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Press Release

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NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg Appears on PIX 11 Morning News

New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on PIX11 Morning News with Dan Mannarino to discuss NYC Transit's return to full service today as New York City enters Phase 1 reopening.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Dan Mannarino: With New York City beginning Phase 1 of reopening the MTA has made preparations to get New Yorkers up and moving. It's the lifeline in New York City, right? So, joining us to share more of the MTA's plan is the Interim President of New York City Transit Authority Sarah Feinberg. Good morning to you, Sarah. Thank you for joining us once again. We've been chatting with you every step of the way here, and here we are on day one. You're in Queens this morning, right? So how many more people are you expecting to ride the trains and buses this morning?

Sarah Feinberg: A little bit unclear. We'll know more later today and we'll know a lot about today, tomorrow, when we get the numbers. But somewhere between maybe two and 300,000 more people expected. We'll see. I mean, to be honest, ridership has been ticking up this entire time since the height of the pandemic until now. Ridership has been growing pretty steadily. We're at about yesterday, or I'm sorry Friday, we were at about 1.5 million riders so we've been on a steady increase.

Mannarino: So, everybody is mandated to wear a mask to be on board a train, right? It seems like everybody behind you, coming and going, is wearing those masks. So, what will you do for overcrowding on the trains? I know there's markings on the platforms, but it is really tough to stay socially distant on board a train or a bus.

Feinberg: You're exactly right about mask compliance. So, first of all, I want to say good job to everyone I've seen this morning. I've been out since about 5:30 and almost everyone I've seen is wearing a mask. And, so, that kind of mask compliance is really important and it's just gratifying because that's what needs to happen. So look, I mean platforms can get crowded, the cars can get crowded. You know, this is New York City, we're used to this at this point, right? And so, what you should do is just make sure you're vigilant about keeping your mask on and put as much distance between you and the next person as possible. If six feet is possible great, if three feet is possible, great. There are going to be some cars, some trains during rush hour today where none of that is possible. To be vigilant about your mask and go about your business -- and the number, the number of people we're seeing in this system with masks -- it's gonna mean that there's some, some heard protection.

Mannarino: Right, right. And so, we understand that service is back to normal, with the exception of course of the overnight cleaning and disinfecting which we'll get to in a second. But if you know, and I don't mean to hammer the issue, but if a train is too crowded, right, where you are literally arm and arm with the person next to you, is somebody from the MTA there telling people, okay you know what, wait for the next train, we're not gonna allow anybody in this one just yet?

Feinberg: Look, we do. We have, our platform controllers are out, we've got, you know, the MTA police are out, NYPD are out, our own personnel are out, and so, you may well see those folks on platforms in a station saying, move to a part of the platform that's less crowded, move to a car that's less crowded. We did that during the pandemic and we're doing it now. But, you know, I also think as many days into this we are, I think this is our hundredth day, people also know what they're doing. They're making good decisions, they're wearing their masks, they're boarding a train, a car that's less crowded, they're making their own space on the car.

Mannarino: Yeah, I've always said this entire time, it's up to the individuals, right? It's up to us to be responsible as we head out the door. I want to touch upon the cleaning and the disinfecting, how long do you think that will last, moving forward, before we can start to see overnight service restored as well?

Feinberg: Look, we're at least going to go through the pandemic. You know, when we are able to surge into the system at night, clean everything with a huge number of cleaners and sort of have this system to ourselves without any riders there, we make an enormous amount of progress. So look, we are now disinfecting and cleaning stations twice every

day, we're cleaning and disinfecting every car that's in service five, six, seven times a day. So, that's a really important time for us overnight to be able to surge into the system.

Mannarino: I know you say when pandemic is over, but I don't know if anybody actually knows that day, right, and so it's tough to say for those overnight workers who might need to ride the train that there's no end in sight. But I understand the importance of it too. It's a double-edged sword, right?

Feinberg: Well, look. I totally agree with you. For those overnight workers we have enhanced the service as much as we possibly can and we can add more if necessary. And we're also changing our routes a little bit overnight to make sure that our buses are serving as many people as possible. We also have our essential connector service where if you have a really, long commute on the bus or you know, two or three transfers. You can use our essential connector service to get a car there. But look, ultimately, you know, we're seeing a pretty small number of people who are in those shoes. Most people are using the buses. And so, we're gratified that we're able to serve them.

Mannarino: So, you're distributing two million masks out there on the subway platforms. You're also have this 13-point action plan for the riders, but there's also a lot of your employees who contracted COVID-19, right? Our thoughts are with those folks and glad to see so many of them are back to work. What are your safety protocols to keep your employees safe as well?

Feinberg: Yeah, it's a great question. So first of all, unbelievably at this point, more than 9,000 MTA workers have come back to work so they were either out sick, out on quarantine, out with an exposure to COVID and they've now come back, so that's really wonderful news. Again, though, I think MTA paid a higher price in this pandemic than so many. It's been a struggle since the very beginning and so we're grateful that so many people are better and back to work. But in terms of protecting our employees, lots of PPE, lots of masks, lots of face shields, gloves, sanitizer, all of the cleanings that we're doing in the system and on those cars every day, we're doing for our workforce too, right? It's not just about riders, it's about keeping our workers safe, as well. Before I lose you, I want to tell you we have hand sanitizer in every station, masks in every station, if you forget your mask go to a station booth and get an extra one.

Mannarino: That is great information. You know, there's something just really nice, to see people once again on the trains behind you, you know, even though everybody's wearing a mask. Thank you for what you're doing and keeping New York City up and running. New York City Transit is a lifeline. And I always appreciate you making the time for us.

Feinberg: Thank you. It's the best day of the year. People are back.