

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 23, 2020

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**Tri-State Transportation Campaign joins National Alliance
In Urgent Call to Action by the White House:
Transit Workers Need Better Protection From COVID-19**

Tri-State Transportation Campaign and a broad alliance of labor, business, and community advocates demand White House and CDC supply better protective equipment and guidance to safeguard the transit workforce who ensure other essential workers can provide medical care, food, security, janitorial support, and basic necessities.

Today, Tri-State Transportation Campaign joined dozens of unions, business groups, economic justice organizations, and local transit advocates from across the nation requesting Vice President Mike Pence and Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, strengthen federal coordination to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for transit workers.

As of this week, the coronavirus has claimed the lives of more than 100 transit workers in the United States, 83 members of the MTA have died and more than 2,400 have tested positive for COVID-19. NJ Transit has lost three staff, including Raymond Kenny, head of rail.

The federal government can and must take stronger steps to prevent such loss of life.

Bus and train operators, maintenance workers, and cleaning staff at transit agencies in the tri state region are putting their lives on the line as they enable essential travel and ensure the continued provision of food, medical care, and other basic goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without strong federal coordination to procure PPE for transit workers, they face needless risks on the job.

Based on guidance from infectious disease experts, Tri-State Transportation Campaign demands consistent provision of N95 masks, gloves, and other protective gear for frontline transit workers whose duties put them in close proximity to passengers, or require exposure to hazardous disinfectants. Tri-State Transportation Campaign. urges the CDC to issue stronger guidance for the MTA, NJ Transit, PATH and other transit agencies, including recommendations on how to

ventilate transit vehicles to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission and whether protective barriers should be installed for drivers on buses.

These measures must be put in place to protect the transit workforce, which in turn will strengthen the overall effort to control the pandemic and minimize the spread of COVID-19. Nearly 3 million Americans classified as essential workers typically commute on transit, according to a TransitCenter analysis of U.S. Census data, a majority of whom are in the tri state region.

Protective gear for transit workers will have a strong multiplier effect, since reducing risk will increase the availability of the transit workforce, leading to greater provision of transit service, less crowding on transit vehicles, and lower rates of transmission among transit riders and thus the general population.

The alliance signing on to the letter reflects the broad public interest in protecting transit workers, encompassing labor, business, transportation, economic justice, environmental, and community-based organizations from dozens of states.

Supply chain issues affect every industry seeking protective gear. However, the need for transit workers is so urgent, and the consequences of further delay so dire, that federal action must be pursued as soon as possible. **These protections will save the lives of transit workers, as well as the lives of nurses, doctors, food distribution workers, and other essential workers who rely on transit.**

“Pat Foye, Chair of the MTA, shared the devastating news that 83 workers for the MTA have now died of COVID-19. Saturday, we lost Raymond Kenney, head of the NJ Transit rail division. More than 2,400 MTA workers have tested positive. Now is the time to act. We call on the White House to issue strict safety guidelines for transit workers as well as to coordinate a rapid and aggressive operation to facilitate getting the necessary PPE to this highly vulnerable population of the essential workforce.”

Founded in 1993, Tri-State Transportation Campaign is dedicated to reducing car dependency in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC has four main priorities: fixing our commutes, meeting our climate goals, stopping traffic deaths, and making transportation fair. Learn more at www.tstc.org

The full letter, including list of recommendations and signatories, is attached.

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