



FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

# **COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session:**

## Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Transit Riders

July 31, 2020



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



# Agenda

- Welcome
- FTA COVID-19 Activities To Date
- Poll Question Results
- Presentations from Transit Subject Matter Experts
- Questions and Answers
- Conclusion

# Welcome



**Henrika Buchanan**  
FTA Associate Administrator for  
Transit Safety and Oversight &  
Chief Safety Officer

# Welcome



**K. Jane Williams**  
FTA Acting Administrator

# Poll Question Results



**Matt Welbes**  
FTA Executive Director

## Poll Question Results (1 of 2)

- FTA received 350 poll question responses from transit provider representatives, each representing one transit agency.
- Nearly 70% of respondents indicated that less than half (40%) of pre-COVID-19 ridership levels have returned to their systems.
  - Approximately 22% reported that between 41% and 60% of riders have returned, and only 10% of those responding indicated that ridership levels were above 60% of pre-COVID-19 levels.
- An overwhelming 78% of respondents indicated that they were deploying mandatory use of face coverings for passengers and employees, new COVID-19 focused communications, and new disinfecting protocols to increase public confidence in their systems.

## Poll Question Results (2 of 2)

- Those who responded that they were taking “other” measures commonly cited actions such as installing barriers between passengers and operators, providing hand sanitizer and masks to passengers, limiting vehicle capacity, implementing rear bus boarding, and suspending fare enforcement.
- Approximately half of respondents indicated that there have been discussions in their communities about returning to transit where the public view was mixed regarding whether transit is safe.
  - 14% of respondents indicated that these discussions revealed that the public sees transit as safe, while only 4% indicated that the public sees transit as unsafe.
  - 33% of those who responded indicated that there have not yet been discussions in their communities around returning to transit.



**Jim Moulton**  
Executive Director  
Tri-Valley Transit  
Middlebury, Vermont

Jim started as Executive Director of one VT transit agency in 2002, then took over a second agency in 2014, before merging the two into Tri-Valley Transit in 2017. He served as Chair of the Vermont Public Transportation Association from 2003-2017 and now serves as Vice-Chair. He is also Vermont's representative on the Advisory Board for the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). In 2015, he was selected as the CTAA Community Transportation Manager of the Year. Jim is also a former Olympic Rower.



# Agency Characteristics and Services

- Located across Central VT
- Serves 100,000+ people over 2,400 square miles
- Operates Commuter Bus, Local Bus and Dial-a-Ride services
- Total Annual Rides (pre-COVID) 300,000
- Annual Operating budget of \$6m and Capital budget of \$1m
- 40 bus fleet; 60 staff members; 60 volunteer drivers
- Multiple service partnerships with Colleges, Hospitals, Schools, United Ways, fellow Transit Agencies, human service agencies, etc.

# Impacts of COVID-19

- Initial ridership drop to 20% of normal (since returned to 40-60%)
- Initial suspension of volunteer driver system (since reinstated with PPE)
- Initial focus on “essential rides” only: dialysis, cancer, methadone, workers (serving more purposes as Vermont slowly re-opens)
- Initial reduction in bus seating-capacity to 25-33% (since increased to 50%)
- Invested heavily in PPE, protocols and info-technology (staff safety)
- Moved all non-frontline staff to remote workstations (slow return-to-work)
- Invested heavily in appreciation pay, supportive HR policies (staff support)

# Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Riders

- Mandated mask wearing for riders and drivers (two-way safety from Day 1)
- Mask mandate publicized on buses and shelters (education)
- Masks available on-board (safety without denial of service)
- Hand sanitizer available on-board (safety)
- Plastic barriers between drivers and riders (safety)
- Plastic barriers between rows of seats (safety for 50% capacity)
- Aisle seats posted “MOOve Over; Window seating only” (social distancing)
- Continuing fare-less system (safety)
- Sanitize high-touch areas after every run AND fully after every shift (safety)
- Full PPE for wheelchair transports (safety with gowns, face shields, gloves)
- Deployed new buses for high-risk shopping hours (safety/capacity)
- Fully trained drivers in deep COVID-19 knowledge (education)
- COVID-19 info in 3 languages posted on buses and at shelters (education)



**Stephan Luther**  
Manager  
Safety and Training  
The Rapid  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Steve has worked at The Rapid since 2000 and has been involved in safety and training programs for his whole career. He currently serves as the Manager for Safety and Training and has had a hand in the development and maintenance of most of The Rapid's safety programs. He also travels as a Senior Associate Instructor for the Transit Safety Institute's Transit Bus System Safety course. In his role as the Safety Officer, Steve has been responsible for writing the safety plans and coordinating efforts to provide personal protective equipment and supplies for the current COVID-19 pandemic.



