

FTA COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session Transcript
Listening Session #3: Maintaining Healthy Operations and Keeping
Transit Workers Safe
Thursday, August 20, 2020 | 10:45 - 11:45 AM EDT

Henrika Buchanan:

Good morning. This is Henrika Buchanan, FTA's Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer. Thank you, everyone, for joining FTA's COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session today. We appreciate that you scheduled time for this important discussion on how to maintain healthy operations and keep transit workers safe during these unprecedented times. We certainly are aware of how busy you are ensuring that transit services are available to support your local communities' economic recovery while also ensuring the safety of your employees and passengers.

Let me start by introducing FTA Deputy Administrator Jane Williams. Since 2017, she has focused on the Secretary's priorities of safety, infrastructure, and innovation and worked closely with many of you to implement those priorities. She also manages some of the largest formulaic competitive grant programs in the department, including our latest and largest program of funding under the CARES Act. Her background from her time in two previous administrations under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, to her time as the senior legislative advisor for Congressman Andy Harris, to her time as the director of the Washington Area Transit Office for the Maryland Department of Transportation has been incredibly valuable as FTA works to provide relief for the transit industry during this public health emergency. Now I will turn the session over to Deputy Administrator Williams.

K. Jane Williams:

Thank you, Henrika, and good afternoon. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. As many of you know, Henrika Buchanan has been invaluable in leading the agency's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Thank you, Henrika, for continuing to manage this very important work, and thank you to your team for managing our outreach to the industry through these valuable opportunities for peer exchange.

Let me begin by thanking all of you for all you have done during these unprecedented times. From the beginning of this public health emergency, the transit industry has continued to provide critical transit service in communities across the nation. I know that many of you have experienced incredible challenges and made great sacrifices, so on behalf of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, I want to say thank you for all you have done and continue to do every day to provide public transportation services to the many Americans who depend on it every day.

Throughout the industry, we see stories of how agencies have been adaptive and creative throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, and FTA will continue to do everything we can to support the industry through offering in-depth technical assistance to help transit agencies support recovery, supporting and helping organize federal deliveries of personal protective equipment and supplies to protect transit workers and riders, identifying administrative and regulatory relief to support transit operations and economic recovery, and continuing to provide federal funding to support transit operations and economic recovery.

As I'm sure you know, FTA has been quickly allocating the \$25 billion in CARES Act funding to support capital and operating expenses to respond to COVID-19, and to date have awarded more than 641 grants totaling approximately \$22 billion or 89 percent of CARES Act funding. Joining me today is FTA's Executive Director, Matt Welbes, our FTA regional administrators, and our other Leadership Team members. All of them have been working with you to ensure this critical funding gets to you expeditiously, including our regional staff who are boots on the ground, providing direct assistance to many of you to ensure your grants are awarded quickly.

Early during this public health emergency, we expanded eligibility to use federal assistance under FTA's Emergency Relief Program Authority, eliminated the local match, and granted extensions and relief to regulatory deadlines, reporting requirements, and oversight reviews. We established a COVID-19 landing page on FTA's website and included a direct email box to which we responded to more than 1200 inquiries. FTA has posted approximately 120 FAQs and collaborated with federal partners to address the safety of the transit workforce, riders, and the state and local coordination process.

In addition to protect frontline workers and riders, FTA issued a safety advisory that advises transit agencies to develop and implement policies and procedures regarding face coverings, personal protective equipment, cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, physical separation, and healthy hygiene practices. We also worked to distribute over 14 million face coverings procured by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to more than 2200 transit agencies for frontline workers and riders to support safe operations. Safety is Secretary Chao's top priority at the U.S. Department of Transportation and a guide to what we do every day at FTA.

Our partnership couldn't be more important than it is today. With that in mind, we have been hosting listening sessions to provide a forum for you to voice your ideas and benefit from hearing what others are doing to ensure the safety of riders and frontline workers and adapt your operations to support the economic recovery. In May, we hosted an FTA listening session with transit CEOs to discuss operational considerations for reopening transit. That event was so successful we decided to launch this series of monthly listening sessions.

And last month we hosted the first one of our monthly series, including a panel of transit agency representatives, to discuss how transit agencies are supporting the health, safety, and confidence of transit riders during their COVID-19 recovery efforts. If you missed it, we have posted the recording and transcript on our website on the COVID-19 recovery listening sessions page.

Today we will hear from four speakers from transit systems in Oklahoma, Salt Lake City, San Diego, and Atlanta about how they are supporting the health and safety of transit workers as they increase service to our pre-emergency levels. They will touch on how they have updated their practices and implemented protective measures to ensure safety of their staff, particularly frontline workers. Their presentations will showcase what is working and highlight areas that need improvement. We expect that all of us can benefit from hearing about their experiences.

