

Regional Transportation District  
District D Director Jeff Walker  
May 4, 2020

Pauletta Tonilas:

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us for this special live telephone town hall meeting hosted by the Regional Transportation District, also known as RTD. I'm Pauletta Tonilas, Assistant General Manager of Communications for RTD, and I'll be your moderator this evening as we talk about the latest of how RTD is addressing COVID-19. We're also here to talk about anything else that you'd like to bring up with RTD, anything going on at RTD. We welcome you to the call tonight and hope this finds you healthy and safe in your home. Joining me this evening is Jeff Walker, RTD director for District D. Also sitting in on the call to answer your questions are Michael Ford, Chief Operations Officer, Mike Meader, Chief Security Officer, and Moe Sullivan, Service Planner and Scheduler. Now we're here to listen to you folks and to answer your questions. Your thoughts do mean something for us. We're here for you. This is all about you. It's your chance to ask all of us here on the line from RTD anything you'd like about RTD, whether it be how we're addressing COVID-19 or anything else.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Now if this is your first time on a telephone town hall meeting, here's how it works. To ask a question or provide us with a comment, all you have to do is just press \*3 on your keypad and you'll be transferred to someone who will take down some basic information and get you in the queue. Then we just ask you to stay on the line, listen in on the conversation, and when I call your name, you then ask your question live. Keep it brief. We want to get to as many of you as possible. Again, if you would like to get in the queue to ask us a question, just press \*3 on your keypad, that's \*3, and we'll get you in the queue.

Pauletta Tonilas:

It is now my pleasure to introduce RTD Director Jeff Walker for District D. That is your RTD District. Director Walker, thank you so much for being on the line with us tonight and taking time out of your evening. It's great to have you on the call and to hear what you have to say to introduce us in this call about COVID-19.

Jeff Walker:

Thank you. It's great to be here. I wish it were under different circumstances, but it's always good to hear what people have to say and what questions they have. Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us this evening. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all of our lives. As RTD upholds its core value of safety, it is especially important during these difficult times that we focus on keeping our passengers and employees safe and healthy. Excuse me. RTD provides a vital service and is a lifeline to many people in the community as it is extremely evident now. It's crucial that we continue operating for the public that relies on us. We are in close contact and cooperate with state, regional, local authorities about best practices, safe operations and communication with the public. RTD public transit is critical infrastructure, continues to operate for essential travel. Essential travel includes trips for groceries, to get necessary health care and medication, or to reach an essential job. Essential workers in health care, public safety, food production and distribution, utilities and government operations rely on RTD daily.

Jeff Walker:

We need everyone's help to keep the transit system safe, so please, please, don't take unnecessary trips. Please limit time spent in RTD stations to 10 minutes. That's just to reduce the probability of spreading the infection or the virus. As often as possible, keep a distance of six feet, at least six feet,

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between yourself and other passengers, as much as possible. There is a lot to cover tonight. We are here to answer your questions. Miss Tonilas, back to you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Director Walker. That is Jeff Walker, RTD Director for District D. You're listening to a live telephone town hall meeting hosted by the Regional Transportation District. If you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question, please press \*3 on your keypad and then just wait for your name to be called. We're going to go up to Desiree first. Desiree, you're first in the queue, so go ahead and ask your question.

Desiree:

Thank you so much for your time. Pretty much I am taking the transit right now. I am an essential employee. I do find that when I'm on the bus, there are certain people that are not wearing their masks and sometimes cough without covering or anything like that. I just feel that those that are trying to stay safe and all, we should not be exposed to those that are not really taking it seriously, so if maybe we could ban people that are not wearing masks somehow. They do need to learn their lesson, that if they want to get on the transit, they need to wear them.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Desiree, thank you so much. You're absolutely right about that. I will just add a couple of comments. Then I'll bring in Director Walker to talk about the importance of wearing masks. What a lot of this comes down to is our own personal responsibility and us doing our part to be safe. That's for us to be safe and for us to provide safety of those around us. We are urging our riders to wear masks. There are some jurisdictions that have put out a mask order or a face covering order. Because RTD is a Regional Transit District and we cover eight counties with 40 cities, it does become a challenge for us to enforce this. What we're doing is the best we can to urge people to wear masks. We have our operators wearing masks or face coverings. Director Walker, this is where it really is up to all of us to step up, right?

Jeff Walker:

Yeah, that's exactly right. All of us have a responsibility. It's not just one entity. We rely on our passengers, our customers to also take a role in that safety. Right now on the buses we're not having ... Most of our passengers at least board through the front, so there's not a very good way for our operator to monitor that. Even if the operator could, they have other safety considerations, so they won't be forcing people to put on masks. We're hoping that everybody out there takes the precautions necessary to keep all of us safe. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks very much, Director Walker. I am going to ask Mike Meader, who is our Chief Security Officer, to chime in here to tell us about some of the other safety measures that we have in place and we're asking people to be our partners in safety. Mike.