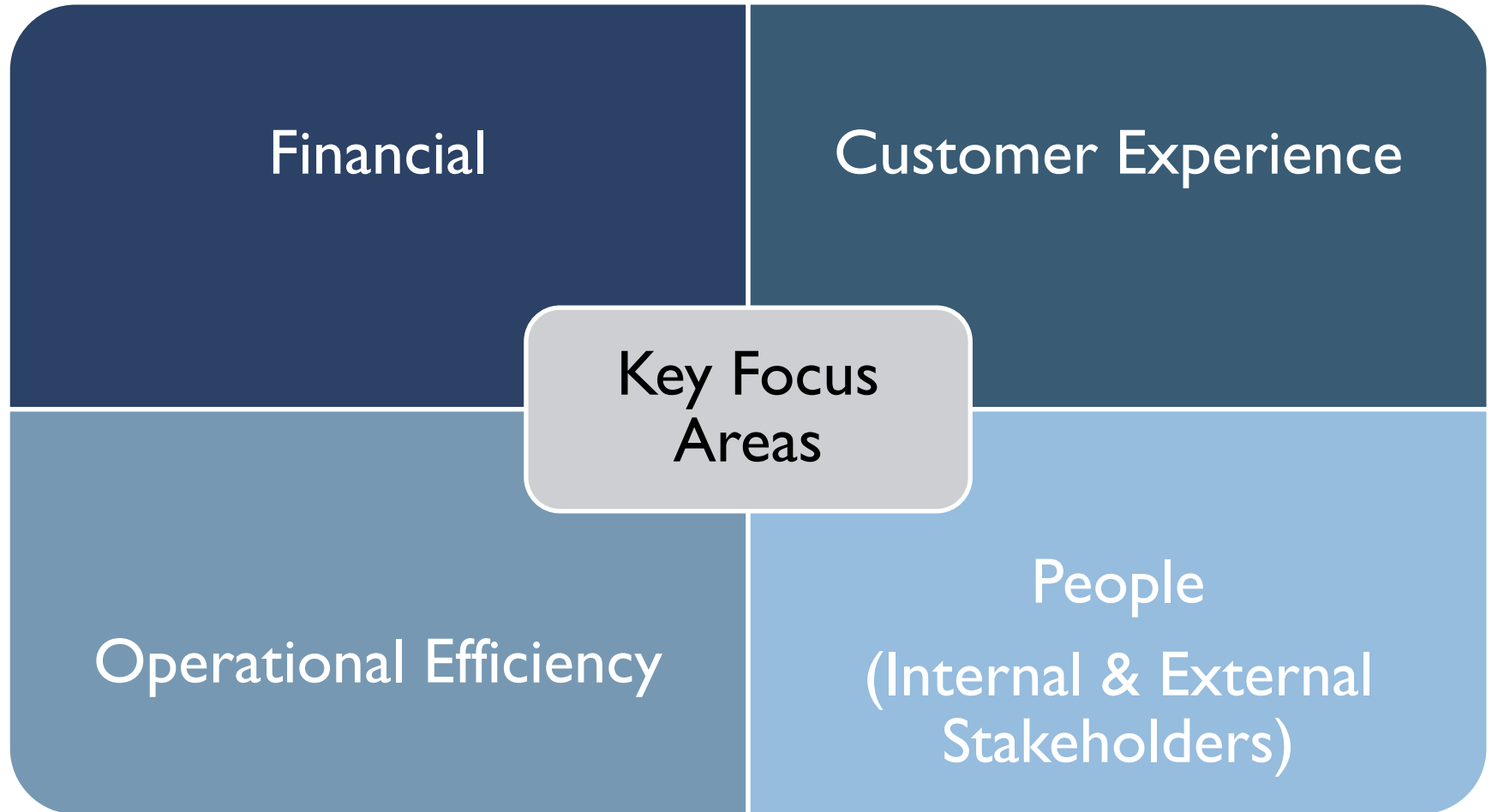
# Agency Characteristics and Services

- The Rapid is a mid-sized agency supporting six cities in the greater Grand Rapids areas. The cities served are Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, Grandville and Walker.
- Combining fixed-route, BRT and paratransit service, The Rapid typically provides approximately 9 million rides.

