



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

March 23, 2020

[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye Appears on Pix11's "Morning News" to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live by phone on Pix11 "Morning News" with Betty Nguyen and Dan Mannarino to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and the rear-door boarding policy on all MTA buses.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Betty Nguyen: It's looking a lot different today than last week, of course, fewer people out there taking the subway system.

Dan Mannarino: Yeah, it's really crippling the MTA, so joining us this morning to explain if we should expect any changes in service MTA Chairman Pat Foye. So good morning to you, thanks for joining us, Mr. Foye.

Patrick J. Foye: Good morning Dan, thanks for having me.

Mannarino: Hey, so let's begin first with the trains and whether or not they will continue to run at full capacity even though everyone has now been kind of ordered to stay at home in New York on pause. What does that mean for the MTA?

Foye: Well, we're running normal weekday service today. Obviously, as Marissa just reported, we're running the A on all the local stops, the C is not running right now. The answer is we're running service, we're taking first responders, police officers, nurses, doctors, firefighters, people working in pharmacies and grocery stores, etcetera, utility workers to and from their jobs. This is a very challenging time, transit workers as they did after 9/11 and after Superstorm Sandy and after any number of acts of God, are showing up to work. We this morning implemented rear-door boarding on our local buses. That's about 4200 of the 5600 buses in the fleet. We're doing that to minimize the risk to bus operators. So passengers will be asked to board in the rear, the area around the bus operator will be roped off to minimize contact, in accordance with the direction of Governor Cuomo and with public health and medical doctors. Lastly, we're very focused on the \$4 billion request we have into the federal government. Obviously, ridership has declined unexpectedly and precipitously on subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Railroad. The MTA system is the circulatory system of the New York and regional economy and it's an urgent matter because we have incurred a revenue loss approaching \$4 billion, and we're spending about \$300 million, both of those numbers are on an annualized basis, to disinfect stations, subway cars, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road cars, buses and paratransit. We've increased substantially the frequency and intensity of our disinfecting and it is really critical that in order to maintain MTA service that the federal government make good, in terms of reimbursing the MTA for that \$4 billion. Time is really of the essence.

Nguyen: Yeah, there's a lot packed into this. So I want to get back to something that you were talking about earlier, and that's protecting the employees, at least 23 transit workers have tested positive for the COVID-19, 19 New York City Transit workers, four LIRR our employees. So what steps, I know you mentioned talking about people entering the backs of buses, what other steps are you taking to keep those riders and workers safe and are all transit workers being tested?

Foye: Great question. We are disinfecting workplaces at the MTA, subway stations, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road stations, every piece of rolling stock, subway cars, the cars on Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North, as well as paratransit vehicles. We're doing stations as well. We're also exploring some innovative ways to take the disinfecting to the next level. We have, obviously this morning implemented the rear-door boarding on buses, and we're doing that for the sole purpose of minimizing the risk to our bus operators. We've been in constant dialogue with union leaders on subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road. And as I mentioned, transit workers are coming up to work, showing up the work, to carry first responders to and from their jobs as they did after 9/11 and as they did after Superstorm Sandy.

Mannarino: So to keep everybody safe, and I think, you know, first off, hats off, and thank you to all those workers who are showing up to keep this rolling, but I want to go back to the to the initial question: the Mayor and the Governor have talked about reducing things in New York City, is there going to be a reduction in the number of trains? Could that help you with some of that deficit, if you reduce the number, its less employees that you have to have on a train or bus at that given time since you're not transporting as many people.

Foye: So Dan we are we are looking at that on a constant basis This morning we're operating normal weekday services I mentioned across the system, we're looking at it when we've got it if it comes to a point where we're making a change, we will inform our customers, the public and of course, the media on a current real-time basis.

Mannarino: Right now, there's no plan for that.

Foye: We have lots of plans, contingency plans, but right now we're operating service. Service is pretty good this morning, with the exception of the A, which is running local in place of the C.

Nguyen: Last thing before we let you go, for those who need to ride the subway, they have to at this point, perhaps they're essential workers, what is your advice to them to protect themselves?

Foye: The advice is the advice that medical directors, medical doctors, public health officials, and frankly our mothers gave to each of us when we were young. Wash your hands, wash them frequently, use hand sanitizers, don't, in the environment we're in, avoid contact with your face, lips, etcetera. Those are common sense things you can't in this environment wash your hands enough or use too much hand sanitizer, it's really common sense. All the parts of, for instance, the subway station, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North station, that customers come into contact are being disinfected. Same thing with respect to cars, buses, paratransit vehicles are being disinfected on a regular basis with the frequency and intensity that the MTA has never done before. The system is safe.

Mannarino: And I'm hearing from a number of unions and agencies from the MTA to Rikers (Island) officials who are asking about the same thing, and that is equipment right, to keep their employees safe. So last question for you is do you have enough safety equipment to keep the buses and the conductors on the trains safe in terms of gloves or masks to keep them safe as they go to work?

Foye: We do, look there is a worldwide shortage of ventilators, gloves and masks. Governor Cuomo has unleashed literally a war effort to increase the number of ventilators in New York City, in New York State hospitals, same thing with respect to gloves and masks. Our workers at this point are allowed to wear gloves and masks and as soon as that shortage is addressed, and the Governor and his team are all over the issue, we have committed to union leadership that we will distribute masks entire workforce.

Nguyen: But at this time you're not distributing them?

Foye: As I mentioned, there's a worldwide shortage affecting frankly doctors and nurses in emergency rooms who are treating coronavirus patients. The Governor and his team are focused on it, it's a worldwide, national issue. Why it happened will be subject of aggressive investigation at some point. But right now the Governor and his team are doing everything they can to bring ventilators to New York City in New York State hospitals, gloves and mask as well.

Mannarino: Pat Foye, MTA Chairman, again, thank you to the workers who continue to show up. I saw them yesterday out there and I thank them and we thank you for your time this morning as well.

Foye: They're doing an extraordinary job, thank you for acknowledging it.

Mannarino: They are.

Nguyen: They absolutely are.

Foye: Thanks.