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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman and CEO Foye Appears on NY1 to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared on NY1 *Mornings on 1* with Pat Kiernan to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Pat Kiernan: The subway system has always operated 24 hours a day but starting next week the 472 stations and the trains will be idle from 1am to 5am. That is going to be the designated time for crews to go in and disinfect the cars. Joining me now with more on this decision, the Chairman and CEO of the MTA, Pat Foye. Pat, good morning this is unprecedented.

Patrick J. Foye: Pat it is unprecedented, morning. Since 1904 when the Lexington Avenue Line started service with very few exceptions, Superstorm Sandy obviously being one of them, the subways have run 24/7. We are in an extraordinary time because of the pandemic and the threat it poses to a loss of life and to frankly the quality of life that we have in the city, state, region and country. We made the decision yesterday, Governor Cuomo announced it at a press conference in Albany, to close during the pendency of the pandemic, the subways between 1am and 5am starting Wednesday in the early morning hours, Wednesday, May 6. It was a decision that was not made without a lot of consideration and thought and anguish, frankly, because it is part of the fabric of life in New York. However, at this point we're carrying approximately ten to eleven thousand passengers in that 1am to 5am period, it's the least traveled period. And like other systems around the country, Seoul, Shenzhen, London to some extent, which have closed nighttime service either wholly or in part to do disinfecting. We made this decision to disinfect so that our employees, our current riders, and our future riders have assurance that every station, every subway car, every bus, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North train and station has been disinfected. We're also looking at a number of new innovative approaches and substances to be used in this disinfecting process, and there'll be more about that in the weeks and months ahead. But this was not a decision that was made without a lot of consideration, but we think it's the right thing to do under the circumstances.

Kiernan: Pat what about the back and forth this week with the City of New York over the homeless population. Is this about disinfecting trains or is this about the homeless on the subways?

Foye: No, this is about disinfecting trains. Obviously the homeless has become a significant issue and as the governor noted yesterday, there's been rapid deterioration especially in the nighttime period on the subways. Yesterday Mayor de Blasio joined by Zoom, the governor in making and affirming and supporting this decision, but the City also committed a robust and sustainable NYPD presence to continue to help with the closing of the subway system from 1am to 5am, but also to continue offering services to the homeless and getting them shelters. The NYPD has really stepped up its activities in the last week and number of weeks, and that level of commitment is really critical to this to this effort and us being able to assure our employees, current riders and future riders that the system has been disinfected on a regular basis, every subway car, every bus, every station.

Kiernan: Pat there aren't quite as many straphangers out there for us to interview and get reactions to, to this sort thing but we found some people yesterday and asked them what they think of shutting down the system overnight. Here's one of those New Yorkers responding to this.

Rider: I have family who get off at 2:30 in the morning, what are they going to do? I think the shuttle buses personally from my experiences, the shuttle buses take forever.

Kiernan: Are you confident? Go ahead.

Foye: Yeah, that is a legitimate question. So here's what we're doing: we're offering Essential Connector service, which is going to be the full current bus schedule which will be supplemented as necessary. That'll be the primary mode, these aren't shuttle buses, this is regular bus service run by TWU members and other union members who are employees of the MTA, in this case New York City Transit. That will be the primary mode of moving between ten and eleven thousand passengers in the 1am to 5am period. That'll be supplemented as necessary by livery cabs, by taxis, and by for-hire vehicles. But the primary method of moving those customers, between ten and eleven thousand, will be the bus service which will supplement as necessary and supplemented secondarily by livery cars, for-hire vehicles and taxis.

Kiernan: Pat Foye thank you for joining us, a lot of challenges ahead in implementing all of this but we appreciate everything everybody's doing to keep the city moving. Thank you.

Foye: Thank you Pat.

