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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears on "PIX 11 Morning News"

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on "PIX 11 Morning News" with Dan Mannarino today to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and post-pandemic transit strategies.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Dan Mannarino: Things are going to look and feel different for millions of commuters. So, here to give us an idea of what changes can be expected, MTA Chairman and CEO Pat Foye. Good morning, thank you for joining us this morning.

Patrick J. Foye: Good morning Dan, thanks for having me.

Mannarino: Let's get right to it this morning, this new poll that came out finds that nearly 50% of commuters in the tri-state will not take public transit following the pandemic. In fact, the New York Stock Exchange you know came out already saying to tell the brokers to avoid mass transit. So what's your take on the poll and the concerns, that are warranted really, moving forward?

Foye: Yeah, look, those concerns are clearly warranted. Our first priority as ridership begins to increase, and we increase service after Governor Cuomo lifts some of the restrictions on downstate in New York on PAUSE is the public safety of our employees and our customers. What we've been doing since the pandemic started March 1st is disinfecting every station, every bus, subway car, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road. We're going to take that to a new level. We've got some very promising near-term technologies -- antimicrobials and ultraviolet and other things. And what we are going to do is come up with a multi-step, multi-layered plan to protect the safety and health of our customers and our employees, we'll be communicating that going forward. But since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was confirmed in New York on March 1, we've lead the nation in terms of transit agencies, taking aggressive steps. We're going to continue to do that Dan.

Mannarino: Yeah, you have done a yeoman's work really making sure that this gets clean and I know this has never been done before so everybody's in this together right, but, I want to talk about the reports about what happens when it does reopen and what it does look like? So, you're talking about all the different plans, I listened to you speak yesterday on a panel discussion. The idea of reserving a subway seat, it should be the hottest ticket in town almost right because -- what is the likelihood that it's even possible to do that, given that some trains aren't even on time, not to insult.

Foye: The point I was making yesterday is that everything is on the table in terms of protecting public health, health of our customers and our employee everything is on the table. What we've been doing since literally the pandemic started is looking at what agencies in Asia where the pandemic started and Europe where it traveled next and then North America, we're comparing notes and studying what other agencies have done, especially agencies in parts of the world that went into the pandemic earlier and got out of the pandemic earlier and looking at what they're doing. We haven't made any decision on reservations but, the point of mentioning it is, everything is on the table and what we're going to do is develop a multi-layered, multi-dimensional plan which is going to include, first of all, of course masks. Every MTA employee will be temperature checked so that his colleagues and our customers will know that the MTA employees are fit and healthy for duty that day. And we think that gives comfort to the fellow employees but, also to our customers. We're disinfecting stations to a level and a frequency that we've never done before -- we're going to continue to do that. And we're going to take that to the next level with antimicrobial solutions which are very promising, and we expect some positive news in the short term. We're also looking-- at we've been working on an ultraviolet pilot since the middle of March. That's a technology that has proven it works in an excellent manner in hospitals and emergency room settings. There's a whole list of things that we've already done, actions we've already taken and actions on a deliberate, concerted and planned basis, that'd be the plan going forward.

Mannarino: Right, cleanliness, is obviously key here, but I think also getting people to where they eventually need to go is also the key and it seems like you're really trying to look at every possible solution here. Reserved seats -- there's also this idea of metering right, clicking how many people are actually going into the subway system, all together. So, is there a magic number because let me tell you I've been on the number 1 train when my face was really smacked up against someone's armpit not to be graphic here, but what's the magic number when you're on board a train then moving forward?

Foye: Let me talk about metering just for a second and then come to the social distance issue. Metering is something that's known right. There is metering when there is crowding -- this is pre-pandemic of course-- at Grand Central or Penn Station and police and transit workers will limit the number of people that can go to the platform or get on a car. Metering is one of the techniques that agencies around the world are looking at and where in some cases have implemented. The CDC came out with some general guidance for transit yesterday, for public transit. We're reviewing it and we're working closely with the New York State Department of Health and the trade associations and agencies all over the world. Clearly six feet of social distance doesn't work in a public transit setting, but in an environment where every customer and every employee is wearing a mask, where the trains have been disinfected on a daily basis, where we are limiting the number of passengers, whether it's by metering or other techniques, and we've got a pilot at a couple of stations on the Upper East Side, where we're putting markers on the platform to indicate how customers want to enter the car and leave the

car. A combination of steps like that is what we have in mind and we're driven first and foremost, as we have been since the beginning of the pandemic, by protecting the health of our customers and employees.

Mannarino: We have seen subway stations crowded, trains crowded right. So, are there going to be people in place to make sure that there are not too many people packing a subway station or packing a train? That's why I'm looking for a number – or is that just still to be determined?

Foye: The number hasn't been determined there are agencies in Europe and Asia that are dealing with this issue right now. Some of them have expressed it as so many people per square meter, a square meter is a little over nine square feet, we're looking at that. Clearly there's an understanding across the world and across among the public health agencies both internationally and here in the United States that a six feet standard won't work. And the question is, with a layered approach the wearing of masks and disinfecting, the metering and limiting the number of people in a subway car or a bus, and we're in the process of working with federal authorities, the State Department of Health, the trade associations and others to come up with exactly what works in a transit setting from public health point of view.

Mannarino: Running out of time here so I want to get to finances – clearly a continued decline in ridership will affect your finances. So, we know the government has come through now with \$3.9 billion to help you get back on track. Does that help with minimizing the idea of a fare increase? Is that even on the table?

Foye: Well let me be clear: there is no pandemic related fare increase contemplated, period, that's not something we're going to do. On the Crain's panel yesterday I know one of the panelists just as a as an exercise calculated or speculated as to some obscenely high fare increase--not going to happen period.

Mannarino: Good to know and by the way, real quick, how are you feeling? I know you had COVID, I want to make sure we get to that.

Foye: I feel fine, I had a very mild case, so I tested negative and tomorrow I'm going to Stony Brook University Hospital to donate plasma hopefully to help a transit worker or some other New Yorker. It's a small part but, there's something I'm going to do tomorrow.

Mannarino: Well thank you for doing that. I'm glad you're feeling better and thank you for always making time for us to get this information out to our viewers, we do appreciate it okay, Pat.

Foye: Thank you, Dan.