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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye Appears on FOX 5's "Good Day New York" to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live by video on Fox 5's "Good Day New York" with Lori Stokes to discuss the MTA's ongoing safety precautions in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and the rear-door boarding policy on all MTA buses.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Lori Stokes: Commuters can get a free ride on many city buses. The MTA is suspending fare collection on local bus routes, aiming to keep drivers and riders a safe distance apart. Here with details, MTA Chairman and CEO Pat Foye. Good morning Chairman, thanks for being with us.

Patrick J. Foye: Morning, Lori, thanks for having me.

Stokes: So can you just clear it up for us So we know which buses are free and which ones are still having to pay and the other changes? I know specifically, coming through the back door now of buses, correct?

Foye: Yeah Lori, here's what we did. We want to minimize the risk to transit workers, subways, buses, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road to the extent we can. We negotiated an agreement with the TWU and the ATU over the weekend to do exactly that. On local buses, which is about 4200 of the 5600 buses in the fleet, we have instituted as of this morning, Monday, a rear-door boarding. The reason for that is to reduce contact between passengers and bus operators to make sure that as many transit workers, subway, bus, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road, can show up for work and take first responders to and from their jobs. This will, rear-door boarding, will minimize contact, an agreement, as I mentioned, reached with the union. We have not changed our fare policy, but we don't expect to collect much revenue on the on the local routes. And again, this is driven by protecting transit workers, period.

Stokes: All right I'm looking at the latest numbers, sir, 23 MTA drivers testing positive for COVID-19 last week. Does that still stand at that number?

Foye: The latest numbers for confirmed cases, Lori, is 30.

Stokes: Okay, so are you confident you're going to be able to maintain the workforce level though, with people being vulnerable in your workforce?

Foye: Transit workers, as they did after 9/11, as they did after Superstorm Sandy, and other acts of God, are showing up for work on subways, buses, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road. We're doing everything we can, based on advice of CDC, State Department of Health, the City Commissioner of Health, and our own medical doctors and public health professionals to minimize the risk to our to our workforce. This morning we're running normal weekday service on the subways and buses, with the exception of the A which is making all local stops. First responders who need to get to work this morning, we'll be able to take a subway and bus and commuter rail to do that.

Stokes: You're projecting that the MTA could be in the red some 3.7 billion to \$4 billion, looking to the government for some help. What are you hearing back so far?

Foye: We've been in constant dialogue with the congressional delegation, both on the United States Senate part, of the House of Representatives. There is bipartisan support for the bill, mass transit in New York City is obviously the circulatory system of the of the New York and regional economy. We planned for ridership declines, but never anything like this. And part of that planning as we drew on a \$1 billion line of credit with the leading international bank that happened on Friday, we have liquidity but obviously given the significant, precipitous, drop in ridership and therefore revenue, and a \$4 billion dollar hole that no one anticipated, federal aid is required as an urgent matter and time is really of the essence.

Stokes: We're not there yet. But if we get to a shelter in place situation, will the MTA be forced to shut down?

Foye: No. The MTA will operate during the entire pandemic. We are today, and in the days and weeks and months ahead if it goes that long, we'll be taking first responders to and from work, the people who move New York, care for New York, treat for New York, and frankly run New York, and that includes transit workers. That's an incredible responsibility that we have, we take it seriously and the MTA system, subways, buses, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North, will operate during this entire situation.

Stokes: And still safe for riders to be on, on your buses, in your subway, on the rail?

Foye: It is. We've increased substantially the frequency and intensity of disinfecting. The system is safe, people here at the MTA ride the system. We're going to continue to ride the system. It is safe for our customers and it's safe for employees, period.

Stokes: Alright, MTA Chairman Pat for we appreciate you being with us this morning. Stay healthy for us.

Foye: Thank you Lori.