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Press Release

July 20, 2020

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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears Live on WCBS NewsRadio 880

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live today on WCBS NewsRadio 880 with Steve Scott to discuss transit plans as New York City enters Phase 4 reopening.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Steve Scott: As the city hits Phase 4 today it will bring even more people back to work. Let's go live to the newslines, MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Mr. Foye good morning. We've been talking about the heat. Does the heat affect your trains and buses much?

Patrick J. Foye: Steve good morning. Thanks for having me. The answer is extreme weather of any kind, extreme cold or extreme heat puts stress first on our crews and on equipment. With respect to extreme heat I have to say that we have not had any significant issues and I think that's thanks to the management and the workforces at subways, buses, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North. But obviously you can put stress on subway cars, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North cars, air conditioning systems etc. But as a result of a vigorous job maintenance program, we haven't had any issues with extreme heat this summer so far.

Scott: As we said Phase 4 for today, let's catch up. Give us a sketch of service. What's at full service, what's still limited or modified?

Foye: Well subways and buses are running at full service. I can give you Friday's report on subways and buses. We carried almost two and a half million total riders that was roughly evenly split between subways and buses. That would represent approximately 23% of normal pre-pandemic subway ridership, and something close to 60% for buses. We don't expect a significant surge as a result of Phase 4 today. You know you just heard a tape of the Governor a minute ago describing what Phase 4 means for New York City, and why we think there will probably some, why we think there will be continued upticks in ridership on subways and buses and the commuter rails. We don't think that the first days of Phase 4 will drive ridership up significantly. Probably the next significant increase on ridership will occur post Labor Day.

Scott: I'm sure you saw last week the Riders Alliance offered a doomsday scenario that suggested some subway lines would have to be cut if the MTA doesn't get some quick cash from the Feds. How realistic is that possibility of cutting service to the point of eliminating lines if you don't get money?

Foye: Well Steve, I've described this as a financial four alarm fire and I think it's exactly right, and I commend the Riders Alliance for their work and focusing public and elected official attention on these issues. I'm not going to comment specifically on what, you know whether lines are going to be reduced, but I will say this. This is the greatest financial challenge the MTA has ever faced by orders of magnitude. It is really essential, and I know today the United States Senators will be coming back into session. It is really essential that public transit agencies around the country but specifically the MTA. The MTA needs \$3.9 billion dollars to get us through the rest of the year as a result of the revenue declines, because ridership declined to such a level during the depths of a pandemic. And we are also seeing declines in a package of dedicated taxes and subsidies that the state legislatures put in place over a period of decades. So, \$3.9 billion is the number that we need. We have said that everything is on the table. Obviously we are going to cut non-personnel expense. We are going to cut overtime first. But if we don't get that funding, everything has to be on the table which would include service reductions and reductions in force.

Scott: Do you have a sense as the Covid-19 numbers in New York City are stable and improving, do you have a sense of when we may return to 24/7 subway service?

Foye: Well look, the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure will continue as long as the pandemic continues. That's a judgement that will be made by Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Zucker. That's not a MTA decision. I will say that the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure has played a critical role in allowing Sarah Feinberg and her great team at New York City Transit Subways and Buses to disinfect every subway station and every subway car, and also to allow the NYPD and the New York City Department of Homeless to get medical and mental health services to those who don't have housing aid, including shelter for those people. But the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure will continue as long as the pandemic continues.

Scott: To be clear, will it be your decision or Governor Cuomo's decision if and when to resume 24/7 service?

Foye: Well just to be clear, since it is tied to the continuation of the pandemic, that's a determination that Governor Cuomo will make. You know in consultation with the New York State Commissioner of Health Dr. Zucker. That's not a determination--we are not public health officials, we are not epidemiologists. So that decision will be made, to be quite clear, by Governor Cuomo.

Scott: MTA Chairman Pat Foye, always a pleasure. Thank You for talking with us today.

Foye: Thank you Steve.