1. CASE: 8989
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA NYCT
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Collision
3b. Accident Severity Index: 0.05
4a. DATE: June 20, 2006
4b. TIME: 7:50 am
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Staten Island Expressway at Clove Road
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Staten Island
7. SUMMONS: None
8. BUS NUMBER: 2014
8a. YEAR: 1998
8b. MAKE: MCI
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 1
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 1 hr and 13 min in last 24 hrs/62 hrs and 53 min in last 7 days
12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 7:50 am, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #2014 traveling in the “Bus Only” lane eastbound on Staten Island Expressway was approaching Clove Road, when an auto traveling in the same direction to the front of the bus, suddenly stopped. In an attempt to avoid a collision the bus driver applied the brakes, however, the bus did not respond as the driver expected and the driver swerved to the right. The front of the bus made contact with the rear of the auto and struck the concrete median coming to a full stop. One occupant from the auto claimed injury and was transported to a local hospital, treated and released. The bus driver claimed a mechanical failure of the braking system. Both the bus and auto sustained slight damage. NYC Police responded to the accident and no summonses were issued.

In the vicinity of the accident site, the Staten Island Expressway is a 92 foot wide, two way road divided by a concrete barrier, accommodating three regular and one “bus only” lane in each direction. The roadway is level, straight and asphalt paved. At the time of the accident it was daylight and the weather was dry and clear. The posted area speed limit is 50 mph.

Bus #2014 is a 1998 MCI coach bus with a seating capacity of 55 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at Castleton Depot at regular 6,000 mile intervals. The most recent PMI was completed on May 5, 2006. The bus had traveled 3,182 miles at the time of the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #2014 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with NYCT staff on June 20, 2006. The inspection showed that the bus failed the brake test by 21%. Further inspection of the braking system revealed several defects. Both drive axle brake throws were beyond the allowed limit. The brake pedal travel was out of the allowed limit causing restricted air delivery to the brake chambers (65 psi instead of 110 psi). The right side drive axle inner wheel seal was leaking oil onto the braking surface. A review of the maintenance record revealed no safety or recurring defects were reported since the two last PMIs. According to the inspection it is most probably that the “long brake condition” existed for a period of time and was not reported by other bus drivers.
The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on July 30, 2001 and he had completed the standard “New Bus Operator Training Program”. A review of the driver’s department of Motor Vehicles records showed two “disobeyed traffic device” violations, one on 09/10/03, resulting in a fine of $40 and 2 points on the record, and the other on 01/22/04, resulting in a fine of $40 and 2 points on the record. New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were complete and up-to-date. A review of the driver’s MTA NYCT record for the last three years revealed two preventable collision accidents, the first one on 05/09/04, resulting in a 10 day suspension and one on 08/08/05, resulting in a warning due to having a minor collision accident and 5 non-preventable collision accidents in the past 12 months. A post accident drug and alcohol test administered to the bus driver 4 hours and 6 minutes after the accident was negative. The delay in administering the drug and alcohol test was due to the bus driver being detained for the purpose of investigation.

In an interview with the PTSB staff, the bus driver indicated that he was driving eastbound on Staten Island Expressway with an approximate speed of 35-40 mph and just entered the “bus only” travel lane when he observed the auto and an unmarked police vehicle enter the lane. He stated that when he was approximately 1/8 of a mile to the vehicles he started to slow down. As the two vehicles stopped adjacent to each other, he realized that the bus was braking too slowly and he began to pump the brakes. In an attempt to avoid a collision the bus driver braced for impact and at that time the front of the bus struck the rear of the auto. Additionally, he indicated that he performed a full pre-trip inspection of the bus and had not experienced any brake concerns.

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that according to the final rest positions of both vehicles, the statements of both drivers and the post accident inspection of the bus, the most probable cause of the accident was the failure of the bus driver to maintain a safe following distance from the vehicle moving in front of the bus.

Contributing to the accident was the failure of the bus driver to properly perform the pre-trip inspection of the bus and identify a long brake condition.

Also contributing to the accident was the pumping action of the brake pedal by the bus operator that would increase the stopping distance of the bus.

MTA NYCT reviewed the accident on September 9, 2006, and found it to be preventable. The bus driver was issued a 5 day suspension. The bus driver was retrained, his performance was evaluated as satisfactory and he was returned to passenger service.
Based on the action taken by MTA NYCT regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendations.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

__________________________  _______________________
CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION  DATE

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT  DATE