the authority to carry out the purposes of the office, including, with the approval of the

commission, temporarily retaining expert assistants as are necessary to protect the interests of corporation customers when exceptional circumstances arise.

The responsibilities of the office include: (1) providing information and analysis to the corporation board of directors, the Governor, and the Legislature concerning the actual or anticipated customer impact of any corporation board or corporation actions; (2) relaying customer input and feedback to the corporation board, the Governor, and the Legislature; and (3) representing the interests of customers, as determined by the Rider Advocate. The office is also required to conduct monthly meetings with corporation customers.

Funds for the expenses of the commission are to be independent of the funds for the corporation. On or before March 31 of each year, the commission, in consultation with the Rider Advocate, is required to prepare and submit a report to the Governor and Legislature on the activities of the commission and office for the previous calendar year, including any reports provided to the corporation board of directors. Finally, the bill repeals a provision of law requiring the corporation to employ a customer advocate.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS estimates that this bill would result in an increase in State expenditures of up to \$1 million annually associated with the establishment of the office and the commission. Notably, this bill repeals a provision of law requiring the corporation to employ a customer advocate. The OLS anticipates that much of the expenditure increase will be administrative in nature and attributable to establishing the office, including, but not limited to, fitting out office space, technology infrastructure, and additional staff support.

The bill provides a broad scope of responsibility for the office, including some roles and responsibilities that are comparable to that of the Division of Rate Counsel, such as conducting independent analysis of proposed fare changes. However, whereas the Division of Rate Counsel provides legal assistance that requires staffing attorneys and additional legal professionals, the bill structures the office as a customer service office that would not necessitate the employment of such legal professionals. Accordingly, the OLS anticipates that the average cost of personnel in the office established by this bill will be lower than that of similarly structured State agencies. Notably, the current salary of the corporation customer advocate is \$175,000.

Section: Authorities, Utilities, Transportation and Communications

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).