Mike Meader:

Sure. Pauletta, thank you. This is Mike Meader. I'm the Chief Safety and Security Officer at RTD. As Pauletta and Director Walker both mentioned, we really are relying on everybody. Safety is everybody's

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responsibility to do the things that are going to keep themselves and others safe and healthy. Internally we are doing all of these things. We're trying to certainly set the example to keep our employees safe and our passengers safe from that perspective. We're constantly talking with public health agencies every single day pretty much and coordinating our efforts in that regard, reminding our employees how important it is to practice social distancing, trying to maintain that six-foot distance. I encourage everybody to do that, wherever they are. Having our employees monitor obviously their own health, and if they're feeling ill, to stay home and make sure that we keep any kind of a possibility of illness limited and isolated to those homes if someone is feeling bad. Of course people who can work remotely, we're having them work remotely as well.

Mike Meader:

We do have plenty of supplies now, although supply lines are still a little bit inconsistent. We're distributing supplies, face masks, hand sanitizer, wipes, gloves, and those kinds of things to our front line employees, and of course requiring all of our employees to wear face coverings while they're on duty or on RTD property, to make sure that they're safe. Also providing daily COVID updates to all the employees, Pauletta, the board of directors, all of the leadership in the union, making sure that everybody understands the latest information and what they can continue to do to keep everybody safe.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Mike. That's Mike Meader, our Chief Safety and Security Officer. If you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question, folks, just press \*3 on your keypad. We're going to go up next to Linda. Linda, you're next in the queue. Go ahead.

Linda:

Hi. I have I guess a two-part question. Number one, what will RTD do to encourage us when everyone is back out driving to instead ride RTD and leave our cars at home? Then the second part is when will RTD be going to all electric buses?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much for that, Linda. For the first part of that is what will we do to encourage people to hop back on board, that's a great question. What I will do is put in a plug for our online survey. Just today we launched an online survey where we are asking people some of these very questions, because we want to check in with our riders on have they been using our system, when they think they might plan to hop back on board, and what will make it feel more comfortable for people to ride RTD when things start getting back open and people start moving around the region more. We invite you to go to our website to take our survey, and that will help us. I think Director Walker, I would ask you too to give some thoughts. How do we get people back on RTD? With people being worried about their own safety, and sometimes you're on buses or trains, and we have had a great history of having some of those buses and trains very crowded, so what do we do to get people enticed to come back on board?

Jeff Walker:

Number one is people need to have a place to go. That could be to a park or to a restaurant, movies, whatever. When those facilities start opening up again, then I believe that we'll see a comfort level that will bring people back to the service. Now those are things that we can't control. Things we can control

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are making sure that our buses are clean, so that is one less thing that our customers have to worry about. All of our vehicles and facilities are being cleaned daily in accordance with public health recommendations from the CDC, Center for Disease Control, and state and local public health providers.

Jeff Walker:

For the current time we've switched to rear-door boarding and exiting on most buses, as well as suspended fare collection, to provide greater distance between our operators and our customers. We put plastic chains between our operators and ... Actually it's behind the wheelchair securement area in the back of the bus, to maintain that distance with our operators.

Jeff Walker:

Operators are calling dispatch when they see buses becoming crowded so that we'll be able to better maintain that social or physical distance of at least six feet. We're trying to limit the number of people per bus, the 40-foot buses without the accordion in the middle, to about 15 people. 20 people for the larger buses, the articulated buses, the ones that have the accordion in the middle, and then 30 people per light rail train car. That's each car, or each vehicle in the consist.

Jeff Walker:

We are deploying our resources when possible to provide additional buses on routes experiencing larger loads, so like the 15 or zero, 16, some of our more popular routes, we're calling in backups if a bus driver has to pass up people because they can't maintain those standards of 15, 20, or 30 people. I guess it's only 15 and 20 for the buses. There's also continued need for the community's help, like I said before. We're all in this together, but we all have to take some measure of responsibility and we all have to take some measure of effort.

