

Port Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (March 12, 2020) - Out of an abundance of caution, growing public concern, and the rapidly increasing number of COVID-19 cases across the nation, Port Authority will immediately begin disinfecting “high touch” surfaces on buses and light rail vehicles every 72 hours. Surfaces inside major transit stations will be disinfected daily.

“High touch” surfaces include poles, pull cords, hand straps, the tops of seats, fare boxes, ConnectCard machines, escalator handrails and elevator buttons. ACCESS service providers will clean paratransit vehicles on a daily basis.

“The safety of our customers and employees is always our top priority, and we are committed to doing what we can until this situation is contained,” said Port Authority CEO Katharine Kelleman.

Increasing the cleaning schedule to once every 72 hours comes in advance of the agency activating its Pandemic Plan. Should Port Authority need to activate its Pandemic Plan, crews will disinfect vehicles on a nightly basis. Like many transit agencies nationwide, Port Authority’s fleet of buses and light rail vehicles are swept nightly and wiped down with a disinfectant cleaner once every 30 days.

“Before making this decision, it was critical for us to make sure that we had the supplies and employees available to keep up,” Kelleman said. “While we’re doing our part to protect the communities we serve, riders are strongly encouraged to follow the personal hygiene tips provided by the Allegheny County Health Department and the CDC to help keep themselves and their fellow riders healthy.”

Hand sanitizing dispensers have been installed at Port Authority's Downtown Service Center, and Steel Plaza, Wood Street, Gateway and North Side stations, with more to be installed once additional supplies are available.

At this time, there are no plans for any changes to Port Authority schedules or service.

Despite recent supply chain issues, the Authority’s Procurement Department has worked diligently to purchase the supplies that are required to disinfect vehicles 10 times more frequently than usual, including extra cans of spray foam disinfectant, bottles of bleach and boxes of gloves.

The Authority has also provided educational materials to employees on proper hand washing procedures. Hand sanitizer will be distributed to public-facing employees as soon as additional quantities are available.

Over the last few weeks, Port Authority updated its Pandemic Plan with COVID-19-specific protocols and formed an internal working group to monitor the spread of the virus and identify ways to contain it, provide information to customers and employees, and ensure the Authority has the resources it needs. This week, the Authority issued a temporary suspension of non-essential employee travel outside Allegheny County and canceled the remainder of its public engagement meetings.

During this time of uncertainty, riders are encouraged to consider purchasing passes of shorter duration or instead buying stored value, which does not expire. Employers who order passes on behalf of their employees are reminded that orders for April can be placed as late as March 25, and riders who purchase recurring passes through Port Authority's website have until March 17 to modify their order.

As of this morning, there have been 118,000 confirmed cases and more than 4,000 deaths attributed to the COVID-19 virus worldwide. And although there are 21 cases in Pennsylvania, there are no presumptive positive cases in Allegheny County.

Riders are again recommended to use common sense hygiene practices to limit the spread of germs and illness, like washing your hands or using hand sanitizer immediately after riding the bus or light rail vehicle; changing your seat if you notice someone near you who appears to be sick; sitting down if possible so you can avoid holding on to poles and straps; and staying home if you are ill.

Port Authority will continue to follow the guidance of public health officials and coordinate with the Allegheny County Health Department on the latest developments.

For the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19, visit www.alleghenycounty.us/coronavirus or sign up for notifications via phone, email or text message by visiting www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts and select COVID-19 under the subscription type.

For updated Port Authority information, please visit www.portauthority.org/coronavirus, follow us on Twitter @pghtransit or call Customer Service at 412-442-2000.

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