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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on WCBS 880 to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on WCBS 880 with Steve Scott to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Steve Scott: Good morning, I'm Steve Scott. Here is our big story at 7:15 on Wednesday, May 6: New York City subway trains are rolling again this morning after shutting down overnight for cleaning. MTA Chairman Pat Foye is on our Newsline. Mr. Foye, good morning.

Patrick J. Foye: Steve, good morning, how are you?

Scott: I am doing well. You sound chipper, we wonder when you sleep, but our big question is how'd it go overnight?

Foye: Look, I think it's fair to say that it was a quite successful and the first closing, scheduled closing, of the subways overnight for the first time in a 115-year history of the subways. We clean and disinfected yesterday nearly every car in service, the cleaning and disinfecting goes on a 24/7 basis. We had 700 cleaners out last night from the TWU and a small number from contractors. I was at, personally, at 96th Street and Second Avenue and then Stillwell Avenue in Coney Island. There was over 1000 NYPD officers and we thank the Mayor and Commissioner Shea for that strong presence. The NYPD was everywhere, the MTA police were also involved in working smartly on this effort, we had outreach teams and social workers. On our service for first responders and essential workers we added 76% more buses, we doubled--sorry bus trips--we doubled, more than doubled the number of buses. The bus service was effective, there was no crowding in any of the four boroughs--we didn't operate in Staten Island Steve because Staten Island Railway continued to operate, was not affected by this. And then in the service with for-hire--and as we predicted, most of the riders, first responders and essential workers in this 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. period were served by the robust bus service that was added by Sarah Feinberg and Craig Cipriano and his team at MTA New York City Transit and MTA Bus, that was effective. As of about 2:30 this morning, we had a couple of hundred, about 250 actually, for-hire vehicle trips, so the bulk of our customers during this time period were carried by the robust bus service. We're going to bring a spirit of continuous improvement to this process, and are going to look at each of these elements, but I think it's fair to say that the first closing of the subways in 115 years was successful.

Scott: So the buses that people were taking, were they crowded?

Foye: There was no crowding reported on busing last night. We're going to look at the service and we may tweak it or here or there, but the significant increase in bus during the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. period will be continued and we will we will look at the service in each of the four boroughs and tweak it where appropriate.

Scott: The Daily News has reported that more than 2000 homeless people were removed from the subway system. How did that removal go?

Foye: Well I was at two stations, and obviously Sarah Feinberg and I were talking to our colleagues across the four boroughs. It went well, it was peaceful. Not only the homeless, but everybody in the station come 1 a.m. had to leave the station. The police presence, NYPD primarily, but also MTA police, it was professional, it was non-confrontational. The NYPD and the MTA police as well as BRC-- which is a social service provider in the Department of Homeless Services-- the City of New York, Commissioner Steve Banks, I think should be commended for the work they did. Obviously the homeless don't benefit, especially during a pandemic, from sleeping or living on the subways, neither do New York City Transit workers on the subways including conductors, operators, cleaners. Not good for the homeless at any time, especially during a pandemic, like the horrific pandemic we're living through.

Scott: I know you'll be evaluating how the whole thing went before you do it again early tomorrow morning, but out of the box, any unexpected hurdles, overnight lessons learned from moving forward?

Foye: I think there's lots of lessons, I think that Sarah Feinberg, Sally Librera, I and our colleagues saw things and passed, you know, made notes and passed them along to the team. I think for a debut closing of the subways, I think it can only be characterized as successful. It will be better this morning, Thursday morning, it'll be better on Friday. We're going to continue to tweak it but I think it was a successful closing. The reopening at 5 a.m. has gone well and as I said, we've cleaned and disinfected nearly every car in the service which was the point of this exercise, to make sure that the public health of every customer and every transit worker on the subways in every capacity that their health and safety is going to be protected. That's what we were doing and having the homeless leave the system as everybody was required to leave clearly expedited and made the cleaning and the disinfecting more efficient and productive.

Scott: MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Mr. Foye, thank you for coming on, we appreciate it.

Foye: Thank you, Steve.