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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on WCBS 880 to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

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

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Steve Scott: Starting next Wednesday the New York City subways will be shut down during the overnight, so every surface of every train can be scrubbed down, every night. On our Newsline, MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Mr. Foye good morning, good to talk with you again.

Patrick J. Foye: Steve, good morning. Good to talk with you.

Scott: Tell us how this will work. Will every train basically grind to a halt at 1am?

Foye: No, here's how it's going to work: beginning Wednesday, May 6 at 1am to 5am we are going to be shutting down subway service. Trains enroute will continue their routes, we're not going to abandon anybody, so there will be trains that will complete their routes post-1am. What we are doing is to serve the about 10,000 customers--and we've researched the data, we know where those customers are getting on and where they're getting off--we will provide robust nighttime bus service, essential bus service, we're prepared to supplement it as we go. The primary way of carrying those 10,000 passengers will be bus service, they will be rear-door boarding and we don't expect those bus passengers to pay. So the primary transportation between the 1am and 5am period will be bus service. That will be supplemented as necessary with compliant dollar vans and with for-hire vehicles, as well as yellow taxis, to get these first responders and essential workers to and from their job, period. The reason we're closing the subway Steve between 1am and 5am is to do disinfecting all of our subway cars and buses on a daily basis so that passengers and our future passengers as ridership grows as the pandemic subsides and our employees have insurance that not only stations, which now are being disinfected twice a day, but all of the subway cars and buses--same with Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road cars--will be disinfected on a daily basis. Closing from 1am to 5am makes that possible.

Scott: A growing homeless population on the trains precipitated this. How will your sanitizing crews deal with the homeless people that they will likely encounter on the trains?

Foye: Well, you're right and this is going to require, and we appreciate the mayor's commitment to a robust and sustainable NYPD presence. The NYPD--as the stations are closed in the 1am to 5am period--the NYPD and the MTA police together with social service workers, nurses, etcetera, have ramped up significantly the number of homeless that are being provided services and are leaving the subway, so that's really important. Everybody is going to have to leave the system between 1am and 5am when it is closed. That means that means everybody, that's going to be required to disinfect the stations, and we expect that that will also result in a significant additional number of homeless being provided services and shelter by the city.

Scott: Just a couple minutes left, tell us about Metro-North and the Long Island Railroad. They'll be sanitized every day too but kind of a different situation, right?

Foye: Yeah, Metro-North Railroad stations are being disinfected daily, they are now, will be disinfected every rail car. There'll be no service changes to Metro-North or Long Island Rail Road. Long Island Rail Road runs all night, it will continue to run all night. Metro-North has a gap of about two hours in the very early morning where it doesn't have any trains operating, that will continue to be the case. So beginning Wednesday subway stations, buses, subway, subway cars, Metro-North cars, Long Island Rail Road cars, plus stations will be disinfected on a daily basis. We think that's important given the pandemic. It's important in assuring our employees, our current customers, and our future customers as ridership grows, that it is safe to take the subways and that everything is being done to disinfect all the areas that customers are likely to touch on a subway car, a bus, a commuter rail or in a station. This effort is going to be intensive, the governor yesterday called it herculean, I think that's an accurate description and to get it done we've got to close the subways between 1am and 5am.

Scott: Before we let you go, the MTA of course has suffered a great personal toll from COVID-19 Are you still losing members?

Foye: We have lost tragically 98 lives at the MTA. We mourn and grieve the loss of each one of those colleagues. Fortunately, and its cold comfort to the family and friends and colleagues of those who have succumbed to the virus, the pace as the governor reports, the pace of hospitalizations and fatalities appears to be slowing in the city, in the state, and that also appears to be happening among our colleagues at the MTA.

Scott: MTA Chairman Pat Foye, Mr. Foye as always, thank you for talking with us we appreciate it.

Foye: Thanks. Thank you, Steve.