When you registered for this session, you provided responses to several poll questions about how your transit system is implementing measures that will help keep transit workers safe. You may also share additional thoughts and comments in the chat box on your screen. And

with those housekeeping matters out of the way, let me turn it over to FTA Executive Director Matt Welbes to get us started. Matt.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Jane. Good morning, everyone. Let me add my thanks to you for joining us today. As Jane noted, we're happy to support the transit industry's COVID-19 recovery and response effort with this listening session. And our intent is to provide a platform for peer-to-peer exchange of ideas, practices, and other information. To support that goal, we wanted to take a moment and introduce FTA's new online COVID-19 recovery listening session forum.

Launched earlier today, it provides the industry with a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges of ideas, best practices, and other information during and after FTA's COVID-19 recovery listening sessions. The platform, called User Voice, allows registered users to post questions, comments, resources, or ideas and view and respond to other participants' posts. This forum is being provided by FTA for the exchange of ideas and best practices only. Commercial posts are prohibited. We are also asking that you have any questions for FTA, that you direct those questions to your regional points of contact. For more information on the forum, including information on how you can register and start interacting with your peers, you can download the file in the box at the upper left of your screen right now.

Now let's talk about the findings from our registration poll questions. There are nearly 600 participants registered for today's event, and of those participants, 336 of you provided responses to our poll who are from transit provider representatives, each representing one transit agency. So, here's what we learned.

When asked what percentage of their transit agency's workforce had been furloughed and/or laid off since the COVID-19 public health emergency began, nearly 60 percent of respondents indicated that their agency has not had any layoffs or furloughs because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Approximately 33 percent of those agencies that responded indicated that there have been layoffs or furloughs because of the COVID-19 public health emergency, but nearly half of those layoffs or furloughs represented less than 10 percent of the workforce. 7 percent of respondents, about 1 in 10, indicated that 40 percent or more of their workforce had been furloughed or laid off because of COVID-19.

When asked whether their agency offers COVID-19 testing to workers, about half of respondents, 52 percent, indicated that testing is not offered to workers. But also, 40 percent of respondents indicated that testing is offered, whether directly or through a contracted testing provider.

When registrants were asked what measures their agency has implemented to protect workers, common responses included providing workers with personal protective equipment and requiring passengers to wear masks, installing physical barriers to protect drivers from exposure to COVID-19, reducing vehicle capacity, conducting worker health screenings and temperature checks, and increasing frequency of cleaning services and installing hand sanitizer on transit vehicles.

When asked whether their agency has included labor unions in making COVID-19-related decisions that directly affect worker safety, 39 percent of respondents indicated that their

agency has included the labor unions in at least some of the decisions. About 12 percent of respondents said that their agency has not included labor unions in those decisions, and then about half of the respondents did not have specific information on this issue. Overall, your responses demonstrate the many steps transit agencies around the country are taking to protect our workers and we're grateful to everyone who did respond.

Now we'll begin the speaker presentations, starting with our first speaker, Kendra Sue McGeady. Kendra is the Director of Transit for the Pelivan Transit/Northeast Tribal Transit Consortium, providing services in Big Cabin, Oklahoma. Kendra, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Kendra Sue McGeady:

Thank you. Good morning and I'd like to thank you so much for having us. My name is Kendra McGeady and I am the director of Pelivan Transit. I have been in this position since March of 2016, and we provide services to the seven counties in Northeast Oklahoma. In addition to our regular on-demand service here at Pelivan, we are also the lead agency in the Veterans Ride Connect and are an award recipient of an FTA IMI grant recently. In addition to my duties as director of transit here, I also serve on the Oklahoma Transit Association Board of Directors, the Southwest Transit Association Board of Directors, and a member of the Cherokee Nation Editorial Board as well.

Some of our characteristics for our agency include that we are the lead agency on the two projects that I mentioned earlier, and we do provide tribal jurisdiction services to the Cherokee Nation and our Northeast Tribal Transit Consortium operation includes the nine tribes of Ottawa County. So, we do a lot of great work here that we're really proud of.

We have been working through the COVID-19 pandemic like everyone else here in rural Oklahoma and have seen the impacts of COVID-19 for sure here. Some of the things that we have dealt with are a significant loss in our revenue, farebox revenue, a decrease in ridership. If you look at some of the numbers that we have up there, currently we are down by 41 percent. Earlier in the year, around the April time frame, we were down by 68 percent, which was a significant impact like it is to everyone.

We have encountered staffing shortages. We have sent -- some high-risk drivers have chosen not to return to work here at Pelivan Transit. We welcomed and encouraged our high-risk drivers to take the time off, but we have seen staffing shortages. Some did not return. Individuals in the call center as well. But I don't think that we have suffered in the same way that some agencies have. My team held it together well and we were very grateful for that.

I know that some of the issues that individuals have dealt with is reestablishing operations. Here at Pelivan Transit, we were fortunate that we had invested heavily in technology for a long time, so we were able to do a lot of work from home. We were already equipped for that and we were very grateful. Allowing our schedulers to go to the house and do their work from home was really a help to us during this terrible time.

