

KEY RESEARCH SHOWS SAFETY OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

No direct correlation found between public transportation and the transmission of COVID-19

At the beginning of the pandemic there was a rush by the media to suggest that transit was a major cause of the virus's spread. However, as reported in a major study by Sam Schwartz, a leading engineering firm, this suspicion has been shown to be untrue.

According to the study, health experts and government officials examining transit as a source of infection found no clear links. Major transit systems around the world were examined, including Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore and Milan.

In an examination of the New York City transit system between June 1 and September 12, 2020, more than 212 million rides were taken on subways and buses, and the average case counts of COVID-19 actually dropped from 623 per day to 281 per day, a decrease of 55 percent.

In the Chicago area, Metra has provided over 5.4 million rides during the pandemic and there has not been one contact tracing of the virus back to the train.

What makes transit so safe? There are many theories: short trips, little talking, enhanced airflow and mask mandates. Certainly the efforts made by Metra and other agencies play a role.

"The CDC recommends a minimum air change of 12 times per hour," said

Janice R. Thomas, Metra Chief of Staff. "Our cars replace the air 15 times per hour. Our trains also make a stop, on average, every 5.2 minutes, flooding the cars with fresh air."

There has not been one contact tracing of the virus back to a Metra train.

While ventilation is important, the study has shown that mask-wearing remains essential. Masks are mandatory for all riders and employees on Metra. Regular car cleaning is also key.

"When it comes to cleaning," Thomas added, "Metra has spared nothing. We are meticulously cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting our trains daily. We want our riders to know they can Commute with Confidence."

As the research concludes, what you do at a trip end, not necessarily the mode of travel, affects the probability of contracting the virus.

