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ADMINISTRATION

To: All STA Employees
From: E. Susan Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
Date: March 19, 2020
Re: **N95 Respirator Distribution**

Valued STA Employee:

At today's Board of Directors meeting, I announced that I will authorize the availability of the limited supply of N95 respirators in our possession for use by coach and van operators who believe they are useful to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19. Employees are not required to have or wear a facemask.

This has been a difficult decision. The executive team and I have relied on the clear guidance from leading health authorities regarding the use of protective facemasks, including N95 respirators. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Washington Department of Health (DOH), have all advised that due to the global supply shortage, as well as the limited effectiveness when used improperly, facemasks should be used by those infected with COVID-19 and the healthcare professionals and first responders overseeing their treatment.

We have received additional guidance from the Greater Spokane Emergency Management (GSEM) team and the experts with the Spokane Regional Health Department (SRHD), that we should adhere to the practices outlined by global health experts – not to distribute N95 masks to frontline transit workers.

We have also heard, however, from some of our own employees and their families about their concerns of potential exposure as they deliver an essential service to the public during this pandemic. They are fearful for themselves and the potentially vulnerable people in their lives. I told employees at the March All Employee Meetings that we have N95 masks on hand, but would follow the guidance from the health authorities about when to make them available. Since then, there has been no change in guidance, and none appears to be coming.

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There is no right answer in this situation. Regardless of the decision I make, I will take an unpopular action in the eyes of people for whom I hold deep respect: our regional partners in the emergency response, or our own coach and van operators who find themselves in close proximity to passengers accessing critical transportation services.

My priority is for Spokane Transit to be united in its responsibility to continue delivering service for the unknown duration of this emergency. Anxious employees distracted from our mission and our commitment to safe driving creates a service delivery risk I am obligated to address. Moving past this potential flashpoint and regaining focus is the basis for my decision.

The N95 masks will be available in respective departments beginning tomorrow, March 20, 2020, for those coach and van operators who want them.

If you have questions about this announcement, please contact your supervisor.

Cc: Steve Blaska
Brandon Rapez-Betty
Nancy Williams
Karl Otterstrom
Monique Liard
Thomas Leighty
Sam Hairston
Mike Kunder