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### TRANSCRIPT: New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg Appears on PIX 11 Evening News with Kori Chambers to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on PIX 11 Evening News with Kori Chambers to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

*A transcript of the interview appears below.*

**Kori Chambers:** We've seen increasing numbers of homeless people take refuge in the subways, conditions that have been described as unsanitary and unsafe, to the point where people that need to be on the trains are crowded together to try and avoid scenes like well, we'll see them in a moment. Joining us now via Skype is Interim head of New York City Transit, Sarah Feinberg, thanks so much for being with us.

**Sarah Feinberg:** Thanks for having me.

**Chambers:** Okay, so we were showing some pictures earlier, for folks, what it looks like on some of these trains, with homeless on the trains, with trash on the trains, the Governor calling it disgusting even, that's a quote, disrespectful. It seems like that's just a part of this story.

**Feinberg:** Well that's right, look I agree with the Governor, you know, we've got 51,000 men and women in New York City Transit who show up to work every day to move the essential workers who are on the frontlines of this crisis and the last thing that they should have to worry about are conditions like the ones that you're seeing on these trains. Look, this is a vulnerable population, they need mental health care services, they need housing services, and I think what you've been hearing from us for the last many weeks, the last many months is it's time for the city to step up and do their job to try to take care of these folks. This cannot be something that continues to land on the shoulders of the MTA. This is something the city has to help us with.

**Chambers:** So the MTA Chief Communications Officer put out a statement a few hours ago reacting to the city promising to do more saying, quote, "It should not have taken a global pandemic for the city to do a job the MTA has called on them to do for years" going on to say, "The Mayor should get out of his car and into the subway so he can see what is really going on and solve the problem of his own making." That's a pretty strongly worded statement. I'm curious, do you feel like that is fair to lay this at the feet of Mayor de Blasio.

**Feinberg:** I think what you're hearing there is a lot of frustration. So I've been the Interim President of New York City Transit for about two months, but for about a year prior to that I was the Chair of the Transit Committee, and I spent a tremendous amount of time trying to get the city to step up to the plate here. This is a responsibility that we need them to take much more seriously. Look, the good news is, last night we saw a great display from the city. They sent New York City police officers out into the system, they had outreach and social workers in the system. They were in one station and they made a great difference there. That was one station, I need them in the rest of the stations.

**Chambers:** Well I want to play a soundbite from the Mayor today, he was speaking at his news conference, his briefing, and he says that look this isn't just a city thing. Listen to the Mayor.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** On the question of who's responsible for homelessness in the subways, it's like other questions I've been asked lately. We're all responsible, it's all of our jobs to get this done. The state runs the MTA. Clearly, the state has a whole lot of the pieces to the puzzle here.

**Chambers:** So I'm curious, as you heard the Mayor speak there, do you feel like he's taking some responsibility, or do you feel like in the same sentence he's kind of saying the state's not doing enough.

**Feinberg:** It's more responsibility than we've seen City Hall take in a while so I'll take it. Look, I'll work with anyone on this crisis. The reality is that I believe that this is the city's responsibility, but look all I want to do is get up every day and run a safe and efficient service for the folks who need to ride our trains and our buses. This is not the thing that I want to be dealing with, it's not the issue that our workers want to be dealing with, but it's what we're dealing with because the city hasn't dealt with it above ground and so look again, these folks need help. This is a population that's extremely vulnerable. It's really important that they get the help that they need. We're trying to facilitate that, but we need the Mayor's help, but we need City Hall's help. Again, great progress last night they were in one station. We are grateful and pleased that they were, but now we need them in the other stations.

**Chambers:** You know I know you changed the code of conduct for riding on the trains, no sleeping now, no storing belongings, no sheltering, but I guess the question I have is this as someone that rides the trains every day. I still see people breaking all kinds of rules. Does that change anything really when you change the code of conduct?

**Feinberg:** Well look, it's important that we have rules and regulations, right? We can't have a system where anything goes. A lot of the rules that you just mentioned have been in place for a while but they're really important. You know no sleeping, no lying down, no smoking, no drinking, no doing drugs, no storing your belongings. We have those rules for a reason. The reason that you see them broken a lot is because we've now got so many folks on trains

that it takes a lot of police work to make sure that those rules are enforced. And that's what the MTA Police have been doing day in and day out for months and that's why I'm so glad that the NYPD and that the city is stepping up, now we've got a lot more help.

**Chambers:** I want to ask you too, Mayor de Blasio proposed this plan of shutting down 10 end of line stations from midnight to 5 a.m. as a way of getting folks off the trains, intervening, cleaning the trains. That's a suggestion, he's saying the MTA should do it. What do you think of that?

**Feinberg:** Look I'm open to it, you know we've been at this for a long time, we've been tackling this problem for months. In our own experience we've been at these end of line stations. When the train pulls in we take the train out of service, we get everybody off the train, we clean the train, we clean the platform, we offer services to those who need them, we ask people to leave the station. Nowhere in that have we found that it's necessary to close the station and frankly I think the one thing I worry about with closing a station is that you're also blocking off access to a station for an essential worker who needs it to go to work. So I don't want there to be unintended consequences there. But look, that the city was in the station last night, they're supposed to be in 10 more stations tonight, which is huge progress. Let's see how it goes the next couple of days, if we end up in a place where the right thing to do is to close stations so that we can deal with this problem, I'll do it because I want to solve this problem. But let's make sure we don't have unintended consequences here. Our number one job still has to be able to be getting essential workers to work.

**Chambers:** Alright Sarah Feinberg, we appreciate you taking the time, I know you were in a meeting that you got out of to talk to us live, so I appreciate that, and thank you for the work you're doing.

**Feinberg:** Thank you, good to see you.