PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE: 9043
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA-NYCT
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Mechanical Failure
3b. Accident Severity Index: 0
4a. DATE: 7/22/2006
4b. TIME: 9:50 am
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Third Ave. and East 72nd Street
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Manhattan
7. SUMMONS: none
8. BUS NUMBER: 5515
8a. YEAR: 2003
8b. MAKE: New Flyer
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 0
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: NA
12. SYNOPSIS:
At approximately 9:50 am, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #5515 was standing in a bus stop when the bus operator observed flames at the rear of the bus. The bus operator immediately evacuated the bus, called the Command Center, and used the onboard fire extinguisher in the area of the flames. The FDNY responded and completed extinguishing the fire. The bus sustained slight damage to the roof area and was towed back to the garage.

The neither the incident location nor local conditions contributed to the cause of the fire.

Bus #5515 is a 2003 New Flyer articulated coach type bus with a seating capacity of 65 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at the 100th Street Depot at regular 3,000 mile intervals, and the most recent was completed on July 10, 2006. The bus had traveled 1,043 miles at the time of the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #5515 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with NYCT personnel. A review of maintenance records revealed that on July 14, 2006, the bus had repair work done to the exhaust flex pipe due to a leak in the system. The bus was subsequently returned to service. The post incident inspection revealed a broken clamp bracket supporting the Diesel Particulate Exhaust Filter (DPF) and tailpipe assembly. This allowed the pipe to move and contact the roof cap and burn a marker light and wiring harness.

The bus driver was hired by MTA NYCT on March 24, 1997 and completed the standard “New Bus Operator Training Program”. A review of the driver's Department of Motor Vehicles records for the last 3 years showed one conviction for speeding (Feb 2004). 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 for the last three years revealed four collisions (two preventable).

A post accident drug and alcohol test was not administered to the bus driver due to the nature of this incident. In an interview with the PTSB staff, the bus driver indicated that while he was in a bus stop a passing motorist informed him that the rear of the bus was on fire. He stated he evacuated his passengers and used the onboard fire extinguisher in an attempt to put out the fire. After calling the Command Center, the FDNY unit responded shortly thereafter and extinguished the fire.
The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the fire was the failure of the DPF clamp allowing the exhaust tailpipe assembly to move and contact the roof cap and clearance light, causing them to burn. Contributing to the fire was the failure of the maintainer who performed work on the exhaust system to ensure that the integrity of the system was not compromised. It must be noted that the location of the clamp is in a very difficult area to inspect.

The MTA NYCT reviewed the accident and found it to be preventable. The bus maintainer was held responsible for returning the bus to service with the broken clamp, however due to the nature of the difficulty to inspect this area no discipline was issued. Subsequently, the bus driver was retrained, and a maintenance directive was issued to all MTA-NYCT depots system wide regarding exhaust system flex pipe securement.

Based on the action of the MTA NYCT regarding the accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendation.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

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CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION   DATE

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT   DATE