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July 6, 2020

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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears Live on PIX-11 Morning News

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live today on PIX-11 Morning News with Dan Mannarino to discuss the agency's ongoing response to COVID-19 as New York City enters Phase 3 reopening.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Dan Mannarino: Let's talk about what's happening in New York City in the five boroughs and above Metro North and Long Island. That means a few more people on the systems there. The buses, the subways, the trains. So, let's check in with the MTA and Chairman Pat Foye to prep us on what exactly we can expect as we enter Phase 3 today. Good morning to you, Mr. Foye, appreciate you joining us once again.

Patrick J. Foye: Morning Dan, Thanks for having me.

Mannarino: So Chairman, daily ridership on the buses and subways has been taking up, right? Towards one million during Phase 2. How much higher do you actually expect that to go today with more businesses opening up?

Foye: So let me talk about last week for a second. So last week on subways, weekday we reached 1.1 million riders and over one million on buses. Interestingly enough buses had been carrying through the pandemic more customers than subways. That's typically not the case. Then lines crossed last week. So, subways and buses carried 2.1 million customers. That's a lot of people. But that's compared to 7.6 million on an average weekday during the pandemic. Mayor De Blasio estimated that at the beginning of Phase 3, we will add an additional 50,000 customers. We expect ridership to continue to gradually increase. We expect a meaningful increase after Labor Day when we believe a lot of white collar workers will return to their jobs.

Foye: And what the MTA has done, we've now increased bus service in Manhattan to a 100%. We are at 100% on subway service. We've added a new overnight express bus service, the M99 from Midwood in Brooklyn to the Upper West Side of Manhattan. We are prepared for additional, to service additional customers on each of our agencies, subways, buses, Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road. On Metro-North, Port Jervis, West of Hudson, Port Jervis and Pascack Valley service has gone to 100% of service even though Metro-North is serving a relatively small percentage of its typical ridership.

Foye: We've also increased bus service to the beaches both on weekdays and weekends and we are obviously aware that a lot of New Yorkers are not going to want to get to the beach especially given the weather that the meteorologist just described.

Mannarino: So besides the fact that you have added hand sanitizers and masks which we have talked about with Interim President Sarah Feinberg here on the morning show. What other steps are you doing to help people and calm those fears and anxiety they have right? It takes a lot for people to get out of the house, let alone take a train. So, what are you advising people in terms of once you get onboard a train, it is tough to socially distance if it's a crowded time of day.

Foye: So good question. Here's the most important thing. Masks, masks, masks. As a result of Governor Cuomo's Executive Order, masks are mandatory. They have the force of state law. Mandatory at being worn on public transit. The single most important thing any of our customers can do is to wear a mask. It protects the customer, it protects fellow commuters and our employees.

Mannarino: And if they don't?

Foye: We did a physical count of our customers and 95% of our customers are wearing masks. Mask compliance by our employees, subways, buses, Metro-North, Long Island Railroad is universal. It's 100%.

Mannarino: So if they don't if they don't wear masks

Foye: Hand sanitizer is available

Mannarino: Will they be removed?

Foye: Well the answer is that they will be asked to put a mask on. Our station agents have masks for free in the booths. We've distributed well over 2 million masks as a result of masks that were given to us by the State of New York and the City, we continue to have masks for those who don't have them. The good news is that mask compliance by customers is 95%. That is the single most important thing. We have disinfecting solutions in every station available for customers, every subway car is disinfected multiple times a day. Every subway station is disinfected a couple of times a day. Same thing with respect to buses.

Mannarino: Okay, I want to get

Foye: Public health officials around. Please, Dan.

Mannarino: I want to get to the finances because we're running out of time here and this is a big topic of conversation in terms of what you need to keep the system up and running and up and running safely right? Because you keep saying it's not going to be a fare increase which is good news for riders. So, what, in terms of the money that came your way, how much time do you have left before it runs out and what's the, is there more money coming?

Foye: So two things. We received over \$3.8 billion dollars from the federal government in the CARES Act. That will take us through the middle of July which is obviously not far away. We'll get the last installment of that funding in August. The House of Representatives under Nancy Pelosi's leadership passed a HEROES bill which provides an additional \$3.9 billion dollars to the MTA. It is absolutely critical that we receive that money. That together with the first round \$3.8 billion dollars we'll deal with the financial effects of the pandemic on the MTA, which I have characterized as a financial four alarm fire and I think that's exactly right. It is absolutely critical that we get additional federal support. Our ridership, our fare and toll revenue has declined precipitously as a result of the effects pandemic, as well as a number of taxes and subsidies at the state legislature had put in place over decades.

Mannarino: Many would think you hear this Chairman, and you would say ok, well then tolls and fares would go up because they how else are they going to make money?

Foye: Well, look, we are not going to do a pandemic related fare increase. We do have a planned fare increase which is in our budget, 2% a year, which is part of our planning now. But a pandemic related fare increase or toll increase is not something that

Mannarino: Understood.

Foye: That our customers deserve or have the ability to pay.

Mannarino: Understood. I appreciate your time this morning as always. A lot to take in there and thank you to all the MTA workers that keep it up and running every single day. Chairman Pat Foye, thank you.

Foye: Amen to that Dan. Thank you.