Our loss of contractual services was probably the biggest hit that we took. Our Cherokee Nation commuter routes, and one thing, our work routes were shut down, which was a significant loss to us, as well as our Grand Lake Mental Health. We provide all the

transportation for Grand Lake Mental Health services in Northeast Oklahoma and provide about between 50- and 60,000 rides a year for them, give or take, and with that operation shutting down, it was a significant loss to us.

Those are some of the things that we've really dealt with as an agency. Again, our numbers are starting to climb and we're very thankful for that.

As far as maintaining healthy operations and keeping our transit workers safe here in rural, we have limited our seating. Normally we take up to four passengers in a minivan for our demand response service; however, we have limited that to one individual per trip or a family of four who are traveling together. Oftentimes people want to sit in the front seat, and we haven't allowed that.

But I think the main thing is disinfecting after each trip, mask requirements for all riders and drivers, and also one of the things that we invested in two years ago in September is a cashless fare payment system and we have seen a great response to that. We have increased our registered users by 769 individuals since we implemented -- or since the year began, since the COVID-19 pandemic came along, and currently 32 percent of our ridership is utilizing our cashless fare payment system, which is great.

As an award recipient from the IMI, we are getting ready to implement on-demand technology, which is going to help eliminate the cash interaction with drivers and passengers and we're really looking forward to that. We have also installed protective barriers for all our vehicles. And one of the things that we've done is -- oh, looks like I'm out of time. Thank you.

Matt Welbes:

Kendra Sue, thank you so much for the update. It's interesting to hear about the work you're doing with cashless payments and leveraging that IMI grant right now.

Our next speaker is Sheldon Shaw. Sheldon is the Director of Safety and Security for the Utah Transit Authority, providing services in Salt Lake City, Utah. Sheldon, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Sheldon Shaw:

Good morning, Matt, good morning, everyone. Good morning from the Beehive State. Next slide.

So, a little bit about Utah Transit Authority. We operate along the Wasatch Front in Salt Lake and that's where about 80 percent of the population are. We are a multimodal service. We run all modes of bus including ski service in the wintertime. We have the three light rail lines, one streetcar line, and the picture you see there is our green line that's on top of the bridge there. That connects West Valley City to downtown Salt Lake and then out to the airport. I highlight that because your next trip to Salt Lake, you'll see that the Salt Lake airport has been totally rebuilt and the new terminals be open and running next month and we'll be working to get our platform moved over there.

On the bottom part of that picture, you'll see that that's our commuter rail North Temple platform, and that's an 80-mile-long line that runs almost the whole Wasatch Front, so the two-hour trip

from Ogden in the north to Provo in the south. And the newest line that we opened in 2019 was the Utah Valley Express; it's a BRT line, connects two of the major universities in Utah County, which is Utah Valley University to Brigham Young University, including downtown Provo and Orem, and we had really good ridership on that up until COVID.

So, you can see what's happened to our ridership post-COVID. We have a lot of riders who are choice riders, meaning that they have other options to get to work and back or to get to where they're going and so we're working hard to reestablish that trust and bring some of the ridership back. We have seen an increase in -- mostly in fixed route service, and as we look to [indiscernible] day here on the 23rd, we're going to add some service back in order to hopefully bring back some ridership also.

Nothing happened here in Salt Lake in early March when all of us were dealing with COVID was that, if you remember, we had a 5.7 magnitude earthquake in the Salt Lake Valley. That was centered on the west side and so that gave us a couple of days' worth of working on something other than COVID. We had to do some bridge inspections and realign inspections and we stood up our emergency operations center, which is still stood up today. We're running that three days a week, trying to do everything we can to make sure we're keeping our passengers and our employees safe with respect to COVID.

What's happened to us with our budget? Picked a positive thing and a negative thing here to highlight. Sales tax. Through June, we were expecting to bring in 134 million. If you look, we brought in 134 million in sales tax and that's kind of surprising to us. What we believe happened is that retail spending is up; it's up a lot in our state. People are doing projects at home, they're building decks, they're remodeling and so spending at Target and Home Depot and places like that are -- were projected to be up 4 percent are going to be up around 8 percent for this year. Another thing that's happened in our state is that we had a high unemployment of 10 percent in April; that's down to 5 percent right now which is the second-best state in the nation right now are far as unemployment, so we're doing pretty well there.

Not doing as well, as you can see, for fare revenue. We had projected 27 million; we're down to 19 million is what we collected. And we're very appreciative to the FTA and CARES Act funding to help us keep afloat and help us respond. You can see our total ridership, 2019 compared with 2020, is down quite a bit.

What's happened to our employees? We've had 51 positives throughout the pandemic thus far. That's updated as of yesterday. Only one of them is not back to work so far and that person is just waiting medical clearance. We feel very blessed that everyone has recovered, most of those recovered at home. And so that's just under 2 percent of our workforce that have come on positive which is a pretty good number and we're appreciative of that and it shows the things that we're doing are working.

