PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT

1. CASE#: 9556

2. PROPERTY NAME: MTA NYCT

3a. ACCIDENT TYPE: Passenger Exiting

3b. Accident Severity Index: 0.05

4a. DATE: November 5, 2007

4b. TIME: 7:40 a.m.

5. ACCIDENT LOCATION: Pitkin Avenue at Rockaway Avenue

6. TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH: Brooklyn, NY

7. SUMMONS: No

8. BUS NUMBER: 4960

8a. YEAR: 1999

8b. MAKE: Nova/RTS-06

9. NUMBER OF INJURIES: 1

10. FATALITIES: 0

11. HOURS OF SERVICE: 1 hr 1 min in last 24 hrs/49 hrs 14 min in last 7 days

12. SYNOPSIS:
At approximately 7:40 a.m., MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) bus #4960 was standing in the far side bus stop, boarding and discharging passengers, on Pitkin Avenue at the intersection with Rockaway Avenue when a female passenger exiting via the rear doors was struck in the head by the step well mirror. The grab pole it was attached to failed and the mirror separated from the supporting stanchion. The passenger claimed injury and was transported to a local hospital where she was treated and released. In the vicinity of the accident site Pitkin Avenue is a two-way east/west roadway with one travel lane in each direction. Rockaway Avenue is a two-way north/south roadway with one travel lane in each direction. Parking is allowed at curbs of both roadways. Both roadways are asphalt paved, straight, level and in good condition. At the time of the accident it was daylight, the weather was clear and the pavement was dry. The area speed limit is 30 mph. The environment did not contribute to the accident.

Bus #4960 is a 1999 Nova/RTS-06 transit type bus housed and maintained at the East New York Depot with a seating capacity of 40 passengers. A review of the bus records showed that Preventive Maintenance Inspections are performed at regular 4,000 mile intervals. The most recent was completed on October 24, 2007 and the bus had traveled 771 miles since then. There were no safety or recurring defects noted in the 45 days prior to the accident. In particular, the bus records showed no history of repairs or work having been performed on the stanchion or the grab pole attached to it. Physical inspection of the bus on November 5, 2007 found that the vertical grab pole, located at the bus rear door step well, had separated from the supporting stanchion. This allowed the mirror, attached to the grab pole, to fall and cause injury to the disembarking bus passenger when it hit her in the head. The inspection also showed that the bolts that secured the grab pole to the stanchion were missing and could not be found anywhere in the bus indicating that they had probably been missing for some time. Furthermore, the bolt holes in both the upper and lower stanchions for the grab rail were elongated indicating that the bolts securing the grab pole had been loose for some time.

The bus driver was hired by the MTA NYCT on May 6, 1991 and completed the New Bus Operator Training Program. A review of the driver's NYS Department of Motor Vehicles records for the past three years showed two convictions for Speed in Zone (01/06) and Disobeying a Traffic Control Device (01/05). 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 accident record for the past three years showed one non preventable collision accident (11/30/06). Due to the nature of the accident, post accident drug and alcohol tests were not performed on the bus driver.
In an interview the bus driver indicated that while standing in the bus stop he was approached by an unidentified bus passenger who informed him that a female passenger had fallen while exiting the bus via the rear doors. The bus driver indicated that he secured the bus and exited the bus and found a female person sitting on the bench in the bus shelter. The bus driver said that he observed the grab rail, with the mirror attached to it, lying in the rear door step well with one end of it stuck between the rear doors. The bus driver indicated that the woman told him that she had been a passenger on the bus and while exiting the bus the grab rail had broken and hit her in the head. The bus driver said that she requested medical aid and he then called for assistance. When the bus driver was asked if he had completed the exterior and interior pre trip inspection of the bus prior to beginning his route, he indicated that he had.

The MTA NYCT requires all bus drivers perform a pre trip interior and exterior inspection of their bus before leaving the depot. This includes insuring that all of the seats and passenger handholds are secure. Based on the condition of the bolt holes in the grab rail and stanchion it is apparent that the grab rail had been loose for some period of time, and should have been observed by the bus driver. The fact that the securing bolts could not be found within the bus indicates that the bolts were likely missing when the bus driver took charge of the bus and, furthermore, makes it most likely that the bus driver did not properly perform the mandatory interior pre trip inspection of the bus.

As a result of this accident MTA MYCT depot maintenance personnel inspected the entire fleet of buses for the defect identified in this accident. Of the 283 buses inspected 37 were found to be defective. Thirty two were identified to have loose securing hardware, which was re-tightened, and five required having the vertical stanchion/grab rail replaced.

Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of this accident was the failure of the vertical stanchion due to missing or worn components. Contributing to the accident was the failure of the bus driver to perform a proper interior pre trip inspection of the bus prior to entering passenger service.

MTA NYCT Department of Buses, after reviewing the facts concerning the accident, found the accident to be preventable. By contract, no discipline was assessed to the bus driver as this was the bus driver’s first non-major preventable collision accident within the last 12 months. The bus driver’s driving skills were evaluated, he was retrained and it was recommended that he be returned to passenger service.

Based on the action taken by the MTA New York City Transit regarding this accident, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no recommendation in this case.

INVESTIGATOR: Harry W. Gerham

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CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION  DATE

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYSDOT  DATE