Jeff Walker:

As far as electric buses go, I don't know when we'll have a full fleet of electric vehicles. There are still some kinks that are being worked out, some bugs that need to be worked out, as with any new technology. We do have 36 buses on the mall right now. We thought we'd be able to put those out on the street in regular service, like the 15 or the zero, any one of our routes, but there are some physical problems with them, meaning the curb. The height of the curb in Denver is about four or five, six inches, and the height of the bus doesn't match up right. There are some other things that need to be taken into consideration. We're not quite there yet. There are a few smaller systems that have electric vehicles, all-electric fleets, but they're very small systems. We have about 1,000 buses, close to 1,000 buses in our fleet. We need to make sure that we can handle that size of an electric fleet before we put that in service. My answer is I don't know yet, but I'm sure our staff are looking into that, because there are a lot of benefits, but right now the technology isn't there for the full fleet to be there, but we can do that for special services like the mall ride. I hope that answers your question. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Walker. I will ask Michael Ford, who's our Chief Operations Officer. Michael, is there anything you'd like to add about electrification of our bus fleet?

Michael Ford:

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Thank you, Pauletta. No, I think Director Walker covered it pretty well. We are looking into some electric vehicles right now. We've got a group that has been monitoring and studying this between planning and operations. There's about available 18 buses that we may be able to secure that are electric. As Director Walker pointed out, we have to look at the infrastructure of our facilities to make sure they can accommodate electric buses, in addition to battery life and other issues that we're currently exploring. Again, we don't have a timeline right now, but we are actively engaged in discussions and evaluations and analysis of all these electric vehicles and the types. One of the biggest concerns is the battery life and that that vehicle can interline with different routes that we have and it has the longevity for the necessary battery life to do that and be a productive route. Again, we are exploring those opportunities right now and really thank you for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. That's Michael Ford, RTD's Chief Operations Officer. We're going to go next to Ann. Ann, go ahead.

Ann:

I used to live in Colorado Springs, and I had a card, because I'm disabled, to get the low-end discount or get a discount monthly pass. How do I go about that?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Great. Actually, very timely that you asked that. We just last July launched a new discounted pass program that we called the LiVE Program. The LiVE Program is an income-based fare product where you have to apply through the State system, through the State PEAK system. Then if you meet the criteria, you are able to get a card, proof of eligibility, and you're able to get a 40% discount from the regular RTD fare. I would ask you to, if you want to learn more about that, you can call our customer care number. This is our telephone information center. The number is 303-299-6000. Again, 303-299-6000. That is our customer care center that can answer any of your questions about RTD, but they can also put you in touch with the information of how to apply for the LiVE Program. We're happy to offer that to folks. We're going to go next to Floyd. Floyd, go ahead.

Floyd:

Hi. Can you connect me to any of that useful information you just had on tape?

Pauletta Tonilas:

The information that I gave on the telephone information center's phone number?

Floyd:

I'm a 63-year-old man in a wheelchair with a disability. I want to know that I can go up to my bus and go to the store and buy some groceries.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, sir, absolutely. I will bring in Michael Ford, who's our Chief Operations Officer. Michael, you can talk about our Access-a-Ride service and something special even that this gentleman might be able to take advantage of.

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Michael Ford:

Thank you very much, Pauletta. Sir, I want to get your information after the call. We do have services that are going to the stores and be able to get food and supplies for you. That started almost about a month or so ago. We do have that kind of service depending on where you live. You're probably not on the line right now. Do you know if you're already a para-transit customer or not?

Floyd:

[crosstalk 00:18:40].

Michael Ford:

I'm sorry?

Floyd:

I've been in my wheelchair for six years and I've never had any problem from trying to wheel myself up the street six blocks to the bus stop to go down to the store for one or two drops off the bus. I could fill my backpack up and a couple of bags on the back of my wheelchair. It takes me three hours to do that. Six, six, so 12 blocks. It takes me two hours to get 12 blocks and back again.

Michael Ford:

I think the best thing that we could probably do right now is get your vital information and see how we could better accommodate you. If you're just taking a fixed route, you may be eligible for our para-transit services. Our para-transit services now are providing accommodations to get people food and other essentials. I think there might be some opportunity there. We just need to get a little bit more information from you. I think after the conclusion of this call, we'll get that information and I'll have somebody contact you tomorrow to see how we can better help you. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. If you'd like to get in the queue, press \*3 on your keypad. We're going to go next to Raul. Raul, go ahead.

Raul:

Hello?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, sir. Go ahead. Yes, go ahead and ask your question, Raul. Raul, are you there on the line with us? I wonder if we lost him. Let's go next to Dean. Dean, go ahead and ask your question.

Dean:

What I'm interested in is the air conditioning on both the buses and the trains, if it's interior only or exterior only or optional.

Pauletta Tonilas:

About the air conditioning units. Michael, do you want to answer that question?

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Michael Ford:

My understanding, it's interior, the air conditioning filtration. Is there more to your question? Just wanted to understand that a little bit more completely.