We haven't had a problem with an employee absence. We're within historical norms. As was said earlier, we've set up some telecommuting options for some of our administrative employees. Our executive director has allowed that to happen to the executive team. So, we found that some of our employees -- all our employees can be productive, they have some have flexibility. As schools open, this gives an opportunity to take care of childcare and it's a quality

of life issue and so we'll see what happens going forward as far as continuing with telecommuting, but so far that's working out well for us.

Another thing that's happened in our system is that system incidents are down. And I guess you'd expect that if you're going to run a Saturday service every day of the week and traffic is way down in Salt Lake Valley, less opportunities for people to make mistakes in front of us. Next slide. Let's move on to the next slide.

So, some of the things that we're doing here in Salt Lake are like what I believe everyone else is doing and they kind of all come out of what the CDC has recommended right from the very beginning. If you're not feeling well, you need to stay home and go seek medical care. And we enacted policies to make that easy for our employees to do. We do cleaning and disinfecting at our house and our desks and on our system and so we've taken that in a big way and really improved what we're doing here.

I need to make sure that you cover your mouth and nose assuming you're around other people, and so on July 1st we enacted a mask required policy on our system and in our facilities. For our state, that is not a statewide mandate, it's only in Salt Lake County, but we enacted that mandate throughout our system and throughout our facilities and across the whole valley as a best practice. Need to avoid close contact per the CDC, and so many of the policies you see on the list there are in congruence with that and making sure that we aren't getting too close to each other and we're practicing good social distancing.

At the bottom of the screen there I want to highlight those are two links that you can go to and we're being very transparent and open with our employees and with our riders. All the decisions we are making and the things that are happening at Utah Transit Authority. And so, if you go, you'll see that we highlight the state's plan, Utah Leads Together, and our plan ties exactly in congruence with theirs. All the things that our recovery task force are doing.

It talks about our ridership, what safety measures we're taking, what service levels we have now and what service levels we anticipate changing to, our long-term planning, surveys of our riders and what they think we're doing well and what they think we need to improve on, and our financial info. So, all the things that I've talked about in this presentation are available to the public and we're doing that in order to build some credibility and hopefully have them feel that they're safe to come back and ride our system.

And so finally, what's happening with COVID in the state of Utah? Where we're at is that we have around 12 deaths per 100,000 which has -- puts us in the top 10. Our rolling average is around 340 positives per day for the past seven days and about 9 percent of our tests are positive. So, all those are good numbers, but we nervously wait to see what happens as schools and colleges open and we have an increase in the ridership. So, we're cautiously optimistic that things will keep going well here in Salt Lake. Appreciate the opportunity.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you for the update, Sheldon.

Our next speaker is David Begley. And David is the Rail Division Safety Manager for the Metropolitan Transit System providing service in San Diego, California. David, I'm now turning the session over to you.

David Bagley:

Thank you. And you can see my background there. I've had 25 years with MTS. I started my career as a train operator in 1995. And without talking too much about myself, I'd just like to say that MTS is a great place to work. Next slide, please.

As far as our system overview, MTS provides service, as you can see, to Central, Southern and Eastern San Diego. We have a light rail system with three-line segments. We have 54 stations. You see our track miles there at 53. And we have 176 light rail vehicles. We have 96 bus routes, 800-plus vehicles, buses, and 85 million annual passengers. And that comes out to 183,000 weekday. Next slide, please.

As far as COVID-19 goes, I can say -- we can all agree that it's had a huge impact on the transit industry. You can see right now we're at a decrease in ridership per rail at 55 percent and bus 64. Service levels, we've returned them to normal and ridership is slowly returning to our system. Challenges, of course, we're in a need for accelerated procurement of PPE and cleaning products, and I know that that's a -- happen nationwide. We also are tracking employees and contractors who are testing positive and we receive updates from our CEO weekly. We're at 61 who have tested positive between employees and contractors and I'm understanding that most of those are returning to work without any problems.

We also installed germ-free barriers on buses for the bus operators and we have germ-free barriers also at all check-in locations for employees. We're also monitoring employee temperatures before anyone enters our facility. And then we've found use guidance tools I have there from the CDC. And you can see the other agencies there they wrote. The 469 Report from NCHRP was very helpful as far as pandemic response and planning. And we also found the education and information webinars hosted by APTA and FTA to be very significant in our planning. Next slide, please.

You can go ahead and look -- also, I want to mention ridership levels. In the beginning of COVID-19 from March through April, we lost about 75 percent of our riders, and then since early April, we've gradually seen ridership return. We're at about 60 percent from pre-COVID levels. And, again, I mentioned we're at 55 and 64 percent.

Moving on to this slide, maintaining healthy operations and keeping transit workers safe. Employee communication has been huge in our agency and we provide updates to the state's safety oversight agency, the CPUC. Those updates are provided by our CEO, so it is top leadership down to all the employees. And within that, we're going as far as planning and development, outreach, media, remote work, policies, use of leave policy based on the Family First Coronavirus Response Act, wellness resources, and a very well-received employee appreciation bonus as far as employees that work through COVID-19. So, thank you, Sharon Cooney, our CEO, for that.

