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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Open Letter from MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye to New York's Business Community

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye today issued the following open letter to the New York business community. The letter will also be sent directly to business leaders and key business associations in the MTA's service region.

The text of the letter is below.

Since COVID-19 first arrived in New York, the ongoing pandemic has dramatically and profoundly impacted the state – affecting each of us personally, professionally and upending the rhythm of our daily lives.

I know your company acted swiftly and responsibly to ensure the health and safety of your employees and customers – as have we. At the MTA, we've led among the nation's transit agencies in our response, stepping up cleaning and disinfecting of our transit system and employee facilities, providing PPE for our workforce, and instituting new practices, such as taking daily temperature checks for employees. And we know that, you, in leading one of the most important companies in New York, have also been reimagining how your business operates and how your employees will work in the future.

We recognize that this crisis hit businesses particularly hard, and that you took quick and decisive actions to protect not just your employees and customers, but the region as a whole – by supporting New York on PAUSE, having employees telecommute where feasible, and making other changes in how you operate. Now, as New York City prepares to enter Phase 1 of reopening, we are asking for your help again – to ensure our critical mass transit system can serve everyone who needs to get around, and provide them as much space as we can.

To help accomplish this, we are requesting key employers in the city, including you, to help us keep New York moving by staggering work hours, allowing flexible start times, extending telecommuting plans, and expanding opportunities to work from home for employees for a few days each week or full-time – not unlike the actions taken by New York City businesses in the wake of the 1918 flu epidemic.

As you know, the morning rush has historically been our busiest time of day, as a result of the traditional 9-5 work schedule. Since the pandemic began, we have seen the morning peak start earlier in the day, in line with shift schedules of essential employees. Implementing policies such as staggered hours, especially starting later in the morning, would make a world of difference in helping spread out the peak.

At the MTA, we are doing the same – implementing staggered hours and alternate days for administrative employees who need to be in the office and extending telecommuting plans for those who can continue to work from home. And our heroic frontline employees are working tirelessly – as they have throughout the entire pandemic – to keep this city moving.

In reimagining our system and what transit will look like for our customers, we have always put the health and safety of our customers and employees first and foremost. We implemented an aggressive program to disinfect all stations, train cars and buses at least once a day, and we're testing innovative new solutions like ultraviolet light and antimicrobial coatings to limit surface transfer of the virus. We're also exploring the use of markers and traffic controllers on platforms and the possibility of providing hand sanitizer in stations, and taking daily temperature checks and increasing access to diagnostic and antibody testing for our employees.

Our essential customers haven't missed a step – heeding new rules requiring them to wear face coverings when riding with us and practicing social distancing where possible. The majority have stayed away altogether to preserve service for essential workers.

This much is clear: the COVID-19 crisis will have far-reaching impacts on our economy and reshape the way we work for years to come. Private sector employees, along with the MTA, will be the engines that power Downstate's recovery as people return to jobs and schools and resume regular travel as part of the new normal.

We are available to provide briefings with groups of employers, to share more about how we're preparing our system and to discuss your questions or concerns. We will all have an important role to play in keeping our city safe, because that's what New Yorkers do – we take care of each other. And we at the MTA look forward to working with you to reopen, rebuild and reimagine a stronger city, state and region for years to come.

Sincerely,
Patrick J. Foye
Chairman & CEO
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

