KEOLIS’ MANAGEMENT OF THE HEALTH CRISIS

FROM MARCH TO MAY 2020
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The Covid-19 pandemic confronted countries around the world and their shared mobility systems with an entirely unprecedented set of challenges, due to its sheer scale, suddenness and socio-economic impacts.

Working closely with the public transport authorities and the communities and regions we serve, our teams mobilised to continue performing their public service role while ensuring the highest levels of health and safety.

Here we take a look back at the tremendous contribution made by all subsidiaries and corporate functions throughout these unprecedented times.

FRÉDÉRIC BAVEREZ
Executive Director France and Chairman of EFFIA

What challenges did the mobility sector face when the COVID-19 crisis first hit?

Fredéric Baverez: Ensuring the continuity of the public service we provide is both a key mission for Keolis and a real source of pride. Offering this continuity is essential for keeping local and regional communities up and running, whatever the circumstances. And that’s exactly what we did from the first days of the crisis — for which no one was prepared. Our subsidiaries were in constant talks with our public transport authority (PTA) partners and very quickly reorganised their working methods and adapted their mobility services. Even though ridership fell by almost 90% during lockdown, they nonetheless maintained a reduced service at 30% to 50% of normal levels so healthcare professionals and other key workers could make the commute and do their crucially important jobs.

Bernard Tabary: On the ground, adapting to circumstances looked different from one subsidiary and country to the next, depending on government instructions, public health guidance and the terms and conditions of our contracts with the various PTAs. But whatever the local specifics, all our teams showed remarkable commitment and shared the same priority of protecting our passengers and employees by implementing all the necessary safety measures - most often anticipating the official instructions to come - including social distancing, suspending paper ticket sales and front door boarding on buses and disinfection of vehicles and stations.

This applied to all our buses, metros, trains and trams, as well as our other work environments such as offices, maintenance sites and depots.

How did Keolis reorganise to manage the crisis?

B.T.: Right from the onset, we set up a crisis management unit at our Paris headquarters to assist all our subsidiaries. During the various phases of the virus’ spread, the first countries affected shared their experiences with the countries likely to be next hit. In China, the situation stabilised earlier, with a gradual return to normal just as France was locking down. In Denmark and Germany, we were fully operational again from the end of April, while at the same time in North America the spread was escalating.

We all learned from these lessons, and our subsidiaries and the PTAs were especially interested in how it was managed in China and Denmark. In managing the crisis, we were able to count on the collective strength shown by our 68,500 people and their dedication to our company and the public service we provide.

F.B.: Beyond our practical response to the issues around the crisis, the unprecedented measures we put in place also highlighted two important elements at the heart of Keolis’ identity — first, the value and strength we derive from the global nature of our operations; and second, our ability to efficiently share best practices in order to implement effective strategies to meet PTAs’ requirements.
What was your strategy for coming out of lockdown?

**F.B.:** It’s always easier to shut down a network than to restart it. So very early on, we planned how we would overcome the various issues, such as staff availability and how to keep our people safe, the availability of technical equipment, specific disinfection measures, the restrictions the public authorities might impose on passengers, and the timelines needed for rebuilding transport services with these restrictions in place.

**JACQUES DAMAS**

Executive Director, Security, Safety, Environment and CSR

**What impacts might this crisis have going forward?**

**F.B.:** In the near term, our absolute priority is to rebuild passenger trust so they come back to public transport, thereby avoiding a massive return to private car use. To do this, we need to reassure them by making cleaning operations more visible and adopting even more effective solutions for disinfecting across our networks, such as UV radiation and ozone machines. We must also encourage passengers to respect social distancing rules and other measures by putting behavioural nudges to work and using high-profile and effective ways of communicating.

Other steps we’ve taken include switching to digital ticketing to limit physical contact, gathering data on real-time vehicle occupancy so we can keep passengers informed about likely numbers on their planned journeys and also encouraging companies and universities to introduce staggered working and teaching patterns to better spread out passenger flows over the days and weeks.

**How do you assess Keolis’ management of the crisis?**

Sharing best practices across the entire organisation helped us act more effectively on the ground in all key areas of managing the crisis—from implementing safety measures on our networks to reorganising operations, managing people working from home and communicating with our teams, passengers and PTA partners. Today, our priority is clear: resume operations as quickly and effectively as we can, in a spirit of trust and dialogue with PTAs.