# Impacts of COVID-19

- At the beginning of the pandemic, all three modes were reduced to about a third of normal service and have been slowly returning in equal amounts as businesses open.
- Staffing was reduced through both paid and unpaid layoffs and many departments allowed some personnel to work from home.

# Objectives Address Key Focus Areas



# Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Riders

Efforts to keep our employees and patrons safe, and bring riders back include:

- More frequent cleaning of buses and facilities, including the number of deep cleans
- Establishing capacity limits (15 on 40' buses, 10 on 35' buses and 4 on paratransit vehicles.
- Disinfection using steam, UVC light, and an approved disinfectant on every bus, every night
- Periodic disinfection of fixed-route and BRT buses throughout the day at stations and platforms
- Application of an antimicrobial agent on all buses and buildings
- Requiring masks for employees and riders when social distancing is not available
- Providing sanitizer for all employees



**Molly Poppe**

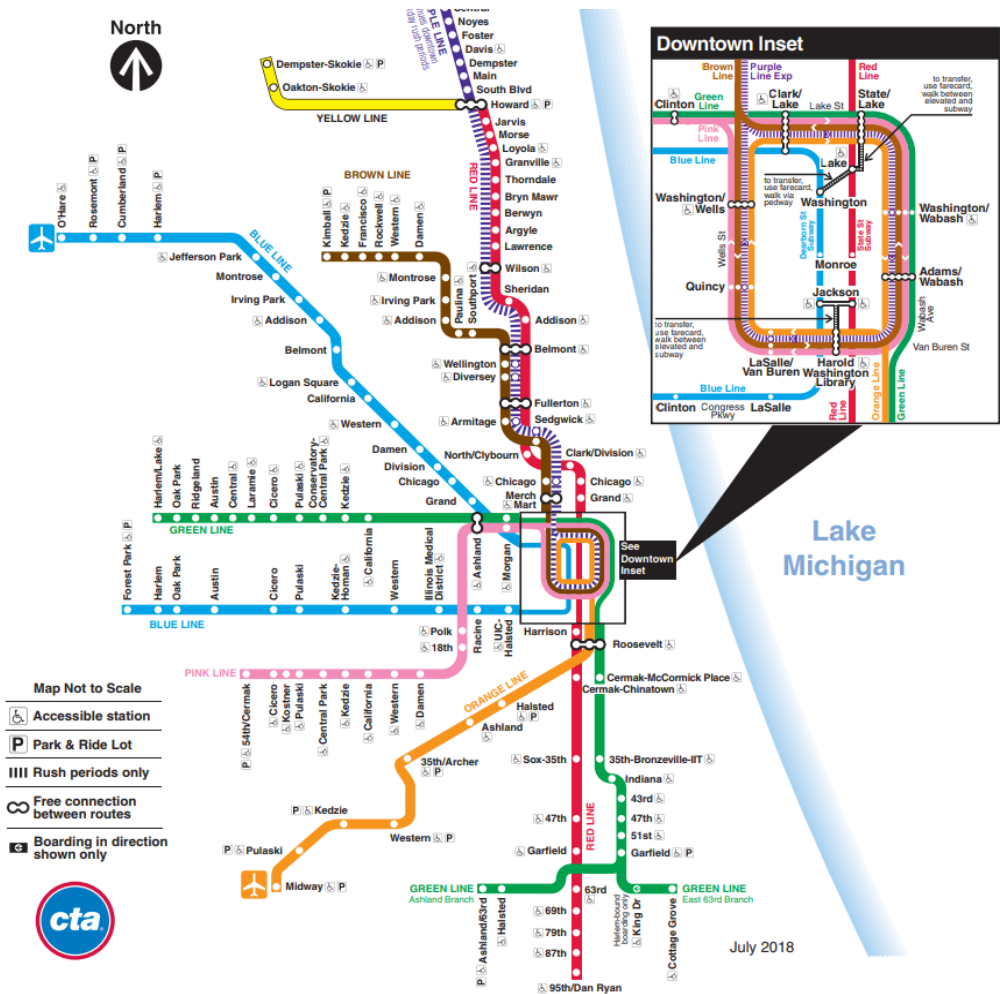
Chief Innovation Officer  
Chicago Transit Authority  
Chicago, IL

Molly joined the Chicago Transit Authority in 2019 as the Agency's first Chief Innovation Officer. She is responsible for leading the development, launch and management of new strategic initiatives, including customer communications tools, fare payment and fare collection products, technology tools, and public-private partnerships. Molly is leading development of the Agency's strategic response plan to the COVID-19 pandemic and developing tools and initiatives that will help to re-build rider confidence in public transit. Prior to joining the CTA, she spent 7 year working in various roles within State government, including Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Development.