Pauletta Tonilas:

I think he dropped off the line, Michael. I almost was wondering if he was wondering if it's optional that you use the air conditioning or if it automatically maybe kicks on. It is optional, right? The operators can turn the air conditioning on and off as necessary, right?

Michael Ford:

That is correct, depending on the conditions and the needs of the passenger and the driver, they can have some options there, for sure.

Pauletta Tonilas:

He might be getting to the filtration and the moving around of air and whether or not that is safe. Have you guys thought about that, Michael, about using the air conditioning units or maybe not during this time?

Michael Ford:

We're taking every precaution not to encourage or create more problem producing situations. I don't believe the air conditioning as we know it right now has been a problem or impediment regarding the virus at this point. We will continue to monitor and study. I don't know if Mr. Meader might have any more information on that from the CDC, but that's my understanding at this point.

Mike Meader:

This is Mike Meader, the Chief Safety and Security Officer. I think one of the things Raul might be getting at, I saw on a piece I was reading today, they were comparing basically an airline HVAC system versus a bus. Airlines are completely internal. They just recycle the interior air. The question was are buses like that. Buses actually you can choose to recycle air or you can choose to have the air come from the outside, so your exterior air's going to be pulled in and used as the cooling and heating system. That may be what he's getting at. Yes, the bus driver can select that. As far as the movement of air, the CDC does recommend that buses have the option of opening windows, moving the air through the bus, recycling, replacing the air from the exterior as a safety precaution as well, just to keep the air less stale. Hopefully that answers your question, Raul.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Great information, guys. Thank you very much for jumping in on that. We're going to go to Gene next. Gene, go ahead.

Gene:

Thank you for taking my question. My question is regarding the workers, the drivers, the bus drivers, train drivers safety, what has been planned. You mentioned personal protective equipment, etc., and the quality of those PPEs. Also front line workers, what is the plan for the frequent testing of those people? If they contract it, then you know, etc.? Thank you.

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Pauletta Tonilas:

Mike Meader, our Chief Security and Safety Officer, Mike, you want to go ahead and answer Gene's question?

Mike Meader:

Sure. Thanks for the question, Gene. We are providing all of the operators with face coverings for them to wear and requiring that they wear them any time they're operating any of the vehicles or on the vehicle. We're also providing hand sanitizer. We have plenty of that in stock. Wipes, so that they can wipe down their area, their actual work area, the steering wheel and the machine's equipment that they use up front between shifts, so that they can make sure that that's as clean as they can possibly get it. We're also, as Michael Ford I think, or Director Walker also mentioned, we've cordoned off the front end of the bus and we're boarding from the rear, so that avoids that interaction with people walking by or stopping to talk and ask questions to the operator at this time. Of course we've suspended fare in order to allow that to happen. We are taking all of those precautions.

Mike Meader:

As far as your second question goes, the testing, we're just getting to the point now with the amount of tests that are coming into the state, where some of the essential worker groups beyond first responders in the medical community can get tested. We're actually waiting to hear this week when there may be enough tests so that we can test our operators, our front line employees, and make sure that none of them have actually contracted the virus, so hopefully very soon. Thanks for the question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Mike. That's Mike Meader, our Chief of Safety and Security. Going to go right next to Paul. Paul, go ahead.

Paul:

Hi. Last year, you guys, two things. I live in the Prairie Valley area, and the 30 bus doesn't go downtown as much as it used to. Then also last year I paid \$500 for a bus pass, a discount card to be mailed to me. Now I work at a King Soopers, so I can buy it at King Soopers. Why did you cancel that? Why are you closing down buses, like the 30 going downtown, when I could use it to go downtown in one ride? Then on the way back from downtown I have to take the rail bus and then one or two buses just to get home from there. That's my two questions.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you so much, Paul. Sorry for the difficulty with changing up your transit trip. I am going to pull in Moe Sullivan, who is one of our service planners and schedulers. Moe, can you answer that question for Paul?

Moe Sullivan:

Yes. Hi. Thanks, everyone, for calling in. I'm a service planner and scheduler with RTD. Thanks for the question, Paul. The 30 bus right now under our COVID plan, as many of you know, we reduced service on April 19th. What that service looks like now is it's a Saturday schedule for all of the buses, with some modifications. We added in some routes that don't normally run on the weekends, because we knew

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there would be gaps if there were essential workers trying to get to their jobs. Then our rail service is running on a Sunday schedule. As a result, the 30 bus is at an hourly frequency right now. That's because that's when it normally runs on the weekend. By reducing the service, we gained flexibility in dispatching operators to cover routes that are busier and where people can't practice safe social distancing. It also makes it so we don't have as many operators out on the road and potentially being exposed. Unfortunately, we did have to reduce service to be able to do that during these times. That was the result with the 30 bus.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Moe. I will say, Paul, your other question about your discounted pass and what happened there, what we can do is take down your name and number and we'll have someone get back to you related to the discount pass. We're going to go up next to Shiloh. Shiloh, go ahead.

