



COVID-19 UPDATES

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My Fellow MTS Employees:

Please know that there have been two MTS contracted employees that have tested positive for COVID-19. My thoughts and prayers, of course, go out to the families of these First Transit bus operators. These are the first positive cases within MTS and in our extended family of service providers.

We are taking every precaution when an employee or rider tests positive. In this case, only one of the drivers had contact with passengers and fellow employees. The operator did not show any symptoms, and he did not report to work after starting to feel ill. For this case, we are putting notification aboard the bus and information on the website as well. First Transit is taking all precautions with its employees. The other operator had not been working for the previous 10 days and has not been to work since feeling ill and testing positive. And, as you know, all of our vehicles are disinfected every night.

Yesterday, we held a news conference with MTS Chairman and Supervisor Nathan Fletcher to announce the changes in our service that will begin next Monday. If you want to watch it, we've put it on the intranet [here](#). This is what we announced:

- No routes eliminated.
- About a 25% reduction in frequency and span, primarily on the bus side.
- Blue Line will revert to 15-minute service in the off peak hours (maintaining 7.5-minute frequency in the peaks).
- No changes to Green Line and Orange Line.
- No weekend changes.

For a complete list of changes, see the [website](#).

We instituted this change for a couple of reasons: bus ridership is down about 70% and Trolley ridership is down about 65%. So the reduction of 25% of our service acknowledges historically low ridership while allowing our passengers adequate social distancing. It is also an insurance policy in the event we have more bus operator call-outs due to illness. By reducing service and keeping all bus operators on the payroll for a full 40 hours, we will have about 100 operators available at any time to fill in for sick colleagues. I certainly hope that is an insurance policy we never have to cash in.

I want to thank all the bus operators for agreeing to this plan in which operators will drive routes for 32 hours each week and be available for extra shifts for 8 hours a week. Once again, the teamwork we have at MTS is outstanding. This will keep all of our fine operators on board so that as we come out of this crisis, we will be fully staffed to ramp back up quickly.

And I always have to close with how proud I am of our operations. Healthcare workers get a lot of respect – deservedly so – for the incredible work they do. Grocery store clerks meet with hundreds of people a day. But many of our employees are on the same front lines. My sincere gratitude goes out to our bus and Trolley operators, to our line supervisors, to our mechanics, to our facilities and cleaning personnel, and to our security staff. You are all making sure that all the people that need transit – we are still carrying about 100,000 people a day – will have a way to get to the doctor’s office or to the grocery store or to their essential job.

Your work is not going unnoticed among the public. Our social media posts about how we are working to keep riders and passengers safe and healthy generate many comments on what great jobs you do. People know that you are providing a vital, essential service!

I want to applaud other members of the MTS staff as well. We are doing great work under difficult circumstances. Our response to this crisis has been acknowledged locally and throughout the transit industry.

Thank you!