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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears on NY1 Mornings on 1

MTA Chairman Pat Foye: "The good news is that 90% of our customers, based on physical counts, on subways and buses are wearing masks. We have a mask force which is distributing 4 million masks donated by the State and the City. We have a very high level of compliance. We want to make it even higher and the news to our riders is you're not welcome on public transit if you're not wearing a mask, period... Public health officials agree that the single most important thing all of us can do is to wear a mask, that is true on public transit. It's good for the rider, it's good for his or her co-commuters, and it's good for MTA employees. So the order of the day is wear a mask when you're in public transit, it's not an option, it's state law and we're going to be even more vigorously enforcing it."

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared NY1's *Mornings on 1* with Annika Pergament to discuss mask enforcement and MTA finances.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Annika Pergament: Daily life in the city, the MTA has been working to make New Yorkers comfortable getting back aboard mass transit. One of the key measures on that front has been mask requirements for subway and bus riders. Signs like these have been up around the system, asking riders to make sure they mask up. We've also seen volunteers handing out masks on trains and platforms. But the soft approach the MTA has used so far will soon be followed with a much tougher stance for those who don't comply. And for an exclusive look about this new plan I am joined by MTA Chairman Pat Foye this morning. Chairman, first of all, thanks for joining us.

Patrick J. Foye: Morning Annika, thanks for having me.

Pergament: So tell us about this new plan because mask riding is no longer a suggestion. Now it's going to be mandatory and enforced?

Foye: It's going to be mandatory and enforced. The good news is that 90% of our customers, based on physical counts, on subways and buses are wearing masks. We have a mask force which is distributing 4 million masks donated by the State and the City. We have a very high level of compliance. We want to make it even higher and the news to our riders is you're not welcome on public transit if you're not wearing a mask, period. We have masks to distribute, we have a mask force, I joined them a little over a week ago, took the 7, took the 4 5 6, took the E train and a couple of bus lines in Queens. We saw thousands of customers, only four didn't have a mask. We distributed hundreds of masks to customers who wanted them for tomorrow, for next week, etcetera. Public health officials agree that the single most important thing all of us can do is to wear a mask, that is true on public transit. It's good for the rider, it's good for his or her co-commuters, and it's good for MTA employees. So the order of the day is wear a mask when you're in public transit, it's not an option, it's state law and we're going to be even more vigorously enforcing it.

Pergament: And what do you mean by more vigorously enforcing? Because what comes to mind is this incident that we had, I believe it was back in May, when there was a woman who was not wearing a mask. It was a really rough confrontation between her and police officers, handcuffing her in front of her child. So I'm wondering when you say that enforcement is going to be enacted, how is that going to look? Especially with these heightened relationships between police and the public these days?

Foye: Well Annika the first thing we're going to do is we've got masks to distribute to those who need them. As I said, we've gotten 4 million masks from the State and the City. We've got a crew of MTA employees who are going throughout the system distributing masks on both subways and buses. Compliance is very high, we want to drive it even higher. We've got Bridge and Tunnel Officers who are carrying masks. We don't want to escort anybody off the system, we will give him or her, our customer, a mask, but it is state law you wear a mask and it is an issue of respect for your fellow commuters and MTA employees. We're starting at a good place with 90% compliance, we want to drive it even higher because of the advice of public health officials that masks, masks, masks, are the order of the day.

Pergament: I want to show you a video that one of your train operators shot over the weekend. The windows, all broken, are cracked on this train. And I, it just, you know, if the trains can't be kept protected and safe, if this can happen so easily, how can we protect people? How can you force people to wear masks if we can't do this basic thing? I mean, that had to be seen by some people when that was, when those windows were being crashed?

Foye: That incident is being investigated. We don't know where or when it occurred. We're working, MTA Police are checking and MTA New York City Transit employees are checking the videotape to see whether we can find out who did that. I will say that crime, especially felony assaults on the subways, are up about 30% June to July. We need greater enforcement by NYPD leadership, which is responsible for policing the subways. Obviously, ridership has increased, but we need a more robust police presence on subways and buses. That incident that you described is obviously unacceptable and we're going to do everything we can to bring to justice those who are responsible.

Pergament: Can you give us an update on the budget? I know it's in such dire straits. I know we're waiting to hear from Washington what may or may not come through. You're asking for an additional nearly \$4 billion. Tell us what happens if we don't get that money.

Foye: Well I will say this, we received in the CARES Act, \$3.9 billion of funding. We exhausted that about 10 days ago. The United States Senate is back in session, Senator Schumer has been a longtime supporter and advocate for the MTA. Over the weekend he indicated that one of the requirements he's going to have in any legislation is \$4 billion in funding for the MTA, as well as for the State of New York. His support is incredibly important. Right now, we're laser focused on getting additional funding. I do have to say that even if we get \$3.9 billion, \$4 billion this month to carry us through the rest of 2020, the deficits that the MTA faces beyond that aggregate \$12 billion, including about six to seven billion dollars according to McKinsey in 2021 alone. So getting that federal funding is a first order priority and we've been working it hard at every level.

Pergament: But regardless, are you expecting fare hikes, toll hikes, scaling back some of the projects that you had been planning to upgrade the system?

Foye: None of those are things that we want to do. But obviously, among the steps that we may be required to take would be delaying or deferring the capital plan, wage freezes, cuts to service, reductions and headcount. None of those are things that we want to do, but obviously, it's a question of survival if we don't get federal funding. But as I said, we're laser focused on getting this next round of \$4 billion of funding and with the support of Senator Schumer and the New York Congressional Delegation we're cautiously optimistic. I ought to say that on the incident that we just talked about, as I understand it, the NYPD has a photo of the suspect on the 7 train and that person is being sought.

Pergament: Okay, we'll wait for an update from you on that as well. Pat Foye, Chairman of the MTA, thanks so much for joining us this morning.

Foye: Thanks Annika.