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Press Release

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[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Launches New 'Essential Connector' App to Move Essential Workers During Overnight Subway Closure

New App Pilot Set to Help 11,000 Essential Workers Plan Alternative Travel During MTA Essential Plan Night Service, With Bus Ridership Increasing Up to 76%
App Supplements MTA's 'Essential Connector' website (mta.info/overnight) and Call Center for Essential Workers to Plan Their Travel

Download the App at the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

View Photos of the New App [Here](#)

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today launched the 'Essential Connector' app to help essential workers plan their alternative travel to or from work during the overnight subway closure from 1 to 5 a.m. Essential workers can use the new app to navigate and take advantage of the MTA's dramatically enhanced bus service schedule – a 76% increase in overnight trips and 150% boost in the operational fleet – or book an eligible for-hire-vehicle where bus service is not workable at no cost.

The new app supplements the impressive work done by MTA's internal team to launch the Essential Connector program on May 6, 2020, just days after the overnight closure of the subway was announced. Tapping a station on the new app's map allows the user to see live bus and train departures, including the last train arrivals of the night and available buses nearby. The app will provide info on current service disruptions and upcoming service changes. Over time the map will become "personalized," highlighting the stops the user visits most often, making trip planning faster and easier than ever before. Following feedback, the MTA is already working on a second version of the app. The Essential Connector app is now available for download at the [Apple App Store](#) or on [Google Play](#).

"Disinfecting trains every 24 hours is critically important to the health and safety of our riders, but in closing the system for four hours each night we knew we couldn't leave overnight essential workers without options," **said NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg**. "Together with our partner Axon Vibe, the New York City Transit team designed and built an app that will help those workers find available buses and other needed transportation. These are immensely challenging times, but I'm proud of our team for moving so quickly to build a user-friendly app that delivers for New Yorkers who rely on mass transit in the overnight hours."

"This crisis requires the MTA and transit agencies across the country to be resourceful and to look to nontraditional sources for solutions," **said MTA Chief Innovation Officer Mark Dowd**. "I am enormously proud of our agency's ability to move quickly to internally create an innovative technology solution in a matter of days to protect our essential workers and help them get to work between 1 to 5 a.m. Our partnership with Axon Vibe is an example of how MTA can bring in a technology provider to supplement the internal work we did to get this program in place. I am also excited that our solution focuses on giving the for-hire-vehicle work to local businesses such as yellow cabs and local car services."

"The Transit Innovation Partnership was created in response to Governor Cuomo's call for the best innovations to solve the biggest challenges in public transit. This mission is more important than ever," **said Transit Innovation Partnership Executive Director Rachel Haot**. "We are honored to partner with the MTA and Transit Tech Lab graduate AxonVibe to serve New York City's heroic essential workers."

Since May 6, overnight subway service has been suspended from 1 to 5 a.m. as the MTA undertakes the most aggressive disinfecting and cleaning program in agency history. The MTA is also leveraging and evaluating innovative new cleaning solutions such as antimicrobial biostats and ultraviolet light to eradicate the COVID-19 virus.

The MTA has significantly enhanced bus service on 61 bus lines during this time, including 11 interborough express routes with additional stops (five routes in the Bronx, three each in Brooklyn and Queens), and 13 new routes that normally don't offer overnight service (17 in Brooklyn, 13 in Queens, 10 each in the Bronx and Manhattan) under the new MTA Essential Plan Night Service. Thirty-seven routes have added overnight service. The MTA is closely monitoring ridership to add additional service as needed.

To complement these robust investments in bus service, the MTA has also launched the "Essential Connector" program. Essential workers are eligible for one free trip in a for-hire-vehicle per night if a bus trip would:

- take more than 1 hour and 20 minutes, or
- require more than two transfers, or
- require a walk of more than a half mile to or from a bus stop.

The MTA "Essential Connector" Call Center, (718) 330-1234, and Essential Connector website, mta.info/overnight, will continue to provide convenient and accessible options for essential workers. Essential workers are also encouraged to register for the "Essential Connector" program via the app or the web to provide MTA a better understanding of how essential workers are planning their trips during the shutdown of subway service.

The Essential Connector App is the product of a partnership between MTA, the Transit Innovation Partnership and Axon Vibe, one of the many startups that MTA is successfully integrating into its operations to bring innovative approaches to the MTA. As part of the plan to shut down late night subway service, MTA asked Axon Vibe to work with them to create the "Essential Connector" app in under a week. Axon Vibe is one of the four finalists selected for the inaugural class of Transit Tech Lab following a global competition in fall of 2018, in which nearly 100 companies participated.

Prior to creating the Essential Connector App, Axon Vibe was working with the MTA and the Transit Tech Lab on testing how their smartphone app technology could improve service and customer communications by enabling the MTA to deliver personalized communications based on the commuting behavior of users who opt into that service. In the event of service changes, the MTA would be able to proactively notify the impacted users (taking into consideration their location and other context) and provide alternative transportation suggestions based on riders' anticipated destination and commuting preferences.