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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on WCBS 880 to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on WCBS 880 with Steve Scott to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Steve Scott: Joining me now is MTA Chairman & CEO, Pat Foye. First of all, you yourself had been ill with COVID-19, how are you feeling?

Patrick J. Foye: Steve, thanks for asking, I'm feeling fine, working from home every day. This isn't about me though. The state announced yesterday that 5,500 people in New York State have passed away, including first responders, police, fire, and tragically 41 MTA colleagues, who had been throughout this entire pandemic acting heroically. We mourn the loss of every one of our 41 colleagues. A number of our colleagues have tested positive, about 1,500 MTA people have tested positive, I happen to be one of those, but the real loss is the grieving that we're doing at the MTA and the families of the 41 MTA colleagues who have been killed by the virus.

Scott: Yeah we hear from riders who say, I knew that person, he was my bus driver or she was a conductor on my train, so the human tragedy now 41 dead at the MTA. We are hearing of some crowded trains, we understand that you've restored some service, adding trains to alleviate that. Tell us about that.

Foye: Yeah, the crowded first, Steve, the crowding was episodic. It would occur mostly at 149th Street and Grand Concourse and 149th and Third Avenue. We believe that is a thing of the past. The NYPD, which patrols those stations has been all over it. We've added, we brought back the 2, which was down in service because of people calling in sick and testing positive for the virus, so service has been restored on the 2. We've also redeployed over 50 buses to add additional busing service in that area. We did not get complaints from crowding yesterday. The message to our riders is if you're not an essential or a first responder, stay home, don't take the subway or buses. If you are a first responder or an essential employee, cover your nose or mouth with a bandana or a scarf, for your safety and the safety of your fellow passengers and the MTA workers, subways and bus employees working to get you to work if you're an essential worker.

Scott: Your employees are being equipped with masks, gloves, other personal protective equipment. Is that helping?

Foye: Yeah, it is definitely helping. Since March 1, we have distributed to our employees 300,000 N95 masks, an additional 160,000 surgical masks and 2.5 million pairs of gloves. There's additional cleaning solutions and disinfecting, but nearly 500,000 masks and 2.5 million gloves. We're going to continue to do that, we've got enough supplies to do that on a daily and weekly basis as long as the pandemic continues and I think that has been an important thing and protecting the health of our colleagues at the MTA.

Scott: What is it pandemic doing to your MTA budget and how or how will or can the system recover from this?

Foye: Well, I'll answer the question by giving you Monday's data. Ridership, and this is a mixed blessing because the Governor has issued a directive we want as few people, we want as little social density, we as much social distance as we can get. Ridership on the subways on Monday down 92%, Long Island Rail Road 97, Metro-North 95, Bridge and Tunnels, people taking bridges and tunnels down 63%. Ordinarily, I would not be rooting for ridership to be down but obviously that's a good thing because people are heeding the Governor's directive. However, that is going to have a significant financial toll on the MTA. The first round of CARES funding provided nearly \$4 billion in funding for the MTA to make up that ridership decline. We're going to need additional funding from the federal government because of the continued ridership decline and because of the effect, which is too early to measure, on subsidies that we receive from, those that have been approved by the state government. Various streams of revenue that are affected by the economy so this is going to have a significant adverse effect on the MTA. The first round of \$4 billion funding is really critical, but we're going to need additional funding and we're prepared to make that case that the recovery of New York City and the New York City region is dependent upon a healthy MTA, and that's the case that we made the first time and the case we're prepared to make again. Lastly, I'll note that the state legislature and the Governor signed into law a number of non-, important but non-financial measures that will give the MTA, at the state level, additional flexibility and we're grateful to the Governor, Speaker Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Cousins for that, Stewart-Cousins, for those measures.

Scott: MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Mr. Foye, we're glad you're feeling better, and thank you for talking with us today.

Foye: Thank you Steve. Thanks for having me.

