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Press Release

December 21, 2020

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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: MTA Chairman Foye Appears Live on WCBS 880

MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye appeared live today on WCBS 880 with Lynda Lopez to discuss the COVID relief package agreement in Washington and its impact on the MTA, the largest transportation network in North America.

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Lynda Lopez: MTA Chairman Pat Foye is joining us now on the Newsline to talk about what the stimulus bill means for the MTA. Chairman Foye, thanks so much for joining us. This means we won't be seeing those drastic cuts to service that were the doomsday scenario.

Patrick J. Foye: Yeah, no, this is great news for MTA's customers and employees as a result of the great work by Senator Schumer and getting this bill through the Senate. The MTA will get for 2021 deficit over \$4 billion as you just said and that will put us in a position where we won't have to dramatically drastically cut back service on subways and buses, the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-north, and lay off 10,000 of our colleagues. It's really great news.

Lopez: Well the MTA still faces a big deficit an \$8 billion deficit you've said. Does that mean some layoffs or cuts are still inevitable?

Foye: Well you're quite right. Our total ask to the federal government is \$12 billion. As a result of Senator Schumer's work we will get more than \$4 billion for next year. We will need an additional \$8 billion in federal support in '22, '23, '24 for the aggregate deficits in those years and in those years, everything has to be on the table in terms of being able to solve that deficit. But for next year great news for MTA customers and employees: there'll be no drastic service cuts and no layoffs of 10,000 people.

Lopez: We know the ridership numbers now are not as low as they were at the beginning of the pandemic. How are they looking now?

Foye: We've come a long way. Let me say this just for your listeners. The ridership decline at the bottom of the pandemic and even now the worst days of the pandemic even now is worse than the Great Depression. On subways we're carrying about 1.8 million passengers a day. That's about 30% of pre-pandemic volumes. It varies from day to day. And on buses we're carrying on a typical day 50% of pre-pandemic volume, and again it varies from day to day. So we're carrying nearly 3 million passengers between subways and buses but that compares to 7.5, 7.6 million in the pre-pandemic time. We've come a long way but we've got a long way to go in ridership.

Lopez: Well, the next Coronavirus relief bill if there is one likely won't happen until the Biden administration is in the White House. What would you expect from that?

Foye: Well look, the President-elect has been a supporter of mass transit his entire career in public life and when he was a US Senator he commuted daily on Amtrak between Wilmington and Washington DC. He understands how important public transit is. And frankly, having a public transit advocate as our new president, current President-elect is actually great news as is today's expected passage of that bill in Washington.

Lopez: That's MTA Chairman Pat Foye. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Foye: Thank you Lynda.