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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears on 1010 WINS to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on 1010 WINS with Brigitte Quinn to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Brigitte Quinn: Joining us live on the 1010 WINS News Line this morning is MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Pat, good morning. Thanks for being with us.

Patrick J. Foye: Good morning Brigitte, how are you?

Quinn: I'm good. I have to share with you. We got a tweet this morning we noticed one of somebody, a subway rider, complaining that homeless people are crawling all over his subway train. We're trying to track that person down get in touch with him and get the specifics of where this is but Pat, can you tell us how this cleaning is going to work next week? Let's say, the cleaner comes to the subway, and there are homeless people camped out in a train car --whose responsibility is it to ask that homeless person to leave the train?

Foye: So Brigitte, here's what's going to happen starting next week and this is a... let me describe what's happening and I'll tell you why. Beginning 1 a.m. Wednesday, May 6 to 5 a.m., that morning and then during that time period during the pendency of the pandemic we're going to stop subway service. And the reason we're doing that is to disinfect every subway car and bus every day. Right now we're disinfecting stations, subway stations twice a day. That work will continue. But we want to disinfect every subway car and bus, once a day, the same will be true, by the way, with respect to Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North cars on those railroads. The reason we're doing it is to protect the health of our employees, and the public and to show our employees and our current riders and obviously ridership is at a very depressed level. Ridership on the subways is down about 92% which is extraordinary. But, we want to show our employees, our current riders and our future riders, as the pandemic subsides and economic activity in New York City and the region comes back to life that we're doing everything we can to protect public health, and everything we can to assure them that it is safe to continue to ride on subways and buses and commuter rails. Giving services to the homeless and taking them out of the subways and getting them shelter is a key part of that. Housing for the homeless is a City responsibility and the Mayor joined the Governor by Zoom yesterday at the Governor's announcement of the closing of the subways beginning Wednesday morning at 1 to 5 a.m. during the pendency of the pandemic. And the Mayor also committed to a robust and sustainable NYPD presence to close the stations to be able to close the system to be able to do that on a safe basis, but also to offer services to the homeless and to remove them from the subways. Look, the homeless themselves are medically vulnerable and many of them are suffering from emotional and mental health issues. And it doesn't do the homeless any good to allow them to sleep and live in the subways. They like every other New Yorker are entitled to shelter, whether it's in a safe harbor, whether it's in a shelter or whether it's in one of the hotel rooms that the City has gotten. So we're going to be disinfecting subway stations, that work continues that's twice a day, every subway car and every bus and removing everybody who's in the system at 1 to 5 a.m., this is not focused on the homeless but everybody who's in the system who's not a transit worker or a police officer or social worker--

Quinn: I'm sorry Pat, I have to jump in, who does that then? Is that the NYPD, they tap people on the shoulder and say you need to leave? And then the cleaners can come in and do their job?

Foye: Absolutely. It'll be the NYPD in partnership with the MTA Police Department, but the NYPD has primary responsibility, and about 2,700 officers in the Transit Bureau. So they've got primary responsibility. They have really stepped up their activities in terms of policing the system, and offering services to the homeless. But it is NYPD in partnership with the MTA Police.

Quinn: So are you confident, is that to say Pat that they will be able to get the people off the trains and into shelters or hotels? Again, so the people who need to disinfect and do their jobs--

Foye: Closing the subways, from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m., is not something that anybody wanted to do, but as the Governor noted yesterday, there's been rapid deterioration in kind of the quality of life on the subways, especially in the evening. So in addition to the concerns about the pandemic and doing disinfecting, we clearly came to a conclusion that the homeless issue had gotten significantly worse. That's not good. That's not good for the homeless, who are entitled to respect. They're human beings, many of them are suffering from medical and emotional and mental health issues. They need services, they need treatment, and they need shelter. They shouldn't be living in the subways, and from 1 to 5 a.m. the subways are going to be closed to everybody except police officers and transit workers in the course of their duties.

Quinn: Right. And I understand. Tell me if this is the same number that you have -- 11,000 people use the subway during those hours-- so tell us if you are one of those people, how do you go about finding out what shuttle bus to take, what dollar van or even a for hire vehicle you're going to take to get to work now? What do you do?

Foye: So here's what you're going to do. The MTA is going to be announcing details on how this is gonna work and what bus service will be available. The primary way that we're going to move the 10 to 11 thousand people which is the average number who are traveling during the 1 to 5 a.m. period is by bus service. Regular MTA bus service. We are prepared to supplement it as necessary. We've got detailed data as to where those 10 to 11 thousand customers, where they get on the system, where do they get off. How many are traveling at 1 a.m. and how many are traveling at 3 a.m. That primary bus service will be supplemented with livery cabs, with yellow and green taxis and with for-hire vehicles as necessary. But the primary way of getting those 10 to 11 thousand New Yorkers to their jobs and back home at the 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. period will be MTA bus service.

Quinn: Okay and people can get information about it, MTA--

Foye: MYmta app or mta.info.

Quinn: Okay good, and we will pass that along to our listeners and Pat Foye we thank you very much for chatting with us this morning.

Foye: Thanks for having me Brigitte.