Shiloh:

Hello, everybody! How you doing?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Hello, Shiloh.

Shiloh:

I thought I'd put a little [merf 00:29:37] into it. My first suggestion is that maybe you could put a Mylar curtain that could be pulled up or down for the driver, between driver and the customers. That way he can see what's going on and not really be having say the circulation and the air from their lungs.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you for that, Shiloh. Go ahead. You have another one?

Shiloh:

Also, why can't we have hand sanitizer dispensers on the bus for the customers?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Shiloh, great.

Shiloh:

One more thing.

Pauletta Tonilas:

That's two great questions. Go ahead. Did we lose Shiloh? Two great questions. I'm going to ask Mike Meader to address the one about the hand sanitizer on the vehicles first, and then Michael Ford, Michael, you can answer the other one about ... I can't even remember what it was. I'm sorry about that. Mike, why don't you go ahead and jump in on the sanitizer?

Mike Meader:

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Shiloh, thanks for the question. We'd love to be able to provide that. In fact, we're hoping that sometime in the not too distant future we'll be able to do that as far as the hand sanitizer goes. It's just simply a matter of supply and demand at the moment. Everyone in the world is competing for that product. It's taking some time obviously for them to get that back into the supply chain in containers that would make it easy for that to be dispensed on the buses. Of course there's always the issue of coming up with the best way to do that. With the rear door boarding, it's very difficult obviously to monitor and maintain and see exactly what's out there and in there and where it would be mounted. We're hoping that once the supply chain gets a little better, and of course at some point we're going to be moving back to that front door boarding of the buses, hopefully we'll have something available for you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

That second question I guess was the first question he asked, Michael, was about a Mylar curtain or something. We have been looking at different barriers between the operator. Do you want to touch on that?

Michael Ford:

Thank you, Pauletta. We have been looking at different securements and protective equipment around the driver compartment. We're actually doing some testing right now to put up some kind of a shield or I won't even use the word plexiglass or glass coverings to give the driver and the passengers some more protection. We are currently in a mock phase of this right now. We're testing out different vehicles. We have quite a few different vehicles in our fleet. We have some engineers, some designers that have been working on this for the last month or so. We're looking to have some prototypes out. We're also working with some other manufacturers to see what they might have to offer. In the not too distant future we're hoping to be able to have something that we can roll out as an added protection and helping with the social distancing and protecting of our employees as well as our customers. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you very much, Michael. It looks like Raul is back. It sounded like we had lost him earlier. You're up. Go ahead, Raul.

Raul:

Thank you. My question is that the day I supposed to be starting my training for a driver, they told all of us to not get started because of the sickness right now that we are going through. They told us that they're going to call us later on when they're ready for all the [inaudible 00:34:09] I can't remember the name of what we're going through right now. I'm still waiting for, seeing if they're going to call me for getting started [inaudible 00:34:27] I'm a driver for them. I called a couple times, and I've been leaving messages, but they don't answer me. Since I don't know anything about that, so I just wonder when we going to get started the folks, start all the drivers to get started working, or they going to keep us like that to who knows when? This is my question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Raul, thank you so much. It sounds like you were hired for an operator, but you're waiting to be brought in for training. This pandemic virus has changed things up for us for training our operators even. Michael

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Ford could probably touch briefly on the process. While it's a delay, we still intend to move forward. Michael, why don't you share some info on that?

Michael Ford:

Thank you, Pauletta. If we can get your name and contact number on the phone after your call, we can definitely follow up. Obviously with the pandemic we have to limit our class sizes, but it sounds like you've been already contacted, you're just waiting for the date. I think we can probably give you an update where we're at. We're wanting to continue to recruit. It's very, very important to us. We've always been involved in a driver shortage. We want to obviously remedy that by continuing to bring in qualified people for the job. If you can leave your contact number and other information, we can definitely follow up with you and let you know where things stand. The pandemic situation has slowed some of the training and hiring processes slightly. Again, I'm glad to take your name and phone number, and we can get back to you tomorrow. I really appreciate you being patient with us. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Michael. I'll ask Director Walker just to add a little info just on what we have been dealing with over this past year, which is a significant shortage of operators. It has been a challenge for us this past year. Director Walker, do you want to just touch briefly on the challenge we've had, but how we've been making progress?

