PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE: 8826
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Bus Fire
4a. DATE: February 8, 2006
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Bronx Cross expressway at Harrod Avenue
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Bronx
8. BUS NUMBER: 263
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 6 hrs and 39 min in last 24 hrs/51 hrs and 10 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 9:22 pm, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #263 was traveling eastbound on the service road of the Cross Bronx Expressway when the bus driver noticed a loss of power and sparks emanating from the left rear of the bus. He stopped the bus and got out to inspect it. He saw flames in the engine compartment. Then the bus driver got back into the bus, discharged all passengers, manually activated the onboard fire suppression system and called the Command Center. FDNY responded to the accident and extinguished the fire. The bus sustained extensive damage. No injury claims were reported.

In the vicinity of the accident site, the Cross Bronx Expressway Service Road is a 24 foot wide, one way road, divided by a white broken line pavement marking, accommodating two eastbound travel lanes. The roadway is straight, level and asphalt paved. Parking is permitted at the right curb only. At the time of the accident it was dark and the weather was dry and clear. The posted area speed limit is 30 mph.

Bus #263 is a 1993 Orion V transit bus with a seating capacity of 39 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at the Casey Stengel Depot at regular 3,500 mile intervals, and the most recent was completed on January 24, 2006. The bus had traveled 1,819 miles at the time of the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #263 was conducted by the PTSB staff in conjunction with NYCT staff on February 9, 2006. The inspection revealed that the fire occurred in the engine compartment, directly behind the rear passenger seat. The inspection revealed that the A/C cable was properly routed and secured by “P” clamps, however, it shorted on a steel braided surge tank vent hose. The vent hose was not properly constructed (two hoses were joined to a union fitting) and were improperly routed or secured. Due to the normal vibrations of the engine, the fitting chaffed the A/C cable insulation, shorted and caused the fire. The short damaged the fuel lines behind the head of the engine and fed the fire.

The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on March 13, 2000, and completed the “Standard New Bus Operator Training Program. A review of the bus driver’s Department of Motor Vehicles records for the last three years showed no violations or suspensions. New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were complete and up-to-date. A review of the driver’s MTA NYCT record revealed no collision accidents for the last three years. A post accident drug and alcohol test was not administered to the bus driver due to the nature of the accident.
In an interview with the PTSB staff the bus driver indicated that he was driving the bus eastbound on the Cross Bronx Expressway Service Road approaching Harrod Avenue when he noticed a loss of power. Then he noticed sparks and flames coming from the left rear of the bus. The bus driver stopped the bus, evacuated all passengers, shut the engine off, manually activated the onboard fire suppression system and called the Command Center. FDNY responded to the accident and extinguished the fire.

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the accident was the failure of the maintenance staff to properly construct, route and secure a steel braided surge tank vent hose.

The MTA NYCT reviewed the accident on May 22, 2006 and determined that the most probable cause of this fire was the failure of maintenance personnel to properly route and secure the steel braided surge tank vent house. There was no current SOP directive for this procedure.

All maintenance personnel at Casey Stengel Depot have been issued a new directive and were reinsstructed as to the proper method of routing, securing and recording all hose and cable changes in the engine compartment. Additionally, in order to reduce the number of bus fires and road calls due to rubbing, chafing lines, leaking hoses, and shorted out wires, New York City Transit implemented a new type of clamping and fastening system. These items would replace P-clamps on the bus wherever a damaged line or hose is known to cause problems.

Based on the action taken by the MTA NYCT regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendations.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

[Signature]

CHIEF ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION

[Signature] 1/22/07

DATE

DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT

[Signature] 2/2/07

DATE