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IMMEDIATE

### TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye Appears Live on Cheddar

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live on Cheddar this morning with Jill Wagner to discuss the start of reopening in New York City, transit priorities, and the MTA's financial needs.

*A transcript of the interview appears below.*

**Jill Wagner:** Welcome back to Cheddar's Opening Bell. New York City is officially in its first phase of reopening the area. It is the last region in New York to begin lifting restrictions. Of course, a city like the Big Apple can't run without its iconic subway system, which is the largest in America. And joining us now is the Chairman of the MTA, Pat Foye. Pat, really great to have you on. It's now the third day of reopening. As of Monday, subways were at 15 percent of normal ridership, local and express buses are at 40 percent of normal ridership. What do these numbers tell you?

**Pat Foye:** Jill, thanks for having me. Here's what it tells me: customers are coming back. Monday was a big day for New York City, the first day of phase one. Ridership on Monday compared to the Monday a week ago was up by 115,000 passengers. On buses, up 100,000 passengers. You're quite right, we are now operating at 15 percent of pre-pandemic levels on the subways. That's an increase, we expected a gradual increase. I think the thing that's important to our customers is, and your viewers is, what we're doing to protect their health and the health of our employees on subways and buses. Let me just spend a minute on that. We are disinfecting, not cleaning, disinfecting every subway car multiple times a day. That is one reason why we've shut down service for the first time in our 116-year history of the subways from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. We're disinfecting every bus, every Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North car, and work places for our employees. We're also innovating. A couple weeks ago we announced with Dr. David Brenner at the Irving Medical Center of Columbia University that ultraviolet C light kills the COVID-19 virus, the first time that that fact was confirmed. We're working with Dr. Brenner and we've actually got a pilot on subways and buses that began at the end of last week, in applying ultraviolet C light to subways and buses. The technology we're using is innovative, it is ultraviolet C light disinfecting devices that are about the size of a hardcover book. We're also looking at antimicrobials, which have the promise and we hope this will be confirmed by independent laboratories soon, have the promise to kill the COVID-19 virus but also do that for weeks and months, perhaps as long as 45 days. As we make progress on that we'll be announcing that to our customers and the media. Whatever it takes to reassure our customers and our employees that it is safe to ride on the subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road, we're going to do that. It's obviously a costly endeavor. McKinsey estimated that could cost us \$750 million annually, the antimicrobial and ultraviolet technologies in particular and others that we're looking at and considering piloting. The increase in ridership on subways and buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road also reported their ridership up, is a very encouraging sign. We're asking employers in New York City and the region to stagger hours and days of work. We're doing that here at the MTA as well, to reduce the burden on the mass transit system and also to minimize the public health risk to our employees. We're very focused on that.

**Wagner:** Really quickly, you did mention, of course, the cost of some of these measures and also ridership was way down. So how does the MTA plan to recoup some of those losses? Do you think that you're going to have to raise fares, are you looking for help from Washington or is it a combination of both?

**Foye:** So, we are not considering any pandemic-related fare increases to be clear. Happily, the MTA got over \$3.8 billion of funding in the CARES Act, which was signed into law several weeks ago, and we're in the process of receiving that funding. That's incredibly important. We have another ask into our federal delegation for \$3.9 billion, that's in the HEROES Act, which was passed by Speaker Pelosi. Great work done by Senator Schumer, the senior senator from New York and the entire New York congressional delegation. But we've got an ask of \$3.9 billion, which will take us through the remainder of the year. You're quite right, the decline in ridership, which has been precipitous following Governor Cuomo's directive that people stay home unless they're essential employees or first responders, ridership went down precipitously-- it's coming back, as I mentioned-- but that has real revenue consequences for the MTA. We're about a \$17 billion revenue organization, roughly half our revenue comes from fares and tolls; those have declined. And the other half roughly comes from a package of dedicated taxes and subsidies at the local, state and regional levels. And those are economically based, or transaction-based, and those have declined precipitously too. So, the additional federal funding is really pivotal to getting us through 2020, and again, we do not plan any pandemic-related fare increase on the subways, buses or commuter rails.

**Wagner:** During the pandemic, there was a spike in serious crimes on the subways, even though ridership was down. What's being done to keep riders safe in that regard, from crime?

**Foye:** Good question. The primary responsibility for policing the subways is the NYPD. The MTA police force also assists with the subways, and the commuter rails in particular. It is safe to travel on the subways. That increase in crime came from a very low level of crime, which is good news. The spike in crime, or the increase in crime, that you mentioned has not been replicated in recent days. I think the closure from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., which was done primarily to allow us to disinfect every subway car multiple times a day and to make sure the unsheltered got shelter through the New York City Department of Homeless Services and receive medical and mental health assistance. Subways are safe from a crime point of view and also safe from a public health point of view, given the massive effort of disinfecting every bus and subway car and commuter rail.

**Wagner:** I do want to talk about the changing ways people are going to be using public transportation. There are still a lot of people, despite all the efforts being done to disinfect and even though most people are wearing masks, they just aren't comfortable getting on a subway right now. Do you have any

message to them? I heard an interview where you were talking about public transportation systems in other countries and how that really hasn't led to a spike. Can you just talk about that a little bit?

**Foye:** So a couple of things, thanks for the question Jill. First, the most important thing our customers can do is masks, masks, masks. We did a survey —first of all it is state law that everybody on public transit has to wear a mask, period. Our employees are doing that on a 100 percent basis. There's universal compliance by our employees. We surveyed the conduct of 50,000 passengers last week before phase one on Monday and mask compliance was at 92 percent. We've got a communication and messaging campaign out there to get that even higher. Public health officials indicate that you begin to get benefits at a 70 percent level, we're way above that. My anecdotal experience, riding the Long Island Rail Road and the subways (the 2, 3 and the 1) is that compliance is higher than the 92 percent. We're very focused on driving it higher. Here's what we did: Asia and Europe entered the pandemic earlier than New York City, New York State did, the United States, and left the pandemic, the pandemic subsided there. So, we've been talking to our counterpart agencies in Asia, Europe and North America, looking at their best practices. We also hired one of the leading engineering and construction firms, WSP, which is consulting with public health professionals at Johns Hopkins University. We've been working closely with the New York State and New York City Departments of Health. The New York State Department of Health issued public transit guidelines last Friday, which are very helpful. So, all of our decisions during the pandemic, and as we come out of it, have been driven by public health officials, the best advice we could get, and taking advantage of some best practices from our transit agency counterparts around the globe.

**Wagner:** All right, MTA Chair Pat Foye really great to have you on, thank you so much.

**Foye:** Thank you.