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August 31, 2020

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TRANSCRIPT: NYC Transit Interim President Feinberg Appears Live on NY1's Mornings on 1 with Pat Kiernan

NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared live today on NY1 *Mornings on 1* with Pat Kiernan to discuss the resumption of front door boarding on buses and the agency's dire financial situation.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Pat Kiernan: It is a big change for bus riders this morning. The free ride is over. The back-door boarding is over. You now have to enter at the front and walk past the fare box and pay the fare. Joining me now to discuss how this is going to work and why they started today, Sarah Feinberg, the Interim President of the New York City Transit Authority. Thank you for joining me Sarah.

Sarah Feinberg: Good morning.

Kiernan: What dictated the timing today to reimplement fares on the buses?

Feinberg: Alas, we've got to start collecting fares. Look, the MTA financial situation is really dire and so it's time for us to start collecting fares again. Of course, the safety of our riders and the safety of our bus operators remains paramount. So we've put in some barriers between riders and operators that will protect operators, and give riders a little bit more space at the front of the bus. But definitely time for us to start collecting fares again.

Kiernan: It was a nice bonus for people who were out of work during the height of the pandemic, they had that option of getting on the buses. It really wasn't initially done as a break for people, it was done because you felt you couldn't safely collect the fare and then people then started to realize it. Did you end up with migration from subways to buses as a result of the fact that you weren't collecting fares?

Feinberg: Well we know we've had some migration from subways to buses, and we don't know what the cause is. It may just be that people felt that it was more convenient and gave them a little more additional flexibility during the pandemic. So, we don't know exactly why. But you're exactly right. We started this because we wanted folks boarding at the back so that we could keep as much space between riders and operators as possible. Now we've installed these protective barriers around every operator so that gives us the flexibility to open up the front of the bus a little bit, but still protect operators.

Kiernan: Sarah, I had the MTA Chair, Pat Foye on the program last week. He was talking about the dire need for additional funding, looking for in the order of \$12 billion dollars from Washington and told us about the fact that service cuts will be on the way soon if that funding doesn't come. How far are you along in that process, about what those cuts would look like if you were asked to reduce service?

Feinberg: You know, we're planning. I have to say it's not a place I ever thought I would be in. A year ago I was Chair of the Transit Committee at MTA, we were, you know we had record on time performance, we were looking at expanding service, we were looking at getting all these capital construction projects underway, and here we are just months later trying to recover from this pandemic, in desperate need of financial assistance from Washington, and looking at frankly draconian service cuts, which we just cannot get to that place. You know that at the end of the day, if we have to do draconian service cuts in order to just save ourselves from bankruptcy, and what does that mean to New Yorkers? It means people can't get to work. It means the economy in New York suffers, and I hope that Washington is paying attention to that. No matter what your politics, you can't root for New York to struggle like that.

Kiernan: You know the city just doesn't work if the service is not regular enough that you can get where you need to go when you need to get there.

Feinberg: Right.

Kiernan: To that end, the Jay Street busway is being implemented finally. We've heard a lot of talk about that. We did a lot of coverage here on the 14th Street busway in Manhattan. We don't know what traffic is going to look like as we get into the reopening of schools and reopening of more offices. And I'm worried that a lot of people who had not been driving, will be driving. So busways could be very important in that. Tell me about the Jay Street project in cooperation with the City.

Feinberg: So these busways are incredibly important because it keeps our buses moving, right? Our buses get stuck in massive congestion. Even when it seemed like no one was in the city, we started seeing that congestion come back. It was the leading edge of people coming back to the city. So if we can leave busways open, if we can give buses the right of way to get through traffic, it's so important, it makes everything work better. And as you mentioned 14 Street, I live in that area. You know everyone was sought of watching, waiting to see what would happen on 11th and 12th, and 13th and 15th, 16th, and it just didn't come to pass. The neighborhood absolutely adapts to it. If anyone around 14 Street will tell you it's one of the best things to happen to the neighborhood.

Kiernan: Sarah, thank you for being with us this morning.

Feinberg: So good to be with you. Thank you.