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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye Appears on NY1 to Discuss the MTA's Urgent Request for Federal Funding

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye today appeared on NY1 with Errol Louis to discuss the MTA's urgent request for more than \$4 billion in federal aid as it continues to respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Errol Louis: With many New Yorkers staying home because of the coronavirus pandemic, fewer people have been riding the city's subways and buses. And as our transit system's revenue plunges, the MTA is calling for a \$4 billion federal bailout. Joining me now to talk about this via Skype, is the Chairman of the MTA, Pat Foye. Good to see you Mr. Foye.

Pat Foye: Errol, thanks for having me.

Errol Louis: Absolutely. The numbers that I saw suggest that subway ridership is down 60%, buses almost 50%, the Long Island Rail Road 67%, Metro-North 90%. That's serious, that's a lot of riders missing. It doesn't sound though like \$4 billion worth. How did you get that number?

Pat Foye: Oh no, it's \$4 billion worth. There's been a precipitous decline in ridership. The \$4 billion dollars assumes this trend is annualized. Clearly ridership is going to be depressed during the duration of the pandemic and for some period thereafter. On the buses and subways we have fare revenue of about \$4.9 billion, on Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road, total of \$1.5 billion between them, and then a couple of billion of spare revenue. Metro-North is down 90%, point nine times \$750 million, the numbers add up. But that is an annualized number and it also includes Errol, about \$300 million of increased operating expense because we're disinfecting MTA workplaces including subway stations and yards and bus depots etc., stations twice a night, disinfecting subway cars, buses, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North and paratransit vehicles plus as I said, transit worker workplaces.

Errol Louis: I'm assuming that if ridership is down, say 90% on Metro-North for example, that you've adjusted schedules, you're running fewer trains?

Pat Foye: No right now, we're running a normal weekday schedule, that's our plan for tomorrow. We're obviously looking at these issues. I'll note that right now, while we're carrying fewer people, we're carrying the people who move New York and take care of New York, by which I mean doctors and nurses and healthcare workers, transit workers who are first responders, firefighters, police officers, people who work in pharmacies, in supermarkets, utility workers, etc., etc. Getting them to and from work is a critical task. We've been talking to the Hospital Association of New York, we've been talking to the city of New York obviously the state of New York, and that is increasingly the population that we're taking back and forth. Of course we're looking at options with respect to service. Today, we're running normal weekday service, that's our plan tomorrow. As if and when we change it, we'll of course notify our customers and the media in advance.

Errol Louis: Okay. How is your workforce doing? You have a very, very large workforce. How have they been doing, are you detecting cases, do you have a capacity to catch it, perhaps even treat it, within the confines of the MTA?

Pat Foye: So here's the story. As the MTA workforces did, transit workers, workers on buses, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road, Bridges and Tunnels after 9/11, after Superstorm Sandy and after every storm and act of God that's affected this region over the last 10-20 years, transit workers have reported for work. They like anyone else, [are] concerned about the pandemic and what it means for them and their family and their neighbors and that's understandable. Transit workers have been coming to work, we're delivering as I said, normal weekday service. In terms of the safety of our customers and employees, taking direction from the CDC and the state Health Commissioner Dr. Zucker, who I speak to in numeral times a day, and the Commissioner of Health in New York City. We're being driven by public health and medical advice in terms of the actions we take with respect to our customers and employees.

Errol Louis: To the extent that people have been told to minimize their trips and so forth, are we getting different messages from different parts of the government. I mean the MTA, it sounds like if you're running normal weekday service, it's safe enough, the trains are all being disinfected twice a day, you can come down and use it, but we're hearing a very different message from the governor and mayor.

Pat Foye: I don't think so at all. Actually because of this significant decline in ridership, there's far more space in subway cars, on Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road and buses. The system is safe, as I mentioned, I took the Long Island Rail Road to Penn Station this morning, I got on the ② and ③ to Chambers and then the ① to Rector St. It is safe to travel on the subways. If you have a fever or a health issue or a compromised immunity or other underlying medical issues, you should not be in crowds, you shouldn't be riding transit anyways in the United States, including in New York City. Everybody should take the governor's advice that unless you are an essential worker you ought to stay home, you ought to telecommute if you can do that, and New Yorkers are taking the governor's direction and the governor's advice as witnessed by our ridership numbers. Doctors and healthcare

professionals and transit workers and others who have to go to work to serve the public, to treat the public, to move the public, and those are increasingly our customers these days.

Errol Louis: Something you and I have talked about is the relatively small number of people who are persistently homeless, some of whom have addiction issues or mental illness challenges as well who are using the subway system as a temporary shelter. Has it been easier, I guess, to deal with that population, with most of those riders gone now.

Pat Foye: It has been easier to deal with that population. A number of the homeless have elected to go into shelter or go into housing, which the city of New York has a responsibility for providing and is doing that. Obviously the homeless are medically vulnerable in many cases because of their lifestyles, diet and underlying health issues. And they're medically vulnerable and frankly in a pandemic, it doesn't do the homeless any good to allow them to continue to stay in subways if they're willing to relocate. We're working with the NYPD, the MTA Police, independent social service providers, the NYPD has also brought nurses to the table and that effort is ongoing, it's been intensified.

Errol Louis: Okay we will leave it there for now, I know you've got a lot of work to do. Thanks so much for spending some time with us, and we will wish you the best of luck.

Pat Foye: Errol thanks, thanks for having me.