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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears Live on WCBS NewsRadio 880

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live today on WCBS NewsRadio 880 with Steve Scott to discuss the agencies' plans as New York City enters Phase 2 reopening.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Steve Scott: New York City is entering Phase 2 of its reopening today. That means that outdoor dining, indoor retail and barbershops and hair salons can reopen. It also means hundreds of thousands of workers are returning to the city today. On our newsline the MTA Chairman, Pat Foye. Mr. Foye, good morning.

Patrick J. Foye: Steve, good morning.

Scott: So with more people, hundreds of thousands returning to the city today, is more service being added to ensure proper social distancing?

Foye: So right now we are running a hundred percent of pre-pandemic subway service and serving about 20% of the ridership. Even with the additional ridership as a result of Phase 2 we expect excess capacity on both subways and buses. On buses in Manhattan we are adding service. Right now, we are operating, we had been operating about 75% of pre-pandemic bus service in Manhattan, that will now be 90%. We've increased service on some of the crosstown buses and the M60 that goes to LaGuardia. So we are prepared. I will say Steve, in addition that the subways, and buses and stations, subway stations, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road cars and stations have never been cleaner. We surveyed about, over 20,000 of our customers. In excess of 70% of our customers tells us that the subway stations and subway cars have never been cleaner. Importantly, we have done physical counts of mask compliance. Masks on public transit are required by law, they are mandatory by law as a result of Governor Cuomo's executive order which has got the force of state law. MTA employees we believe universal compliance with the mask. Latest physical count indicates that 95% of our customers are wearing masks. Public health officials around the country and around the world agree that the most important thing one can do in any environment is wear a mask. There are substantial benefits, over 70% mask compliance. I just reported that's ninety-five, that's terrific news. We've got a robust messaging and communications plan to make that even higher. The other thing Steve is we are disinfecting not cleaning, but disinfecting stations, subway stations twice a day. Subway cars and buses multiple times during the day. Same thing with respect to Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North and their stations, as well as Access-A-Ride vehicles, not cleaning, disinfecting. We're also piloting and innovating the use of ultraviolet lighting, ultraviolet-c light which at Columbia, the university professor Dr. David Brenner has concluded kills the Covid-19 virus, and we have been using and piloting since March, a couple of weeks into the pandemic. The use of microbials on subway cars and buses. We are awaiting results from independent labs and regulators to the ability of the anti-microbials to eradicate the Covid-19 virus and perhaps to do that for weeks and months after application. That would be game changer.

Scott: I think everyone appreciates the disinfecting of the trains and stations. But a lot of the people coming back to work today go to work early. And there are a lot of people calling for the resumption of 24/7 subway service. When will 24/7 service resume?

Foye: Well as we said, we are closing from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. We are providing service for the essential workers in that time period, robust bus service. We added additional bus service including express bus, and for customers whose bus ride would be greater than an hour and 20 minutes, or require more than two transfers there's a for hire vehicle option. We are taking advantage of the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure to disinfect every subway car and every station, but also to allow the City of New York Department of Homeless Services to be able to provide medical and mental health services and shelter to the unsheltered. No one benefits including the homeless from them living on the streets or living on subways. We're going to continue that closure while the pandemic continues and we are going to use that time to continue to disinfect subway cars and stations.

Scott: Allow me to ask this another way.

Foye: Sure.

Scott: Will there ever be 24/7 service on the New York City subways again, or are those days behind us?

Foye: Short answer is yes there will be.

Scott: When we say when the pandemic is over, what does that mean? I think people might like some clarity on that for planning purposes.

Foye: Well Steve I think the pandemic will be over when the Governor and public health officials declare it to be over. Obviously we are all hoping and praying for that sooner rather than later. There's concerns about spikes, in some, not in New York, but in some other parts of the country, so I'm not going to provide an estimate because that is not a knowable date right now. But there will again be 24-hour service on the subways in the future.

Scott: Alright. You heard it here from the MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Pat Foye as always, thank you for coming on with us.

Foye: Thanks for having me Steve. Take care.