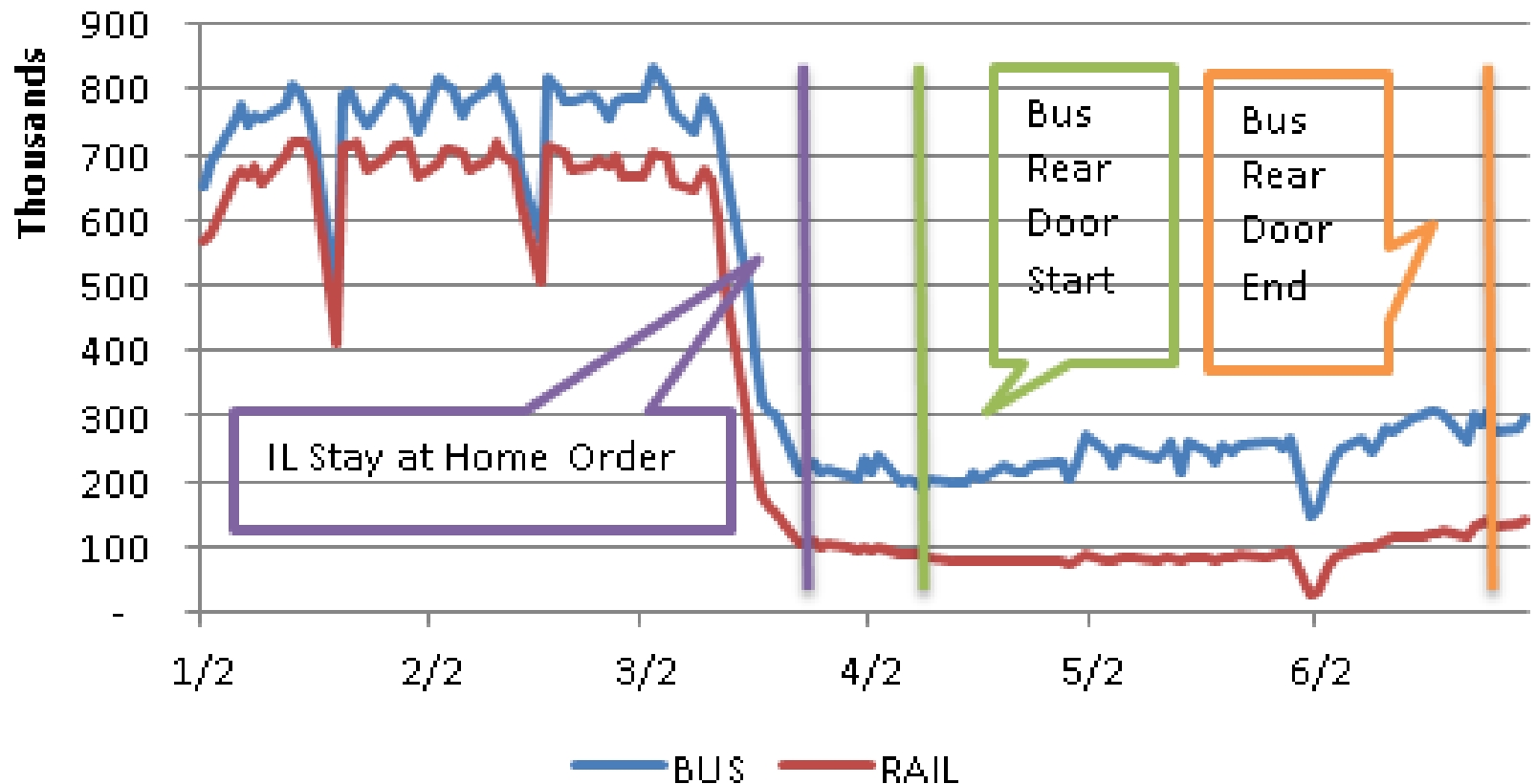
## Agency Characteristics and Services

- Nation's second largest transit agency
- Serves the City of Chicago and 35 surrounding suburbs
  - Over 120 bus routes serviced by 1,800 buses
  - 8 train lines, elevated, subway and at grade
  - 145 rail stations and over 1,400 rail cars
- Prior to COVID-19, provided nearly 1.5 million rides each weekday