And then in July, we saw ridership beginning to return at a greater pace. The MTS executive team initiated a Clean Ride campaign, and let's go ahead and watch a video now that explains it much better than I can.

[video playing]

[music]

Speaker:

San Diego is back on the move. And MTS is more ready than ever to get people back to places that matter most. Of course, the world has changed, things are different now but I'm proud that MTS has been a constant through it all running essential service for people who have been necessary to keep our region working through a crisis. Just as our service is essential, our riders are essential also. That is why we take our responsibility to keep everyone safe and healthy very seriously. So, we are changing with the times. First, we've enhanced our already vigorous cleaning protocols. Every day and on every vehicle, we use the best disinfectants and deploy the best practices shared by transit operators all over the world. And some busy stations and vehicles get two cleanings a day. We've installed handwashing stations at all our Trolley stops and some of our busy bus stops. We'll also be handing out hand sanitizer and MTS face coverings to riders. Most importantly, we are ramping up services again to handle larger passenger loads. Trolley service is back to every seven minutes all day long on the UC San Diego Blue Line. We will have buses running as frequently as possible on our most popular routes. New barriers are being installed on buses that will protect our drivers and allow more seats to be open at the front. We're doing everything we can to allow as much space as possible between our passengers. But as ridership climbs, social distancing won't always be possible, and your help will be more important than ever. If a vehicle is crowded, considered taking the next bus or trolley. Try to avoid sitting next to another passenger. Always wear a face covering when riding. Limit conversation. Sneeze into your elbow. Use Compass Cloud, our mobile ticketing app, to buy your fare to minimize touching surfaces. Reminders about these and other practices will be part of a new educational campaign promoting rider safety. By working together and caring for each other, we'll emerge from this crisis stronger than before. So, whether you'll be choosing transit to save money, cut on your commute time or help create a more sustainable future, we'll be here for you, to get you where you need to be.

Speaker:

I'm Sharon Cooney, the CEO of MTS, and on behalf of all the men and women who work at the agency, welcome aboard.

[End Video]

David Bagley:

All right, thank you. MTS in collaboration with Scripps Research is participating in a study called Detect. And let's go ahead and watch that video that explains it.

[Video Start]

Speaker:

A new study is using smart watches and fitness trackers to monitor healthcare in transit workers, and it could stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. ABC 10 News reporter Cassie Carlisle shows us it works.

Speaker:

Before the coronavirus, Scripps Research was looking at ways to stop the spread of flu.

Speaker:

When COVID hit, that really inspired us to get this platform off the ground quickly.

Speaker:

Dr. Jennifer Radin says they're using smart watches and fitness trackers to detect a viral infection. They're collecting data like heart rate, activity, and sleep.

Speaker:

When you get sick, typically your resting heart rate increases compared to your individual norm and people often don't feel well so they're not as active, their sleep might change.

Speaker:

Detecting COVID-19 or another sickness before you feel symptoms, something that could save lives.

Speaker:

He was in the hospital for two weeks and he only had symptoms for one week before that.

Speaker:

Monica Valencia is a senior transit store clerk with MTS and lost her father-in-law Friday.

Speaker:

I want to do anything and everything we can so every other family can avoid this situation.

Speaker:

The study partnered with transit workers like Monica and healthcare workers at Scripps to collect data since March. Researchers saying they're at the highest risk of exposure.

Speaker:

So, if we can know kind of where these hotspots are quicker and faster, public health officials can respond quicker.

Speaker:

Getting someone tested and isolated quicker.

Speaker:

We must start somewhere, and we must start documenting things. And by starting here it's only going to help things moving forward.

Speaker:

Determined to keep families together and stop the spread. Cassie Carlisle, ABC 10 News.

Speaker:

35,000 people across the country are participating in this study and you can get involved if you are over 18 and have a device. Links to download the app to your smart watch or fitness device are online at 10news.com

[End video]

David Bagley:

Okay, next slide, please. And this slide will contain references if you'd like information about the Clean Ride campaign or any information about the Detect studies and follow those links. And thank you very much.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you for that MTS update, David.

Our final speaker is LaShanda Dawkins. And LaShanda is the Assistant General Manager of Human Resources for MARTA, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. And, LaShanda, I'm now turning the session over to you.

LaShanda Dawkins:

Thank you. Good day, everyone, and first I'd like to thank the FTA for the opportunity and invitation to participate in the COVID-19 recovery listening session. I've had the pleasure of serving at MARTA for over 14 years. Most of that time I spent in the legal department as a litigator, but I've enjoyed my most recent six years that have allowed me to get closer to the business of our agency. Next slide.

As it relates to our agency characteristics and service. As you can see, we are one of the largest public transit systems in the United States. We have over 550 buses, over 101 bus routes, with 9- to almost 10,000 bus stops. 338 rail cars, which we are in the process of updating with a very exciting program, 39 rail stations and 104 miles of track. Under the leadership of our general manager/CEO Jeffrey Parker, we recently added a station which was the Clayton County station and we're very excited about that addition. As you can see, we were fortunate enough to be named the 2019 Public Transit Agency of the Year by the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials and recognized by Forbes Magazine as one of America's Best Midsize Employers. Next slide.

