§ 1266-e. Metro-North rail commuter council. 1. There is hereby created the Metro-North rail commuter council to study, investigate, monitor and make recommendations with respect to the maintenance and operation of those portions of, if any, the Hudson, Harlem, New Haven, Pascack Valley and Port Jervis commuter railroad lines remaining within the metropolitan commuter transportation district. Such council shall study and investigate all aspects of the day to day operation of such railroad lines, monitor their performance and recommend changes to improve the efficiency of the operation thereof. Such council shall study and make recommendations in regard to improving bicycle and pedestrian access at bridges, stations and other facilities operated by such railroad lines and submit such recommendations to the metropolitan transportation authority on or before June first, two thousand twenty-two and every five years thereafter.

2. Such council shall consist of twelve members and shall be commuters who regularly use the transportation services of such railroad lines. At least five of such members shall be residents of the county of Westchester. Of the other seven members, at least one of such members shall be a resident of each of the counties of Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Orange and Bronx, provided that such county has not withdrawn from the metropolitan commuter transportation district pursuant to section twelve hundred seventy-nine-b of this title; provided further, should only the county of Putnam remain in the metropolitan commuter transportation district then membership on such council shall consist of eight members, six of whom reside in the county of Westchester and two of whom reside in the county of Putnam. Members shall be appointed by the governor. In making such appointments the governor shall consult with and solicit recommendations from local officials and to the extent possible appoint members who represent the ridership of the several commuter railroad lines. Provided, however, that one member shall be appointed who has a demonstrated expertise or interest in the promotion and development of improved bicycle and pedestrian access at bridges, stations and other facilities operated by the authority and its affiliates and subsidiaries. Vacancies occurring in the membership of the council shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments.

3. The members of the council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for their expenses actually and necessarily incurred by them in the performance of their duties hereunder from funds appropriated to the commissioner of transportation.

4. The council may request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission, agency, public authority of the state or any political subdivision thereof such assistance and data as it requests and will enable it to properly carry out its activities for the purposes set forth herein.