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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye Appears Live on WCBS 880 With Wayne Cabot to Discuss the Agency's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on WCBS 880 with Wayne Cabot to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Wayne Cabot: Let's go live on the newslines now at 8:16 on WCBS, MTA Chairman Pat Foye is with us live now. Chairman Foye good morning to you.

Patrick J. Foye: Wayne good morning, thanks for having me.

Cabot: I see you have a plan to do some temperature checks now among subway workers. How's that going to work?

Foye: Well thanks Wayne. It's not a plan actually. It's a program that began in March. We have increased it substantially. Literally tens of thousands of front-line New York City Transit, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road employees have been tested. We are now at 22 locations, 24/7. About 90 medically trained personnel which includes employees from New York City Transit, Long Island Rail Road, fire marshals, and Metro-North fire brigade, and 60 medically trained outside personnel. All five boroughs. Bus depots, the Staten Island Railway Center, Long Island Rail Road in Jamaica, Queens Village Depot, Jackie Gleason Depot, the Rail Command Center for subways etcetera. Tens of thousands of employees had been tested. The temperature rate so far per 1,000 employees tested is about one percent* and we believe this is an important program in terms of giving assurance to our employees. Letting them know if they have a fever we don't want anybody working who's sick and we believe it's also helped in returning some of our colleagues to work. It gives them additional assurance. Again, 22 locations throughout the entire, each of the five boroughs, Long Island Rail Road, Metro North, and 24/7.

*[see Foye's correction to this stat below]

Cabot: So when you say their temperature rate is one percent, that means one percent are testing too high to go to work?

Foye: Not one. One out of a thousand are testing having a fever. Those employees are advised to go home and the other employees are fit for work. And again, it's 22 locations, 24/7 across the five boroughs, Long Island and Metro-North. Beyond that Wayne, we've distributed at this point since March 1st well over 2.5 million pairs of gloves, 500,000 masks, which includes 300,000 N95s, and a hundred and sixty or seventy thousand surgical masks, and began disinfecting subway cars, buses, stations, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North. On March 3rd the first COVID case in New York was March 2nd if I'm not mistaken. We've put other programs in place in cooperation and collaboration with our unions, to put in rear door boarding to eliminate contact between drivers and passengers, eliminated cash transactions and have been disinfecting stations since that. I have to report that at this point that 50 of our colleagues have died of the virus. That's tragic and we mourn everyone of those and mourn with the families of every one of our colleagues. The total number of positives is nearly nineteen hundred. Quarantine employees, colleagues in quarantine is fifty-two hundred, that's down from a high of 6,000, and nearly eighteen hundred employees have returned to work. Some after having been tested by the temperature brigade, nearly 435 in the last 36 hours. Ridership continues to decline precipitously and stay at depressed levels. Subway ridership is down about 93 percent, this is data as of yesterday. Long Island Railroad down 97 percent. Metro-North down 95, and Bridge and Tunnel traffic down two-thirds.

Cabot: Wait, how do you come back from that? I'm trying to see light at the end of the subway tunnel if you will pardon that analogy there, but, or metaphor, when you think about just how much money has been lost and maybe fear people may have about crowding in subway trains again. How do you come back from that when this is all over?

Foye: Well let me address the crowding issue first. We have been aggressively monitoring the crowding issue with the NYPD and the MTA police. We've been monitoring social media as well. Spoke with Sarah Fienberg the President of New York City Transit this morning who told me that there were no reports of crowding on subways yesterday. We're monitoring it aggressively. To answer your question, subways and buses and MTA Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North are fundamental to the New York City economy, to the economy the entire region. The health of the MTA it is vital to that recovery. We are grateful to the New York congressional delegation led by Senator Schumer and Chair Nita Lowey for the nearly \$4 billion that we got on the CARES round of stimulus funding. We're gonna need additional amounts because a subway ride not taken or a ride not taken on Metro-North that revenue was lost forever, it can never be recovered. And in addition to that we expect there's going to be a significant reduction in the subsidy payments that account for about half of MTA revenue. Clearly when the governor gets to a point where he begins on a regional basis to loosen up the restrictions on the economy, the MTA's financial and operating health is gonna be critical to that. And that's a role that we're prepared to play, but we are gonna need significant additional support from the federal government.

Cabot: Pat Foye you are running the MTA at a clutch time that is for sure and we want to salute all of the drivers the bus drivers, the subway operators,

the train operators, everybody who's on the front lines trying to keep things moving, and we do mourn the loss of now 50 people.

Foye: Wayne, you're absolutely right. The MTA forces are first responders, they're acting heroically. They are essential workers getting doctors and nurses, and utility workers and people in supermarkets and pharmacies etcetera to work and they're doing they're doing extraordinary work at a very challenging time. They are heroes each one of them.

Cabot: Chairman Foye. Pat Foye of the MTA, thank you sir.

Foye: Thank you Wayne.