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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

MTA Announces Front-Door Boarding and Fare Collection to Resume on All Local and SBS Buses Beginning Monday, August 31

MTA Prioritizing Customer, Employee Safety: Front-Door Boarding Adds Up To 40% More Space for Social Distancing

Employee Safety Top Priority - Innovative Barriers Protect Bus Operators When Riders Board

White Line at Front on Bus Floor is Moved Back to Create Additional Space for Operator

MTA Continues Aggressive Cleaning and Disinfecting Regimen

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The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced front-door boarding and fare collection on all local and SBS buses will resume Monday, August 31 as agency officials remain laser-focused on designing and implementing innovative ways to protect customers and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Front-door boarding will add up to 40 percent more space on buses, enhancing a rider's ability to socially distance. Barriers of chains and vinyl curtains will be taken down from the middle area of the bus to increase social distancing opportunities as well.

As front-door boarding resumes, the MTA is implementing other changes to increase separation between bus operators and riders in order to continue enhancing safety. The changes include blocking off the seat directly behind the bus operator, and moving the white line on the bus floor, which passengers are expected to stand behind, further away from the bus operator.

Polycarbonate sliders designed and assembled inside the MTA, and vinyl curtains to fully protect bus operators, continue to be installed on 4,800 local buses and are expected to be completed in the fall. Simultaneously, full-length vinyl curtains are being installed on 1,000 express buses and are expected to be complete this month. The MTA continues to block off the front two rows on express buses to allow distance between riders and the bus operator.

As an international leader among transportation agencies, the MTA led the way for other transit agencies by implementing rear-door boarding measures on March 23 to protect frontline employees from the spread of COVID-19 early in the pandemic. Regular fare policy remained in effect wherever on-board payment boxes and SBS off-board machines continued to be accessible.

The MTA's bus revenue and bus ridership projections indicated a loss of approximately \$431 million throughout the pandemic, based on regular pre-pandemic ridership. Based on the number of riders who actually boarded over the last several months, if the MTA had collected bus fares, those fares would have amounted to \$159 million. As the MTA faces continued financial fallout due to the COVID-19 crisis, it has requested \$12 billion from the federal government to get through the end of 2020 and get through 2021. This financial calamity has made it critical to once again resume fare collection at the end of the month.

"Front-door boarding is a crucial step as we continue to support the reopening of New York City by making sure our buses have more space to socially distance and our bus operators are fully protected," said **Sarah Feinberg, Interim President of New York City Transit**. "Safety will always be our top priority. I'm grateful to our bus team for working closely with our labor partners to find a safe solution that protects operators and employees."

"We have a comprehensive plan to enhance the safety of our operators and customers, who have chosen the bus system over other modes of transportation throughout this pandemic," said **Craig Cipriano, President of MTA Bus Company and Senior Vice President of NYC Transit's Department of Buses**. "We are tremendously grateful to our employees, who are the heroes of this pandemic. As customers continue to choose buses, we now expect them to pay the fare and remain respectful of others by wearing a mask whenever on board."

"We are continuing to take aggressive steps to ensure employee and customer safety and it's at the forefront of everything we do," said **Patrick Warren, MTA Chief Safety Officer and Acting COO of New York City Transit**. "Since the beginning of the pandemic in March, we have distributed more than 6 million masks across agencies. Additionally, infection rates among our heroic workforce have dramatically decreased since the height of the pandemic with fewer than 170 bus employees currently at home under quarantine."

"Riders can already pay their fare using OMNY at the rear door on all Manhattan SBS routes now and by year's end all SBS buses will have rear door enabled contactless readers," said **Al Putre, Chief Revenue Officer of New York City Transit and OMNY Program Executive**. "OMNY remains on

target for system-wide reader installation by years end. Riders can utilize our contactless fare payment system, a tool that can further facilitate social distancing.”

On August 14 bus ridership reached more than 1.3 million riders, the highest ridership has been since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As more riders come back, they can plan their trip by using the new capacity tracking feature on the MYmta app, unveiled last month, that allows customers to track in real time the number of passengers on an arriving bus. The new tech, being rolled out in a pilot across buses, with 40% of the fleet activated so far, enables customers to better socially distance on buses.

The MTA continues to make improvements to its air filtration systems on the bus. The entire bus fleet of nearly 6,000 buses is being upgraded to provide high density air filters, allowing fewer dust particles and other airborne contaminants to pass through the filter.

Riders who have lost or forgotten their mask can easily access a mask when boarding. A pilot program is underway to provide free surgical masks via dispensers installed inside of buses to further protect riders and employees. The MTA has rolled out the pilot to 360 buses on 15 routes across all five boroughs. Customers on the Bx12 SBS and Bx41 SBS routes in the Bronx, the S53 local route in Staten Island, the X63, X64 and X68 express routes and the Q110, Q112, and Q64 local routes in Queens, the M15SBS in Manhattan, and the X27, X28, X37, and X38 express routes and B38 local route in Brooklyn. Each dispenser holds approximately 50 surgical masks.

The MTA has distributed to date, across agencies, 6.1 million masks, 8.1 million pairs of gloves, 55,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, 5.3 million individual sanitizing wipes, 155,000 gallons of cleaning solutions, and 12,000 face shields to its heroic employees. Additionally, the MTA has distributed 2.5 million masks and 750,000 gallons of hand sanitizer to customers.

MTA Bridge and Tunnel Officers and NYC Transit agents (EAGLE teams) will be deployed throughout the bus system to remind customers of the need to pay the fare while entering through the front door starting August 31 and of the requirement to wear a mask while on board.