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IMMEDIATE

TRANSCRIPT: NYC Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg Appears on NY1 with Roma Torre to Discuss MTA's Ongoing Response to COVID -19

New York City Transit Interim President Sarah Feinberg appeared on NY1 with Roma Torre to discuss the MTA's ongoing response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

A transcript of the interview appears below.

Roma Torre: A drop in ridership has caused quite a bit of crowding on our city subways and so joining us now to talk more about that is Interim President of New York City Transit, Sarah Feinberg. Ms. Feinberg thanks so much for taking the time to speak with us.

Sarah Feinberg: Good to be with you.

Roma Torre: First of all our condolences to the MTA and family members of the MTA who have been lost to his horrible virus. Can you give us any more information about that?

Sarah Feinberg: Thank you so much it has been relentless honestly on our employees. You know, we have now had more than 1,000 MTA employees test positive - more than 1,100 actually test positive. We have 5,600 that are quarantined and unfortunately the latest number of deaths is 33. So I mean that is just a devastating number as you can imagine. So we are reeling and are struggling you know to -- I think everyone's struggling to come to work every day but, that's what the heroes of the MTA do. They show up every single day and they operate a safe and efficient service for all of those other essential workers that need to get to hospitals, medical centers and grocery stores. They are truly heroes and it's just an honor to be a part their team.

Roma Torre: Well as you mentioned obviously trains are an essential part of the city right now to transport these essential workers to their line of work and their duties but, I know that a number of workers at the MTA have been complaining that they have not been given enough protective gear what is the status of that right now?

Sarah Feinberg: At this point I don't have the numbers in front of me but, it's well, well into the millions. So we have distributed millions of pairs of gloves - thousands and thousands of masks. You know I think we struggled just like everyone did with the fact that for far too long I think the CDC was saying that it was not a good idea to wear a mask unless you were actually ill yourself. You know it wasn't until yesterday I think that they finally said you know how even healthy people should be wearing them. You know, we threw our hands in the air several days ago before the CDC changed their guidance and said this just doesn't make sense to us. And so at the time went against medical guidance and started distributing masks - it just made sense to us. It made our workforce feel more comfortable it put people more at ease. It just made people feel more to the extent that folks are continuing to travel and may not realize they're sick. It gives people an added sense of security and so I am glad that we did that. And I think at this point we are handing out thousands of pieces of equipment every single day I hope that people are feeling that they are getting what they need.

Roma Torre: Ms. Feinberg we know you've had to implement service reductions to count for the drop in ridership and obviously because you're short on staff but, it has led to crowded cars. I actually saw some pictures that were tweeted out and it is the opposite of social distancing - what is the MTA doing about that to spread out the riders within these cars to keep everyone safe?

Sarah Feinberg: So to be clear we reduced our service due to crew shortages, due to the fact that our own workers were either ill or quarantined. And we found that there have been some one-off issues of crowding but, really we are finding that that's pretty sporadic. You know those issues were certainly happening in the Bronx and more than we would like and more than is acceptable. But, we took a bunch of immediate steps to address those issues and frankly I am frustrated that we keep seeing the photos on social media because most of the reports we're getting otherwise is that we've really resolved the issue. The police has no issues today. We put NYPD and the MTA out in full force over the last week to keep people moving and to address any kind of crowding situation. We have had no reports from the police this week. I think they had two on Friday and I think four on Thursday - so pretty minimal issues. With that said we don't anyone cramming into a subway car in these conditions so we've continued to try and be really vigilant about reminding people that you know there is likely to be a much more empty car farther down the platform. Please move down the platform - please consider waiting for the next train. I know it's not convenient particularly where the headway is seven or eight minutes opposed to two minutes but, it's really the smart thing to do at this moment. So while we are going to continue to do everything we can to address any kind of instance of crowding - just don't get on that car is the thing that makes the most sense. Walk to the next station or wait for the next train.

Roma Torre: Alright Sarah Feinberg thank you for taking the time to speak to us we wish you and everyone at the MTA well as you cope with this horrible crisis. All good luck to you.

Sarah Feinberg: Thank you.