Jeff Walker:

Yes. I can speak to that a little bit, although it feels like years ago since we've had to have that discussion. For the last several years, since about 2015, is when we started seeing our operator numbers dip down below acceptable levels. Whole bunch of reasons why that happened. We started making progress. We started making efforts to get those numbers up. We increased operator pay. That was outside of the contract. We gave additional funds or additional money for working a split shift, a signing bonus, a \$2,000 signing bonus that was paid out over a certain number of months to help the operator decide to stick around. The job market was just too strong in Denver and around the country, because every agency that I'm aware of had the same scenario of not having enough operators and mechanics. Those are some of the steps that we took to maintain that.

Jeff Walker:

The last and the least favorable one, but when we felt like we were backed into a corner, it was reducing service. That was to have started in May. We went out in the last part of 2019 and the early part of 2020 to get public feedback about what the public wanted that to look like. They could continue to be surprised whether or not a bus showed up or we can have some certainty, even though it might provide some inconvenience, but at least there would be certainty about when that bus or that train would show up. Before we got to implement that in May, coronavirus hit, which drastically reduced our service anyway. Those are some of the measures that we did take, that we plan to take.

Jeff Walker:

As we start to move out of this pandemic lockdown, stay at home, safer at home, and whatever iteration comes next, we plan to start implementing that May service schedule that will be reduced from what we typically see in the summer months. Because we believe we'll have an excess, not an excess of operators, but because we'll have a full complement of operators, we'll be able to send them through

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training like we weren't able to do before, additional training. They'll also be able to provide backup service, like we mentioned earlier on the 15. If social distancing isn't able to be maintained on one particular bus, that operator can call the dispatch or street supervisor and have somebody else come out and pick up the passengers that would otherwise be stranded.

Jeff Walker:

Those are the things that we've done. The scenario now allows us to have a full complement, or at least we're making great strikes to get there. That's what we'll be able to do when we have that. We'll be able to provide some certainty to our customers and able to do some other things to provide a more stable agency for our customers. I hope that answers your question. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you for that, Director Walker. That is Director Jeff Walker, the RTD Director for District D. Now if you'd like to get in the queue to ask us a question or give us a comment, you can do so by pressing \*3 on your keypad and we'll get you in the queue. We're going to go up next to Carmen. Carmen, go ahead.

Carmen:

I have a few questions. I agree with the first lady that ... I think her name was Desiree. I agree with her about the mask issue. I know I've been going on the bus for many years now. I went yesterday on the bus and stuff. I noticed that a lot of people are not wearing a mask. There's a lot of people that are, but some are not.

Carmen:

There's a lot of people that have a bad attitude with the bus drivers. Yesterday I was on the bus, and this lady, the driver, she had the mask on, but the driver, she ... This happened at Decatur Station. She passed the Decatur Station up and she waved out her hand saying the bus is full. It even says on there, "Sorry, bus is full." She passed it up and let the people off. When they were getting off, here comes everybody coming on the bus that was waiting at the Decatur Station. That lady, the driver got mad and said, "You can't come on my bus! It's full! That's why I was going like this!" and stuff. People just started coming on and did not have no respect for the bus driver or anybody that was on there. That was about maybe 20 or over 20 people on that bus. The bus driver just let them on, because she couldn't do nothing. One guy said, "I can come on the bus if I want to come on. You can't stop me," and stuff like that. I was like, "What?" I told that bus driver, "Close the door so other people won't come on." She did close the door. Then there's people that don't have no mask on coming.

Carmen:

My suggestion is that why can't say the bus driver or maybe we can have a guard or something in the bus, and say that if you don't have a mask, you cannot enter the bus, because we don't know if anybody is sick. We can't count. That's what my suggestion is about that.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Carmen, thank you so much for that. These are tough times, and tough things happen during these times. A lot of it is tough for anybody to control. We hope people respect each other. We hope people are respecting the rules, the guidances, the protocols, the orders, but we know that sometimes that

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doesn't happen. Mike Meader, who is our Chief in Safety and Security can speak a little bit to what our limitations are in enforcing these types of things. Mike, would you like to weight in?

Mike Meader:

Sure. Carmen, thank you. You're right. Not everyone is quite as respectful as you certainly appear to be. Again, we continue to encourage people to take some of their own safety, responsibility, and really respect others as well. It is very difficult to enforce these rules. Up until Wednesday of this week, I should say, the mayor is putting in place an order. It is a lawful order that people wear masks any time they're out in public. That includes any time they're at one of our bus stops or stations or riding on one of our vehicles. That said, it's still going to be something that's somewhat difficult to enforce, although the City and the police certainly can do that. We at RTD don't have the resources from a security or policing standpoint to have people on every bus. I certainly wish we did, because it would be a lot easier to enforce that. Absolutely, we're really hoping that people will pay attention to the order that's coming out, will try to respect others, keep themselves healthy, keep others healthy, maintain that distance, certainly put a mask on. I encourage everybody listening right now, please wear a mask for your own health and safety any time you're out in public.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Mike. Thank you, Carmen, for your story and for sharing that with us. We're going to go up next to Robert. Robert, you're in the queue. Go ahead and ask your question.

