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Press Release

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[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Brings Port Authority, NJ TRANSIT, Amtrak and SEPTA on Board with Regional Mask Force

New Regional 'Mask Force' Will Work to Further Boost Mass Transit Mask Usage with Goal of Universal Compliance

Regional Partnership Brings Systems Together to Fight the Pandemic and Provide Millions of Free Masks to Transit Customers

[See Photos From Today's Mask Force Efforts](#)

[See Video of Today's Announcement](#)

[See Video of MTA and Regional Agency Officials Handing out Masks](#)

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced a partnership with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), NJ TRANSIT, Amtrak and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) to create a regional 'Mask Force' to encourage universal mask compliance on public transit.

Through this partnership, the transit systems will provide millions of free masks to customers across the northeast as face coverings have proved one of the most effective tools in combating the spread of the virus. The partnership builds upon regional transit operators' comprehensive efforts to keep customers and employees healthy and safe throughout the pandemic -- from aggressive cleaning and disinfection programs to mask mandates and enforcement efforts -- particularly as the number of coronavirus cases has risen across the country in recent weeks.

"Wearing a mask is the single most important thing all our customers and employees can do to combat the spread of COVID-19 — and it's the law here in New York," **said MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye**. "I'm proud to stand with my partners across the region and thank them for doing everything they can to protect the riding public."

"It's truly exciting to see how customers have embraced the Mask Force and are happy and grateful to see us out in the system," **said Sarah Meyer, New York City Transit Chief Customer Officer**. "Our employees and volunteers are so committed to this effort and they're making a difference in helping to the flatten the curve."

"Wearing masks reduces the spread, saves lives, and is a sign of respect especially to fellow riders," **said Rick Cotton, Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey**. "Since July, the Port Authority has given out over 736,000 masks and hosted 28 mask education days across our facilities. We're seeing close to universal voluntary compliance, and in partnership with our fellow transit agencies, we'll continue those efforts to keep the traveling public safe."

"NJ TRANSIT is proud to join our regional transit partners on the Mask Force initiative, reinforcing the critical importance of wearing masks while traveling through our stations and on our vehicles," **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin Corbett**. "NJ TRANSIT has already distributed nearly 20,000 masks to customers on our system — free of charge — and the Mask Force initiative is yet another example of the extraordinary collaboration taking place among transit agencies at this time. We remain committed to working hard every day to provide the safest possible travel environment for our customers and employees."

"When we began implementing our new, enhanced safety and cleaning measures under guidance of our full-time medical director, public health and safety team and partnership with the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, it was clear that wearing masks or face coverings in stations and on trains was essential for the safety and health of our people and travelers," **said Amtrak Chief Safety Officer Steve Predmore**. "We thank our partners at the MTA, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, PATH, and SEPTA for joining us in today's Mask Force event to highlight the importance of wearing a mask and sharing the same commitment Amtrak has to customer and employee safety."

"Public transportation continues to be on the frontline of this pandemic, and SEPTA remains committed to protecting the health and safety of our customers and employees," **said SEPTA General Manager Leslie S. Richards**. "We are proud to report that over 90 percent of our riders have complied with SEPTA's mask requirement and we are working hard every day to remind customers of the important role they play in keeping our employees and their fellow riders safe. The Mask Force initiative highlights that public transportation is in it together as we move forward."

The MTA first launched its Mask Force in July in order to supplement its existing distribution of masks in the transit system and acknowledge customers who are already compliant. Wearing a face covering on public transportation in New York was required by law under Executive Order 202.18 issued by

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo effective April 17. A \$50 fine was implemented on Sept. 14 for customers who refuse to wear a mask on public transportation.