# Impacts of COVID-19

## Daily Weekday Ridership - 1/1/20 to 6/30/20



# Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Riders

- CTA's Bus Crowding Dashboard is an interactive, responsive website that puts recent information on bus ridership in our customers hands
- Customers can view crowding by route by hour and identify the best times to ride to avoid crowds



## Historical Bus Crowding Dashboard

Route Selection(s)

9 - Ashland - North

9 - Ashland - South

X9 - Ashland Express - North

X9 - Ashland Express - South

8 - Halsted - North

(+3 others)



Select a schedule type:

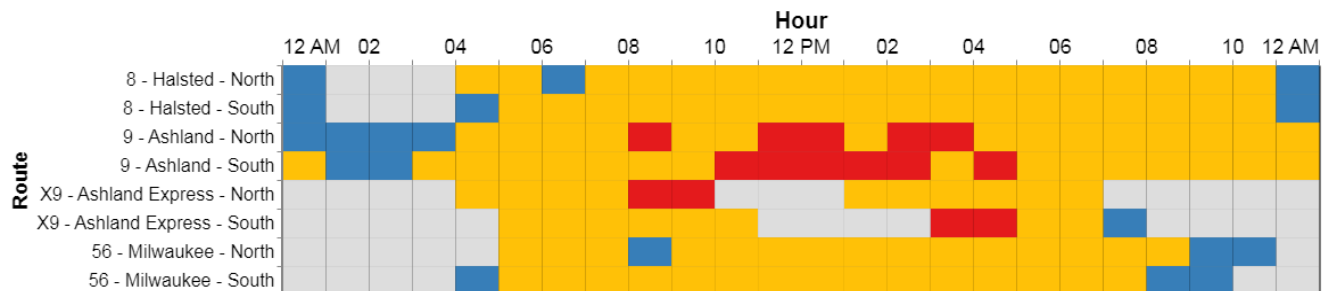
☒ Weekday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday

☐ No Data/No Service

☒ Low Ridership

☒ Medium Ridership

☒ High Ridership



Crowding data from 7/11/2020 - 7/26/2020 using CDC recommended capacity (15 passengers for 40 foot bus, 22 for 60 foot bus). Less crowded conditions exist on portions of every route.



**Francis Julien**

Deputy CEO

Regional Transportation  
Commission of Southern  
Nevada

Las Vegas, NV

Francis joined the RTC in November 2019 and leads a range of departments, including:

- Fixed Route Transit
- Paratransit and Specialized Services
- Human Resources
- Safety & Security
- Technical Equipment
- Fleet
- Transit Amenities and Customer Care.

He also manages a budget of more than \$367M annually. Prior to RTC, Francis served as VP of Western Region Operations for Keolis Transit America.