Robert:

I've been listening to all this. Although my original question was will the drivers be really able to maintain the social distancing rule on the buses, I find that that's been replaced with a concern that anything that it's too hard to do, and it's not safe to take the bus. My comment really, or my interest is that I'm lucky enough to have people and resources to take taxis, where I don't have to ride the bus. I don't intend to do so until at least in June. I'm concerned that there's a social element who doesn't have that liberty.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you for that, Robert. Appreciate you sharing that. I'll ask Director Walker to weigh in. These are all challenging times for all of us. Us putting things into place to the best of our ability is, then the second half of that is hoping that people respect that and participate. Director Walker, would you like to address that?

Jeff Walker:

Yeah, sure. I've been riding the bus here for about 18 years now. Pretty much as soon as I got to Denver I got a bus pass and started riding. My view, this is Jeff Walker's view, is that the bus operator is the captain of that ship. When they see a situation or they're presented with a situation that gives them concern, I've seen this happen a couple times. Riders in Denver, the customers in Denver are phenomenal. They're extremely polite, and most of the time most all of them are extremely respectful and thankful to the bus operators. That operator has the right and the obligation, for the safety of the other passengers on there, to stop that bus, call the street supervisor, and get that situation taken care of. I've seen that happen a couple times when I've been on the bus. In my experience, everybody understands what's going on and why that bus isn't moving. If a bus operator were to have a situation

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that he thinks isn't safe for his passengers or her passengers, then I would expect that operator to call for backup, call for a backup bus, call the street supervisor to come out and help resolve the situation.

Jeff Walker:

That's been my experience from being a bus rider for the last 18 years. That's my position as a director also. I'd support that operator for looking out for the welfare of all of the passengers, not just one who ... Looking out for the welfare of all of the passengers, that's it. Thank you. I hope I answered your question.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Walker. Going to go to David next. David, you're next up. Go ahead.

David:

This is David. I just have a couple concerns. I'm disabled and I use a service animal. My service animal isn't a large breed. I chose to go with a smaller breed. Having to get on the back of the bus, he's for stability and mobility, and having to use the back door, it's been a little complicated to get on the bus. My other concern is I've had a couple of issues with a couple bus drivers not letting me on the bus because of my service animal. He's clearly marked with a service animal vest. I realize there's been issues with people bringing their house pets with them. My concern was this. My service animals are always clearly marked. I guess that's just my concern.

Pauletta Tonilas:

David, thank you very much. Michael Ford, who is our Chief Operations Officer, can address the matter of your service animal. Then of course we'll take your name and number and get back to you with any other specific info about your case. Michael, do you want to go ahead and chime in?

Michael Ford:

I'm sorry to hear about your situation coming through the back door. I'm just wondering if there's some issue where we can maybe better accommodate you through the front door if that's a service animal that you need for obviously real reasons, for needing to navigate. I think there are some things that we might be able to do in that area. I'd like to get a little bit more information from you and follow up. I am sorry to hear about your experience. I think if you got your information, we could work with you to see how we can better handle that. It's not making me feel good that you've gone through that experience. Let's get your information and find out what's going on that route and with the particular operators that you're encountering so we can get this issue addressed. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thanks, Michael. One thing that always does help us is if anyone is having an issue on one of the buses or the trains, we always ask you to call in or email us through our customer care center with the information as best as you can offer, so what's the vehicle number, what time was it, those types of things, so that it can help us track down the information a little bit better. We're going to go to Lynn next. Lynn, go ahead.

Lynn:

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Hello?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yes, Lynn. Go ahead.

Lynn:

I got a question. I'm a retired truck driver of 48 years. I got a discussion with a RTD employee. The drivers, I understand their schedules are four hours on, four hours off, four hours on. In other words, they put in a 12-hour day for an eight-hour shift. I ask around, I says, "What's your shift?" He says, "I work eight hours." I said, "Why don't you work four and four?" He said, "Oh no. Hell no. I couldn't do that." Why is it that operators or the drivers are the only ones that work a split shift? I know some drivers that's laid off that would love to drive a bus, but they say there's no way they're going to put in a 12-hour day to get an eight-hour pay. Hello?

