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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

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

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

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Michael Wallace: 22 MTA employees who work on subways and buses have died of the coronavirus. Joining us now on our newsline, New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg. Sarah, thanks for joining us. I know like many families who have lost people to this virus, you probably haven't even had time to mourn the workers you've lost yet.

Sarah Feinberg: Yeah, well, thanks for having me. Unfortunately, I have to update that number now. We're now at 33 employees who have passed away. So you know, we are absolutely devastated. And to answer your question about whether we've had time to mourn, I mean, I think the answer is that we are mourning all the time. And that is not expected to end anytime soon. So we will find a way to honor our brothers and sisters, as soon as folks are allowed to gather again, but you know, this has been devastating to New York City Transit.

Michael Wallace: What are you doing and what might you still do to protect your workers as best you can?

Sarah Feinberg: Well, we are handing out literally thousands of pieces of personal protective equipment every day. So masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, all of that. So, you know, I think we've really felt strongly that the CDC and other medical experts really waited too long to tell healthy people to start wearing masks, it just didn't make sense to us. And we finally threw our hands in the air last week and started handing out thousands and thousands of masks to our workers. You know, all of these pieces of equipment are in short supply and so we want to be able to hand out more and do more, but we're doing everything that we can.

Michael Wallace: I know you've also asked your riders to wear masks. I know ridership is down but the riders that you have, are you seeing them wearing masks?

Sarah Feinberg: We are, you know that just made sense to us, too. So again, you know, I guess I'm proud that we were a little bit ahead of the guidance on it, but I wish we hadn't had to be. We asked a couple of days ago for riders to start wearing masks and any kind of covering over their face. I think the reality is that a lot of members of the public don't have masks because they took the advice of the medical experts early on and didn't purchase masks. I know that's the position I'm in with my family. And so you know, I think for those folks we're suggesting that they wrap something around their face a shirt or something else to offer some level of protection.

Michael Wallace: New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg joining us here on WCBS. Obviously you've cut back your service substantially with so few riders. Are you looking at more changes here in the coming days are you satisfied with what you're running now?

Sarah Feinberg: Well, nothing is imminent in terms of additional service. If anything, we actually added some service today. So we had seen some crowding issues in the Bronx. And so we added some additional train service and we added some bus service as well because we want to make sure that we are doing everything we possibly can to avoid any kind of crowding situation. You know, we had to reduce service in the first place because we have so many employees who are out. We've got at this point, thousands of employees who are out on quarantine and another 1,100 or so who are who have tested positive so, you know, we had to reduce service just to be responsive to the fact that we didn't have enough crews. Hopefully as we as we reach the peak of this thing and then start to recover we can we can go back up to regular service as soon as possible.

Michael Wallace: When that day comes not if but when right, how long will it take to ramp up service again. Hours, days, weeks?

Sarah Feinberg: Well in terms of planning and just pulling it off, we can do it in a couple of days. But you know, it really depends on our workforce. We want to make sure that everyone is safe and healthy and recovered and coming back from quarantine perfectly healthy. So that's the thing that will remain the priority.

Michael Wallace: Sarah we know you're busy, thanks for giving us a few minutes this afternoon.

Sarah Feinberg: Great talking to you, thank you.

