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IMMEDIATE

### TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on FOX 5's "Good Day New York" to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live by video on Fox 5's "Good Day New York" with Rosanna Scotto to discuss the agency's ongoing response to COVID-19 and post-pandemic transit strategies.

*A transcript of the interview appears below.*

**Rosanna Scotto:** These are unprecedented times for all of us, including the MTA. Ridership of the subway is down nearly 90% because of the pandemic, it's blown a huge hole in the agency's already fragile budget. Then last week they began shutting the subway system down overnight for disinfecting. Joining us right now with an update MTA Chairman Patrick Foye, nice to have you with us Mr. Foye. First of all, how are you feeling? You had COVID back in March, what's going on?

**Patrick J. Foye:** Rosanna, good morning, thanks for having me. I did, fortunately I had a very mild case, I've recovered, I've tested negative and tomorrow I'm going to Stony Brook University Hospital out in Suffolk to donate plasma, which hopefully will help a transit worker who's suffering through this or some member of the public. It's my small way of doing my part.

**Scotto:** Well, thank you for doing that. All right, so the rumor out there is you are considering reservations for subway and bus seats. Is that true?

**Foye:** So here's what we're considering Rosanna, in an effort to protect the health of our customers and our employees and to deal with the increase in ridership that will occur when Governor Cuomo begins to lift New York on PAUSE downstate, we're looking, everything is on the table. We've been talking to transit agencies in Asia, in Europe, in North America, APTA, the Trade Association, the International Trade Association, etcetera, we're looking at everything. Reservations would be a difficult thing to achieve but we think we've got an obligation to look at it and we're going to look at everything that we think makes sense, including everything that is being considered or implemented at transit agencies in Asia, Europe and North America. Clearly the experience is going to be different, for instance, every employee will be temperature tested. We have a Temperature Brigade that has tested, done over 120,000 approximately tests-- temperature checks, that will be the rigor. It is going to be mandatory for our customers and employees to wear masks and we can't emphasize how important that is. Mask wearing, I think the compliance on MTA subways, buses, commuter rails has been high, very high. I thank our customers for that, it's mandatory for our employees and as Governor Cuomo says, that's a case of your respecting others and the families of others around you, and I think you New Yorkers and our customers have responded to that.

**Scotto:** How are you going to deal with social distancing on the trains?

**Foye:** So it's a good question. Look, social distancing on transit, if the standard is six feet, is an issue. The CDC issued some advice yesterday on transit, it wasn't specific as the social distance-- on the social distance issue. Some transit agencies in Asia and Europe have set standards so many people per square meter, which is around nine, a little over nine square feet, we're looking at all those things. I think that protecting customer's health and employees' health is going to be a multi-dimensional, multi-step process beginning with first, masks. Second, if you're sick, if you've got a fever, don't-- stay home, don't travel on mass transit. That includes our employees as we're doing temperature checks. If we find that someone has a temperature, we're going to refer him or her to a doctor and send him or her home, advise that they talk to their physician. It's not going to help their coworkers, it's not going to help our customers and it's going to be a series of steps like that. Very importantly, the first COVID-19 case in New York State was confirmed on March 1. On March 3, we began disinfecting stations, rolling stock, subway cars, buses, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North cars. We've ramped that up to doing every subway car daily, every bus daily--that's one of the reasons for the closure, the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure, that started on Wednesday which has gone well under the leadership of Sarah Feinberg and her team. It's allowed us to disinfect every subway car, every night. We're looking at-- beyond that we're looking at some innovative disinfecting technologies including ultraviolet, which is a proven technology and used in hospital and emergency room settings. We're also very encouraged by the pilots that we are, have been conducting, frankly since mid-March at the Corona yard and every subway car and bus has been treated with anti-microbial solutions over the last month.

**Scotto:** Let me ask you about the homeless on the subways. The Mayor said it was a game changer, historic. Do you see the homeless returning to the subways after you clear them off at night?

**Foye:** There's two pieces to this right? There's the disinfecting of the subway cars and buses and stations and that has gone well, and stations as well. Over a 24-hour period we're disinfecting all of that and I want to thank the transit workers that are involved in that effort. They've been heroic throughout this entire terrible pandemic and 8,000 of them have returned from quarantine and are back on the job, that's extraordinary.

**Scotto:** So they do come back?

**Foye:** Absolutely. Well over 8,000 have returned to work, and that's a testament to their dedication and commitment, and they are performing heroically and they are moving heroes-- our customers are primarily first responders and essential workers. With respect to the homeless, it doesn't do the

homeless any good to be sleeping on subways or getting on buses-- and this is an issue for both subways and buses. Providing services--medical services, mental health services--and shelter to the homeless is an important obligation, it's an obligation of the City. I think we've made significant progress, we've got to maintain that progress. The work of the NYPD has been critical, together with the MTA police, has been critical on this. I think on the homeless issue it is too early to declare victory. Clearly we've made progress, we've got to continue that progress together with the NYPD and the Department of Homeless Services led by Commissioner Banks. That partnership has to continue but we've got a great deal more to do with respect to making sure the City, making sure that the homeless get the services they need and the shelter that they're legally entitled to. They should not be on subways and buses at any time, but especially during a pandemic.

**Scotto:** Alright Chairman Foye, let's do a quick round here. Layoffs, will they happen?

**Foye:** We need every operating person, we've got subways, buses, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road, we're running MTA essential service. As the Governor begins to lift the portions of New York on PAUSE with respect to downstate, we'll be increasing service. We'll be doing that on a gradual basis and we'll be doing it on a basis where we're minimizing the public health risks to our employees and our customers, that's priority one.

**Scotto:** But layoffs, do you think layoffs are in the future?

**Foye:** If we get--we got \$3.9 billion of federal funding, we received the first installment yesterday. I want to thank the President for signing that bill, and for expediting it, and I want to laud and applaud the work of Senator Schumer and Chair Lowey and Congressman Hakeem Jeffries and Congressman Espaillat, we need their help and the New York Congressional Delegation on a bipartisan basis supported the 3.9 billion in round one. Speaker Pelosi's bill that was released I believe on Tuesday of this week provides another \$3.9 billion approximately for the MTA. We need those funds to keep the lights on and to pay the payroll. If we get that we will not in a position where we have to lay operating people off, we're going to need their services.

**Scotto:** Gotcha, one last question, fare increase. There's rumors going up that fares may go up to \$9.

**Foye:** No that's a nonstarter, period. I think that came out of a Crain's webinar yesterday, one of the panelists suggested that as a back of the envelope exercise--that ain't going to happen. We are acutely aware of the fact that all New Yorkers are under financial press as a result of the pandemic. I do not see and do not support any pandemic-related fare increase.

**Scotto:** All right, MTA Chairman Patrick Foye. Thank you so much for being with us this morning and congratulations that you're feeling better, and thank you for giving your blood to help somebody else. We appreciate it.

**Foye:** Thank you, Rosanna. Thanks for having me.