Several authorities in different parts of the world have thanked us for the expertise we’ve provided. The unfailling commitment and flexibility shown by our teams has enabled us to maintain the safe, world-class public service they expect and deserve.

We’ll continue to focus our efforts on service quality and safety. Rebuilding passenger and employee trust in public transport means ensuring buses, trams and trains are always reliable, on time and clean. Talking to people directly on the ground is the best way to understand the evolving expectations of passengers, who may want to use different modes of transport, and our staff as they go about their jobs. It’s the best way to understand the priorities of our PTAs and the constraints they face in the new socio-economic paradigm. It’s also the best way to stand out and build our future.

**What are the potential long-term impacts?**

When the coronavirus crisis is over, we expect an increase in public transport use as people return to their jobs. Keeping public transport competitive is a priority for us, and we hope to be a key partner to local authorities and businesses in any economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic. We’re focusing on delivering service quality and safety, while ensuring that we provide attractive mobility solutions.

We must also take this opportunity to listen to our passengers and find out about their new needs and expectations, such as increased demand for bus services in small towns and villages. We will need to offer the best transport services at the best possible price by constantly seeking ways to drive economic efficiency. They’ll also need to adapt to social changes as a lot more people will work from home or live further away from city centres, as well as potential changes in passenger behaviour. Like a new preference for active modes of transport. That’s why we’re tracking these trends through Keoscopie—our international observatory of mobility trends—so we can better understand the medium-term impacts the crisis could have on lifestyles and mobility.

**What measures have you put in place to ensure passenger safety?**

At Keolis, we’ve put in place a comprehensive daily disinfection plan across the Divia Mobilités network. “As well as deep cleaning of rolling stock at depots, we’re also disinfecting buses and trams at night using a procedure called fogging,” says Thomas Fontaine, the subsidiary’s executive director. Fogging creates a fine mist of virucidal disinfectant, which is a really effective way of deep cleaning seats, windows, inside walls and the areas you can’t reach manually. Rolling stock is also disinfected at night using ozone, along with the common areas in depots, offices, toilets, canteens and so on. Rolling stock is also disinfected at night using ozone, along with the common areas in depots, offices, toilets, canteens and so on. Rolling stock is also disinfected at night using ozone, along with the common areas in depots, offices, toilets, canteens and so on.

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MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

200 NEW STAFF TO MEET THE DISINFECTION CHALLENGE

“To step up cleaning and disinfection on Yarra Trams — the world’s largest tram network — we hired almost 200 people left jobless by the COVID-19 crisis,” says Julien Dehornoy, Managing Director of Yarra Trams. “This exceptional measure was made possible thanks to the Working for Victoria Fund, an initiative launched by the State of Victoria, which enabled 300 new jobs to be created to ensure enhanced cleaning and safety on the network as well as provide work for people in the region.”

NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA, GERMANY

KEEPING OUR ONBOARD STAFF SAFE

As requested by the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, train services in the region returned to 98% of normal timetable from 27 April. “To ensure our staff could return to work as safely as possible, our subsidiary and the transport authority put in place all the necessary measures,” says Anne Mathieu, CEO of Keolis Deutschland. “These included mandatory wearing of masks by passengers and inspectors, washable gloves for onboard staff and disinfectant for drivers so they can clean the cab areas where they work.”

LYON, FRANCE

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR MAXIMUM HEALTH PROTECTION

“To ensure the highest levels of safety for passengers as the public transport network in Lyon came out of lockdown, we worked with public transport authority SYTRAL to install automatic contactless hand disinfectant dispensers, which allow effective, natural, eco-friendly hand hygiene in just seven seconds,” says Pascal Jacquesson, CEO of Keolis Lyon. “We deployed a new UV air disinfection robot and a dry steam cleaner, which can deep clean a bus in 15 minutes. And over 400 staff worked every day to distribute 100,000 masks a week and remind passengers to abide by social distancing and other precautionary measures. Their efforts were commended by SYTRAL and passengers.”

