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April 28, 2020

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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg Appears on WCBS 880 with Lynda Lopez to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on WCBS 880 with Lynda Lopez to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Lynda Lopez: During his press conference today, Mayor de Blasio demanded the MTA close 10 select end of line stations every night so the NYPD and outreach workers can clear out the homeless, days after he claimed the city was in control of the situation. New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg joins us now, and you wrote an op-ed titled "City Hall must not let the subways turn into a homeless shelter." What steps exactly are you calling on the City Hall and the Mayor to take?

Sarah Feinberg: Well look, we started to see a little bit of it last night so you know, the city after many, many weeks, has finally answered the call on this. They were out in force last night at one station. They had NYPD officers out and social workers and outreach workers out in one station and look it was a huge help. They helped move the homeless and those who needed assistance off of trains. Some folks took up offers of shelter, others took up offers of other social services. But what I need is for them to be in all of the end of line stations. So, one station last night was great, but I need them in the other 40 as well.

Lopez: And what do you think of Mayor de Blasio calling for those end of line stations, he called for 10 to be closed, so that there can be a cleaning and clearing out and helping the homeless. You're saying that's not enough, you do need all of them. Will you take the steps of doing that in all of them?

Feinberg: Look, if that's ultimately the solution, I'm open to it. We've actually looked at that before. We've been doing this work for many, many months, while we've been calling on the city to step up and to help us. So look, if that's what ultimately solves the problem, I'm for it. In my experience and in our experience at MTA, that's not actually what solves the problem, and sometimes you end up with some unintended consequences. I want to make sure that essential workers who are trying to get to their jobs, who have to leave for those jobs in those in that time slot in that time period between 12 and 5, I don't want them to be left behind. So there's some trade offs here and we have to make sure that it's actually the best solution before we execute on it.

Lopez: We know you're calling on the city and the Mayor to take some steps, but Governor Cuomo was here on WCBS last hour, and he had a lot to say about the situation. He called it disgusting and unacceptable. And he said he needs the MTA to tell him what they need to fix the problem, because he's committed to fixing the problem. So what would you tell him?

Feinberg: Well, he's exactly right, it is unacceptable. I mean, look, we've spent many weeks, a month, trying to get the city to step up. I'm glad that they finally have. But here's the reality. I need them in all of those stations. I need the NYPD officers and the social workers in all of those end of line stations by the end of the week. If they can't do it, look, every agency in the city is under unbelievable amounts of pressure. If they can't get it done, I need to be able to go hire more MTA Police to get this done and that'll be what I do.

Lopez: So that's what you're asking of the state?

Feinberg: That's right. What I'm asking of the city is to step up. If the city is unable or unwilling to step up, then I need to go hire more MTA police officers and extend the contracts for outreach workers on my own behalf so that I can get it done.

Lopez: And what more can the MTA do, would you like to do?

Feinberg: Look, we have got to make sure that we are creating a safe and efficient transportation system for essential workers right now and making sure that we're preparing for the reopening of the system as the ridership comes back. So that means, you know, expanded cleaning of cars, it means expanded cleaning of stations, it means making sure that our crews are back who have been out for weeks because they've been ill or on quarantine. We need to get all those crews back so that we can make sure that we are able to meet the ridership demands that are coming. So it's an all of the above approach. We need safety, we need security, we need cleaning, and we need to make sure that we can provide the service that the ridership needs.

Lopez: That's New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg. Thank you for joining us.

Feinberg: Thanks, Lynda.

