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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on 1010 WINS to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on 1010 WINS with Brigitte Quinn to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Brigitte Quinn: Joining us right now on the 1010 WINS Newsline, MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Pat, thanks so much for talking with us.

Patrick J. Foye: Well, morning Brigitte.

Quinn: So nationally, this Amalgamated Transit Union is demanding that the feds provide protection for workers. Can you tell us about what the MTA has been doing locally?

Foye: Yes, since the pandemic began, we've distributed almost half a million masks: that's 300,000 of the N95 masks and 160,000 surgical masks. We distributed 2.5 million gloves. We're doing this on a daily and weekly basis, we will continue to distribute to our colleagues subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road, at these levels, as long as the pandemic continues. We have the inventory to continue to do that. We've also distributed 53,000 gallons of cleaning solution Since March 1. We were also early to abandon the advice of the CDC and the World Health Organization, which suggested that only healthcare workers needed masks before the CDC changed its mind a week or ten days ago, we decided to go in a different direction and the CDC ultimately came to our position. There's one thing I want to note, the State noted yesterday that about 5,500 people have died in New York State. That tragically includes 41 MTA colleagues who were performing heroically. We grieve for the loss of every one of our colleagues, including the 1,500 who have tested positive for the virus, but the loss that the families of our 41 colleagues have suffered, is unimaginable and tragic. Those colleagues were acting heroically, carrying first responders, transit workers, healthcare workers, utility workers, people working in pharmacies, police, fire, etcetera, and we grieve the loss of every one of our colleagues.

Quinn: They certainly are the frontline workers too Pat. You mentioned the distribution of masks and the other protective gear. Are there any workers who needed more than others? Like do you need more for the workers on subways? Because I'm wondering if the suburban train lines are emptier these days?

Foye: So let me just report on that. Subway ridership is down 92%, this is Monday's data, Long Island Rail Road 97, Metro-North 95, Bridges and Tunnel volume down 63. So you can see that the decline in ridership on subways, Long Island Railroad and Metro-North is pretty comparable, frankly, not statistically meaningful. We have a worked with the union leaders at New York City Transit, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North and Bridges and Tunnels in coming up with the distribution of these materials. Agency employees at each of the agencies--subways, buses, Metro-North, Long Island Rail Road, Bridges and Tunnels---has received the distribution of the masks, of nearly 500,000 masks and the 2.5 million pairs of gloves and the other material that's been distributed. We've done it across the agency.

Quinn: Okay, that makes sense then with those numbers that you just gave us. The Mayor had talked several days ago about, you know, if you get on the subway and you see people in the car try to social distance, maybe move to another car. Are you seeing that happening, or do you feel that people are able to social distance on train cars?

Foye: So a couple of things: one is the only people who ought to be riding subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road at this point are essential employees or first responders, everybody else should take the directive of the Governor and the Mayor and stay home, one. If you have to get on a subway or bus or Long Island Rail Road or Metro-North, cover your nose and mouth with a bandana or scarf or whatever material you've got. Three, there were some episodic reports of crowding on stations in the Bronx last week, 149th Street and Grand Concourse and 149th and Third Avenue. Sarah Feinberg's subway team has really done an extraordinary job and added 2 service in the Bronx. We've also redeployed over 50 bus routes. We did not on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of this week get reports of crowding, overcrowding, in the Bronx or anyplace else. The NYPD which patrols those stations has really done an extraordinary job together with the MTA police. They are acting quickly and responding quickly to reports of overcrowding, we didn't get those reports yesterday. Last thing I'd say is if, if you see a crowded train, go down the platform. We all tend to be creatures of habit, come down the same staircase, get on the same--look for look for another car, look for another train, but given the decline in ridership on subways down 92%, we do believe that the overcrowding issue is one, that last week was episodic, we've addressed it and we'll respond. We're monitoring social media and responding and the NYPD, as I said, has really done a terrific job on this.

Quinn: Oh, that's good to hear Pat, one last quick question. How often are the subways being cleaned these days?

Foye: On March 3, we started disinfecting stations, rolling stock, subway cars, Long Island Rail Road, and Metro North cars. That cleaning regime continues, stations are being cleaned--actually not cleaned, disinfected--and the trains, subway cars, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North are being

disinfected as well on a regular schedule.

Quinn: All right, Pat Foye, thank you so much for talking with 1010 WINS this morning. We do appreciate it.

Foye: Thank you Brigitte.