With all that said about our size and depth, the impact of COVID-19 has been great. As you can see, the initial decline in our ridership was at the 75 percent level in rail and 55 percent level in bus. As many of you know, Atlanta is a major hub for entertainment, conferences, sporting events, and so with the onset of COVID-19, it was extremely devastating to our region and our economy. Due to the shelter in place orders, people essentially stopped at some point and were not traveling. So, we have had significant impact to our service. We are starting to see it come to improve some, but still slightly, with our current ridership at the levels of a 71 percent decline in rail and a 28 percent decline in bus travel.

Budgetarily, MARTA is experiencing the loss of farebox revenue. We did institute rear door onboarding measures to be mindful of the safety of our operators as well as our traveling patrons. And we have suffered tremendously with the loss of sales tax revenue from the

decrease in commercial transactions. As many of you know, we didn't get to enjoy March Madness in March and we were very excited to host the Final Four here in Atlanta. So that's just one example of the tremendous impact we're seeing in terms of the sales tax revenue in this region.

But as we all know, the losses that we feel are very much consistent with our fellow transit service providers throughout the country. Next slide, please.

We have also experienced the impact of COVID-19 as it relates to our personnel. At the time of this presentation, you can see we were reporting a total of 160 cases, so that represents how many MARTA employees that have tested positive. We have on average 4500 employees and currently, our numbers are at 171. So, as you can see, they continue to grow, and MARTA has not been immune to this pandemic.

Our experience has been consistent with the community spread in our region and we're pleased to say that we haven't seen any evidence that there has been workplace outbreaks that are really centralized to the interactions among employees, but more so the community spread impact that we are seeing across this country. Of those 171 positives that we have to date, approximately 62 percent of those have returned to work, 36 percent are still recovering at home, and today we have two individuals who are still under medical care in a hospital setting. Next slide.

One exciting initiative that we did to really honor and demonstrate our appreciation for our frontline employees was instituting hero pay. This was again under the leadership of our general manager Jeffrey Parker and in partnership with our ATU union brothers. We instituted a payment of \$500 -- it's a one-time payment -- and it was extended to both our represented, which is our union personnel, and our non-represented MARTA frontline employees.

To give you some idea who may have benefited from this payment, all of our operators, our members of our MARTA police department who are out there sacrificing daily to keep our system safe, interacting with patrons throughout our system, our safety employees, our parking personnel. So, all those individuals who continue to keep the system going and who were working in a situation where they would come into contact with the public on a regular basis, we did provide this payment to. That included approximately 3,781 of our employees, and as you can see, the payment reached almost \$1.9 million. Next slide.

Another exciting thing that happened here at MARTA is the MARTA army. The MARTA army is an independent grassroots organization who has partnered with MARTA on many occasions. They're just individuals in our public environment who are just excited about transit. They understand the importance of transit and what we contribute to the region at large in this great United States.

They've helped us at the Operation Bus Stop Census, they have their own book club, participated on our Operation Clean Stop programs, and most recently under the COVID-19 pandemic, they assisted us with handing out protective masks to patrons at key rail stations and bus routes. And they deliver 14,000 free meals to our MARTA bus operators and employees as a show of support during this public health emergency. So, again, hats off to the MARTA army and all that you do to help us at MARTA be great. Next slide.

Most importantly, maintaining the health of our operations and keeping our transit workers safe. We have instituted a case management system here in the human resources department, primarily housed in our occupational medical services unit, where we monitor the wellness of our employees. All employees are asked to not come to work if they're feeling ill. When those employees determine that they can't report to work due to illness, they will reach out to their supervisor and during that process, we will conduct an intake where the supervisor has a form that they complete through a Survey Monkey tool to fill out information to determine if this is a COVID-related illness or if it's unrelated to COVID.

In that process, we determine -- if it's COVID-related, we get them key information and we also find out who that employee came in contact with on their day-to-day interactions the last time they were at work. In that process, we do a risk assessment. We have a risk assessment team comprised of HR and safety professionals. So, we're spending a great deal of time in our case management efforts to monitor the wellness of our employees and that information feeds the dashboard that demonstrates how many employees are impacted at any given time.

With social distancing, we've instituted barriers. We are doing the rear boarding, as I mentioned earlier, and we have seat markers to ensure that we maintain appropriate social distance. And our operators are keeping track of the activity on their bus to determine if they've reached an appropriate capacity and cannot carry any more passengers.

As it relates to personal protective equipment, we require all employees, contractors, anyone on our property to wear masks any time they're in a MARTA facility. Proper mask face covering, covering in the proper way that has been prescribed through CDC guidance with the covering of the mouth and the nose. We provide gloves and face shields to all those employees who need them in the commencement of their duties.

