At approximately 3:45 pm, MTA Bus Company (MTA BC) bus #9849 arrived to the bus stop on Main Street at Roosevelt Island Bridge. The bus driver shut the engine off and a few minutes later he noticed white smoke emanating from the right rear of the bus. Then the bus driver exited the bus and observed flames on the left side of the engine compartment. The bus driver called the Command Center for assistance. At that time the on board fire suppression system activated automatically. In a few minutes the FDNY responded to the accident and extinguished the fire. No injury claims were reported. The bus sustained extensive damage to the engine compartment.

In the vicinity of the accident site, Main Street is a 20 foot wide one-way road with no pavement marking accommodating one northbound travel lane. The roadway surrounds a grass island and it is level and asphalt paved. At the time of the accident it was daylight, the weather was dry and clear.

Bus #9849 is a 1999 Orion V CNG transit type bus with a seating capacity of 39 passengers. A review of the bus records indicated that Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are performed at MTA BC at regular 4,000 +/- 500 mile intervals or 90 days whichever comes first, and the most recent was completed on August 9, 2007. The bus had traveled 2,862 miles at the time of the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #9849 was conducted by the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) staff in conjunction with MTA NYCT and MTA BC staff on September 18, 2007. The post accident inspection of the bus revealed that the fire in the engine compartment was caused by a ruptured water pump hose which started to spray coolant onto the hot turbocharger and igniting the fire. The fire damaged the electrical harness, and coolant and hydraulic lines in the engine compartment.

The bus driver was hired by MTA BC on February 5, 2007, and completed the standard “New Bus Operator Training Program”. A review of the driver’s department of Motor Vehicles records for the time since he was hired showed one “no inspection sticker” violation. New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law Article 19-A records were complete and up-to-date. A review of the driver’s MTA BC record revealed two preventable minor collision accidents resulting in a warning and a reinstruction. 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 arrived to the bus stop, and shut down the engine because he had 10 minutes before his first trip. At that time he noticed white smoke emanating from the engine compartment. The bus driver exited the bus and went to the rear to inspect the bus. As he got to the rear he saw flames on the left rear side of the bus and liquid leaking to the pavement. He called the Command Center for assistance. The onboard fire suppression system automatically activated. FDNY responded to the accident and the fire was extinguished.

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the accident was an unpredictable failure of the water pump outlet hose, which ruptured and sprayed coolant onto the hot turbocharger.

The MTA NYCT and MTA BC reviewed the accident and determined that the route cause of the fire was an unpredictable failure of a water pump outlet hose that ruptured.

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

INVESTIGATOR: Mikhail Palanker

CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION  DATE

DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT  DATE