PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE: 9067
2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA NYCT
3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Bus Fire
3b. Accident Severity Index: 0.0
4a. DATE: August 11, 2006
4b. TIME: 4:20 pm
5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: West Kingsbridge Road at Kingsbridge Terrace
6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Bronx
7. SUMMONS: None
8. BUS NUMBER: 5282
8a. YEAR: 2000
8b. MAKE: New Flyer
9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 0
10. FATALITIES: 0
11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 0 hrs and 54 min in last 24 hrs/48 hrs and 22 min in last 7days

12. SYNOPSIS:

At approximately 4:20 pm, MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #5282 traveling eastbound on West Kingsbridge Road approaching a bus stop when the bus driver observed smoke coming from the rear of the bus. Bus driver stopped the bus, discharged all bus passengers and called the Command Center. FDNY responded to the accident and extinguished the fire. The fire suppression system did not activate. No injury claims were reported. The bus sustained moderate damage to the engine compartment.

In the vicinity of the accident site, West Kingsbridge Road is a two-way road divided by a full barrier yellow pavement marking, accommodating two eastbound and two westbound travel lanes. Kingsbridge Terrace, north of West Kingsbridge Road is a one way road accommodating one northbound travel lane. Kingsbridge Terrace, south of West Kingsbridge Road is a two way road accommodating one northbound and one southbound travel lane. Both roadways are straight and asphalt paved. Parking is permitted at the curbs. At the time of the accident it was daylight and the weather was dry and clear. The posted area speed limit is 30 mph.

Bus #5282 is a 2000 New Flyer Articulated bus with a seating capacity of 62 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at Kingsbridge Depot at regular 3,000 mile intervals, and the most recent was completed on August 7, 2006. The bus had traveled 29 miles at the time of the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #5282 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with NYCT staff on August 14, 2006. The post accident inspection revealed that the fire in the engine compartment was caused by an antifreeze leak from a ruptured thermostat by-pass hose located directly above the turbocharger. The onboard Fire Suppression System had not activated. Further inspection revealed a rusted and separated crimp connector at the thermo sensor in the fire area. It should be added that on August 11, 2006, (day of the accident) as result of the last PMI, a defective water pump hose was replaced. The coolant system was drained and refilled and the bus was put in passenger service. The fire occurred 29 miles after the last PMI. The PTSB staff in conjunction with MTA NYCT staff was unable to determine the cause of the rupture the by-pass hose.
The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on March 9, 1998, and completed the standard “New Bus Operator Training Program”. A review of the 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 preventable 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 while the bus was moving uphill on eastbound of West Kingsbridge Road he observed white smoke in the rear of the bus. He stopped the bus, evacuated all passengers, shut the engine off and called the Command Center. FDNY responded to the accident and extinguished the fire. When the bus driver was asked why he did not activate the FSS he claimed that he did not have enough time. He also stated that warning lights or signals came on prior to the accident.

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the accident was the unpredictable failure of the thermostat by-pass hose located above the turbocharger.

Contributing to the extent of the fire damage was the failure of the FSS to activate automatically.

The second contributing factor to the extent of the fire damage was the failure of the bus driver to manually activate the FSS.

The MTA NYCT reviewed the accident on March 14, 2007 and was unable to determine the main cause of the fire with any certainty. MTA NYCT reinforced the “Permanent Bulletin #01.22.01” and reinstructed the maintenance personnel to properly diagnose, repair and inspect the onboard FSS. The bus driver who failed to identify an existing defect of the FSS and report it to the supervisor was issued a verbal warning. The driver was reinstructed and returned to passenger service.

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

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CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION  DATE

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYS DOT  DATE