We've reduced our bus routes tremendously. As I stated in the open, we have about 101 routes which we initially reduced significantly. We were down to about 30 routes currently, operating rail on weekend schedule, and we're monitoring bus and train activity.

With our disinfecting program, again, hand sanitizers are key. We are using electrostatic sprayers to clean our fleet and we've increased the frequency of our high-touch service disinfection.

Additionally, we have surveyed our employees because we really want their feedback as it relates to how they feel about their safety, so we're waiting final results from our frontline employees as to what we're doing, how well we're doing it, and what they'd like to see in the future. Again, thank you for this opportunity to share the great things that are happening at MARTA. We appreciate this time.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, LaShanda, and thank you all for sharing information about the good work that your agencies are doing right now.

We're now going to have our speakers answer questions that were shared by the listeners in advance. The first question for the speakers is how do you operate -- how do your operators handle interactions with riders, particularly those who may not follow face mask or distancing

requirements, and what has your agency done to keep the operators safe in these situations? Kendra, would you answer the question first, please?

Kendra Sue McGeady:

I will. Thank you so much. Here at Pelivan Transit, we did go to mandate -- we've been mandatory for our drivers really since the beginning of things and we went mandatory with all drivers and passengers as of July 1st. In the beginning, I think like you'll probably hear from every other agency, we did have some pushback on that, with riders who wanted to use their T-shirt collar to -- as a face covering, which isn't permitted. So basically, at this point, I think that people have started to comply with it, and after getting used to it, they really seem to appreciate the extra protection that they're receiving and the safety factor on our buses.

We have had a couple, two incidents in which they just refused to utilize a face mask and they were asked to leave Pelivan bus and we did not give them their trip. However, I reached out to them individually and had a nice conversation with them and explained things and they seemed to be willing to do that. So, we haven't had a lot of issue, but we are being mandatory with it.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Kendra. Sheldon, you're next.

Sheldon Shaw:

Thanks, Matt. Again, appreciate the opportunity from Utah Transit. The tools we're using to enforce mask use is information and education. We're not asking our operators to make people wear masks or even deny service. Masks aren't required everywhere in Utah, and in fact, most of the state is not required, although we have required them on our system. So, we use information, education. We have signs, there's automated announcements that happen on the buses, in the trains, and on the platforms. Operators may remind people as they come on and off the bus that they should be wearing a mask.

The big thing we've done is we've made masks available. They're available at the front and the back for patrons who are on board. If they happen to forget one, then we have one available for them in dispensers. Other passengers help with that. And, we haven't had much issue. The population here are very compliant. Almost everyone has a mask on and they're following with our guidelines. Thanks.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Sheldon. David, your turn.

David Bagley:

Okay. As far as face masks and social distancing, we haven't really had a lot of problem with that. The majority of passengers comply when asked and we have gotten that information out, similar to what Sheldon mentioned, through education, again, signage and electronic messaging boards making the public aware of the requirement. We've taken a friendly approach and, again, are asking passengers at this time. It is a requirement and I have learned the last couple of weeks that passengers will police your system, which isn't -- it's not a bad thing but it cannot be a good thing also. And so, we're talking about taking a stronger stance on enforcing that requirement at this time. And my understanding is we would want our employees to nicely

remind passengers, and if it becomes an issue, we would initiate some type of contact from a security representative.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, David. And if you would tell us about how MARTA is handling this, LaShanda.

LaShanda Dawkins:

Like Utah, we're following the inform and education approach. We want to keep everyone safe so enforcement is mainly through our MARTA police department. So, the first time is information, education. We're providing the free masks through distributions through our transit ambassadors. But our police will, if they have you -- [indiscernible] again with an occurrence of noncompliance, they will do a 12-hour suspension and escort the customer away from the rail or bus facility based upon our Ride with Respect program. And subsequent incidents are handled the same way, but we're mainly using enforcement through the police department. We don't want to put our operators and other employees or our patrons in a position to feel like they need to enforce the mask requirement.

Matt Welbes:

Sure. Thank you, LaShanda.

For our second question, please tell us about the precautions your agency takes to disinfect vehicles throughout the day to protect transit operators. LaShanda, we'll start with you this time.

LaShanda Dawkins:

We are doing daily a.m. post-service cleaning and disinfecting. We're wiping all high-touch points like the dashboards, passenger seats, handrails, hand holds. We disinfect all clean high-touch points once they're cleaned with the electrostatic sprayer. And we make sure that our employees always use all the required PPE as directed. The Pine Quat disinfectant is one of the key approved solutions that we're using. So, cleaning has been a key emphasis.

And we're providing weekly reports to our ATU brothers and sisters to let them know how important it is for us and to make sure they and their members are comfortable with [indiscernible].

Matt Welbes:

Great, thank you, LaShanda. David, you're next.

David Bagley:

Okay, thank you. As I mentioned in the presentation, I went over it quickly, we are using the United States Environmental Protection Agency list of registered products for use against COVID-19. We are cleaning our vehicles daily, in some cases extra cleaning in areas where there's a high number of passengers at transit centers. So, I think that would summarize our cleaning efforts.

