At approximately 2:00 p.m., MTA Long Island Bus (LIB) bus #415 was proceeding on a left turn from westbound Old Country Road onto County Seat Drive when an auto, traveling east on Old Country Road at high speed, collided with the right side rear corner of the bus. Five of the 15 bus passengers, the auto driver and auto passenger claimed various injuries. The injured persons were transported to a local hospital where they were all treated and released following treatment. The bus sustained moderate and the auto extensive damage from the collision.

In the vicinity of the accident site Old Country Road is a two-way east/west roadway divided by solid double yellow pavement markings into two travel lanes and a dedicated left turn lane in the westbound direction and two travel lanes in the eastbound direction. County Seat Drive is a two-way north/south roadway that is divided by solid double yellow pavement markings into two travel lanes in each direction and forms a “T” type intersection with Old Country Road. Parking is not allowed at the curbs of either roadway. Both roadways are asphalt paved, straight, level and in good condition. The intersection is controlled by standard overhead traffic signals and is illuminated by standard street lighting which, at the time of the accident investigation, were all functioning as designed. At the time of the accident it was dark, the weather was clear and the pavement was dry. The posted area speed limit is 40 mph.

Bus #415 is a 2004 Orion V compressed natural gas fueled transit type bus housed and maintained at the Mitchell Field Depot with a seating capacity of 45 passengers. A review of the bus records showed that Preventive Maintenance Inspections are performed at regular 6,000 mile intervals the most recent was completed on August 16, 2007 and the bus had traveled 2,698 miles since then. There were no safety or recurring defects noted in the 45 days prior to the accident. Physical inspection of the bus on September 6, 2007 found no defects that could be considered a causative factor in the accident. The inspection showed moderate to extensive collision damage to the right side rear corner of the bus. Due to damage sustained in the accident, decelerometer tests could not be performed on the bus braking systems.

The bus driver was hired by the MTA LIB on May 27, 1997 and completed the MTA LIB New Bus Operator Training Program. A review of the driver's Department of Motor Vehicles records for the past three years showed no violations or convictions.
NYS Vehicle & Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were reviewed and found to be complete, in-order and up-to-date. A review of the driver's LIB accident record for the past three years showed no collision accidents (the driver has only been involved in two non-preventable collision accidents, 1998 & 2003, since her date of hire). Post accident drug and alcohol tests performed on the bus driver upon her release from the accident scene, within two hours from the time of the accident, were negative.

In an interview the bus driver indicated that she observed the oncoming auto prior to beginning to turn left from Old Country Road onto County Seat Drive. The driver also indicated that although she felt that the approaching auto was traveling at a high rate of speed, she believed that she could safely complete the left turn.

The Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff was unable to interview the driver of the auto or his passenger.

MTA LIB bus driver training program train their bus drivers in defensive driving techniques for safely approaching and traversing intersections, statistically one of the most hazardous points in a driver’s route. These techniques emphasize the need for scanning for hazards, identifying and anticipating potential hazards when crossing the path of opposing traffic when making left turns.

The bus driver stated that she observed the oncoming vehicle while preparing to turn left from Old Country Road onto Count Seat Drive and, by her own admission, stated that the vehicle was approaching the intersection at high speed. Therefore, the most prudent thing to have done, according to the bus driver’s training, would have been to yield the right of way to the approaching vehicle.

Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of this accident was the failure of the bus driver to adhere to her defensive driving training and yield the right of way to the approaching auto. Contributing to the severity of the accident was the failure of the auto driver to maintain control of his vehicle due to traveling at an imprudent (high) speed.

MTA Long Island Bus, after reviewing the facts concerning the accident, found the accident to be preventable. The bus driver issued, and received, 8 hours of unpaid behind-the-wheel and simulator training. Upon completion of the training the bus driver’s driving skills were evaluated, found to be satisfactory and she was returned to passenger service.

Based on the action taken by the MTA Long Island Bus regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendation in this case.

INVESTIGATOR: Harry W. Gerham

CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION

DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT