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July 20, 2020

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TRANSCRIPT: NYC Transit Interim President Feinberg Appears Live on FOX-5's Good Day New York

NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on FOX 5's "Good Day New York" with Rosanna Scotto and Lori Stokes to discuss to discuss transit plans as New York City enters Phase 4 reopening.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Lori Stokes: As the city pushes into Phase 4 reopening, the MTA is ready, continuing to make, to make travel safer for riders.

Rosanna Scotto: Joining us this morning, Sarah Feinberg, Interim President of New York City Transit, nice to have you back on Good Day New York. So, what are you doing today that's different than what you've been doing the last few months?

Sarah Feinberg: Welcome to Phase 4. So today, what's new is we have hundreds and hundreds of people out in the system, in the subway system today, and on buses handing out masks. So this is it, I can't imagine you would have an excuse at this point but if for some reason you do-- if your mask fell out of your pocket or you left it at home--we're going to have hundreds of volunteers out today with a mask ready to give you and so everyone can be wearing their mask and keeping themselves and their fellow riders safe.

Scotto: Well that's good because sometimes you do forget your mask, and then all of a sudden, you're confronted with it. What's ridership at today? Do you have those numbers yet?

Feinberg: Don't have the numbers from this morning, I'll get those tomorrow, but we're at about 2.4 million riders a day now. So, you know, obviously nowhere close to what we would be on a normal, on a normal day pre-pandemic, but we're ticking up slowly but steadily and that's good news. We're not expecting a huge surge to come back into the system for Phase 4. We're expecting it to continue to do a slow uptick but slow and steady wins the day in my mind.

Stokes: Can we talk about the buses just a little bit, Sarah, because I know there have been some incidents lately involving drivers and riders, who do not want to put a mask on or do not want to practice social distancing. And there's confrontation to the point where your drivers are feeling that they're threatened, they've been called the N-word, many more claims of incidents then this time last year certainly.

Feinberg: Yeah, that kind of behavior is appalling. And you know, that is not like New Yorkers. In a crisis we don't lash out of each other, we don't call each other names. We stand together, we come together, and we protect each other and we respect each other. So a little bit of news for you this morning, we're actually going to start putting mask dispensers on buses. These are little homemade devices that we made in-house, and so kudos to the bus team for coming up with a way to do it. We're going to start that program in the coming days, so on buses, again, no more excuses, if you don't have a mask you're going to be able to get one on the bus. But to your point about these interactions between riders and operators, it's just inexcusable. I mean, at this point, if you are not wearing a mask, and you are refusing to wear a mask, even though you have access to one, you're just showing that you don't respect your fellow riders, you don't respect your fellow New Yorkers---and you're also violating the law, by the way.

Stokes: Right. I mean we've talked about this before the transit workers, all of your workers, whether they're in the subway or the buses out there, and we talk about giving thanks to the frontline workers, they are indeed the frontline workers and so susceptible during this pandemic.

Feinberg: Absolutely. They've been on the frontlines since day one, just like healthcare workers, like pharmacists, like city workers. They've been the ones who have brought the city through this process. And to not wear a mask at this point is disrespectful of anyone, but who is so disrespectful of a frontline worker that they would do such a thing? It's just such a disappointment.

Scotto: Can we talk about going back 24/7 on the New York subway system, the cleaning still going on overnight, any talk about kind of ending that and bringing back service full-time?

Feinberg: The cleaning is still happening 24/7, if you've been in the system lately--I'm there every day--it is still sparkling and clean. It's so gratifying and I think it helps New Yorkers feel really safe on their commute, I think it's a good thing and we'll continue. Look, the pandemic, the Governor has said, and others have said, when we get to the end of the pandemic 24/7 service will resume and so we'll get there. We're not going to be the ones that call the end of the pandemic, we'll work with public health officials to do that, but it'll come back. Look, I think it's going to take a while but we'll get back eventually. Ridership is still about 23-24% of what it was and so I think it makes sense to get more riders back in the system before we go 24/7.

Scotto: What about the homeless situation on the subway?

Feinberg: Look, one of the things that's been really disappointing in recent weeks is the NYPD has really pulled back on this. So we said from the beginning, in order to safely shut down the system every night, ask people to leave the system, give us the opportunity to go in in full force and clean you know all the stations and every car for the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh time that day, it all goes a lot more smoothly and more efficiently when no one is in the system. We said from the beginning, we can't do it without a significant police presence. It's been pretty frustrating I think for all of us over the last couple of weeks to hear the NYPD say they're not going to they're not to be able to engage as much. So we're working with them now, we need a strong partnership with police.

Scotto: So wait a second, Sarah, I just want to go back on that. What happened? They pulled back police officers on the subway, or how are they approaching this? Because I thought that was a partnership?

Feinberg: It is a partnership. And to be clear, the NYPD Transit Bureau is great partners with us. They're in the system day in and day out, helping to keep the system safe and secure, they partner with the MTA Police and some of our contractors who are out. What I'm referring to is the NYPD pulled back a little bit on the overnight assistance. You were asking about the homeless population in particular, helping us to ask everyone to leave the system. That started during the protests, you know, they started moving people around to make sure that they could be responsive to everywhere they needed to be, and I think with budget cuts, we're not seeing those folks come back. And so that's certainly something we're very worried about, working closely with the police to make sure that we've got all the assistance we can get.

Stokes: And not getting much federal help either, and likely to maybe raise the rates as well?

Feinberg: Well look, we desperately need federal assistance, we've been really clear. I mean, our finances fell off a cliff when this thing started. Of course, we've had to put more resources into cleaning and, and into items that we weren't expecting pre-pandemic. We absolutely need the federal assistance. I certainly feel very confident in our New York Delegation, you could not have better focus on your side than Senator Schumer and Ms. Lowey and so I feel great about that, but we absolutely need the Senate to step up and we need the White House and our federal partners to do their job.

Scotto: Well thank you for appearing on Good Day New York and kind of getting us up to speed on what's happening with the New York City Transit system. Sarah Feinberg...

Feinberg: Great to see you all.