One thing I'd like to add as we had an outbreak of hepatitis in San Diego in 2017, so we went with CDC requirements at that time and we maintain those requirements, so when COVID hit, we were looking at how we clean our vehicles and found that we had practices that we had kept

in place since 2017 so we were in good position as far as cleaning our vehicles and having our vehicles safe for the riding public.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, David. Sheldon, you're up.

Sheldon Shaw:

Okay. For Utah Transit, in addition to the nightly deep cleaning and sanitizing, we already had in place contracts for our light rail and our commuter rail to clean at the end of the line and disinfect at the end of the line, and with the reduction in service, we were actually able to do a more thorough job with that throughout the pandemic. On the bus side, we have our operators are given cleaning and disinfecting supplies and we've asked them to clean their way in and clean their way back out. And what you'll find is they tell each other that, hey, I've disinfected this station and it's ready to go for you.

For our bus system, if we have someone on board who's coughing or sneezing, we've asked operators to let us know that and because of the extra assets we have, we'll take that bus out of service and we'll put a different one into service so we can clean and disinfect that on a daily service. And then want to shout out to our board who, even in this time of budgetary constraints, we added headcount to all our business units in order to add cleaners so that overnight we can do a better job cleaning and disinfecting. So that's how we're attacking it.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Sheldon. And to conclude this question, Kendra, you're next.

Kendra Sue McGeady:

Yes, we have provided PPE to all our drivers, masks, gloves, hand sanitizer which they are utilizing on a regular basis and have been since the beginning. We are doing rear entry and limited seating. And in addition to that, our protective barriers and we have purchased a chemical spray system for each of our satellite locations, which they are utilizing two to three times a week on each vehicle. And we are also disinfecting vehicles after every trip is what our drivers are doing. We've provided them all the necessary equipment to do that and are just trying really hard to keep our vehicles clean and if any riders with any potential symptoms, they've been pretty receptive to letting us know about this, coughing and sneezing, things like that, as Sheldon said, giving those vehicles a little extra attention.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Kendra.

For our third and final question, I'd ask you each to please tell us how your agency is handling COVID-19 cases among workers, particularly when it comes to testing, HIPAA, and contact tracing. LaShanda, we'll begin with you.

LaShanda Dawkins:

As I mentioned, we're doing a pretty detailed process in this area. We are not providing testing to our employees; however, we continue through our situational updates to provide information where testing is available. Again, when they report that they have a positive test, we have a team in occupational medical services that will monitor them throughout the process. They

check on them daily to determine how they're doing with their recovery, and we make notations when the person is available to come back to work. And we do have a second level review we're doing with our third-party medical vendor to do the return to work on our employees who have tested positive for COVID. Thank you.

Matt Welbes:

All right, thank you, LaShanda. Kendra, you're next.

Kendra Sue McGeady:

Yes. We have had two positive cases within our staff and what we're doing is we're sending those individuals home for their quarantine time and we are requiring two negative tests before returning. We are also monitoring temperatures and as far as -- we're a council of government here, so our services have had to continue and while we're on a small staff, every once and a while you do have to intern to another department. So, we're doing a log-in system so that if anyone from one department must go into another, that there's a record of that. And, again, have just been keeping in offices and mask requirements and closed to the public.

But as far as our HIPAA goes, the two individuals who tested positive did give permission to give their names and wanted people to know how to better determine who they may or may not have come into contact with.

Matt Welbes:

All right. Thank you, Kendra. And, David, it's your turn.

David Bagley:

All right. Thank you. That aspect of COVID is managed very well by our human resources department. There is contact tracing that occurs, but, again, that is protected as far as HIPAA's concerned so only those employees that need to be contacted that have had close contact with that individual would be notified. And, again, their name would not be included. Department has also issued a memo when an employee tests positive within their department; it's letting people know that somebody has tested positive and that they would be notified if they had experienced close contact with that individual. Those memorandums are posted on agency bulletin boards. And, again, we protect the privacy of any employee that would test positive and would not share their name with anyone within our agency other than those that would need to know.

Matt Welbes:

All right. Thank you, David. And thank you all for your time today sharing the work you're doing. It really resonates when we hear the information directly from you. Your work to maintain healthy operations and keep transit workers safe is appreciated. Here at FTA, we're looking forward to supporting all of you in any way we can as the country recovers from this public health emergency and we work to return to normalcy. With that, I'm going to turn things back over to Jane Williams to close out today's session.

K. Jane Williams:

Thank you, Matt, and thank you, Henrika, and thank you to each of our speakers today for their contribution to this important discussion. Let me again say thank you for all you are doing in each of your communities during these unprecedented times. On behalf of Transportation

Secretary Elaine Chao, please thank your frontline workers as they continue to keep America and Americans moving under these challenging times. I'm confident we will get through this together as we continue to partner and build upon one another's experiences. We are stronger together. Please take care and remember to stay safe. Thank you.