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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg Appears on NY1 to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on NY1 with Pat Kiernan to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Pat Kiernan: MTA buses were disinfected overnight, here is some video that just came into us of that process happening this morning. Sarah Feinberg is the Interim President of the Transit Authority. Sarah, a long night for you, thank you for joining us. How did that effort go on the subway – because this rush to get into the cars and clean them overnight is something new?

Sarah Feinberg: Yeah, good morning, thanks for having me. I think it went better than I had any right to expect last night. This was unprecedented to actually shut down the entire system down for a couple of hours and really swarm the system with cleaners, with law enforcement, with police, with social workers, with outreach workers, with nurses and with other folks to try to make sure that we are giving people the help that they need as they leave the system. And also give the system the really deep clean that will help make it safer and disinfect it for our essential workers.

Kiernan: So you've got three logistical things happening at once – one is you have to stop the subways which isn't as easy as it sounds. You have to get them to the end of the line, you have to figure out how the crews are out of place. The second is that – getting to the cars and doing the disinfecting and the third which may be the hardest piece of all – is how do you move the people around who normally would have just gotten on the subway. So I want to talk about that third piece. It's only night one but, how did that go and what will be improved in the days ahead?

Feinberg: Yeah, that's exactly right. So we only have one night under our belts, so we will learn and continue to get better as the nights go on. You know, the goal is to be really effective and efficient here. Look, I saw a lot of kindness last night and a lot of grace. I saw a lot of police officers treating those who are experiencing homelessness with a lot of kindness and respect. Outreach workers doing a great job of offering services to folks. A lot of people took us up on that – a lot of people took a ride to a shelter. Some people took us up on the offer of medical care and went to a hospital to get some better care. So, look I think it was a massive effort last night I think it went really well. We have a long way to go and we'll learn from it every single day.

Kiernan: And in terms of the essential workers who do need to move around in the overnight, our reporter Dan Rivoli said that so far 1,500 people have gone to your website, filled out a form – which declares they are an essential worker, here's how they have to travel. What happens once they have filled out that form?

Feinberg: Yeah, so once they have filled out that form – they provide us with where they are leaving from and where they are going – origin and destination information and what time. And we basically plan a route for them. So if bus service is going to work for them we give them a recommended bus route and if it's going to take them more than an hour and 20 minutes or require more than two transfers on the bus then we provide them with a for hire vehicle – a taxi or a livery car. So that is the trade off we're making. Again, probably not a perfect experience last night – we are still working on it – still ironing out the wrinkles but, from all reports that I've heard it went pretty well and we will get better tonight.

Kiernan: And in the morning subway gets back to regular or the essential service plan gets back to what has been the regular week day service that happens at 5 am.

Feinberg: That's right. That is exactly right. So at five o'clock this morning station open, trains started running and knock on wood we have had a good morning so far.

Kiernan: I said earlier this morning that we are sentimental about this – that in the city that never sleeps you expect that the subway is 24/7. Do you have an end date for this – will there ultimately be a way where you can keep the trains running but, still do the disinfecting work?

Feinberg: Look, I am sentimental about it too it's sort of unimaginable that we are not running service 24 hours a day right now and I know other people feel the same. I mean the subway system is part of the fabric of the city and so we are going to get back to 24/7 service as soon as possibly can. I think part of going through this process is we are going to learn, we are going to keep getting better, every day and the more efficient and effective we can be the quicker we can get back to regular service.

Kiernan: I have said it repeatedly, you've said it repeatedly – we just saw pictures of some of those transit workers in the trains – spraying the disinfectant, wiping down the subways. Worth mentioning again as we wrap up Sarah, their contribution it is immeasurable.

Feinberg: It is, immeasurable is the right word. They are doing the lord's work as we say in the south and I am so grateful to them. They have showing up every day of this pandemic. You know, when a lot of people have been staying home they show up every single day, they operate buses, they operate

trains – they clean cars, they clean stations. And you know, I am grateful to them but, I know the city is incredibly grateful to them as well.

Kiernan: Thank you for being with us Sarah.