MTA Announces $50 Fine for Refusal to Wear a Mask on Public Transit Takes Effect Today

MTA

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Pursuant to Governor Cuomo's Executive Order Directing MTA to Bolster Mask Compliance, Customers Refusing to Wear Masks While on Subways, Buses, & Commuter Railroads Are Subject to $50 Fine

Hundreds More Join MTA Mask Force to Provide Free Masks to Customers Across the System; Mask Usage Remains High at Above 90% Across Subways, Buses, LIRR and Metro-North

MTA Launches "State of Respect" Campaign to Encourage Universal Mask Usage; New Campaign

Complements Comprehensive Efforts to Increase Public Awareness Through "Operation Respect"

View the New "State of Respect" Campaign (https://www.flickr.com/gp/mtaphotos/F616R8)

View Photos (https://flic.kr/s/aHsmQKL1z5) and Video (https://youtu.be/7yfl7L3sU4o) of MTA Chairman Foye Distributing Masks on NYC Transit

View Photos (https://flic.kr/s/aHsmQKKEGj) and Video (https://youtu.be/yK2Z9AM9Cnk) of MTA Chairman Foye and LIRR President Eng Distributing Masks on LIRR

View Photos (https://flic.kr/s/aHsmQKQ5CY) and Video (https://youtu.be/lcz6suBnJZA?t=296) of News Conference

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) announced that as of today all customers who refuse to wear a mask on public transit will be subject to a $50 fine. The new measure follows Governor Cuomo's executive order directing the MTA to develop a plan to bolster mask compliance across public transit. MTA officials reiterated that the rule is to ensure that customers are adhering to the best possible public health practices and to further improve upon current rates of mask usage, which are already above 90 percent across New York City Transit subways and buses, the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North.

The MTA's Mask Force, comprised of hundreds of MTA employees, elected officials and advocacy groups, also kicked off additional outreach efforts and has made four million free masks provided by the State and City available to customers to-date. Additionally, the MTA launched a new *State of Respect* campaign to remind New Yorkers to wear masks on public transit as a sign of respect towards their fellow New Yorkers and to stop the spread of COVID-19. The art, which will be on display on more than 8,000 digital screens throughout the transit system and on a billboard in Ridgewood, Queens, features a diverse group of New Yorkers wearing a New York State-shaped mask. View the new campaign here. (https://www.flickr.com/gp/mtaphotos/F616R8)

"The goal is to achieve universal mask compliance," **said Patrick J. Foye, MTA Chairman and CEO**. "This is about saving lives not generating revenue, and we'll work with a range of law enforcement personnel to make sure riders are given every possible opportunity to wear a mask. This is about encouraging safety, not punishment."

"The vast and overwhelming majority of New Yorkers are doing a fantastic job when it comes to maintaining safe distances and wearing masks in the system," **said Sarah Feinberg, Interim New York City Transit President**. "This new policy is intended to give us an additional tool to keep our customers safe."

"Our employees and customers have been doing the right thing with strong mask compliance." **said Phil Eng, LIRR President**. "We need to stay vigilant to ensure that the curve stays flat on Long Island and between the Mask Force, the updates to our TrainTime app that empowers customers to control their commute like never before and unprecedented disinfecting, we are doing all we can to make riders feel comfortable and stay safe when taking mass transportation. We are in this together."

“As we welcome more riders back we want to maintain the high compliance that we are currently seeing**,” said Catherine Rinaldi, President of Metro-North Railroad**. “We have ambassadors at our busiest stations and conductors on board trains who can provide a mask to anyone in need, and there are also PPE vending machines throughout our system. We have made tremendous progress throughout our reopening -- let’s keep it going.”

"Our customers have been incredibly caring and health conscious since the very start of this horrific pandemic," **said Sarah Meyer, New York City Transit Chief Customer Officer**. "But now, with more New Yorkers returning to the system, we need to be even more attuned to public health and make sure that we build on the success we've had thus far. If you need a mask, ask our station attendants for one. We'll take care of you. If you don't want to wear a mask, stay home."

The MTA has filed an emergency rule with the New York Secretary of State allowing a $50 fine for refusal to wear a mask on public transit. A 60-day comment period is in effect, after which the MTA Board will consider the public comments and adopt a final rule. The new rule follows Governor Cuomo’s most recent directive and the nation-leading executive order issued on April 17 requiring all customers and employees to wear a face covering while in the public transit system.

The new enforcement and outreach measures build on the MTA’s ongoing multi-layered strategy to encourage universal mask compliance. More than 600 employees and volunteers joined the MTA’s Mask Force in July and August. The MTA has made four million free masks available to customers since the start of the pandemic. Any customer in need of a mask can ask a station agent, customer ambassador, conductor, or law enforcement officer for assistance.

In July, the MTA also launched a pilot program (http://www.mta.info/press-release/nyc-transit/mta-announces-installation-mask-dispensers-inside-buses-customers-easily) adding free surgical mask dispensers in buses to further protect customers while on board. Today, more than 360 buses across 15 routes are equipped with free mask dispensers. This effort also complements the MTA’s PPE vending machine pilot across New York City Transit, the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North. PPE vending machines equipped with COVID-19 protective gear are located throughout the system.

The *State of Respect* campaign was donated by the Brooklyn-based design agency Conquistadors and Manhattan production studio Versus. Artists from around the world created 12 diverse posters featuring geometric illustrations, collages and cartoons. The pro bono campaign uses the map of New York State telegraphed as a mask, tapping into the strength, connection, and resiliency of New Yorkers in the fight against COVID-19. The artists include New York City-based Hisham Akira Bharoocha, Tom Brolga and

Monique Aimee, along with creators from Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Sydney, Mexico City, Miami, Buenos Aires, Italy and Norway who were inspired by New York's fight against the virus.

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