# RTC Services



**Transit**



**Transportation  
Planning**

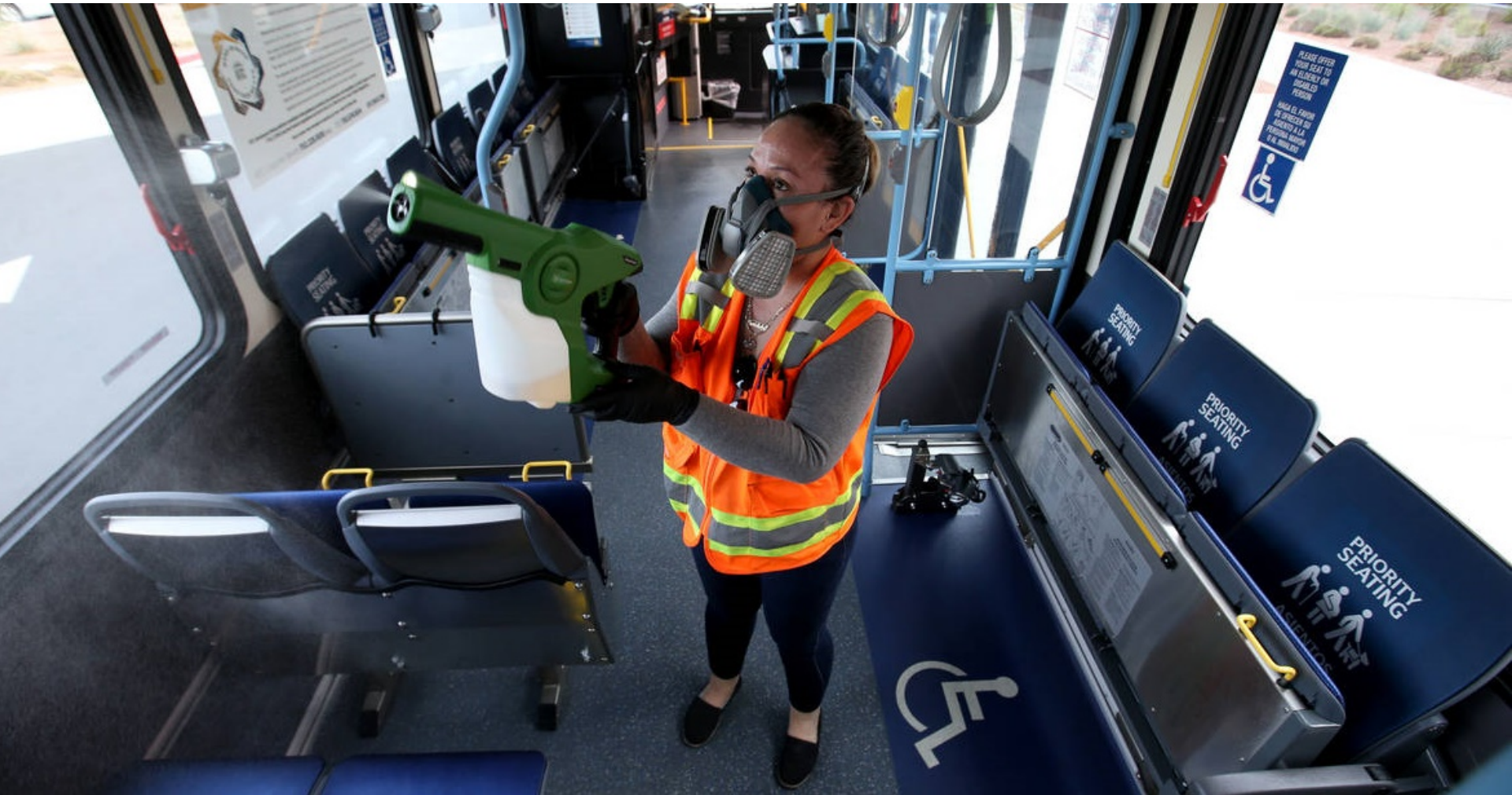


**Roadway  
Funding**



**Traffic Management**

# Impacts of COVID-19



# Supporting the Health, Safety, and Confidence of Riders

## 1 FACE COVERINGS



Don't have one? We've got you covered! Visit the BTC, SSTT, or see a security guard, while supplies last.

## 2 SOCIAL DISTANCING



Keep at least 6ft between you and others.

## 3 VEHICLE CLEANING



We clean all surfaces inside the vehicles daily with hospital-grade disinfectant.

## 4 HIGHER-CAPACITY VEHICLES



We are implementing longer and double deck buses to give you more room.

## 5 MORE BUSES



We're sending out more buses to make sure there's always room for you.

## 6 SOCIAL DISTANCING REMINDERS



We're reminding you to practice safe social distancing with signage.

## 7 CONTACTLESS PAYMENT



Avoid contact and board quicker with just a tap of your phone with the rideRTC app.

## 8 DRIVER ENCLOSURES



All vehicles come with an enclosure for drivers and help provide you with another layer of protection.

## 9 DATA TRANSPARENCY



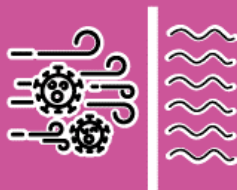
Sharing all of the latest information on how the pandemic is affecting transit on our website.

## 10 HEALTHY WORKFORCE



Our employees and contractors are staying healthy and practicing safe social distancing.

## 11 ION AIR FILTERS



New air filtration that can kill germs and viruses while the vehicle is on the road.

## 12 PASSENGER COUNTS



Passenger count information in real time to assess need for additional buses on the route.

## 13 SANITATION INFORMATION



Up-to-date messages to let you know when the vehicle was last sanitized.

## 14 MICRO-BACTERIAL SHIELDS



Extra layer of protection on all new vehicles moving forward.



# Thank You!

This session has been recorded and a summary will be provided to registered participants.