More than 650 people have volunteered for the MTA Mask Force since its inception. The volunteers include top MTA officials and other employees, elected officials and their staffs, advocates, community board members, and members of the riding public. The program runs two days out of each month and is organized primarily around almost a dozen subway stations for maximum line coverage and the busiest bus hubs with broad coverage across New York City. Employees and volunteers wear bright yellow t-shirts (and masks) identifying them as part of the team. The Mask Force has distributed over 300,000 masks since July.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's top priority is the safety and security of its customers, its employees and its facilities. Throughout the pandemic the agency has kept all its facilities open and operating. Anyone using Port Authority facilities – including airport terminals, PATH stations and trains, AirTrain stations and trains, bus terminals and the Oculus Transportation Hub – must wear face coverings to help protect fellow passengers and employees from the spread of COVID-19. To date, the Port Authority Police Department and Port Authority staff have distributed more than 736,000 masks and held a total of 28 mask education events at the Midtown Bus Terminal, the George Washington Bridge Bus Station, and PATH stations at the World Trade Center, Journal Square, Penn Station Newark and 33rd Street.

This week, the Port Authority's mask education and distribution events occurred on and were scheduled for Monday, Nov. 16 at the George Washington Bridge Bus Station; Tuesday, Nov. 17 at the World Trade Center PATH Station; and Wednesday, Nov. 18 during the afternoon rush hour at the Midtown Bus Terminal. Starting Friday, Nov. 20, Port Authority employees will be distributing face coverings at the airports through the Thanksgiving holiday. Masks and PPE are also available for sale at concessions and vending machines throughout the agency's facilities. The Port Authority reports voluntary compliance with mask wearing at over 98% across its facilities.

NJ TRANSIT continues its "SAFE NJ" customer awareness campaign which focuses on high visibility signage throughout the NJ TRANSIT system, including across all social media channels, to maintain awareness of recommended best practices that ensure the healthiest and safest transit system for all. A primary focus of the "SAFE NJ" campaign reinforces the requirement to wear face coverings and the importance of wearing them properly.

In addition, NJ TRANSIT deployed teams of Customer Service Ambassadors over the summer at a number of stations and terminals to assist customers returning to the mass transit system. Ambassadors remind customers to maintain safe practices, specifically regarding the requirement to wear face coverings onboard vehicles, in stations and on platforms, and to refrain from eating or drinking on vehicles. Ambassadors also provide free masks to those who need them, and free masks are also available at Customer Service offices at major terminals. NJ TRANSIT's Mask Force program formalizes and brands mask distribution efforts, with a plan to introduce Mask Force volunteers for the first time at major stations and select outlying stations on Wednesday, Nov. 25 from 7 AM to 9 AM and 4 PM to 6 PM. NJ TRANSIT will look to deploy Mask Force volunteers on a monthly basis.

Amtrak will have ambassadors at their largest stations in the Northeast Corridor during Thanksgiving week to assist customers with their travel experience. They will have a small supply of masks available if anyone needs one to comply with mask or face covering requirements at stations or on Amtrak trains.

Beginning in July, SEPTA employees volunteered to serve as Social Distancing Coaches engaging customers on travel safety and distributing masks. As part of Mask Force, a small team of assigned staff and employee volunteers will do meet-and-greets at various stations where customers do not routinely need to interact with SEPTA employees in order to ride the system, and where mask compliance may be a greater issue. While there, the Mask Force Philly teams will hand out masks and literature about the importance of wearing masks and the proper way to wear them. The SEPTA team will have uniquely branded hats and shirts, and possibly outerwear as they begin to implement their program during the winter months.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared that face coverings are one of the most effective tools in the fight against COVID-19, particularly when used universally within communities. Studies have shown that face coverings can significantly help reduce the risk of spread of the virus.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the PPE distributed to heroic MTA frontline employees includes 5.2 million N95 and KN95 masks, 5.5 million surgical masks and 13.6 million pairs of gloves. Customers have been given 5.4 million free masks by the MTA.

Mask usage across the MTA network is very high, above 96%. The MTA has equipped buses with [mask dispensers](#), installed [vending machines that sell personal protective equipment](#), and launched new capacity tracking app features to report in real-time how many passengers are [on a bus](#), [LIRR train car](#) or [Metro-North train car](#). Train cars and buses are disinfected at least daily, and stations are disinfected at least two times per day.

Last month, the MTA launched a [voluntary COVID-19 screening](#) program for frontline employees, at rotating field locations and medical assessment and occupational health services centers. It is the first transit worker screening initiative in the country.