SHANGHAI, CHINA

HEALTHY AIR ON EVERY TRAIN

“In China, the first country affected by COVID-19, our teams operating the tram network in Songjiang district (31 km, 46 stations) implemented extra health and safety measures, such as temperature checks for passengers at the busiest stations,” says Bertrand Laude, Managing Director of Shanghai Keolis. “UV lamps have been installed in the tram air conditioning and ventilation systems to sterilise the air as it passes through. As part of the daily disinfection of trains at the depot, the entire air conditioning system and filters are also deep cleaned.”
Bordeaux, France

Mobile cleaning patrols to reassure passengers

“To ensure the highest levels of safety and reassure passengers, the Keolis Bordeaux Métropole network set up cleaning patrols, which continually move around the network to disinfect the most critical equipment on buses and trains, such as grab rails and bars, handles and push buttons,” says Eric Reinier, Managing Director of Keolis Bordeaux Métropole. Working in teams of six and recognisable by their blue uniforms, they operate across the network from Monday to Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm. The subsidiary has also set up a free on-demand transport service for staff at hospitals and retirement homes, with 24 specially equipped vehicles. The service carried 6,000 people during its two months of operation, from 25 March to 24 May 2020.

Hyderabad, India

Mobilisation for children with HIV/AIDS

Keolis Hyderabad provided 120 litres of sanitiser solution to Agape, an NGO caring for children with HIV/AIDS. Because their immune systems are weak, they have a much higher risk of contracting COVID-19. “We managed to source the sanitiser. Our teams then loaded it on to the only metro train allowed to operate so it could be delivered to a station where Agape could pick it up,” says Edward Thomas, Managing Director, Keolis Hyderabad. “Many of our colleagues here at the subsidiary took part in this action, from purchasing the bottled sanitiser to loading and unloading.”

Rennes, France

8,000 stickers installed in a weekend

“To comply with social distancing rules, we increased the number of vehicles operating from 11 May, with 100% of the normal level on our metro lines, with a 90-second gap between trains, and 80% on bus routes,” says Laurent Senigout, Managing Director of Keolis Rennes. “The weekend before, 150 staff put up signage in stations, bus shelters, metro trainsets and buses to remind passengers of the precautionary measures they need to take during their journeys. Over 8,000 stickers were placed across the entire network.”

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

A safe service for frontline passengers

“To balance the need for safety and still provide an essential transport service for everyone who needs to commute to key jobs such as doctors, nurses, food retailers and other frontline workers, we’ve adapted our train timetables and stepped up cleaning across the network,” says David Scorey, CEO, Keolis Commuter Services. “Each train is disinfected at least daily or even during their passenger service schedule by extra cleaning teams working at key terminals as well as maintenance locations.” At the same time, the subsidiary’s teams have been carrying out maintenance and improvement work on infrastructure and maintaining full rolling stock fleet availability to prepare for the resumption of normal services on this commuter rail network featuring 14 lines and 640 kilometres (398 mi) of track. On 15 June 2020, Keolis’ operating contract for this network renewed for a further four years.

Morlaix, France

Contactless payment to reduce risk

“To resume services as safely as possible from the first day of lock-down, the Liniotim bus network in Morlaix — comprising four urban and six suburban routes, plus two on-demand services — has adopted a range of preventive measures to limit the virus’ spread and restore passenger confidence. “In just three days, we rolled out the TixiPass contactless payment solution, which lets passengers buy and validate their tickets using their smartphone and a QR Code,” says David Kernevez, Managing Director of Keolis Morlaix.

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CLAPPING FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS

“Every day during the coronavirus crisis, trams stopped for a few minutes at 8 pm to allow drivers and passengers to clap, cheer and make noise for healthcare staff and other frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19,” says Paul Robinson, Managing Director of Nottingham Trams. Other networks also showed their solidarity with essential workers. Bus and tram drivers in Besançon, for example, sounded their horns every day in a concert of support in front of the hospital to thank medical staff for their brave commitment.

KEOLIS SANTÉ, FRANCE

ON THE FRONTLINE WITH PATIENTS

In partnership with the Vendée departmental council, Keolis Santé launched an innovative new concept called the Mobile Teleconsultation Unit (UMT). The UMT unit with its specially adapted ambulance, connected hardware and nurse/ambulance crew has been made available to the council’s medical staff to enable people to stay at home. “This initiative has helped reduce demand on hospitals while keeping vulnerable people safe from Covid-19,” says Roland de Barbentane, President of Keolis Santé.

All across France, our medical transport teams have been playing a key role in carrying patients. As well as responding to the needs of hospital emergency services on a 24/7 basis, they’ve also been called on to support ad hoc transfers by plane or high-speed train by bridging the first and last mile gaps.”