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TRANSCRIPT: NYC Transit Interim President Feinberg Appears Live on FOX-5' Good Day New York

NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared live today on FOX-5's *Good Day New York* with Lori Stokes to discuss the resumption of front door boarding on buses and the agency's dire financial situation.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Lori Stokes: There is no such thing as a free ride anymore in New York City. Beginning today the MTA is resuming bus fare collection. Buses were free over the last several months of the coronavirus pandemic, but with a \$12 billion budget shortfall the agency really needs to start collecting fares again. Joining us this morning with details Sarah Feinberg, Interim President of New York City Transit. Sarah, great to have you with us this morning.

Sarah Feinberg: Good morning. Great to be with you.

Stokes: So how strict are you going to be this morning about the new fares going back into place?

Feinberg: I know, bus fares are back. Look, this is what I'll say: we'll be out there this morning reminding everyone that it's time to start paying their fare again. We're not going to be too tough on you the first Monday back, but we do have to start collecting fares. As you mentioned, our financial situation is dire. We've lost about \$160 million in bus fares over the last couple months, so time to start collecting again. And as you probably know, installed some protective barriers between operators and riders and so everyone can be safe while we're doing it.

Stokes: There's some other safety measures you also put into place?

Feinberg: Yep, we've moved that white line that separates the operator and riders back a little bit to further protect operators. We've installed a protective barrier around the operator. This is good for riders too though because it opens up the front of the bus, gives them more ability to social distance, gives them a little bit more space to move around.

Stokes: So they come in now from the front? Because for a while folks were coming through the back?

Feinberg: Yep, so during the pandemic we had folks boarding in the back. We wanted to put as much distance as possible between the bus operator and riders. Now that we're collecting fares again, we need folks to come through the front. We've got the protective barrier between the operator and the riders but gives riders more space, they can use the entire bus.

Stokes: Talk about safety also Sarah, the last time you were on we were talking about some of your drivers and some of the assaults that they were having to deal with some of their passengers. Has there been any update on that? Are there some other measures to keep the drivers, your workers safe?

Feinberg: This is so frustrating. New York is going through such a difficult time, such a difficult moment. People are feeling emotional, people are feeling frustrated, but to take anything out on a bus operator who is just out there serving the city that he and she loves, it's just, it's so frustrating and we are absolutely furious about it. We are working closely with the NYPD to make sure that every single instance gets prosecuted, the perpetrator is found and we hold folks accountable. Our bus operators got this city, helped this city survive the pandemic and the last thing they need is to have someone yelling at them because they're reminding them to wear a mask or someone coming at them because they're trying to just do their job. So frustrating.

Stokes: Let's switch gears just a little bit, talk about the subway system. And I know you all are continuing to aggressively clean like you are doing the buses. But we know that that period of time between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. when it's shut down for overnight, people are still wondering when can they start? When will that service resume? Any indication?

Feinberg: So look we're still trying to get through the pandemic, get to the other side of it, so no news on that this morning. Look the subway service is going to come back to 24/7 at some point, but not right now. We've still got, we still need those overnight hours to really efficiently clean the system. We're cleaning 24/7 but to have everyone out of the system from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. is just hugely beneficial to our cleaners, makes their job a lot easier, gives them the ability to really clean the entire system.

Stokes: Yeah last time, again, when you were on we were also talking about the NYPD and them being able to enforce during those hours and keep the subway system safe during that. And you had seemed to indicate that you didn't know if there was enough concerted effort by the NYPD to maintain safety during that time as well.

Feinberg: Look, I mean, I think just like everyone in this city, there's a feeling like the NYPD has stepped back a little bit. And they are going through their own tough moments at this point, I understand. We also have an MTA police force that is out all the time. But we've just seen some troubling, a troubling uptick in some crimes. So less on the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., but, we've seen assaults on operators, assaults on our workforce, certainly a lot of issues of vandalism over the last couple of months, and last several weeks in particular. And so look, we work closely with the NYPD, they're great partners to us, but everyone really needs to be particularly vigilant at this moment.

Stokes: And of course, Saturday Sarah at 11 o'clock in the morning, the attempted rape on the subway platform. People are wondering about the safety.

Feinberg: Let me just say, I am so furious and every New Yorker should be that something like that could happen at any point, at any place in the city, at any time of day. But in the middle of the morning on a subway platform with others standing by is just appalling. And so, look, I've been saying for months, I want a stronger police presence in the system. It's controversial at this moment, I understand why, the NYPD has a lot to contend with. They have a history that they need to take a serious look at. They need to do a lot of I think, self-questioning, but that doesn't mean that everyone else has to stand back and go through an uptick in crime while that is happening. We've got, as a city, to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. We have to be able to keep people safe, and the subway system is a critical part of that. People have to feel safe when they're going to work, when they're going to school, when they're going to visit their family and their friends. New York does not work without a safe transit system.

Stokes: All right, well Sarah, we know once again today, fares resume for bus services. I know that you, if people don't have a mask you are providing them there. And hopefully we'll get, like everything else, we'll get to this together and everyone will get in sync eventually. Because I know you do have quite a fiscal issue going on. As always good to have you on Sarah, as always. Appreciate your time.

Feinberg: Good to see you.