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah, Lynn. Thank you. Yeah, Lynn, thank you. That's a great point. There's definitely an answer to that. I'll ask Michael to weigh in on that. Not everybody does work a split shift like that. Michael, do you want to go ahead and answer his question?

Michael Ford:

Pauletta, I'm sorry, I'm just trying to make sure I got that. It was the issue about the split shifts and how [inaudible 00:52:26].

Pauletta Tonilas:

Yeah. He was saying that it was unfair to have that kind of split shift where they work four hours, they're off four hours, they're on for four, you work 12 hours to actually have an eight-hour shift. Not everybody has a split shift. Do you want to address that a little bit?

Michael Ford:

Yeah. We have different shifts depending on the need and the resources. We normally have high peak demands between 6:00 in the morning and 9:00 and from 3:00 to 6:00. They're designed to really try to address that need at that time. Depending on your seniority and when you start, you typically will probably get a shift like that, unless you get on it for reasons that you would like to work those hours. Again, sometimes it just falls to you because of the level of seniority that you have. We are looking at other issues right now and how we can make the work a little bit more stable and more consistent in terms of operators' quality of life, better serving our customers. I think those are definitely discussions we'll be having in the very near future with our union, just to determine how we can make work more manageable and trying to address some of these gaps that have been really historic in nature. We've had these type of split runs for years. As we look to a new future, as our transit will continue to move forward, we'll have to take those things in consideration. I'm sorry about your situation. Again, there are definite needs for work to be split up that way. Again, as we move forward there might be some other dynamics that come to fruition. I really appreciate the call. Thank you.

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Thanks, Michael.

Jeff Walker:

Pauletta, this is Jeff.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Sure, Jeff, go ahead.

Jeff Walker:

I'd like to say something about that too. I know that work scenario's not ideal for everybody, but I talked to a couple drivers who like that. They get a break during the middle of the day and they get to run errands or just zone out or do whatever they want for that four-hour period. Sometimes the crowds are lower, fewer crowds. Not as many people want the same services, going to the bank or the dry cleaners or whatever. They can get that done during the middle of the day instead of having to rush home before some of the services close, like banks close at 5:00. If they need to do that, they can do that. Doesn't work out for everybody, but I've talked to a few drivers who do like that flexibility, having that big break in the middle of the day where they can take care of stuff that would otherwise have to wait until after normal business hours. It's a good point. That's all. Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Director Walker. We're going to go right to Gene. Gene, you're up next. Go ahead.

Gene:

Thanks for taking my call again. I have a question regarding some kind of a future plan or some idea to work with the university or the state health department or the city health department on how to measure in the bus or train the virus level once in the morning, once in midday, and in the evening, so that can be used for safety reasons in case and also to see the distribution in the city by the state and city officials. If there is a plan, if not, could you consider that? Thank you.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Mike Meader, who is our Chief of Safety and Security. Mike, is there any information that you can offer to answer Gene's question about measuring the air in the buses?

Mike Meader:

Sure. Gene, that's a great suggestion. We do periodically actually do that to just get a sense of what kind of particulates and those kinds of things, particularly around the fact that we're driving around in wintertime with windows up in diesel buses and things like that. As far as your concern, I assume it would be about viral components and those kinds of things. We are looking at some technology as we order new buses, that might help filter the air and keep it cleaner. We're definitely taking a look at that, as we understand it is important.

Pauletta Tonilas:

Thank you, Mike. Folks, we have just about come to the end of our telephone town hall meeting. We thank you for staying on the line with us and for all the great questions and the comments, the ideas.

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Really great to hear from all of you. Again, if you need any information from RTD, you can always call our telephone information center, our customer care center at 303-299-6000 and also check our website [rtd-denver.com](http://rtd-denver.com). We keep our information about COVID-19 updated regularly. I will turn it over to Director Walker to close things out for us tonight. Director Walker.

Jeff Walker:

Thanks. I won't take up a lot of time. I just want to thank all of our staff, our operators, our mechanics, the folks in the customer care center, the police officers, the firefighters, the nurses, the doctors, the folks that clean up the buildings and that we all use the grocery store clerks, the folks that are stocking the shelves and ringing us up. I think this pandemic has shown the importance of everybody, every job and every person who fills those jobs to help us get through this. I have a lot of conversations with my friends about what this world's going to look like, what this country and this city's going to look like when this is done. I'm hoping that it's a lot more respect for the folks who really, really hold things together. Thank you all for joining. If you didn't get your question in, please feel free to email me at [jeff.walker@rtd-denver.com](mailto:jeff.walker@rtd-denver.com). I'll gladly respond to you. If I can't answer it myself, I'll put it on to somebody who can. Thank you for your participation, your interest, and looking forward to things getting back to something stable. Thank you, Paula.