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Chicago Transit Authority

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To our Elected Officials and Community Leaders:

At the Chicago Transit Authority, the safety of our employees and riders is our first priority. Governor Pritzker's designation of public transit as an essential service during the stay-at-home order is the latest reminder of the critical role that CTA's employees play in ensuring people have a way to access the resources they need.

Every day since the COVID-19 pandemic began, CTA's workers have remained steadfast in carrying the people that need us – including essential employees such as health care workers, emergency responders, and grocery store employees – across the region, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Despite our ridership losses from the COVID-19 pandemic, each day CTA continues to carry hundreds of thousands of riders, including seniors and other transit dependent riders accessing essential services. This is more total riders than many other major cities carry under normal circumstances.

Given the critical role that CTA's employees play in getting the region through this crisis, it is imperative that CTA's employees are protected and supported during this time. For this reason, CTA has taken extensive measures to make sure employees have what they need.

First and foremost, CTA continually coordinates with local, state and federal health experts as relates to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The health professionals at the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) continue to provide guidance that CTA follows daily. Every decision that CTA has made with regards to our workplace environment during this period has been in consultation with CDPH and in lockstep with their guidelines on proper cleaning practices and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, CTA already had one of the most rigorous and extensive cleaning schedules in the transit industry – and now, we are doing even more. Our railcars, buses, stations and work facilities are cleaned and disinfected throughout each day and receive deeper cleanings nightly and on a regular basis. All of the cleaning products used by CTA are products that have been reviewed and approved by CDPH for use during the COVID-19 outbreak. CTA has informed the public and its employees about these cleaning practices via a website dedicated to describing CTA's efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, which we encourage you to visit if you have not already: <https://www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/>.

By maintaining a robust service schedule, CTA allows our riders to practice social distancing from one another and from our operators. CTA has also actively promoted social distancing on trains and buses, placing signs on every vehicle and on digital screens throughout the rail system to influence customer behavior. Wherever it is possible to do without limiting access to seats for disabled customers on our buses, CTA has roped off seats near the operator to provide a proper distance between operators and customers. Likewise, CTA requires social distancing at all work facilities, both by adjusting the environment in common areas and posting signage in areas where employees often gather.

CTA has provided all of its employees with gloves and hand sanitizer and has distributed extensive information to all work locations about COVID-19 and the best practices recommended by city, state and national health experts. We will continue to follow CDC and CDPH guidance around proper PPE. With regards to their work environment, while operating our trains, rail operators are in entirely enclosed operating cabs at the front of the train. For our bus operators, CTA has ensured that the buses out on the street during this pandemic are

ones that are equipped with a protective shield that creates a barrier between the bus operators and their riders. For our rail station attendants, they are conducting their work out of enclosed kiosks in our stations. Additionally, CTA is closely monitoring ridership levels throughout the system to ensure that, where we are seeing substantial ridership on our buses where space may become limited, we are targeting the deployment of additional buses to spread out customers.

With regards to sick employees, consistent with guidance given to us by CDPH, we have constantly advised sick employees to not come to work and to stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms. If an employee reports to work and appears to have COVID-19 related symptoms, or if that employee becomes ill at work, that employee is immediately removed from service and sent home. If we are notified that an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, we follow CDC and CDPH guidelines and act immediately to notify those fellow employees who had close contact with that employee (the CDPH defines “close contact” as being within 6 feet of someone for 10 minutes or more). We direct the employee’s close contacts to remain at home with pay for 14 days from the date of last contact. They are instructed to contact a medical provider and notify the CTA if they too develop symptoms. CTA also posts a notice in the work location advising employees that a co-worker tested positive and to take proper precautions. In every communication we have with employees about COVID-19, we reiterate CDPH’s guidance and also remind them of the City’s Coronavirus website (www.chicago.gov/coronavirus), which is constantly being updated and which provides directions on who should be tested for COVID-19.

Also, in accordance with CDPH guidelines, if equipment used by the employee has not already been cleaned as a result of CTA’s current rigorous cleaning schedule, it will be removed and cleaned immediately. In addition, the work location’s bathrooms, training room, clerk area and any other area the employee accessed also are cleaned. Special attention is paid to frequently touched surfaces throughout facilities, and as is the case with all of our cleaning practices, it is conducted using products that have been approved by CDPH for use during the COVID-19 outbreak.

CTA also has taken multiple steps to support its employees during this unprecedented time, including support for all workers who must take time off for illness or self-quarantine. While CTA has traditionally negotiated sick pay and other provisions as part of our collective bargaining agreements with our union-represented employees, we have voluntarily expanded this coverage to ensure no employee goes without pay, going well beyond the provisions of the current collective bargaining agreement.

We have also expanded access to health care services through our designated medical services provider, allowing employees without CTA healthcare coverage—including participants in our Second Chance program—to visit our provider for COVID-19-related illnesses. Additionally, we’ve expanded access to telehealth services, and have a comprehensive Employee Assistance Program offering free, 24/7 professional support and assistance for all employees.

Please know that the health and welfare of our riders and our workers will remain our No. 1 priority as we work each day to help carry Chicago through this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,



Dorval R. Carter, Jr.
President, Chicago Transit Authority